

Offering our Love to Christ

John 12:1-11

Pastor Paul Anthes

Introduction: Last time we looked at the hardened unbelief of the Pharisees. This is not an isolated human phenomenon. Men are like this right now in our own day. Such people refuse to consider the facts and when they are forced to face evidence that disproves what they want to believe they simply refuse to believe it or they seek actively to destroy that evidence. In the case of Christ, **He Was The Evidence**. He had been saying He was the one true creator God and now He has boldly proven it in public. He had to be killed for raising Lazarus from the dead while also saying....

John 11:25-26 ²⁵ "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.

So John brings chapter eleven to a close with these verses....

John 11:53-54 ⁵³ So from that day on they planned together to kill Him. ⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.

John resumes the account of Jesus' life several weeks after the raising of Lazarus. Jesus has been far from Jerusalem in Ephraim. His plan is to sacrifice His life for yours at Passover. **AT THIS PASSOVER!** Not before and not after. Jesus is in control of this and not evil and murderous men.

John 12:1-11 Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. ³ Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" ⁶ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. ⁷ Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. ⁸ "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me." ⁹ The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. ¹⁰ But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

These few verses give us a study in contrasts that is intended to help you decide how to prioritize your life. Mary and Judas could not be more different. Mary spends what she

possesses lavishly on someone she loves while Judas criticizes her and selfishly seeks to get what Mary is so willing to give away. The third person is of course, Jesus Himself. Mary wants to love Him, worship Him and care for His physical needs. She wants to bless Him while she still can. Judas resents her for this. He does not love Christ, does not worship Him and cares nothing for His comfort and physical needs. John even mentions [under inspiration] that Judas was already intending to betray Him.

None of us here would ever see ourselves as a Judas. But....do you or would you ever see yourself as a Mary? Would you give a treasure that you had saved for yourself to Christ as an act of worship and love? I am not asking you if you think Christ needs your money, your time, your gifts or anything else. That is not relevant to the question at hand and is often the ready excuse we have for not making any sacrifices for Christ. The question is one of love and worship and not need or want.

Let's look at the Timeline and then the people in this passage more closely and see what was driving their actions on that day.

The Timeline: This is the week leading up to Christ's Crucifixion. It is the Passover Week!

Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. [1]: Passover started with sunset on Friday evening. The people of Jesus' day counted the day you were on as one of the days. So six days before means that Jesus traveled to Bethany and arrived there on the Sunday evening before Passover began. Jesus would not have traveled on Saturday which was the Sabbath.

So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. [2]: Because He had been traveling all day and by now it was evening and a supper was prepared for Jesus. Martha was serving and Lazarus was one of the guests at the table with Him. This is how the account opens.

The People: Remember the many pilgrims that had come in from the countryside to purify themselves before the Passover began.

John 11:55-56 ⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶ So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?"

They were all actively keeping an eye out for Jesus and He was the topic of their discussions and debates. Would He even come to Passover at all knowing that the Jews were bent on killing Him as quickly as they could. So....when they learned that Jesus was approaching Bethany [just a short walk away] they headed there to see Him and also Lazarus. Word got around fast in those days.

John 12:9 ⁹ The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.

Lazarus:

John is making an important point. Lazarus was a big draw for the crowd. John mentions Lazarus twice in the first two verses and then two more times in verses 9 and 10. It seems that when Christ makes men alive and they have the aroma of Jesus on their lives they become a curiosity. Conversion is instantly like this. Everyone wonders what has happened to you. Religion is a pathetic explanation for life transformations, but it is the only one that makes sense to most people. The idea of new birth and a transformed heart and changed character must be explained in some way.

In the case of Lazarus....he was dead and now he is alive and everyone knows exactly what the explanation was. Jesus who says He is the Christ has made this four day dead man, suddenly alive. They want to see him. They are curious.

There is of course the other thing that happens when men are made alive by Christ. His enemies become our enemies as well. Not because we have become hostile toward anyone. It is quite the opposite. Converted men and woman, who have been brought from spiritual death to life are the enemy of the enemies of God and Christ. Verses 10 and 11 distill it all down pretty clearly.

John 12:10-11 ¹⁰ But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

Jesus tells us that when we love Him we are hated by the world. This is still true today. It is not acceptable to proclaim the true Christ. The one who claimed to be the only way back to God. The one who died in the place of sinners for love of men. That is hateful speech in the mind of many. Any call to morality on any level is hateful speech and any admonition to repentance implies that others are sinners and that too is hateful speech.

All Lazarus did was die and then was brought to life. Jesus did everything here and Lazarus did nothing and yet....He is hated for the sake of Christ.

John 15:18-19 ¹⁸ "If the world hates you, you know that it has **hated Me** before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

1 Peter 4:12-14 ¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though **some strange thing** were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Mary:

Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard [3a]: This would be about the size of a soda can and it cost what you make in one year. I think you can do the math on this. It was rare, costly, extravagant and precious.

It was most often used festively. It was an honor given to a special guest and was usually poured on the head.

And anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. [3b]: When we read John's account we assume that Jesus is eating at Martha and Mary's house, but in reality they were at Simon's place. This is why John makes a point of saying that Lazarus was also eating with Jesus that night. Let me read another account of this same incident from Mark.

Mark 14:3-10 ³ While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining *at the table*, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; *and* she broke the vial and poured it over His head.

Mary takes this entire bottle of oil and breaks the neck off of it so that she can get the contents out and then she pours it over his head. Calvin understands this to mean that the entire contents ran down over his body and clear to his feet. There was so much perfume that the entire house was filled with the fragrance. The crowd there was expecting Mary to take a few drops and put it on the forehead of an honored guest. They were shocked by her extravagance.

