

The Gospel of John

Costly Worship

John 12:1-9

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are beginning the 12th chapter of the Gospel of John. In our text this sermon we are going to look at true worship, and how true worship appears foolishly costly to the worldly minded, but to Christians there is no cost too high. After all, if you think about it, there is nothing you possess, including your own body, that truly belongs to you. It was given to you by God for your use. So as a Christian why wouldn't you return portions of it back to God. Both in money and time.

Even though we are a small church, one of the things that I have never had to worry about is money. God has always provided for our needs. Today I am briefly going to do something that I have never done as your pastor. I am going to preach about money. I typically don't do that because the Bible is pretty clear:

Matthew 6:20-21 (NASB)

²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Meaning we display what we love, worship, and adore by what we give our time, money and treasures too. If you love Jesus, and His Church, the ministries of the Church, the preaching of the Word, and the feeding of your soul, **you're going to give.** It is not some deep theological mystery. It's just "**Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**" So... I guess when you get right down to it, this sermon isn't really going to be about money, it's about worship and discipleship. With that in mind, take your Bible and open it up to the Gospel of John, chapter 12.

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 12:1-9 (NASB)

12 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.

Prayer

This is a short while after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus left Bethany and went with His disciples to the city of Ephraim. A small town about 12 miles north of Jerusalem. Now He has come back into the area of Bethany because Passover is about to start. Our text tells us, that it's going to happen in six days. That means that we are getting close to the end of Jesus' life. John used the first eleven chapters hitting the high points of the first 3 years of Jesus' earthly ministry. Now the last ten chapters are going to focus on the **final week** of His life on earth. We are just a few days before the Triumphal Entry, and then of course Jesus will be betrayed by Judas, and crucified by the mobs.

The Sanhedrin had decreed that anyone who knew where Jesus was should report that information to them. But rather than turning Him in like some criminal, the Lord's friends in Bethany gave a supper in His honor. The purpose of the event was to express their love for Him, and especially their gratitude for raising Lazarus from the dead.

BODY:

I. THE SERVICE OF MARTHA.

John 12:1-2 (NASB)

12 Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

If you were just to read John's account, you might think that Jesus is again at Martha, Mary, and Lazarus' house, but John never actually says whose house they were in. We have to turn to Mark to get a clearer picture His location.

Mark 14:3 (NASB)

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.*

Jesus is in Bethany, but He has been invited to eat at the home of Simon the leper. And Mary, Martha, and Lazarus are all there with Him, along with the disciples.

Who is Simon the leper? Well some people say that he was Mary, Martha, and Lazarus' father. Some people say that he was the one out of the ten lepers who gave thanks after he had been healed. We really don't know.

But here is what we do know: Simon the Leper would have been someone who was well known to the people of that region and time period, but his identity has been lost to us today. He almost certainly had been healed by Jesus because leprosy was not curable in their day. If he still had leprosy, he would not have been able to host a dinner. Lepers

were social outcasts who were not able to have close interaction with people. **This dinner was Simon's way of demonstrating his gratitude to the Lord.**

John 12:2 (NASB)

² So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him.

Martha was involved in serving the meal. Martha's service on this occasion was primarily directed at Jesus. She was motivated by a loving gratitude to Him and by a desire to honor Him in the best way she knew how. Jesus explained servitude.

John 12:26 (NASB)

²⁶ If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

Although she was overshadowed by Mary's act of worship, Martha's humble act of service was no less pleasing to the Lord.

II. THE WORSHIP BY MARY.

John 12:3 (NASB)

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.

Jesus, and the other men are all reclining at the table, and in comes Mary with an alabaster flask of expensive ointment of pure nard. When we look at the parallel passage in Matthew, we see that she breaks the flask of alabaster, and pours a pound of pure nard on Jesus' head and on His feet.

This is probably her greatest treasure and she gives it to the Lord. Without hesitation, and without reservation. She willingly gives her most valuable treasure to Christ. No one commanded or compelled her to do that. She does this as an expression of pure worship, love, and adoration.

Only four kinds of people were anointed in those days. Kings, Priests, Prophets, and those who had died... they were anointed for burial. Revelation 19:16 tells us that Jesus is the King of Kings. He is the sovereign Lord over all. Hebrews 3:1 tells us that He is the Great High Priest. And Matthew 13:31 tells us that Jesus is a prophet... "THE PROPHET." Not Mohammed, JESUS!

Jesus Christ, the Son of God is Prophet, Priest, and King. And of course, He alone dies for our sins. He alone goes before God and takes our sin upon Himself, so that He may take the punishment of those sins on the cross. And on the cross He endures the wrath of God, and is our perfect sacrifice for sin, so that we can be forgiven and made right with God.

Where does your treasure go? **That** is where your heart is.

What **gift**, what **effort**, what **treasure** is Jesus NOT worthy of? Is Jesus not worthy of giving up your Sunday mornings? Is He not worthy of giving up your tithes and offerings? Is He not worthy of giving up some of your time to serve Him?

