

Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. (John 12:3)

Merciful God, you have done so much for much for us that we could never repay you. We thank you for the opportunities we have to show your love in our lives. Help us to honor and praise you, even in a world that does not recognize you. May we use all that we have to serve you and give you glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

After Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, he was invited to a special celebration dinner by the man's sisters, Mary and Martha. That night Mary honored Jesus by anointing his feet with expensive oil. But not everyone watching approved of what she did.

Read: John 12:1-11

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

The last of his seven great signs in the Gospel of John — the miracle bringing Lazarus from death to life — became the catalyst for the events that would lead to Jesus' own death and resurrection.

The setting of today's story might be called the Second-to-the-last Supper, taking place just prior to his entry into Jerusalem. Here, Mary not only expressed her gratitude to Jesus for what he had done, but as Jesus said, the anointing also foreshadowed his death and burial, which would soon take place.

It would not be long until Jesus was betrayed by Judas, arrested, and taken into custody. He was brought before authorities and sentenced to death.

Discussion Questions

1. From what you read in this lesson from John, what do you think *motivated* the good deed Mary did for Jesus? Have you ever had a gift that you really *wanted* to give someone? What motivated you?
2. What inside information are we given about Judas in these verses? How do his actions here foreshadow what he would later do in Jerusalem?
3. Despite his greedy motives, do you think Judas had a legitimate point? Was this a waste? Or is Jesus saying here that it is not important to care for the poor? What *is* Jesus saying?
4. Think about that phrase, "You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me" (v. 8). In our lives, how do we show our love to Jesus? Compare with Matthew 25:44-45.
5. In verse 7, Jesus says Mary had this oil "for the day of my burial." How does Mary's anointing of Jesus in this story point us to the true mission of the Messiah (the Anointed One)?
6. How is the dinner in Bethany (vv. 1-8) contrasted with the gathering of the chief priests in Jerusalem (vv. 9-11)? What feelings did the raising of Lazarus prompt in the religious authorities? What did they plan to do in response?
7. Read Psalm 45:6-15. In biblical days, why would anointing with oil and perfumes be associated with kingship and royalty? How does this Bible passage foreshadow the gifts the wise men gave baby Jesus?
8. Psalm 45:15 says that the princess will "enter the palace of the king" with joy and gladness. How does this foreshadow our eternal future with Jesus?