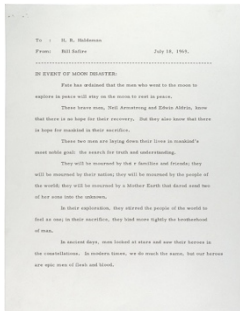


PREPARATION FOR RESURRECTION DAY
JOHN 12:1-11

Some of the great adventures in the history of the world are the trips men have taken to the **moon**. While we look back at the ventures with a sense of awe because of the technology that was used to get astronauts there — the quests were filled with much uncertainty. There was so much uncertainty that prior to the safe arrival on and departure of Apollo 11 from the moon, presidential speech writer [William Safire](#) wrote a **short memo** to be read by President Nixon should astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin become stranded on the moon, unable to return to earth:



Fate has ordained that the men who went to the moon to explore in peace will stay on the moon to rest in peace. These brave men, Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin, know that there is no hope for their recovery. But they also know that there is hope for mankind in their sacrifice.

These two men are laying down their lives in mankind's most noble goal: the search for truth and understanding....

The men were graced to make it safely there and home. But we also appreciate that preparations had been made for every eventuality, including the possibility that they might not come home.

Of far greater significance is the preparation that Christ made for His crucifixion and resurrection. One week prior to His resurrection, and a few days prior to His crucifixion He was widely celebrated as the Messiah as He entered Jerusalem. That was a public proclamation and a public preparation for the following events. But one day prior to that grand entry, Jesus also prepared His followers for what was coming when He shared a meal with the 12 and a few others. In the privacy of that home, preparations for His crucifixion were underway as Mary anointed Jesus with “burial oil” — and along with that preparation, hearts were being exposed about how people perceived Christ. One writer has said:

The account of the anointing is at the heart a tale of contrasts: on the one hand is Mary's lavish devotion to Jesus, on the other the looming prospect of Judas's betrayal of his master. In another contrast, the man whom Jesus had raised from the dead, Lazarus, takes part in the dinner, while Jesus himself is anointed for burial. This is the time for devotion or antagonism toward Jesus to come to the fore. The narrative enters a crucial phase.”
[Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, 136.]

Along with all the other details of the story and the preparations that are made for Christ's crucifixion, we see what people really thought about Jesus. Here is the lesson of the story we want to be attentive to today:

WHEN OUR LIVES INTERSECT WITH CHRIST, THE CHARACTER OF OUR WORSHIP IS QUICKLY REVEALED.

In the brief account of Jesus' anointing, we see six pictures of varied responses to Christ.

Here are six pictures of people who worshipped in a variety of ways, each revealing the condition of their hearts toward God. Some were devoted to Him. Others were distracted away from Him. *All* were worshippers. But some were devoted and true worshippers while others were distracted and false worshippers.

As we consider these responses, we might ask ourselves, "What is the state of *my* worship of Christ? Am I devoted? (How deep is my devotion?) Or am I distracted? (What is keeping me from joyful devotion?)"

1. Martha: A Picture of **GRATEFUL SERVICE** of Christ (v. 2)
2. Mary: A Picture of **PASSIONATE DEVOTION** to Christ (v. 3)
3. Judas: A Picture of **ANGRY RESENTMENT** Against Christ (vv. 4-6)
4. The Twelve: A Picture of **WAVERING SENTIMENTS** for Christ (vv. 7-8)
5. The Crowds: A Picture of **CURIOUS BELIEF** in Christ (vv. 9-11)
6. Lazarus: A Picture of **TRANSFORMING GRACE** from Christ

CONTEXT (v. 1):

