

The Anointing of Jesus

John 12:1-11

March 26, 2023

1. Mary's Extravagant Worship: A Gift Fit for a King (1-3)

- a. The timeframe – “Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead whom he raised from the dead” (1).
 - i. “Six days before the Passover” – the countdown to Jesus’ hour of trial has begun. This feast occurred the night before Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
 - ii. “Bethany” – Jesus returns to Bethany to the house of Lazarus.
- b. The place – “There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was **one of them** that sat at the table **with him**” (2).
 - i. “There they made him a supper” – the supper is to honor Jesus for His resurrection of Lazarus.
 - ii. “Martha served” – Martha is doing what she does best, serving those she loves.
 - iii. “Lazarus” – Lazarus was one of the honored guests reclining at the table with the others
 1. “One of them” – Lazarus was one of them once again!
 2. “With him” – Lazarus is enjoying fellowship with the Savior Who raised him from the dead.
 3. Like Lazarus, we look forward to the day when we too will sit at a feast in honor of our Savior and thank Him for raising us from death to life (cf. Revelation 19:7-9).
- c. The event – “Then Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment” (3).
 - i. Mary’s gift:
 1. Expensive (a year’s wages)
 2. A Roman pound was equivalent to 12 ounces of oil (1 ½ cups).
 - ii. Mary’s service:
 1. Anointing was intended to set apart the person being anointed for a special office such as kings (cf. 1 Samuel 10:1-13; 16:12-13) and priests (Exodus 28:41).
 2. Anointing was usually applied to the head of the person being honored.
 3. Mary chose to anoint Jesus’ feet which was very rare in the ancient world.
 4. Foot washing was considered a demeaning task reserved for the lowest household servants.
 5. Mary further worshipped Jesus as King by wiping His feet with her hair.
 6. The odor filled the house; surely as Jesus rode into Jerusalem the following day, the strong aroma of the perfume wafting from Jesus body would have been just as striking as His riding on a foal.

2. Judas’s Selfish Opposition: What about the Poor (4-6)

- a. Expect opposition from those who refuse to honor Christ for Who He is – “Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him” (4).
 - i. Expect the devil to stir up a loud minority to oppose your extravagant devotion to Christ.
 - ii. Expect the harshest opposition to come from those who claim to be followers of Christ.
 - iii. Expect that there are those who seek to exploit Christianity for their own gain.
- b. Expect some to question your extravagant devotion to Christ – “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor” (5).
 - i. Expect questioning from those who focus only on the cost of your devotion rather than the object of your devotion.
 1. The cost of Mary’s gift was a year’s wages (2020 median household income in the US was \$67,521).
 2. “Since it was more than most women would inherit, the gift was like an inheritance, an offering of a slave to her King” (Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Edward Klink II, page 527).
 - ii. Expect questioning from those who do not know the worth of Christ.
 1. Mary took the costliest possession she owned and poured it on the feet of Christ, showing that even the very best she had was only worthy of her Saviors feet.

2. Judas measured Mary's act economically because he did not understand Christ's worth.
- c. Expect some to covet your gifts given to Christ – "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (6).
 - i. Judas did not really care for the poor.
 - ii. Judas feigned care for the poor to mask his true nature.
 - iii. Judas was serving as the treasurer reserved for those of the highest integrity.
 - iv. Judas exploited the trust of those he served because he was a thief and cared only for himself.
3. Jesus' Defense of Mary: Preparation for a Corpse (7-8)
- a. Jesus defends Mary's act of worship by illuminating its meaning – "Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this" (7).
 - i. Though Mary was likely anointing Jesus to show her allegiance to Him as the King of Israel, Jesus explains that God's purpose of the anointing was for His burial.
 - ii. As Mary poured out her offering for Jesus, Jesus would pour out His life's blood for us.
 - iii. All Christian service and sacrifice is ultimately pointing to the cross and the ultimate sacrifice Christ made on our behalf.
 - b. Jesus explains the priority of Christian devotion – "For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always" (8).
 - i. Christ is to be the ultimate object of our devotion.
 - ii. Serving the poor is to be a means of serving Christ.
 1. Matthew 25:34-40 "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."
 2. On the other hand, it is possible to allow the service of others displace our service of Christ. We do so by finding our worth in the people we serve and by seeking the approval of those we serve more than the approval of God.
4. The Public's Response toward Jesus: Belief and Treachery (9-11)
- a. The Jews that sought Jesus finally found Him – "Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead" (9).
 - i. Some sought Him because the chief priests and Pharisees had ordered His arrest (cf. 11:55-57).
 - ii. Others sought Him because they wanted to see Lazarus for themselves.
 1. Do not discount the power of your testimony of new life in Christ!
 2. God desires to use your testimony of new life in Christ to draw others to faith in Christ!
 - b. The chief priests conspired to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus – "But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;" (10).
 - i. When we boldly testify of new life in Christ, we should expect opposition.
 - ii. 1 Timothy 3:12 "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
 - iii. Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."
 - c. Many Jews were overwhelmed by the testimony of Lazarus - "Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus" (11).
 - i. Many Jews stopped following the chief priests and the Pharisees.
 - ii. Many Jews believed on Jesus.