

Sermon Notes April 7, 2019.

Focus Lazarus, John 12

Lectionary Readings

https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearC_RCL/Lent/CLent5_RCL.html

Today's reading is the about life after resurrection **for Lazarus**. In John 11, Jesus raised Lazarus. In chapter 12, Jesus is the special guest at a pre- Passover meal *at Lazarus' house*. The gospels confuse the chronology a little bit but it is near Passover.

Mary and Martha are the sisters of Lazarus in the story. They were so grateful that they got their brother back, they would fuss over Jesus and feed him. Lazarus's sister Mary does this over-the-top gesture of anointing Jesus' feet with perfume using her hair....and you know who Judas is... or do you?!

Lazarus is a big deal in John. In fact, the raising of Lazarus is the hinge point of the gospel of John. The last half of the Gospel turns dark and conspiratorial because leaders felt threatened by Jesus who seems to have limitless power both over the natural world and the hearts and minds of people. Seeing Jesus raise Lazarus was the last straw for them and maybe even for Judas (I'll say more later).

John 11:47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation." 49 Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! 50 You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."

Lazarus' pre-passover-supper/ raised-from-the-dead-after-party (chap 12) is also a foreshadowing of Jesus being betrayed by Judas and the eventual Easter resurrection. In Lazarus' home, Judas sees the extravagant waste of Mary and the perfume and decides (probably right then and there) to switch teams. When does he definitively switch teams? That comes later at the Last Supper a Passover meal.

Not really about the money- Judas takes offense over the extravagant waste of Mary wiping perfume on Jesus's feet. "Why didn't she sell it for 300 denarii?" Judas asks. He piously offers that the money could go to the poor. My mind immediately goes to 30 silver pieces, but that would be a mistake.

read a Gospel on its own terms

You may, like me, tend to smush Gospels together. Only in John is Lazarus raised from the dead. The foreshadowings of Jesus' betrayal take very different

shapes in different Gospels. But the Gospels all agree that Judas betrayed Jesus.

For example Gospel of Matthew likes connecting numbers to prophecy. Trying to get rock solid equivalencies in ancient currency is challenging at best. In Matthew, Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 coins which is equivalent to the price of a slave, and the 30 coins that are used to purchase a poor person burial plot is also connected to Zechariah's prophecy about a Potter's Field.

As juicy as those are- ignore Matthew and the 30 silver pieces for a moment and try to hear John's different emphasis--Judas and Passover are connected.

John and Passover Judas began to betray Jesus at Lazarus' home and would finish the breakup in the Upper Room/Last Supper (also another person's home) . Judas complaining about Mary's perfume was one a visible sign of the breakdown of their relationship.

"Couldn't this money be given to the poor?" This event turns him against Jesus. John's Gospel likes to make sweeping points -- Judas is a stand-in for all that is wrong with the powerful who don't understand what Jesus is trying to do. The "Jews" (house of Judah) are turning against Jesus. And while Judas was a real dude, he means more than himself. Judas --- Judah...get it?

Judas and Judah turn against Jesus. The betrayal starts before a Passover meal with Lazarus. The fight continues at another passover meal in the upper room. The battle lines are drawn out at Lazarus's house.

So what?

Are you going to give thanks for the extravagance of God or pull away, pick a fight over details, and miss a party where gratitude is the key?

It's very easy to take Judas's approach - picking over details and missing the big story.

Summary

John makes big sweeping points using individuals. Matthew is all about connecting prophecy. When we put the two stories together, it gets a little confused.

A good approach to reading a gospel is to read it on its own terms. Also, don't be like Judas but you probably will occasionally.!

Todd