- ✓ **six days before the Passover** = Sat. evening before triumphal entry — “thank you” meal for **Lazarus ...raised from the dead** (despite warnings of religious leaders in **11:57**).
- ✓ Jesus is back in Bethany after being in Ephraim (11:54) and then Galilee (Mt. 19:1ff).
- ✓ John is not clear where the dinner is hosted (**they made Him supper**, v. 2), but Mt. 26:6 and Mk. 14:3 are clear that **Simon the leper** hosted. Christ likely healed him so he was no longer a leper (could not have otherwise hosted a meal — no one would have come).
- ✓ Given that Martha and Mary were involved in serving, they may have helped Simon as hosts.
- ✓ At least 17 (Jesus, 12, Simon, & Lazarus and sisters) were at the meal. It was probably a typical feast setting around three tables and couches for reclining (perpendicular to each other in an “open-ended square”). They would eat with right hand while leaning on left arm.
- ✓ A servant would wash feet upon entry and then often anoint guests’ heads with olive oil @ meal.
- ✓ What was enacted at that meal was similar to what is anticipated about God’s care of His people: “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows” (Ps. 23:5)

1. Martha: A Picture of GRATEFUL SERVICE of Christ (v. 2)

- **Martha was serving** = we see Martha 3x in the NT, and twice she is serving. But on the first occasion, her service was a source of complaint and resentment (**Lk. 10:40** — **tell [Mary] to help me!**)
- Something seems to have changed now. She’s still serving, but now it appears to be with gratitude. She is not “the same old Mary.” What changed?
 - ✓ In Luke 10, Jesus had gracious words of correction — **you are worried and bothered about so many things, but only one thing is necessary, but Mary has chosen the good part...** And she changed.
 - ✓ Notice the one other time when Martha is highlighted — after Lazarus died (**Jn. 11:20-21**). In Luke Martha was serving and Mary was at His feet; here Mary is at home (disconsolate?) and Martha went to find Jesus. Martha is the one demonstrated trust and dependence on the Lord. It seems she learned.
 - ✓ And notice that in this passage, while she is serving, she doesn’t complain and she isn’t rebuked.
 - ✓ Her service is appropriate — she is not serving from compulsion but from delight and gratitude.
 - ✓ This is a reminder as well that following Christ means serving Christ. He is the Master. We are servants and we demonstrate genuine faith when we graciously serve (**Mk. 9:35; 10:43**). And that service means an end to ourselves (and our demands, **Jn. 12:24-26**), though the life of serving Christ also leads to a life of honor from the Father (**Jn. 12:26b**).
- The goal is not service, but service that emanates from a heart of worship, gratitude, faith, and love.

- Jesus prepared Martha for His final days not by telling her not to serve, but by compelling her to worshipful gratitude. Do you want to stimulate devotion and love for Christ? Cultivate worship and gratitude. You will never be devoted to Christ if you are convinced that He has been less than favorable toward you. True gratitude will always overflow into genuine love.

