

Sermon Title: **“Leave Her Alone!”**

Bible: **John 12:1-8**

When: on the 5th Sunday in Lent, April 3rd, 2022

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

O Lord, during this Lenten season, we come to you, because you welcome all of us. And we serve one another, because all of us are your children. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. Who Is Mary?

Today’s Gospel reading of John is chapter 12. Mary is the main character in this story. Who is she? In the Bible, there are many Marys. This Mary is not the mother of Jesus Christ. This Mary is a sister of Martha and Lazarus. In the former chapter 11, Lazarus was ill, Jesus was asked to come and heal the sick Lazarus. However, when Jesus arrived at the home of Lazarus, Lazarus had already passed away and had been in the tomb for four days. Both Mary and Martha were weeping and weeping, and dared to say to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Have you prayed for your loved one who was sick? Have you lost your loved one? Have you cried out to the Lord? And have you seen the tears of the Lord? I am not a good prayer warrior. But I am like a crybaby, a prayer crybaby. Sometimes, when I have seen the names of the prayer list, I have just cried and cried.

In chapter 11, we can find one of the most famous declarations of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead to life! But don’t we know the depth of sorrows and the length of the broken hearts when we have had to say good-bye to our beloved ones? Don’t we have holes that nothing or no one can replace, because we lost our loved ones?

2. Mary’s Costly Perfume

Now when Jesus talked about his own death, how could Mary respond? I believe that after Mary experienced the death of Lazarus, her perspective on life was changed. Probably, Mary did not want to say “I should have done this” anymore. She might have decided to follow her emotions and gut. To her, the expensive perfume did not matter. It cost three hundred denarii. This is similar to a year’s wages. But the death of Jesus Christ **did** matter to her. How to say good-bye to Jesus was more important than anything else. Don’t we feel her heart? Her heart was broken, and healed. But her heart would be broken again with the death of Jesus Christ. When I talk with someone in sorrow and pain, sometimes, I cannot follow what is said. But I find tears in my eyes and in my heart.

3. Leave Her Alone

Maybe, it is more reasonable, or it makes sense to sell the expensive perfume, and to help the poor or other causes. That’s because we cannot understand it in our brains. It does not make sense. Then, Jesus said, “Leave her alone!” How can we interpret this “Leave her alone!”?

4. 3 S's - Stupid, Slow, and Silent

I believe that many of us have heard of mentoring, a mentee and mentor relationship. Have you heard of Coaching or Spiritual Direction? I have experienced some coaching and spiritual direction, as well as mentoring. And the following is my understanding. Mentors give knowledge and skills to the mentees. For example, I can learn how to play baseball, how to hold the bat, how to throw and catch the ball. This is close to mentoring. I need to learn knowledge and skills, because I do not have them. But coaching and spiritual direction are a little different. In this concept, I have potential already in me. Rather than learning knowledge and skills, I unfold my potential and find my own ways, kind of like the idea, "Leave me alone."

But the attitudes of coaches and spiritual directors can be summed up in these 3 S's: stupid, slow, and silent. Because we are not God, we cannot know others. Because we are all God's children, the Holy Spirit lives in all of us. If I were a spiritual director or coach for you, I would need to confess that I am stupid, because I do not know you. Maybe I can know a little bit about you today. But I cannot know who you are tomorrow or yesterday. I need to admit that I am stupid, because you know yourselves better than I, and because the Holy Spirit in you works with you. This means that I need to learn about you slowly. Because I am stupid. Time is needed for me to learn about you, and for you to teach and educate me. I also need to be silent. Rather than give you knowledge and skills, I just need to give you the opportunity to speak up with your stories, your emotions, and your understanding. To listen, I need to be

silent. Then, you will find your answer, your meaning, and the Holy Spirit in you. This is how I understand this idea of “Leave her alone.”

In our faith journey, we need each other, because we cannot be the body of Jesus Christ by ourselves. We need you. You need us. I need you. You need me. To be the church together is not easy, because sometimes we cannot understand each other. But I hope for us to remember the wisdom of “Leave her alone.” Three S’s: Stupid. Slow. And Silent. I am stupid. I am slow. I am silent. Then, we can listen to each other; we can learn from each other; we can find the Holy Spirit in all of us.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, you call all of us as your body. You call us as your church. We are stupid, because you know us. We are slow, because you work before us. We are silent, because we will listen to you and your children. We are one body and one spirit. In Jesus’ name. Amen.