

## Getting in the Mood for Jesus Week

Ken Wilson, 3/25/18

Emily recovering from **concussion. Sabbatical. Baptisms**

Holy Week, or Jesus Week for you Shark Week fans, involves retracing the last week of his life: triumphal entry on Palm Sunday, Last Supper Thursday, Crucifixion Friday, Resurrection Sunday

To get us in mood, consider 3 telling moments in last weeks of his life that remind me why I admire this man. I don't work well—my psyche goes sour—if I don't have someone to look up to.

Jesus brand has taken such a beating as the religion that claims him is so out of step with him. No simple task to separate the wheat of Jesus from suffocating chaff of so much Christianity.

[Our Serendipity-Do-Dah moms, moms of LGBTQ kids who can't find a supportive church, connect with us online. HI MOMS!]

On global scale, major religious traditions going thru a rummage sale, a major sorting. In times like these, we could do worse than remember what it is about Jesus that lifts, inspires us, moves us.

Sometimes the most telling things about a person aren't the major accomplishments—the stuff that makes it into the obituary—but the telling gestures, the spontaneous moments. The stories you hear from closest people...like Caleb Brokaw, the most thoughtful-kind, not-spotlight-craving person, was on side, lead singer in like a goth-grunge-Ypsi bar band. That's important to know about him.

[Matt's tipping, Joy Eckstein after bank robbery]

### JESUS INTERCTING WITH MARY EPISODE 1

Set the scene in John 11—maybe two weeks before his final Passover week (week before Palm Sunday which began final week)

Jesus had three friends: Lazarus, Mary, Martha who were siblings living together. So far as we know, unmarried. Probably well off.

Lived in Bethany, a day's walking from Jerusalem. hey are supporters but not traveling disciples. More like friends.

Non-traditional family. Three mature adults living together, not married. Siblings. So there is some story, why none of them is married. You get impression never married. Unusual for any one sibling to be unmarried (divorced/widowed)—but all three? Odd. I. People wonder—what’s the story? Like when I was growing up, nobody knew anyone who was openly gay—but everyone knew two older women living together for decades: are they sisters? Cousins? Friends? Not saying Lazarus, Mary, or Martha were gay, but there was some story, maybe some secret that we don’t know. Makes this friendship with Jesus, extra fascinating. Because Jesus was also living outside of social norms—unmarried man in his late 20s or early 30s who was a rabbi.

Lazarus becomes gravely ill and Mary sends for Jesus who has reputation as a healer. Jesus doesn’t respond. He doesn’t drop what he’s doing and rush to their side. Lazarus dies. And now Jesus is arriving to the now bereaved family.

Mary goes out to meet him. She’s mad-sad. Can’t understand why Jesus didn’t respond to her urgent appeal when Lazarus fell gravely ill. Her hurt pours out when she sees him: Why didn’t you come when I called?

Man, we’ve all been Mary—calling out for help that doesn’t come. But we’ve also been Jesus—not being there for a friend or loved one who needed us. Maybe we didn’t get there in time for the death of a loved one, we feel horrible. Nancy’s dad calling us when Nancy’s mom came back from golf feeling sick.

Now here’s the moment—not raising Lazarus from the dead, but Jesus’ response to Mary’s disappointment in him. **“Therefore when Jesus saw her weeping, he groaned in his spirit, and yielded himself to his turmoil,** and said, **“Where have you laid him?”** [then it says **“And Jesus wept”**—but word in GK. is loud sobbing wailing.

But here’s precise moment: **“Therefore when Jesus saw her weeping, he groaned in his spirit, and yielded himself to his turmoil...And Jesus wept”**

Ever felt intense emotion like that rising...yet so many reasons not yield yourself to it. As was case with Jesus here, outside in a public space, large entourage, onlookers, some adoring, some critical. Ever time he entered a town, it was a scene. No slipping into anywhere for Jesus at this stage.

No doubt the intensity of this moment is heightened by extraordinary external pressure he’s under. Leading a messianic movement that has the leaders

understandably concerned because such movements can end in disaster for the nation.

In these moments of cascading emotional turmoil, the brain can process on many levels. On part of your brain is in the emotion—riding it like a wave. Another part is observing it, calculating—can I afford to let this out or do I excuse-distract myself, clamp down. There's a split moment when you can decide which way to go.

