

Title: Jesus Deserves Your Best


Object: Something Precious

Scripture: **-S-** Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. (John 12:3 NIV)

This ring is one of my most prized possessions. I do not know how much it is worth, but it is of great value to me because my wife gave it to me. In fact, it is dear to me because it is a symbol of your unending love for me. I would never consider selling this ring because it is worth far more than money.


If I were to ask you to name your most prized possession, what would it be? To some of you it might be a stuffed animal you have had since you were small or a pocketknife or a doll or a cowboy hat. If a friend came to your home to visit would you give him your most prized possession to show how much you love them? This is exactly what a woman named Mary in our Bible story today.

One day Jesus went to the village of Bethany. It was where a man named Lazarus lived with his sisters Martha and Mary. Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and he was alive again. They planned a very nice dinner for Jesus at the house of Simon. **-S-** Martha was serving and Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to Him teach. As she was sitting at the feet of Jesus, Mary did a very unusual thing. **S-** She took a bottle of very expensive perfume and began to wash the feet of Jesus with it. Then she dried his feet with her hair. The Bible tells us that the entire house was filled with the sweet smell of perfume.

 One of Jesus' disciples, whose name was Judas, was very upset by what Mary did. He said, "What a waste! This perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor. It was worth a year's wages." Judas wasn't really worried about the poor. The Bible tells us that he was worried about the money because he often stole money from the treasury for himself.

Jesus came to Mary's defense and answered Judas. "Leave her alone. She has kept this perfume for the day of my burial."

Jesus said that because he knew that it was only a few days before he would be crucified and buried. Mary wanted to give Jesus the very best that she had to show her love for him. That perfume was the very best thing that Mary had to offer.

 Jesus has given us the most wonderful gift imaginable -- the gift of everlasting life. It is free, but it was a very costly gift. It cost Jesus his life.

What can we give to Jesus to show our love for him? I don't think He wants a diamond ring, a stuffed animal, a doll, or an autographed baseball. I think He wants us to give Him our very best. He wants us to give him our life!

Dear Heavenly Father, You sent Jesus to earth to give His life so that we might once again be called your children. This truly is an amazing love. May we give our lives in return back to Jesus to show our love for Him. Father, God, let us live for Jesus.

READING – John 12:1-11

-S- Love and Hate

October 19, 2014

John 12:1-11

Sermon #66

When God came to earth in human form, as Jesus Christ, it marked the dividing point of all history. The birth of Jesus divides the calendar **-S-** B.C. meaning “Before Christ” and **-S-** A.D. “anno Domini” meaning “in the year of the Lord.” It is also the dividing point of all human destinies – **-S-** Jesus invokes love or hate, devotion or rejection, worship or blasphemy and faith or unbelief. How people see Jesus and respond to Him divides the sheep from the goats, believers from unbelievers or those with eternal life in God and those eternally separated from God.

In John’s story here in chapter twelve Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Judas, the large crowd of Jews and the chief priests all responded to Jesus differently and five different reactions are seen; **-S-** Martha responded with **sincere service**, **-S-** Mary with **self-sacrificing service**, **-S-** Judas with **self-serving** interest, **-S-** the crowd of Jewish people with **shallowness**, and **-S-** the chief priests with **scheming**.

Read with me beginning at the beginning with verse 1, **-S-** “**Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.**” No other week in history is like this week. The week of creation is important. The week Jesus was born is important. This first week of Christ’s ministry is important. However, these weeks do not compare with the seven days, which the Apostle John and all the other gospel accounts end with. Here in chapter twelve John begins his narration of this final week and what follows and it will comprise nearly half of his total gospel account. Mark dedicates almost 40% of his gospel to these events, Matthew over 30% and Luke 25%. **-S-**

This last week of Jesus' earthly life and ministry includes the **-S-** anointing of Jesus in Bethany, **-S-** His entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, **-S-** the cursing of the fig tree, **-S-** the Olivet discourse recorded in the other three gospel accounts, **-S-** John's recording of Jesus' final instructions to His disciples, **-S-** the Last Supper, **-S-** Jesus' arrest, **-S-** trials and crucifixion. **-S-** The week ends with Jesus' burial by Joseph of Arimathea aided by Nicodemus. **-S-** Then the climax of all these events and of all history happen three days later - Jesus' resurrection.

We begin this week that changes all history in Bethany with a supper banquet.

