

## HOLY WEEK MEDITATIONS: WEDNESDAY

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me.

### It Was On The Wednesday

It was on the Wednesday that they called him a waster.  
The place smelled like the perfume department of a big store  
It was if someone had bumped their elbow against a bottle and sent it crashing to the floor,  
setting off the most expensive stink bomb on earth.

But it happened in a house, not a shop.  
And the woman who broke the bottle was no casual afternoon shopper.  
She was the penniless poorest of the poor, giving away the only precious thing she had.

And he sat still while she poured liquid all over his head..... as unnecessary as aftershave on a full  
crop of hair and a bearded chin.

And those who smelt it, and those who saw it, and those who remembered he was against  
extravagance, called him a waster.  
They forgot that he also was the poorest of the poor.

And they who had much and who had given him nothing, objected to a pauper giving him  
everything.  
Jealousy was in the air when a poor woman's generosity became an embarrassment to their  
tightfistedness.

It was on the Wednesday they called him a waster.

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### Mark 14: 1 - 11

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

14 Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. 2 "But not during the festival," they said, "or the people may riot."

3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. 4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages[a] and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. 6 "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you,[b] and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. 11 They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

## Reflection

Extravagant love on the path to extravagant grace.

For years, every time I went into Debenhams in Chester, I got lost. I could never come out of the same door I went in. I would go in via shoes and handbags to browse men's shirts and always find myself lost among pots and pans. That was until I learnt to follow the fragrance. If you take a deep breath you can always smell and follow the scent towards the entrance on the rows – the entrance that is surrounded by perfume counters. The air is full. You can taste it. When you walk through that area of the store it leaves its mark on you. When you get outside you could still smell the perfume on your clothes, your skin, your hair. You carry that fragrance with you. Not only does it fill the front of the store but it flows from it.

And so, we reflect on the story of the woman with the alabaster jar of perfume. An extravagant display. A foresight of extravagant grace.

This is a powerful story and one of the few encounters that is told in all four of the synoptic gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It must be a very important story. The account teaches us more than just sacrifice and repentance; it teaches us love, forgiveness, and real freedom.

Extravagant love doesn't hold to the expectations of those around, of society norms, or perceptions of status and Jesus knew this. When this lady broke open the jar, she offered everything she had, her most treasured possession and Jesus gave all he could – redemption.

The oil she used would normally have been used to prepare bodies for burial and what she did prepared Jesus for the next stage of his ministry.

The smell of that oil would have filled the room, what she did would have filled the senses of those observing and like in the department store they would have taken a piece of that with them if only for a short while.

As the passage closes, as the fragrance of the woman's love is still filling the air Judas is setting in motion the events that would follow. The path that leads to the cross - a love that doesn't just fill a room but fills the world.

Can we carry the fragrance of Jesus with us this Holy Week and Easter? Can we let it move us again, let it transform our hearts, let it spill out from our homes and our faith this Easter?

May the fragrance of Jesus fill this place.  
May the fragrance of Jesus fill this place.  
May the fragrance of Jesus fill this place.  
Lovely fragrance of Jesus,  
Rising from the sacrifice  
Of lives laid down in adoration.

May the glory of Jesus fill His church.  
May the glory of Jesus fill His church.  
May the glory of Jesus fill His church.  
Radiant glory of Jesus, Shining from our faces  
As we gaze in adoration.

May the beauty of Jesus fill my life.  
May the beauty of Jesus fill my life.  
May the beauty of Jesus fill my life.  
Perfect beauty of Jesus,  
Fill my thoughts, my words, my deeds,  
My all I give in adoration.

*Graham Kendrick*  
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## Prayer

*Lord God,  
We tremble to think  
That it was one of Jesus' own friends who betrayed him.  
One who sat by him, who broke bread with him.*

*Give us strength, we pray,  
To walk faithfully with Jesus,  
Even when the road we walk is rocky  
Even when the message of the cross seems like foolishness  
And even when we feel betrayed.*

*You, Lord, are always faithful.  
We stumble, we become lost,  
But you are steady and sure.*

*Give us the grace to endure our troubles,  
And reveal to us the glory of your kingdom,  
Through your son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>.*

**Amen.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ibelieve.com/faith/8-prayers-to-pray-each-day-of-holy-week.html>