

## Opportunity Knocks – 3 Small Steps to Abundant Giving

A 1970's TV programme, Opportunity Knocks, gave people the chance to be remembered. Three minutes of fame where they showed the world their talents and careers were launched – or wannabes quickly forgotten!

In Matthew 26: 1-16, we see people looking for opportunities; two of them with malice a forethought (the scribes and Judas) but a third, Mary, wanting to be a blessing. Today's **3 Small Steps** are inspired by this passage and will help us to act with abundant generosity.

**Step 1: Don't lose sight of the Saviour.** In the activity of daily life it is easy to forget that Jesus is in the midst of it with us. Here we see him doing the ordinary – having a meal as a guest in someone's home; but although fully man, he remains extraordinary – always fully God. He couldn't divest himself of who he was, the Son of God, and it was Mary who elevated his presence in this everyday scene by anointing him. At another meal at Mary and Martha's home, Mary "chose the best thing" by sitting at Jesus's feet honouring the presence of the very Word of God. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst". Let that reality dominate and focus our thoughts, wherever we are.

**Step 2: Be a God-pleaser, not a man-pleaser.** Dozens of worldly voices are raised when we act in a godly way. The world counts as foolishness our faith in Christ, our belief in life after death, our assurance of heaven. Peter sought to encourage the churches in Asia Minor who were facing opposition, with voices raised against them, by reminding them of the truth of who they were following. "We didn't follow cleverly invented stories", he said, "but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty".

Mary faced huge criticism for her actions; from a culture where women did not approach men or uncover their hair; from a thief who wanted to get his own greedy hands on the money; from those without an understanding of the relevance of her actions. A poem by Edgar Guest has the lines, "There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done / There are thousands to prophecy failure". Don't allow worldly voices, or the fear of them, stop you from being a blessing to someone today.

**Step 3: Practice Lavish Love.** A prayer of St Ignatius says, "Teach me...to give and not to count the cost". That does not mean we give beyond our means, foolishly or with no regard for other responsibilities we may have. It does mean that we shouldn't keep a record in our hearts and minds of, "how much I have done for God" but count it all joy and keep giving! We can only give lavishly if we love lavishly. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love Him because He first loved us". In this time of Lent, when we fix our eyes afresh on all that God gave because of his great love for each one of us, let's not hold back in our outpouring of love to him and others in both word and deed.

Perhaps Mary only meant to pour out a drop of oil but love overwhelmed her and she just couldn't stop. Are you willing to let love overwhelm you so that when your opportunity knocks, you take it, give abundantly and leave a lasting legacy? How our neighbours, families, friends and Jesus would be affected by such an outpouring.