

**- Saint John's Pulpit (March 28, Palm / Passion Sunday)
- "Remember, then Will be Remembered" Mark 14:1-9**

14 It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; ² for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

³ 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. ⁴ But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? ⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. ⁷ 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. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. ⁹ 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."

Our time is limited...

I don't think that my parents are joining this service virtually now because it is Sunday very late night in South Korea. Just like you, I used to think of the moment when my parents are no longer in this world. As my kids are growing, and I am getting older. I am ready to see this life change.

However, I know that this life change means a farewell with my parents someday.

Although I have no idea when it is, I should be ready for that moment. Yes, it is a huge pain and sadness to see one's parents are getting old and weak. Because we have limited time with our parents in this world, we treasure all moments with them either good or bad. If so, what did Jesus' disciples do when they knew that their time is limited with their teacher, Jesus?

Irony, but wonderful Grace from God

When it comes to Jesus' death, we are surprised to see that no one from Jesus' disciples could prepare for Jesus' death or His burial. Jesus' funeral was cared for by people whom we never expected. Joseph of Arimathea provided his own new tomb for Jesus' burial.

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Matthew 27:57-60 NRSV

In John 19:39, Nicodemus donated myrrh and aloes.

39 Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. John 19:39 NRSV

Besides, there were some women who took care of Jesus' burial.

55 The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. 56 Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. Luke 23:55-56 NRSV

Politically and physically Jesus' disciples were threatened by people as Jesus was sentenced to death on the Cross. Thus, it makes sense even if they could not take care of their teacher's burial. But it does not make sense for them not to prepare for Jesus' death although Jesus officially announced his death and Resurrection at least three times while he was with his disciples.

The only one who thought Jesus' death before Jesus' death

The story today is presented in Matthew 26 and John 12. No name is shown in Matthew and Mark, but in John 12, we see Mary who met Jesus and offered him such a precious gift.

³ Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. John 12:3 NRSV

Indeed, it is not important to ask who did this, but it is more important to know that there was someone who thought of Jesus' death to come and did something special for him. If so, the woman in the story is the only one who thought of Jesus' death and prepared for it before His death.

⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. ⁹ 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." Mark 14:8-9 NRSV

From 'Memento mori' to Remember others' death

You may know this Latin expression – *Memento mori*. It means that 'remember you will die.' Have you ever thought of your death or your final moment in this world? In other words, have you ever experienced that your death is around you? Although all these are not fun, we agree that these help us more mature. How? A sense of death makes us wake up our more responsible life and hope of resurrection in Christ.

What about remembering others? As we shared this morning, the woman in this story thought about Jesus' death to come and did something for him. The first group who heard about Jesus' death and resurrection directly was Jesus' disciples. If so, this woman is assumed to hear this news later or indirectly.

However, while Jesus' disciples were not ready for Jesus' death to come, but she did it clearly. Not only by remembering, but also, she did something special for Jesus Christ. When she did this, some of the disciples blamed her because she spent a lot of money for Jesus, not for the poor to help.

One of big mistakes made by disciples was that they did not think of their limited time with Jesus. This means that they had no idea about Jesus' death and resurrection! But this woman knew her limited time to serve Jesus in this world. A deep sense of our time helps us make good use of our limited time.

In a week, we will see a glorious Easter morning. So, for the last seven days before Easter, how can we make this Holy week more meaningful? Just like the woman in the story today, why don't we remember, think, and pray for others who are struggling with their daily challenges?

During this Lent, what we have heard or seen was lots of sufferings and pain. Caused by natural disasters, shootings, hate crimes, and Covid... All these things around us teach us now that it is time to think of others and their sufferings.

When Jesus' disciples heard about Jesus' death and Resurrection, they focused their own matters such as arguing who is great and greater among disciples or asking Jesus to guarantee better places when Jesus made His Kingdom. Unfortunately, these disciples had no understanding of death.

However, what about the woman in the story today? John 12 indicates that the woman's name was Mary. Who is Mary? She already experienced her brother Lazarus' death and resurrection by Jesus Christ!

12 *Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. John 12:1 NRSV*

Her careful sense of death probably made her do something special for Jesus in the story today. At the same time, it made her concerned about others and their sufferings more and more.

Now we begin the Holy Week (or Passion Week) this year. Like the woman in this story, it is time to pray for others. Our time may be limited, but our prayer shouldn't be. Hope that your holy week makes you feel God's unlimited Grace.