Mark 14:4-5 ⁴ But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted? ⁵ "For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and *the money* given to the poor." And they were scolding her.

John singles out Judas, but Mark tells us that there were a lot of people who agreed with him. Nobody there wanted to give a year's wages to the poor. They were just shocked that she wasted it on Jesus! That she would give so much of herself and her possessions to Jesus.....who doesn't really need anything. How do I know that giving to the poor was a ruse? Because.....

Mark 14:6-9 ⁶Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. ⁷ "For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. ⁸ "She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. ⁹ "Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

None of us will ever have the opportunity to serve Christ exactly this way. But there are opportunities nevertheless. It is not what she did that is the model to follow. It is the way in which she did it and the reason behind what she is doing. So here are three "intentions of the heart" that each of us can embrace:

Mary used what she had to serve Christ. She had \$30,000 worth of oil that she could have used for herself but decided to lavish it on Christ instead. She knows that Jesus is the Christ and that He owns everything, but she does not say the thing that many, many believers say....”what does God need my insignificant offering for?” So....if Christ needs nothing and owns everything then why is Mary giving Him this gift? She loves Him! She honors Him! This is the reason that makes our gifts pleasing to God.

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

And this is not just about money....oh no! For most people their time and affection is a close second to money. Can you imagine never giving anything at all to your kids or your spouse? Never having time to give them or some of your wealth to give them or some service for them? We share our food and money and time with people we love. Mary loves Christ!

Secondly, Mary makes her offering with a pure servants heart. She is acting with full knowledge of who she is and what she has to offer. Perhaps she did say, “what is my gift when given to the King of Creation, but it is what I have to give.” So as the oil drips down His body to his feet she does the unthinkable. She does what the lowest servant of the house does....what the slave does. She gets on her hands and knees and begins to wipe and clean His feet.

Thirdly, Mary acts as if she and Jesus were the only two people in the world. Any normal slave would have come with a towel and a basin to wash and dry Jesus’ feet, but she lets down her hair [something not done in public] and she dries up the perfume with her own hair. Her love and devotion for Jesus caused her not to care what others thought of her actions. She loves Christ openly with no regard for what others think of her sacrificial service.

Let me summarize here. Mary willing comes as a slave to offer a gift that has immense value to her to someone she loves with all her heart and soul and mind and strength. What can you give to Christ that He needs? NOTHING! Then why give? Because of reciprocal love. Christ has given His life for you! He has freed you from the slavery of sin and death to become His possession. If you love Christ you will find something to give to him. The greater your love the greater the value of the gift.

Giving will not cause you to love Christ BUT loving Christ will cause you to give.

After witnessing this disgusting display of love and heart devotion, Mark says.....

Mark 14:10 ¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them.

Judas:

Let’s go back to the account in John 12:4 now.

But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" [4,5]: If Jesus was going to approve of throwing away a year's wages so that some lowly woman could express her love and humility then it was clear that there was no money to be made here. Judas acts upon what many others thought. "There is nothing in this world to be gained for me by following and serving Jesus."

Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. [7]: He was already intending to betray Jesus, but this have another incentive. He could get some of the money that he might have been able to pilfer from the bag if it were not for this foolish worshiper of Christ.

Jesus:

Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial [7]: Jesus will not have any of this phony criticism. Rather than sell it she should keep it for his burial. Mark adds understanding to the entire event.

Mark 14:6-8 ⁶Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. ⁷ "For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. ⁸ "She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.

"For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me." [8]: You guys do not love the poor and you certainly don't love me." Mary is making you look bad! That is why you are trying to pretend like you would have done something for the poor with the money. This is the same attitude that drives those who believe in unrestricted abortion to work tirelessly for children's rights. It is a ruse! A diversion of guilt! We love children!!! See!

Sacrificial giving or service makes others look bad...but nothing makes people more uncomfortable than sacrificial love for and obedience to God. The man who asks "how little of my life can I keep for myself," will always make the one who asks "how little of my life can I give" very uncomfortable.

CONCLUSION: This is an account of one woman's love for Christ. It is for us today. We all have time, talent and some money. The amount of these things is totally irrelevant to the question at hand....which is..... "Do you love Christ enough to give Him any of what you have?"

Mary is a study of the heart. She is the exact opposite of Judas and the Pharisees in every way. Of them Jesus said,

Mark 7:6 ⁶ "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

We have previously observed that service to Christ is done today through service to His other children. It is carried out most perfectly between a husband and wife.

Wives....when you serve your husband and children sacrificially without complaining you are serving Christ and He is deeply pleased.

Ephesians 5:32 ³² This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Men when you serve your wives by cherishing them and sacrificially loving them you serve Christ. When you do everything you can to make your wife succeed in her role and not blame her in her weakness....you serve Christ.

Ephesians 5:25-27 ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

A second place where we offer our sacrificial love to Christ is in the local church. Christ gave the church so that we would be able to fulfill our love for Him....Jesus said....

John 14:15 ¹⁵ "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

And Christ was very clear about those commandments. They are not a code of rules that we can keep even if we have to stomp all over everyone else in our lives to do it. No...they are much more intimate and vital than that.

John 15:12-14 ¹² "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³ "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ "You are My friends if you do what I command you.

The New Testament is awash in instructions about how to love one another. The Church is the venue for doing it. If you are ignorant of the Bible and absent from the Body then the opportunity to bring the gift of sacrificial love to Christ is almost nonexistent!

From prison Paul begs the Ephesians and us today to love Christ by caring for one another. Christ loved all His people including you in your sin. A life that is given to Christ will do the same. Paul calls it a worthy walk.

Ephesians 4:1-6 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.