

SCRIPTURE READING: JOHN 12:1-11

Lord God reveal the true value of Jesus to us and lead us into an encounter with him that results in extravagant worship in service, fellowship and devotion. In Jesus name we pray, *amen*.

If you were able to be here when I preached last month on the death and resurrection of Lazarus, you will remember that Chapter 11 was the final sign Christ performed when he raised Lazarus back to life. John 11 concludes with the Jewish religious leaders, the chief priests and the Pharisees, along with Caiaphas, the high priest, meeting in Jerusalem, plotting together to destroy Jesus.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, they kept looking for Jesus, but the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was, should report it, so that they might arrest him. (John 11)

This is the background situation to Jesus' appearance in Bethany and where our bible reading picks up the story.

What is Jesus worth to you? What value do you place on Christ, the Son of God?

In the anointing of Jesus at Bethany we see a stark contrast between one who places infinite value upon Jesus and another who values money more than anything else. Mary who is sitting across from Lazarus realises the value of Jesus. Her affection and love of Christ cannot be measured. Sadly, on the other side of the room, we see someone who is only interested in money.

He's been with Jesus almost from the beginning. This man has seen miracles and heard amazing preaching and teaching but through it all, his heart remains unchanged. His affection is not for Jesus but for the coins in the money bag for which he is responsible.

While Mary wants one more minute with Jesus, Judas just wants more coin. This banquet reveals the hearts of these two people. One cherishes her Lord over all other things and the other cherishes money above all things. Later we will consider Martha and Lazarus and their worship of Jesus... But first we will focus on Mary and Judas who both reveal their true colours on this occasion. Matthew records Jesus words another time:

24 "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. (Matthew 6:24)

We must lose our love for money. We must kill it before it kills us. The only way we can lose our love for money and maximise our love for Christ is to see Him as infinitely valuable. When seen against Christ, we begin to see that money is a mockery of true value.

Again, Jesus says:

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?
(Matthew 16:26)

Money is like fire, care must be taken when we handle it. We can become so blinded by it that we will chase after riches while forfeiting our souls. Money at best is only a tool but it can very quickly overtake us to our utter ruin.

Today we have before us a case study in true value. Mary who sees infinite value in her Lord and Judas who worships money. In just a few short days Mary will watch as her Lord is raised from the grave. She will see her treasure again and spend eternity with Him... In just a few short days Judas' will understand that he has traded his soul for 30 pieces of silver, he will realise he has nothing; for what can he give to redeem his soul? And in utter despair he will commit suicide.

Death will come to all who worship money. Life will come to all who worship Jesus Christ.

You have the infinite value of Jesus and nothing in this world can measure up to that. However, to discern this value one must be made alive by God. Those who are dead in sin cannot see the value of Christ.

It is a most amazing thing when the value of Jesus Christ is seen and a person's affections and commitment line up with it.

Today we see two people who have been confronted with the immense value of Jesus Christ. One of them sees it and lavishes Him with devotion and love, the other is lost and sees more value in money. We must look within ourselves to see which one represents us.

However, they were not the only 2 people at this feast, with Jesus...

Our Lord returns to Bethany, the place where the Jews were out to capture Him.

Now our Lord returns to His friends for a banquet held in His honour.

- ❖ The first person mentioned in this account is Martha. Of course, she is serving ...bless her heart.

This seems to be who Martha is. This is what Martha does. We see that in another account of Jesus' life as recorded in Luke. On another occasion, Jesus had been in Lazarus, Martha and Mary's home, and there we see...

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed, or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38 - 42)

Martha was serving then as well!

I bet she worked hard all day to make sure everything was just right. The aroma from the food must have filled the house and everyone was likely entering the home in anticipation of the meal. Then, once everyone was there, Martha began serving.

This was her thing. This is what she loved doing, and I bet she was happy and in great spirits as she served a dinner in honour of Jesus, who had raised her brother from the dead! This was truly a joyous event. I wonder if she was almost doing a dance as she served.

This is certainly different than the previous dinner isn't it? At the previous dinner, Martha was serving, but her attitude wasn't so great. She was all upset because Mary was not helping. Jesus had told Martha on that occasion, that just sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to Him was even better than serving, and that He would not take that away from Mary. I think she learned that day, that enjoying and worshiping Jesus was the truly important thing.

On this day, that is what she was doing. She was no longer just about all the details, and worried about everything being just right. On this day, her attitude was one of joy and worship. She served. She did attend to the details. She did everything she could to serve well. But it was not out of an anxious spirit. It was out of a spirit of joy and worship! She was worshipping extravagantly through her service!

The difference is all in the attitude, isn't it?

Martha served with an attitude of extravagant worship, focusing on Jesus, and not on what anyone else was doing or not doing.

- ❖ John also reports that Lazarus was reclining with Jesus at the table. A few days earlier Lazarus was a rotting corpse but now, because of Jesus Christ, he was alive, cured, and getting ready to feast with Jesus.

This will be our story someday. After we've died of whatever kills us, whether sickness, old age, some accident or whatever, we too will be cured and sitting with Jesus at the great banquet feast.

Can you imagine what dinner with Lazarus was like? The stories being told!

They were truly fellowshiping with Jesus! They were enjoying His presence. They were remembering all that Jesus had done for them. They were worshipping extravagantly as they recounted the difference Jesus made in their lives! They were honouring and worshipping Jesus!

Lazarus was reclining with Jesus and he was worshiping through fellowship, sharing conversation with his saviour and Lord. For Lazarus, Jesus Christ is literally the resurrection and the life. Just as Mary had done earlier, he simply sits and spends time in conversation with Jesus. This too is extravagant worship offered to Jesus.