For “**Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**”

What Mary is showing us is a picture of the progression of the Christian life. We hear the Word, and are brought to saving faith. We continue to hear the Word, and grow in maturity and understanding. And even when tragedy or hard times come upon us, we realize that He is in control and cling to Him in faith. And ultimately; as we know Him better and better and we love Him more and more, our hearts are filled with worship, and praise, and adoration, and love for Him. Through it all, the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of HIS glory and grace. We understand that HE IS THE TREASURE.

III. THE GREED OF JUDAS.

John 12:4-6 (NASB)

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.

Judas questioned what he considered the waste of money. It exposes his extreme greed ambition, and selfishness. Judas had cast his lot with Jesus expecting Him to become an earthly leader. Since he was in the inner circle, he anticipated an exalted position in that kingdom. But that dream had turned to ashes. Jesus had infuriated the Jewish leaders so much that they were seeking to kill him. He was not concerned about the poor. It infuriated him to see that much money elude his grasp.

“Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?”

And it may seem strange to us too. I wouldn't want someone to pour stuff on me...even if it is expensive perfume. I would probably be thinking, “Do I smell so bad that you have to cover it up?” So to us, this seems odd. But we are not in their time and culture.

Now why is that important? Well...you have to understand that nard comes from the root of a plant that grows in the Himalaya's in India. So it was hard to get and you had to prepare the ointment in a certain way Then you had to transport it from India to Israel. In other words, this is expensive stuff. In fact Judas values its worth at about 300 denarii. The Bible refers to a denarius as a day's wage for a common laborer in Matthew 20:2. The current minimum wage in the US is \$7.25 per hour or \$58 per day. So 300 denarii based upon US wages would be the equivalent of \$17,400 to us. And that is not counting the value of the alabaster flask that held it.

I don't know about you, but to me, that is a lot of money. What could you do with an extra \$17,400 dollars? Pay off some bills? Start, or maybe finish some projects at home? Buy a new car? Pay for your kids college? Take an amazing vacation? Maybe invest it in something? All of those things are good things, and almost everyone would look at those things and say, “Yep, I'd probably do something like that too.”

How about putting it in savings and using it for our Lord's work as opportunities arise? Helping finance projects at the church. Helping others in need. Buying groceries for the poor. Supporting a specific ministry that is making an impact.

There are a lot of so called churches, ministries, causes, and organizations out there, that I wouldn't give a dime to. We've got to be discerning when it comes to giving. But God expects us all to be wise and good stewards, and to be smart with the finances He has given to us. Use those finances for His work, and His purpose, and for His glory!

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The secret is to understand that Jesus is our treasure. This world, and everything in it, is passing away.

Matthew 6:31-33 (NASB)

³¹ Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' ³² For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Judas is the greatest example of a missed opportunity in history. He lived day in and day out with Jesus for three years. Yet in the end Judas rejected Him, betrayed Him, was overcome by guilt (but not genuine repentance), and committed suicide.

Jesus actually said of him...

Matthew 26:24b (NASB)

...woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

Jesus immediately defended Mary, sternly rebuking Judas.

John 12:7 (NASB)

⁷ Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial.

Mary's act was a spontaneous outpouring of her love, gratitude, and devotion to Jesus but it had a deeper significance. Jesus saw it as a symbol of His coming death and burial.

John 12: 8 (NASB)

⁸ For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

If Judas had really wanted to help the poor, he would not have lacked opportunity since there will always be people in need around you. But the opportunity to do good to Jesus would not last long. He was once again referring to His coming death in less than a week.

IV. THE CURIOUS CROWD.

John 12:9 (NASB)

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.

News of the miracle had spread and the curious crowd wanted to see both the miracle worker and the one whom He had raised. The miracle was causing many of them to leave the temple and believe in Jesus. The remaining group were thrill seekers who were superficially interested in Jesus, but spiritually indifferent. Most of them were not openly

hostile like Judas and the Jewish leaders. Nor were they committed to Jesus like Mary and Martha. They would praise Him at the triumphal entry and just days later scream "**Crucify Him!**"

CONCLUSION

Giving is an end result of worship and discipleship. The scriptures say we will know a true follower of Christ by their fruit. I feel that we are often confused by what that fruit is. Too often we want to measure fruit with numbers. How many people has he led to Christ? How many jewels does he have in his crown?

But you see, our fruit is not a numbers game. So what are the fruits that we are to exhibit in our lives?

Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

We worship and serve God by the way we conduct our lives. Our job as disciples is not producing fruit. Our job is to abide in Christ, and if we do, the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit, and this fruit is the result of our obedience. As we become more obedient to the Lord and learn to walk in His ways, our lives will change. The biggest change will take place in our hearts, and the overflow of this will be a new conduct as we just read in Galatians. We want to glorify God in everything that we do and everything that we say using the fruits of the Spirit. The change we seek is done from the inside out, through the power of the Holy Spirit. It isn't something we can conjure up on our own.

When we are in love with God our worship will willingly generate giving.

1 John 3:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

The Family of God