2. Mary: A Picture of **PASSIONATE DEVOTION** to Christ (v. 3)

- Verse 3 is the center of the story; it is not the longest part, but it is the most important part of the story.
- During the meal, Mary used **a pound** (12 oz. today) bottle of perfume (**pure**/undiluted) for anointing Jesus' head (which Mt. & Mk both tell us) and His feet. She likely started pouring at His head and then His body and ended by anointing His **feet** as well.
 - ✓ Anointing *with oil* would have been common in this context, but usually on the head; for Mary to anoint **His feet** also was to take a place of humility.
 - ✓ This perfume, made from nard plant and imported from India would now have value \$2500+/oz.
 - Judas noted that it cost **300 denarii** (v. 5) — a daily laborer's wage (\$50K today??).
 - It was so expensive because the perfume was extracted from the plant and it took a great many plants to yield even a small amount of perfume, and it was imported from a great distance.
 - The current most expensive perfume in the world is Shumukh, by Nabeel. It is made with rose and sandalwood and costs more than €1.5 million euros. But there are some packaging costs: the bottle is made with 3,500 diamonds and pearls, 2.5kg of 18 karat gold and 5.9kg of silver.
 - One of the most expensive perfumes (without an accessorized bottle) is Chanel No. 5 at \$3500.
 - The perfume Mary used would certainly have been competitive with these current perfumes.
 - ✓ What is extraordinary is not the value of the perfume nor how she acquired it, but how she used it.
 - ✓ Mark tells us that she not only broke the seal, but the neck, meaning it *all* had to be used immediately.
 - ✓ Her lavish gift expressed her lavish love and gratitude to Christ — “unrestrained love.”
 - ✓ While Judas was “appalled” at the extravagant expenditure (v. 5), the others noticed as well.
 - ✓ But that might not have been the most extreme thing Mary did: having anointed Christ, she then **wiped His feet with her hair**; in that culture, hair was a woman's glory and crown (1 Cor. 11:15).
 - Both times this anointing is mentioned, the drying with her hair is also mentioned (11:2; 12:3).
 - The “dishonor” was extreme: to let down her hair in public was considered disgraceful; to use the hair to dry something was a further disgrace, and to touch the feet was the worst disgrace.
 - ... With her most valued possession, she anointed his feet.
 - ... With her most honorable personal quality, she dried his feet.
 - ... There was no expense too great to pay or no service too menial to do to express her love.
 - These acts combine to picture one who gave liberally, sacrificially, passionately, and humbly (contrast that with the 12 just a few days later, waiting for someone else to serve, 13:5ff).
 - Her love for Jesus Christ overflowed into an act of extravagant worship.

- By recounting this astounding act, we have a picture of one who is compelled by Christ's love (2 Cor. 5:11ff).
 - ✓ Her devotion to Christ meant that she was unrestrained in her devotion to Him. After time, the tendency of love is to become sensible, practical, reasoned, calculated — cost has been counted.
 - ✓ There is nothing of that in Mary's act of love — while planned, her act was not "sensible..."
 - ✓ Genuine love gives, no matter the cost, and finds joy in paying the cost (2 Sam. 24:24).
 - ✓ Are you extravagant in your love for Christ? Are you passionate in your love for X? (Rev. 2:4)
 - ✓ I define love as "a commitment of my will *and affections* to your needs..." We often are willing to commit our will ("I will serve you..."), but do our affections (desires) demonstrate a joyful desire to serve and give? That's what is demonstrated by Mary.
 - ✓ Let your love for Christ overflow into a great act of devotion and humble sacrifice...What extravagant thing have you done, or can you do for Christ that will demonstrate your love for Him?

"[Love] cares nothing about expense. It cares nothing about what other people think. It cares only about the object of that love. Worship is what naturally proceeds from a heart that has been transformed by love."
 [Stedman, 327.]

- John also observes that the house was filled with the fragrance — certainly from Christ, but also from Mary who walked about the house and filled the house with His fragrance that was passed to her. It was apparent to all who smelled her that she had been with Jesus. Is that true of us (2 Cor. 2:15-16)?
- One final observation: both Mt. and Mk. say Jesus said that wherever the gospel would be preached that Mary's action would be spoken of in memory of her. The fragrance of her life is still detected. Great sacrifices for Christ leave a memorable legacy for our families, *and* for ages of believers to come.

3. Judas: A Picture of **ANGRY RESENTMENT** Against Christ (vv. 4-6)

- **But Judas** — this is one of the most tragic contrasting ("but") statements in the Bible. In her love for Christ, Mary honors One who is about to die; in his greed, Judas brings about his own death. [Westcott]
- Every time Judas's name appears, his betrayal is mentioned; what he did was so abhorrent, it becomes his defining act and even part of his "character" or "nature." To be a Judas is to be a betrayer.
- John particularly builds a case against him:
 - ✓ He was a devil (6:70-71)
 - ✓ He was an outwardly moral person (12:5)
 - ✓ He was a selfish thief (12:6)
 - ✓ He was a hypocrite (13:18)
 - ✓ He was the son of perdition (17:12) [Gangel, 232.]
- And all this was done as **one of His disciples** — he heard all the teaching, saw all the miracles, went on every trip, and was even entrusted with responsibility. And he was wholly unmoved by Christ.
 - ✓ It is possible to be near to Christ without belonging to Christ (12:42-43; Mt. 7:21-23; 25:11ff).

