3/13/16 **A New Grace** Mark 14:1-9 Deb Winters

As we approach the sermon this morning I first want to give you permission to give answers. This is what I call an interactive sermon. We will first try it with you calling your answer out and I’ll repeat your answer so everyone can hear. If that doesn’t work, I told Charles I hope he has his walking shoes on today and he will carry the microphone around for me today.

My first question is this, what does the word extravagant mean? ( Excessive, above and beyond what is expected, beyond what is earned.) My next question I want you to think about for a little bit. Have you ever experienced extravagant love?

I’ll give you an example from my life and I apologize if you have heard this one before, but it is one that touched me deeply at the time and one I still remember today. I was going to buy my first piece of property, a small condo and in order to have enough for the down payment my eccentric great-uncle lent me money to do it with strict orders that I was to pay him back and how I was to pay him back. I was to buy a savings bond every year in whatever amount I could afford made out to myself with him as my beneficiary, should God decide to take me home before him. My great-uncle both provided for my financial needs at that point in my life and forced me to put money away for later. His gift still overwhelms me when I think about it.

Do you have any examples of extravagant love in your life (and since this is a story I will ask you to use the microphone)?

I wanted to hear your stories of extravagant love because of the scripture lesson today. What happened to Jesus I would describe as an act of extravagant love. There are various versions of this story in the Gospels and in the Gospel of Mark the woman who does the extravagant act of love is given no name or designation as to who she is. She is simply a woman who wanted to do something for Jesus.

She took a costly bottle of ointment that they used in that time period, broke open the seal so that the smell filled the room and as was the custom of that day, poured it on Jesus head. It is not something we do today or maybe the closest thing I can think of is putting one of our ointments on your hands today and giving someone a good scalp rub like some hairdressers do.

When the woman did it in her time period, there was an instant uproar about the expense of the ointment and how it was wasted on Jesus instead of being used for the poor. They start to scold the woman for her act of EXTRAVAGANT love at which point Jesus stopped them with a line that still gives us pause today:

“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[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mk+14%3A1-9++++++++++++++++++++++&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-24757d)] is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

The first thing that strikes me about what Jesus says is the fact that he knew he was heading to his death. The story starts with it being two days before the Passover. Looking back in time we know that Jesus only has two days left to live. Jesus understood she was anointing his body for burial.

The next line that strikes me is that you can do kind things for the poor whenever you wish, but this was the moment Jesus needed that kindness, that extravagant act of love. When you received your gift of extravagant love, was it at a moment that you needed it most or at a time you later realized how much you needed that love, maybe like me an act of kindness that still overwhelms you? An act you have in your memory for you to pull on when you need reminding that some did love you and someone did look out for you. You remember what love is.

There is no question there are still poor people in this world that need our help. But this story reminds me that there are people in my life that I need to take the time to give extravagant acts of love to when I can. Everyone needs to know that are loved beyond measure and that that love is just a shadow of how much God loves us and the kind of love Jesus will soon give the world as he heads to his death, and extravagant act of love for the whole world throughout time.

Here are some questions I just want you to think about. Is there an act of extravagant love you need to do today? Are you open to allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you in ways you can give extravagant love? Will you act upon it?

For me, not acting on moments when I could give extravagant acts of love is one of my greatest disappointments in myself. I see places I can give extravagant love but only act on about 10% if that of what I could do. Don’t be like me in this instance. Be like the woman in this story whose act is a legacy for all of us to follow. Show love as often and whenever you can, not just to the poor, but to those closest to you as well as well as strangers and to whomever God gives you opportunity to love.

I heard someone say there should never be any “random acts of kindness”. Acts of kindness and beyond that, extravagant acts of love should be the hallmark of everyone who follows the God of love. It should be part of our daily lives. My benediction for you today is to go forth from this place willing to show love, even if the world calls it extravagant. Love as God loves you. Amen.