Lazarus and his two sisters give Jesus a lavish, spare-no-expense banquet. Jesus is of great value to them. When they placed their wealth in scales alongside of Jesus, they quickly realised that Jesus was of infinite value. He was Lord of heaven and earth. He could raise the dead. He was their dear Friend and Saviour.

❖ Then enters Mary.

Into this scene where Martha is truly serving with a worshipful attitude, focusing on Jesus instead of the others around her, and where Lazarus and others are telling everyone how Jesus had radically changed their lives, Mary comes and does the totally unexpected.

Mary worshipped extravagantly by giving Jesus her treasured possession.

Mary truly loved Jesus. He had changed her life. He had saved her life by raising her brother, and through his teaching, she believed in him and had eternal life! She loved Jesus and was thankful for all He had done.

She loved Him for what He was about to do! This was just 6 days before He would give His life by dying on the cross for her sin.

Jesus had been talking about this over the past few months. The disciples didn't get it, even though He said it plainly. But Mary understood. She believed what He said. Jesus even said, she was doing this for His burial! She knew what was coming, and she loved Jesus so much for what He was about to do to give her forgiveness for sin, and eternal life!

So, she worshiped extravagantly!

What could she do to Jesus to show Him how she loved Him? She could think of nothing better than her life savings wrapped up in that bottle of perfume. She gave sacrificially! She gave extravagantly! He was going to give His life for hers! She wanted to give sacrificially her life for Him!

I love the way Jesus said it as recorded in Mark:

“She did what she could!” (Mark 14:8)

One trait Mary exhibits is that she couldn't care less what others think of her. She's not sure how much longer Jesus will be with them. There is so much talk of capturing Jesus and putting Him to death that she knows that His physical presence cannot last forever. She also realises how much of a risk it is for Jesus to come back to Bethany, the place where the Jews were in hot pursuit of Jesus just a short time before. She doesn't care about all that, she has Jesus with her now and she is going to show everyone that day and even us today what type of extravagant love Jesus is worthy of.

In six days, her Lord will be crucified and dead.

Why did she anoint Jesus' feet? It seems that what Mary was communicating with her action was that the lowest part of Jesus, His feet are worthy of deep affection.

Jesus' dirty; soiled, smelly feet are worthy of the most extravagant worship. The least of Jesus is worth the best we have. Why did she use her hair? The Bible speaks of a woman's hair as her most sacred possession. A woman's beauty and honour is in part at least to be found in her hair. I wonder today how much time, effort and money we spend on our hair! Mary wasn't just giving Jesus expensive perfume, she was taking her glory and turning her honour, her greatest possession, her hair, into a rag to glorify her Lord. Mary didn't care what others thought. Jesus was here now and that was enough for her.

What is the most extravagant gift you have given someone you love?

How do you show Jesus extravagant worship?

How are you going over and above in your affection for Jesus?

What is your life worth?

What is the freedom of forgiveness worth?

What is the peace and hope of eternal life worth?

What is a relationship with our God and Creator worth?

What is the worth you place on Jesus?

Is He worthy of extravagant worship or do you justify a more moderate, sensible worship?

Since He is worthy of all our affection and passionate worship how could you express this to Christ in a better way?

- ❖ As the wonderful aroma of that extravagant worship filled the house, we then see the next character enter the scene... Judas.

The first thing Judas points out is that the ointment is worth more than Jesus is. You see Judas also did a value assessment that day. In his calculations the ointment had a far better use than to be wasted on Jesus.

According to Judas the ointment was worth about a year's salary. John tells us that Judas wasn't the least bit concerned with the poor. What he really was sad about was that the perfume wasn't sold, and the money placed in his care, for he was a thief.

Then, Jesus speaks up in Mary's defence...

Notice why Jesus tells Judas to leave Mary alone...

- ❖ Judas leave her alone so that her passion and affection for Me will remain. Jesus realised that He could not allow anything to detract from His glory or to douse the flame of Mary's affection for Him.
- ❖ Leave her alone Judas because the poor will always be here. If you're so concerned about the poor, when I'm gone you can spend your entire life caring for the poor. In other words, they will still be around when Jesus is gone.
- ❖ Leave her alone Judas because she is only going to have Me like this for a little while longer. Let her keep her amazement and wonder because in a few short days her heart will be broken.

Judas would leave that feast and strike a deal with the religious leaders to betray Jesus. We read in Matthew

14 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests 15 and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. 16 From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. (Matthew 26:14–16)

Let’s do the maths...To Judas Jesus’ value was less than the perfume. He was upset that the expensive perfume was wasted on Jesus.

Jesus was worth less than a year’s wages. Now, Judas is cutting a deal with the Jews to turn Jesus over to them for 30 pieces of silver...worth about 1,000 bucks.

Matthew gives us these beautiful words at the end of his account of this incident:

12 When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13 Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.” (Matthew 26:12-13)

Indeed, today we tell the story of Mary in fulfilment of the prophetic words of Jesus.

❖ Now we consider the application to our own lives:

Am I like Judas in any way?

Do I hear the teachings of Jesus and walk away to live my life my way?

Do I remember what Jesus has done for me?

Do I consider others, or am I judgmental and condemning?

If so, let us confess that sin to Jesus, and ask Him to change us to be more like Mary, Martha and Lazarus!

<https://sermons.faithlife.com/sermons/506212-extravagant-worship>

https://gccwaverly.net/2017/03/01/sermon-extravagant-worship-and-infinite-value-john-121-11/#_ftn2