**Sermon at Bluff 13 March 2016**

**Extravagance and Waste**

**“Why wasn’t this perfume sold for 300 silver coins and the money given to the poor?”** (Jn 12.5)

So says Judas with the implication that he wanted a slice of that 300 for himself. We too might feel cross with Jesus for letting Mary ‘waste’ so much money, when there are many more worthy ways of using that amount. And by further implication we would use similar money that came our way for the poor, not on ourselves.

300 silver coins = approx. one year’s wages. Imagine blowing that in one go!

How did Mary get all that money? Must have been a lifetime’s ‘savings’. All gone up in smoke – well perfume! This is unimaginable rapid use of resources – the question is: was it a waste?

We are not beyond extravagance; think of the cost of funerals, weddings and holidays.

And our extravagance is for us and ours, ie somewhat selfish, not for the poor.

When we have our ‘woo-hoo’ moment with tax back is our first thought “give the money to the poor”, or “let’s have a treat”?

I can understand treating oneself especially for those having a tough time – recently bereaved, recovering from major illness, facing terminal illness, struggling financially.

It is easy to say, ‘It is not all about money’ when you have enough to choose.

But there are two more issues going on here.

[1] The perfume could not feed the poor

Can the poor eat or drink that perfume? No matter who owned it, it could not.

For the perfume to be bought, someone has to have 300 silver coins. Whoever has that and would like to buy the perfume – *that* is the person who should give to the poor!

In our society many rich folk have forgotten their obligation to society, treating taxes as the limits of what they should give, and doing their best to avoid paying them anyway. The rich are rich so that they can support the poor – if that sounds paternalistic, I doubt the really poor would mind, as long as they are helped.

“The poor are always with us” (v8), is no recipe for inaction, but a cry to the rich to give.

[2] What cost friendship?

Signs of love are often ‘a waste’ – think of all those flowers, chocolates and jewellery.

Mary has an inkling that Jesus is going to die soon and she so loves him that she wants to give him what she can while she can. This is no sexual love, mind; this is a sign of friendship. Many other things could have been done or given. Mary chose. Was Judas more upset that she thought of it before he did? Or that she was generous while he was mean?

Her action was costly - much of friendship is. That is what makes having a friend so valuable.

All 4 gospels record this story, or one very like it. They do so to show that our love for Christ can have no bounds, just as his love for us and the whole world, shown on that cross 2000 years ago.