-S- Sincere Service

At the supper banquet we observe the first act of service. Reading verse 2, **-S-** "So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table with Him.*" In the last verse of the last chapter we read, **-S-**⁵⁷ "Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He (*Jesus*) was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him." But instead of turning Jesus in like a common criminal hunted for by the authorities, His friends in Bethany host a wonderful supper in His honor. The Greek word used here for **-S-** supper is **-S-** **δειπνον** "*deipnon*" means a banquet, feast or supper. Supper was the main meal of the day and we can surmise it was designed to be lengthy with time for conversation and fellowship. We know from Matthew and Mark's accounts that this meal was held at Simon the leper's house. We also know from the scriptures that people would not have come to a leper's home for a banquet, so we are led to believe that since there were no known cures for leprosy that Jesus had at some earlier time, cured Simon from leprosy. Lazarus was also a guest of honor for Jesus had raised him from the dead. Martha is being Martha serving

and caring for the guests and especially Lazarus and Jesus. **-S-** Martha served Jesus because of her love for Him and a sincere desire to honor Him in the best way she knew how. Even though Mary overshadows Martha's sincere service to Jesus, her care for Christ shows her love and desire to please the Lord. Her sister Mary was where she often was, at the feet of Jesus.

-S- Self-Sacrificing Service

-S-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.” A pound was a Roman measure equivalent to about 12 ounces today and that was a large amount of perfume. Today 12 ounces of Spikenard oil perfume costs between \$350 and \$400. Even though that is a great deal of money and a sacrifice - it is far more important for you and me to understand that Mary knew Jesus was about to die. **-S-** Mary understood Jesus was preparing to go to the cross and as far as we can tell at this point, she is the only one who knew. As Jesus and the disciples were walking He told them, **-S-**³³“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again.”(Mark 10:33-34) We know from Jesus' conversation with the disciples in the Upper Room that they did not grasp what Jesus was saying, Mary knew. She now breaks her box of precious perfume to show her Lord that she understood. Mary, knowing that Jesus would be martyred by those who oppose God, had been saving the nard oil perfume for Jesus' funeral. **-S-** How did Mary understand while those walking daily with Jesus failed? James Montgomery Boice wrote, **-S-** “By Mary being often in the place

where we find her now. Where? She is at the feet of Jesus, anointing him and wiping his feet with her hair. Where is she always?" Mary is at the feet of Jesus listening and serving. If you are struggling with spiritual understanding it may be because you have not spent enough time at the feet of Jesus.

-S- Where are the feet of Jesus today? They are found in two places: first the written **-S-** Word of God, the Scriptures and second in **-S-** prayer, listening to our Lord. To humble oneself by sitting at the feet of a person is to submit to them and their teaching. Studying the Bible just as God inspired it is to sit at the feet of God. Mary understood Jesus' present and coming sorrow and she wanted to identify with Jesus' sorrow just as she had identified with the joy Jesus gave to others. The first words recorded in the scriptures by Mary are, **-S-** "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." (John 11:32) On the other hand the first recorded words in the scriptures by Judas were in stark contrast to Mary's.

-S- Self-Serving

-S- ⁴"But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him (Jesus), said, ⁵"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" These first words of Judas expose the ambition and self-focus that ruled his heart. Judas had come into Jesus' band of disciples expecting Jesus to usher in a new political and earthy kingdom in which he would be rewarded with title, position and power. But now Judas' dream of power and wealth had turned into ashes and this caused his heart to turn to stone and blinded him to the real purpose for which God to come to earth in the form of man, that being for the salvation of mankind. Judas was not concerned about the poor but about his lost opportunity to steal from the moneybox he managed. So persuasive was Judas'

expression of self-righteous indignation that Matthew and Mark record that people in the crowd joined in the protest against wasting the nard. As John MacArthur wrote, **-S-** “Judas is the greatest example of missed opportunity in history. He lived day in and day out with Jesus Christ...for three years. Yet in the end Judas rejected Him *and* betrayed Him...” In his writing many years afterwards, the Apostle John makes a comment on the divinely revealed motive of Judas, **-S-**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.” If John did not know at the time what was in Judas’ heart, he had come to know it through time. However, Jesus, God incarnate, knew all. Jesus looked at Judas and said, **-S-**⁷ “Let her (Mary) 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.” Friedrich Nietzsche restated the meaning behind what Jesus said to Judas, **-S-** “What upsets me is not that you lied to me, but that from now on I can no longer believe you.” You see Judas was a liar, but the other disciples had not recognized who he was yet.