- ✓ Bible history and church history are filled with people who were like Judas (2 Tim. 4:10; 1 Jn. 2:19). And Charles Templeton (Graham's co-worker) and Joshua Harris and Jen Hatmaker and...
- ✓ Just because you are in this church doesn't mean you are in Christ. Please be sure that you have saving faith and not a false and rejecting faith. You must believe (Jn. 3:14-16, 36).
- Notice also that this betrayal was not impulsive, but part of a long-standing plan (*he was intending...*)
 - ✓ The timing of betrayal was triggered by his inability to get his hands on part of this money (Mt. 26:14)
 - ✓ He had a greedy desire, didn't get it, *became angry and resentful*, and then betrayed Christ. (What do you do when you don't get what you want? That reveals the real nature of your inner life.)
 - ✓ He attempted to shield others from the reality of his heart (v. 5). He was even convincing (Mk. 14:5). But he was only a thief wanting to indulge his fleshly desires (v. 6). His motives were common, but he they took him to an uncommon place, and he is still paying an infinite and eternal cost.
 - He is aware of the needs of the poor (v. 5), but he is **not concerned** for them (v. 6). "Like the hired hand, he cares nothing for the sheep (10:13)." [Carson]
 - His only concern is how to indulge the flesh. He would not sacrifice for others. All others were used only as a means to indulge himself (his stealing was regular — **used to** = regularly stole).
 - He did not "lose his character" in this episode; this episode revealed his lost character.
 - ✓ From a human perspective, his betrayal was rooted in unchecked lusts — he allowed the lust of the flesh to keep Him from seeing Christ. Our world glitters, but it's fool's gold. Don't be distracted from the reality of the limitless treasures found in Christ (Mt. 13:44-46).

4. The Twelve: A Picture of **WAVERING SENTIMENTS** for Christ (vv. 7-8)

- John doesn't mention it, but Mark 14 tells us there were other disgruntled voices about Mary's action, and Matthew 26:8 tells us the other indignant, displeased voices were the *disciples*!
- For all their devotion to Christ, the disciples, until after the resurrection, regularly wavered in faith.
 - ✓ This is a reminder about the difficulty of progressive sanctification.
 - ✓ When you fail, don't see it as final — there is forgiveness for every sin. Confess it and appropriate the grace of Christ to live like Him.
 - ✓ The Lord knows we are frail; while He demands perfection, because He knows we can't, He provided the perfection we need in Christ. Once in Christ, our concern is direction, not perfection.
- Christ had repeatedly given hints about His impending death, but apparently only Mary, who had been **keeping this perfume** to prepare for His burial, apparently understood what was going to occur soon.
- One exhortation (v. 8) — **you do not always have me** = "*The time for actions of devotion toward Him is much shorter than those at the table think.*" [Morris]
 - ✓ Jesus was not being dismissive of the need of the **poor** whom **you always have...** He wasn't Judas. But He was asserting that there were ongoing opportunities with them and limited ones with Him.
 - ✓ There was a small window of time for unique acts of love for Christ and the disciples missed this one.

In their wavering faith, they missed a special opportunity for worship.

- ✓ Time is short. While Mary's act cannot be replicated today, there still is much that we can do that will honor Him (and many of those things may not be able to be replicated either).
- ✓ We will waver in our faith when we believe we have a long time. We don't. I'm closer to my death than I am my birth, and have become aware that life contains a series of many "last things" — including last opportunities (walking out of hospital rooms after last prayers...)
- ✓ Don't be distracted from Christ by the presumption of an abundance of time. We don't have it.
- ✓ The time to cultivate affection, love, and passion for Christ is *now*.
- ✓ Don't waste your time and don't waste your opportunities to serve Christ (Eph. 5:15-16).

