

Lavish Love; Brazen Beauty

A Sermon by Rev. Dawn Allen-Herron,
with the people of St. Mary's Episcopal Church

Sunday, April 3, 2022; Fifth Sunday in Lent

Scripture: Luke 13:1-9; Isaiah 43:16-21; Philippians 3:4b-14

Michael has read for us an **astounding** story.

Here, in sacred texts, is a story of **incredible intimacy**. When we read the “Big Long Story” of Jesus’ life and ministry, it becomes very clear that Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus are **dear friends** to Jesus. Their home is the place that Jesus chooses to go just before heading, for the last time, to Jerusalem.

There, he will have supper with his closest followers,
where he will mimic Mary’s anointing using water, rather than oil, as he
washes his disciples’ feet.

There, in Jerusalem, relationships will be stretched and broken--
he will be betrayed and denied.

And there he will be hailed, and then condemned,
for daring to live such Lavish Love.

At such a moment as this, Jesus chooses to stop, again, at the home of his dear friends.

And here, Mary of Bethany,

sister of Martha-who-hustles and Lazarus-whom-he-had-raised-from-the-dead,

commits an act of Brazen Beauty by anointing Jesus' feet with a year's wages worth of perfume. The room is filled with the fragrance....and Mary continues on,

wiping Jesus' feet with her own hair.

Mary is, in today's slang, *EXTRA*.

Her act is over-the-top. Lavish Love.

This morning, I'm going to ask you to do a bit of work. I want us to think, together, of moments when we have seen Love Lived in ways that are extra, over-the-top, and lavish.

....Pause.....

But there is more.

Mary's act is not just lavish, not just love, and not just beautiful. It is BRAZEN.

It is inappropriate, given the sociology of their culture.

What Mary does here transgresses common sense, and social boundaries.

It also resists not only social expectations, but political realities as well.

Here, she cherishes one whom Rome is intent on destroying.

And so I wonder what Brazen Beauty you have seen.

I wonder where you have seen Loved Lived in ways that goes beyond...that transgresses...that confronts someone/thing that is ignored, or debased, or that "ought to be left alone" (=death)

in a way that resists the power of death with a proclamation of Live-giving Love.

Pause.....

One place I've seen this is strollers, left at

SLIDE HERE.....



Strollers for refugees and their babies fleeing the conflict from neighboring Ukraine were left at the train station in Przemysl, (puh·SHEH·muh·shl) Poland. (Francesco Malavolta/AP)

Then.....I wonder about Judas.

I wonder why he couldn't see the beauty.

(Concerned with what others should do???)

I wonder if he would have been changed, if he'd seen the beauty.

I wonder what Lavish Love and Brazen Beauty we have missed.....

I wonder what Lavish Love and Brazen Beauty might look like, this week....

I wonder how WE might follow the example given us by St. Mary of Bethany?