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**Date:** 2011/ 04 /17  
**Church:** Ev.-luth. Petrikirche, Hannover  
**Text:** Mk 14, 3-9  
**Topic:** In memory of her who cared for HIM beautifully“

Bokeloh, den 18. April 2011  
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Sprechzeiten nach Verabredung  
und Mittwoch 16:00-18:00h

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

You are part of an historical movement. Yes, indeed, today you have already become part of an historical movement, because today has come true what Mark recorded in his account of the gospel about Jesus Christ. The title of his book says, if you'd translate it completely into English - the good news about Jesus, the Anointed One. " In that book it reads: "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to his disciples, "wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

And today, it has become true in two ways, because we have already heard about the woman who anointed Jesus in the reading and we - here at Hanover International Worship - resemble the world with our different nationalities and backgrounds. "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to his disciples, "wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

So let me take you back to Jerusalem and the surrounding area to find out more about her and to, thereby, do justice to Jesus' words:

The city is crowded with Passover Pilgrims. Several hundred thousands of them fill the streets and places of Jerusalem in order to celebrate. They've gathered from all over the country to commemorate how the Angel of the LORD had passed over the homes of the Hebrews, how He had spared their ancestors' offspring and, thereby, granted them a future as HIS people. The Passover liturgy speaks of freedom for HIS people, but they find themselves still oppressed - another Passover celebration under the Roman rulers: who will finally set them free?

The village of Bethany is only half an hour away from the capital. It is safer and more convenient for them to stay there for the Festive Season. In Bethany they have friends who welcome them, Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus. Here he can withdraw from the attention of the masses with all their diverse expectations. Amongst his close friends and followers he can rest from the days' demands, the cheering crowd, the tricky questions of the different leaders and teachers, the constant pressure on him. Every night they return to Bethany. It's their retreat in these turbulent times. It's in Bethany where Jesus and his disciples feel at home.

Tonight Simon has invited them. His sickness has marked him that people still call him Simon, the Leper. It is not a name you want to be identified by. Yet, Jesus doesn't mind what the people say, he has accepted the invitation - just as he has spent time with the Pharisees, the Tax Collectors ... They sit around the table. Do they discuss the days' events? Jesus has given them a lot to think through with his teachings on the signs of the end of the age. So much food for thought that is hard to digest at this dining table!

While they still talk, she takes action. While they still reason, she does the apparently unreasonable: A woman anoints Jesus'. All of a sudden she has appeared amongst them. Just from the make of the jar and the smell of the mixture she poured over his head, it is obvious to those present: She used very expensive perfume for her gesture of devotion in honour of the guest.

That's all we know - there is not a name to identify her by nor a nick name that reveals some aspect of her background, nor words by which she tried to explain her motive. All that we know of her is what others have observed and described of and ascribed to her deed. It's a quiet act between her and the Anointed One that Jesus only reacts to once the others criticise her. Jesus speaks up to protect, but not to address her. It's a brief and gentle

encounter between them in a week full of long drawn arguments and increasing violence. Yet, it does not go unnoticed. And we still remember her for what she has done in these few moments - not for anything else!

What is there in her story with him that makes it significant history for our time, but to show that Jesus' prediction was right? What does their encounter reveal that is still relevant for us? In which way will her act move us to take action? I would like to draw three conclusions by looking more closely at Jesus' reaction to his friends' murmured complaints and outspoken rebuke.

**Firstly**, on that night Jesus is surrounded by his friends and acquaintances, people who know him, who had the privilege of being eye witnesses of his ministry and could ask him all their questions privately. Yet, at this point in history, they are so much on a mission caring for the poor that they miss the point completely. Understandably so, had Jesus not just a few hours ago recommended the poor widow at the temple for her giving? Now they jump to conclusions. It is not only one of them, but they obviously agree straight away and all of them start to criticise her, rebuke her harshly. Not of them bothers to ask her! It is one of them who now mumble about the waste of perfume of 300 silver coins who will betray their Master and Friend for 10 % of the amount, for 30 silver coins.

If it happened to them who lived with him for three years' on a day to day basis, how easily can it happen to us! We better think twice when we judge other's people actions just by observing, even more so when we feel that we will speak on HIS behalf! We might also spoil what HE considers a beautiful moment, just because we don't see the big picture, lacking in understanding of the whole situation.

**Secondly**, how many times are we eager to work through the agenda at a meeting in the work place, how often are we pressed for time, even when gathering with friends and family, that we get carried away with our every day life and responsibilities but lack her dedication to really care for those around us?

In these turbulent times this unknown woman has noticed the importance of a gesture of honour and encouragement for Jesus. His own people don't see this need. She seizes the moment, no matter the costs, she acts in order to do what she feels needs to be done. She is willing to give abundantly of her means and to put her name and fame at risk. It takes courage to act the way she did in a room full of people. We do not know, whether she followed the road with Jesus all the way to the cross, but she is there on that evening to show him her care/ she cares. It is people like her who make live more bearable in trying times. It takes people like her to see the need of those who care for others and to reach out to them in order to enrich their life with beautiful moments in the midst of anxiety and hardship.

People like her hardly ever make it into the headlines. Most of the times they stay anonymous for the public eye but they are great in the eyes of those who they are concerned for. Where and when should it be us to do what we can to care?

**Thirdly**, Jesus disillusiones the people around him: In the procession to the Temple, the air must have been full of expectations: "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David. Hosanna in the Highest." Just now they have been talking about the end of the age. The fulfilment of God's promises seemed just at hand and now it sounds as if it is still a long while to wait. In Bethany, which means "House of the Poor" Jesus recommends them to care for the poor on any other day. Furthermore, in his understanding the anointing does not mark the powerful beginning of a triumphant kingship but points to the pitiful ending of any mortal man: his impending burial.

Jesus puzzles the people, even his close friends who thought they'd know him. Are we prepared to get to know Jesus in a new way? Are we ready and willing to change our understanding of Jesus' ministry under different circumstances? Or do we feel more comfortable to stick to the perceived perspective?

Only a few days later it will be three women who sat out to anoint his body who will be the first ones to change their understanding of Jesus' dramatically. It is an empty tomb that opens up a completely new understanding of His teaching to them: Instead of caring for a corpse according to their tradition they hear the good news of the living one. It is on them to spread the news that changed history for good: "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter: 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you.'"

The peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.