



WORKTALK WEEKLY

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Welcome to the new format WORKTALKweekly

Special announcement

Geoff Shattock's new book *Jesus and the Racing Rat* is available now please visit [here to order your copy](#).

Gentle Moments

There is a tendency to think of the workplace as an often harsh and unforgiving environment. Nurtured by "Apprentice" type shows where an Alan Sugar or a Donald Trump Warlord presides over competence and combatence competing with each other for the coveted prize, we can be fed on a diet of conflict. The workplace becomes an arena for battle, a stage for performance, or a sports field for games played to win.

There is, of course, truth in these images - many places are emotion-free zones where the role of the worker is to deliver results in an impersonal, mechanistic culture.

But people will always discover ways to find the gentler moments. It is these gentler moments which will hold our gaze for the reflective season of lent. There is much to be learnt in these tender gaps in the market which are more numerous than you might first imagine. We will visit them in a moment, but let me take you to the first example to explore on Jesus' journey to Easter.

It is called the 'anointing in Bethany'. A woman pours expensive ointment over Jesus' feet and then wipes His feet with her hair.

To place this in perspective, Mary performed this gentle act less than six days before Jesus would die. This death was on His mind as He defended her to her critics.

Make no mistake, Jesus was on his way to the hardest week of his life - to face the awesome fulfillment of His life's mission. Conflict, scheming, betrayal and battle are in the air - until this moment. Mary's act fills the whole house with fragrance.

In this expression of authenticity, Mary transforms the whole atmosphere and gives an incalculable gift to a Man whose on the brink of battle. Something changes here and it has been recorded for every generation to inhale the benefit.

Such acts still take place every day in workplaces around the world. Some of them are almost built into the job description. The touch of the hand from a hospice worker to hold a person in their last moments; the gentle changing of a bandage by a nurse so the patient can find some relief; the sensitive preparation from the funeral directors so a family can grieve; the skillful manipulation from a physical therapist for a distorted limb.

A teacher may lift a weeping child who has fallen to the ground; a soldier supports his fallen comrade. These moments may be built into the job even though they can still be given generously or withheld.

But there are other moments which are harder to define. An arm around the shoulder when a co-worker receives news of bereavement or illness, the hand on the shoulder when someone has been made redundant, the surprise birthday party for a well loved team

member.

The list is endless but the results are the same. Although kindness is not in most job descriptions the fragrance fills the space.

As for Mary she was not being extravagant as she was criticized for being, because she was expressing her devotion to her Lord. In so doing she did not care what others thought and was prepared to take the criticism.

She has given us a model of tender transformation in a harsh world.

Work well
Geoff Shattock

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BIBLE SECTION

John 12:1-8

1Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

4But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 5"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." 6He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 7"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

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