5. The Crowds: A Picture of CURIOUS BELIEF in Christ (vv. 9-11)

- **Large crowd** (v. 9) is a reference to the "common people" — the everyday man. But note that they are **of the Jews**, which is almost always a reference to those who were opposed to Christ.
- These may have initially believed, but they were not significantly different from other crowds — they began with an initially curious faith but ended in rejection.
 - ✓ The crowd in 6:34, 52, 60 rejected Christ in **6:66**.
 - ✓ The Jews in 8:31 had their true hearts revealed in **8:37, 40, 44**.
 - ✓ This crowd (cf. vv. 13, 17) was just as fickle — cf. **12:37**; 19:6, 14-15.
- Not all "belief" is belief. (**Believe** is a key word in John [98x]; but unbelief is alluded to 121x in chs. 1-12! It is even one of the opening themes of the book — **1:11**.)
- There is a hint of that here — they came **not for Jesus' sake only**, but to see **Lazarus**. They made Lazarus and Jesus "equals" so that they both were only the latest carnival curiosity.
- That their faith was lacking is evident in response of Sanhedrin, who were angered by the **belief** of some so they wanted to **put Lazarus to death**. Such faith is no faith.
- The crowds looked at Christ, but they did not see Him — they were distracted by curiosities — "please take away our hunger, sickness, and political oppression." They wanted Jesus for temporal ease and "blessings," but nothing else. Not much has changed in 2000 years.
- All men will be judged to be one of two kinds of people — those who are devoted to Christ or distracted and uncaring about Him — and those who affirm curiosity without transformation, will not be called His.

6. Lazarus: A Picture of TRANSFORMING GRACE from Christ

- Here is everything that the NT records about what Lazarus said or did:
 - ✓ He got sick (11:1-2)
 - ✓ He died (11:14)
 - ✓ He was resuscitated (11:43)

- ✓ He ate a meal with Jesus (12:2).
- ✓ No accomplishments. No words of wisdom. No questions or conversations. Nothing.
- There is nothing about Lazarus except picture of the great power of the gospel in X's resurrection.
- Whatever he said, it evidently was compelling because some people *were believing* (vv. 11, 17).

"Lazarus had become Jesus' star witness. I find that amazing because as I read the Gospels, I cannot find anything outstanding about Lazarus. It seems he never said anything worth recording, and perhaps he never did anything worth recording. Yet he ended up being one of the great witnesses for Christ. Why? The answer is not in what Lazarus did for Jesus. It is in what Jesus did for Lazarus." [Hughes, 295.]

- When you look at Lazarus, see him as a man prepared, transformed, and used by Christ.

CONCLUSION: One day after this meal, Jesus was celebrated as He went into Jerusalem. Four days after that He washed the disciples' feet in the Upper Room. And the day after that He was tried and crucified. And two days later, He was resurrected. Then He appeared to some of the disciples, and a few days later (a week?) He met with the disciples in Galilee and publicly restored Peter by asking three questions (Jn. 21:15-17): "***Do you love Me?***" It was a question that articulated what was exposed in the meal at Simon's house.

Jesus was not asking Peter for comparisons with others; He was asking about the genuineness of Peter's love. It was a good question for Peter, a good question at Simon's house, and it is a good question for us — a question that demonstrates our preparedness for worship this week (and every week to follow).

- ✓ Do I love Jesus Christ?
- ✓ How much do I love Him?
- ✓ Is my love for Him growing?
- ✓ Am I prepared to rejoice in Him as the resurrected Savior?

Only One is worthy of devotion. Time is short. Let us, like Mary, be lavish and poured out in our love for Christ.

BENEDICTION (Rob Treat): Jude 24-25