

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



April 3, 2022

## GENEROSITY

*giving as an act of discipline*

by Drew Downs

Every time I think about *being* generous, some voice in the back of my head asks *Can we afford this?* Another asks *But what if there isn't enough left for **me**?* And, of course, *Do they really **deserve** this expense?*

Same goes for conversations with others about being generous as a group. We have to interrogate the generosity. Make sure it is "worth it" or financially appropriate given our own needs.

Two things are striking about this. One is that Jesus never condones this approach. And two: we work so hard to *not* be generous, but we *rarely* question prudence or consider the liberating side of generosity.

This all should give us pause. Given how many stories of Jesus reveal his *radical generosity*, we must honestly let go of our love of security and consider taking up radical generosity as an act of discipline.

# LENT

*Spring 2022*

---

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

*What Is Our Tomorrow?* We were asking this question long before hearing about COVID-19. It is another way of asking *Where are we going?*

I'm reminded of family car trips as a kid. My parents would often get us up on a Saturday morning telling us we're going somewhere. The question I always asked (after *where are we going?*) was *how long will we be in the car?* What I wanted to know was how should I prepare for this trip. But I never *asked* that. I wanted to know how long the car ride would be because I was worried about entertaining myself. If this is a 30 minute drive, then a comic book is fine. Three hours will take a bag full of stuff.

How often are our questions not really *our* questions? Or even *the* question of the hour? How often are we just trying to figure out what *I* should expect?

As we continue to wrestle with *our* future, how might we better *own* our questions and obsessions? How might we engage with the moment we're in, as a group? So that we all know where we're going, what we can expect, and how adaptive we will need to be for the journey.

That's what we'll be talking about this week. If you are able to be with us *in-person*, join us next **Wednesday, April 6 at 6:30 pm** in the **Cloister Room** at St. Stephen's. A recording will be made available the next day. If you can't join us, consider how we can engage *our* purpose with clarity *together*.

With love,  
Drew

# LENT

*Spring 2022*

---

## FOR SUNDAY

*The Fifth Sunday of Lent*

April 3, 2022

### **Collect**

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

From John 12:1-8

"The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

### **Reflection**

Mary gets up, opens up a bunch of expensive ointment, and anoints Jesus with *using her hair*. I'm not sure most of us *truly* know what to do with that information. Back in the days when I had long hair, I'd occasionally get it in my mouth while eating. Which was totally annoying. But I never cleaned anything with it.

And I didn't anoint anyone with it.

We must think of this as a kind of amazing sacrifice. But obviously one for that moment, right? Not something for *us*. Right? *Right?*

The evangelist paints the picture to bring us into that moment, for sure. But I also think, the wafting fragrance in the room reminds us of all that is happening *there* is covering

# LENT

---

everyone alike. Yes, Jesus is getting anointed by Mary, but the *scent* is smelled by everyone. The sight is seen by everyone. They all get to experience it. And through the evangelist's words, even we get to experience it.

Then Judas busts in with words so incredibly familiar any of us could have said them. Because many of us *have said them* (or something like them): "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?"

The narrator kindly butts in to remind us that Judas didn't *actually* mean it "for realsies" because he was a thief. So, I suppose, that implies that he's mad that he didn't get to steal his cut of that.

But what is *our excuse* for making that same argument? We aren't thieves trying to steal from the common purse, of course. But I think we often have less than genuine reasons for *opposing imprudence*. And besides, even the *genuine* response to imprudence is a rejection of Jesus's *generous grace*.

And then, of course, Jesus's words, which remind us of that very generous grace: "You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." Reminding us to *celebrate* and *honor* with generous hearts. Those words get twisted so often to do the opposite: to do nothing to help the poor. *As if it doesn't matter*. The very opposite vision than the one Jesus offers.

All of this hangs in the air when we read this story. Jesus's generosity and our stinginess. We certainly don't cast ourselves as the bad guy, the thief. But we do struggle to embody what Jesus is *actually* asking us to do.

To celebrate and honor *without being cheap*. Lavishly isn't quite the word, but it's close. Offering what you have...without an eye toward "cost-effectiveness." Putting generosity *above* maximizing *anything*. In other words, giving grace generously.

---

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807  
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG

---