

Mary of Bethany

KNOW THE HOUR

Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil...and anointed the feet of Jesus. » JOHN 12:1

There's a time for everything, a passage in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 reminds us: birth and death, planting and uprooting, weeping and laughing, mourning and dancing. The secret to living well is to know what time it is. Too often, we misjudge the time and make the inappropriate choice.

The gospels reveal that Jesus is acutely sensitive to the time, always awaiting the hour of his surrender. People in Nazareth are intent to dispatch him off a cliff at the start of his ministry. But Jesus is aware that his hour hasn't arrived and he slips away easily. We can imagine he might have done the same on the Mt. of Olives. Yet in his prayer of anguish there, Jesus accepts that on this night, surrendering his life is the right response. The hour has indeed come.

In anointing Jesus for burial, Mary of Bethany signals that she too is aware of the time. Jesus is glad to have a friend who observes the time and keeps vigil with him.

FOR CONTEMPLATION ► Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Identify which season of life you're in and how to respond to it.

PRAYER ► *Keep me awake to the summons of your service, Lord—now and until the hour of my death.*