

Good evening!

I'm Pastor Doug Browne. Thank you for joining me this evening.

May the peace of the Lord be with you.

(pause to let folks say "and also with you.")

Remember, "In life and in death we belong to God."

We trust in God, and God is worthy of our trust. Even now.

During this time when we're not meeting in person, I'm going to post videos here, praying with you and walking through the Bible stories in the Gospel of Mark, continuing from where we left off when we were together in one room. I'm doing this on Facebook Live tonight and Friday. Our Sunday morning services are on Zoom. We will try to post video from that here, too,

but there's more information on both the Church website and the Church Facebook page. If you can't find this information, please contact me.

If you've missed any of the videos, the easiest way to find them is that they're all linked from the sermons page on the church website.

My hope is that this will help us remember that we are God's people, no matter what's happening around us, and that God loves us.

Today, let's pick up in Mark chapter 14, verses 3 through 9, if you'd like to read along at home. Jesus has entered Jerusalem, cleansed the Temple, and looked around. Then he and his disciples left the city and went out to Bethany, a suburb. This is the same suburb where Jesus' friends Mary and Martha and Lazarus lived.

“While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, ‘Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.’ And they scolded her. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.’”

This is the Word of God, for the People of God.

Thanks Be to God.

This story is in all three of the so-called Synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Jesus is right, that what this woman did is remembered two thousand years later, but do you notice what isn't? Her name. We remember what she did, but not who she was.

What we remember about her is her extravagant devotion to Jesus.

Jesus has told his disciples what's going to happen. He's told them that he's going to die. The menfolk, the people we traditionally think of as "the disciples," don't seem to get the message. Recently they were still arguing over who was going to be at his left hand and his right when he came in glory.

Everyone who follows Jesus has seen his verbal fights with the high priests in the Temple, and seen that these powerbrokers are looking for a way to get rid of Jesus. It doesn't take a Torah scholar to figure out that trouble is coming, even if they hadn't had Jesus' warnings.

They know that Jesus is going to die. Some people are in denial. Some clearly aren't. This is real. Jesus is going to die, for them. And for us, too, but they're not thinking about us.

The woman sees what is going to happen, and she puts that aside. Jesus is here, and she responds with love. She doesn't worry about her dignity, or her reputation, or her bankbook. She loves Jesus, and lets him know that.

The disciples who object and scold her for “wasting money” are missing the point. As Oscar Wilde would say, they know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

These weeks when we’re in physical isolation, it’s easy to get into and out of habits. To get into some bad habits, and to get out of some good habits.

Like going to worship.

Like thinking about our church family.

Like praying.

Jesus is here! He walks with us through the darkest times, through the valley of the shadow of death. That’s now, folks.

I would encourage you to spend more time in prayer, not less.

If you'd like a starting point, read one of the Psalms. We have a hundred and fifty of them. Read one tomorrow. Think about it. Pray on it.

You are a beloved child of God. Talk with your Father. He'd love to hear from you.

And now, people of God, I call you people of God because that's what you are, people of God, remember, we are still God's people. You are still the child of a God who loves you. Call home! In these troublesome times, pray more. You'll find it helps.

Trust in God and wash your hands.

And may the grace of God the Father, the love of Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit rest upon you and rest in you, now and forever. Amen.

I hope that I'll see you Friday evening right here on Facebook, and Sunday morning on Zoom.