Jesus was not saying that He or His followers should not help the poor and be charitable. He was challenging not only Judas, but for all the disciples to keep their priorities straight, for they had been called to plant Jesus’ church. Jesus would soon be departing and He wanted them focused to the mission He was giving them. They would be taking His gospel and salvation message to the people. This is our mission today – sharing Jesus with all who will listen.

-S- Shallowness

In fact, the crowds were already coming but for the wrong reason. Verse nine reads, **-S-** “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." The people were not coming for the hope and salvation Jesus had come to earth to offer people, but to see Lazarus who had been raised from the dead. It was like going to the circus to see some show like the breaded lady. They were curious and it gave them something out of their normal routine to do. **-S-** Jesus might be a miracle worker, but they did not see Him for what He was – God incarnate. It is the same today; people see Jesus as a wise teacher or even a prophet, but not for who He truly is. This crowd was not hostile toward Jesus as the chief priest's were but this, too, would soon change. In John chapter 19 it is recorded just how the masses of people changed as they shouted to Pilate, **-S-** *"Away with Him (Jesus), away with Him, crucify Him!"* (John 19:15) They had become blinded and an enemy of God just as the chief priests had become. We stand as a small band of believers in a world that is in love with their sin and that hate Jesus. **-S-** Together we can stand strong for the cause of our Lord Jesus, but it becomes almost impossible to stand alone.

-S- Scheming

The fact that large crowds were leaving Jerusalem to see Lazarus and Jesus had not escaped the notice of the Jewish leaders. Bethany was only a short walk of about 1 mile east of the edge of Jerusalem. Reading verses 10 and 11, **-S-**¹⁰ *"But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; ¹¹because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus."* The chief priests wanted not only Jesus dead but also Lazarus. Lazarus was living proof of Jesus' power over not only nature, like water turned to wine, but over death itself, which is power only possessed by God. **-S-** Remember the chief priests included a large number of Sadducees who had been teaching there was no resurrection of the

dead. Lazarus' resurrection shattered their teaching and their reputation as spiritual leaders. By killing Lazarus, the people, as they always do, would soon forget. Isn't it interesting that the chief priest Caiaphas had said, **S** "that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." (John 11:50) Caiaphas said by killing Jesus the nation would be saved. Now the killing has expanded to eliminating two people. **S** Isn't it the very nature of lies and evil to have to expand to cover the first lies. This is still true. Lying for personal gain seems to be a way of life for many people. We lie at the drop of a hat. The book **S** *The Day America Told the Truth* written in 1991 by James Paterson says that **S** 91 percent of those surveyed lie routinely about matters they consider trivial, and **S** 36 percent lie about important matters; **S** 86 percent lie regularly to parents, **S** 75 percent to friends, **S** 73 percent to siblings, and **S** 69 percent to spouses. As the men read last week in our study of the Holiness of God by R.C. Sproul, **S** "Sinful people are not comfortable in the presence of the holy." (Pg.69) This is true at both the time of chapter twelve and today. No one can be truly neutral when it comes to Jesus. As Jesus said, **S** "He who is not with Me is against Me..." (Luke 11:23) People all around us today react to Jesus as in this story: **S** like Martha and Mary they love and serve Him or **S** people are indifferent towards Christ like the crowds or **S** like Judas and the chief priests they oppose and hate Jesus. Everyone takes a stand and that stand determines each person's eternal destiny. Salvation is found in Christ alone. You have been graced by God and called – do you not feel the burden to tell others about Jesus?

As Sproul continued in our men's study saying, **S** "The incarnate Christ is no longer walking the earth. He has ascended into heaven. No one sees Him or speaks audibly with Him in the flesh today. Yet the threatening power of His

holiness is still felt.” (Pg. 79) Today we have the same mission entrusted to His disciples. Jesus’ words instruct us to, **-S-** “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (Mk 16:15)

-S- Serving in Submission

If you, my beloved, are not a blessing to other people, if you see that your life does not draw others to Jesus, then do what Mary did. Get down on your knees before Jesus and give Him all that you are. If you desire to hoard what you have, you will not bless others and you will lose what you are so tightly holding on to. We seek God’s blessing to fulfill the promise God made to Abraham, **-S-** “...I will bless you...so you shall be a blessing.” (Gen. 12:2) Give freely of your life and possessions and then you will bless others and you will be blessed. Choose this day to serve your Lord.