Last time this happened to me, week after my first wife had died suddenly. At table with adult kids (Grace 19) and a couple of their spouses. Son Jesse taking the call from the coroner, reporting on cause of death. He tells us all what doctor told him. Toxicology clear. Heart enlarged. Had been a small heart attack that due to the enlarged heart, led to sudden cardiac arrest. Would have happened very quickly in her sleep.

I am flooded with emotion including a load of irrational guilt I'd been carrying—that I wasn't there when she died, why didn't I check in, before I left for church, was stress of change process I was leading in church a factor, blah, blah, blah. When a loved one dies suddenly people around feel guilty—what could I have done differently? Somehow in that moment I felt safe enough with kids to let it out—to yield myself to my turmoil—a good move.

Jesus made a move like that in a much more complicated situation: Mary's anger with him, her grief, his grief, plus the pressure of his own impending crisis. Thus he ***“groaned in his spirit, and yielded himself to his turmoil....and wept”***

He's didn't project mastery—I've got this! He didn't even search for the right words, no attempt to explain himself. She was vulnerable with him, and he mirrored her: He ***“groaned in his spirit, and yielded himself to his turmoil....and wept”***

**God, I love that man!** This is someone with a capacity for human connection at deepest level. **Maybe I could yield myself to my turmoil with him knowing he yielded himself to his turmoil with Mary.**

A VERY DIFFERENT RESPONSE TO MARY'S EMOTION A WEEK LATER

After raising of Lazarus Jesus retreats to wilderness near Ephraim for his own safety. Judean leadership understandably concerned that messianic movements can pose an existential threat—and Jesus had no plan for defending Israel in face of a Roman crack-

down. Jesus could be arrested at any moment—taken into custody by Rome or by the Temple guard, wanting to protect Jerusalem from a Roman reaction.

But he's returned to Bethany on way in to Jerusalem. Now he's dining with newly raised Lazarus and Mary & Martha.

And at dinner another unexpected intimate gesture from Mary—his close friend, close woman friend, close unmarried woman and Jesus, an unmarried man at age 30 (time a man should be married)

It's more like a semi-public banquet than a private dinner. At least disciples are there, probably town leaders as well. Only moment or gesture like this between a man and woman would be in the privacy of their home, and they would be married.

Here's our moment: ***“So Mary, taking a pint (16oz) of unguent of pure nard (flowering plant, caviar of fragrance), anointed the feet of Jesus, and with her hair she wiped his feet off; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the unguent”***

A gesture of extraordinary intimacy, especially the wiping of his oiled feet with her hair.

Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, objects with a moralizing-principled objection: this perfume could have been sold and money given to the poor. But it's an insincere cover argument—Judas is soon to betray Jesus, he's grown resentful of Jesus, and this is his religious-moralistic objection. And Jesus rejects it out of hand saying, ***“Leave her so she might keep it for the day of my burial; for the poor you will have with you always, but me you do not always have.”***

Jesus is not Steve Mnuchin and his beautiful wife holding the sheet of newly printed 50-dollar bills at the US Treasury for a photo op—the guy who made his millions off people losing their homes during the mortgage crisis. This is Jesus, who owns the clothes on his back and counsels people to sell their goods to give to the poor. But he knows a moralistic-religious cover argument when he sees one and he refutes with a single sentence. He doesn't care how it looks to the critics. He cares about receiving and honoring this act of devoted love from Mary.

The criticism of Judas is a public rebuke of Mary as well—how inappropriate it is for her to be wasting this perfume like this.

OMG, Jesus, I admire this man.

## JESUS IN THE CENTER OF ADULATION BOUND TO GO SOUR

Many sermons on Palm Sunday point out how the crowd's adulation was short lived...the fickleness of crowds...different between being a follower of Jesus and a fan (and these are just fly by night fans) ...but the thing is, given how Jesus responds in the moment, he would never, ever, be capable of giving that kind of sermon in that moment

He knew the mixed notices of crowd...he certainly knew the high probability that their adulation would be short-lived, turn on a dime...

Our praise-admiration of Jesus is surely mixed...not consistent, etc. but that doesn't invalidate it.