

LENT 5

Extravagant Love

Read Mark 14:3-9

In Mark's gospel, the story of the anointing at Bethany takes place just prior to the Last Supper and betrayal of Jesus. It contrasts the love of the woman with the betrayal of Judas. In John's account, the anointing woman is identified as Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, but in Mark, she remains unnamed.

Mary breaks open an expensive jar of ointment and pours it on Jesus' head (an action normally reserved for a prophet anointing a king). Jesus defends her extravagant act of love, anointing him in advance for his burial. This woman disciple understands his mission. She knows she cannot save him, but "she has done what she could." With the highest praise, Jesus announces that the story of her great love will be told to the whole world in memory of her.

Jesus also answers her detractors with these words: *"You will always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish, but you will not always have me."*

Sometimes people use these words as an excuse to resignedly overlook the ever-present poor and focus on the church or "spiritual" things. Rather, Jesus is pointing us to the place where we can always meet him and lovingly serve him, once he is gone. As he says in Matthew 25, "whatever you have done to the least of these, my brothers and sisters, you have done to me."

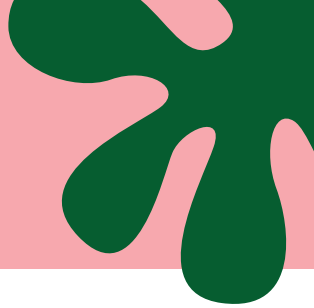
We have the privilege of following the example of the anointing woman, and of our Lord, in pouring out sacrificial, extravagant love. Sadly, the poor, the orphan, the homeless, the "least of these" are still with us. We CAN choose to help them in ways that do no harm, remembering Jesus' promise that he will be there, too.

We go now to visit Jacques in Rwanda, whose sacrificial love and care for his father and siblings is evident as he tells his story.

[Launch Video](#)

Mercy, a first year Zoe participant, shares her story and how the love of Zoe inspires them to share love with others. Let's go to Kenya and see them.

[Launch Video](#)



Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. Where did you see extravagant love in the video stories? What struck you in each one?
2. What connections do you make from this biblical text to the Zoe young people's experiences?
3. How does Zoe teach and demonstrate true "kindness" to the poor in Jesus' name?

Prayer

God of extravagant love, we thank you today for all the blessings you pour into our lives, and for the love your spirit pours into our hearts. Empower us to freely give our treasures like Mary did, not holding back, and to be generous with our love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Action

Take time to look around your home for things that might seem extravagant to a Zoe child. In gratitude for all you have, place an extravagant gift in your Zoe box today!

Ask God to show you who in your family, church or community needs a gift of your extravagant love today, perhaps through a phone call, letter, meal or listening ear. Take action!