

John 12:1–8

<sup>1</sup>Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.

<sup>2</sup>There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him.

<sup>3</sup>Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

<sup>4</sup>But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said,

<sup>5</sup>"Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"

<sup>6</sup>This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

<sup>7</sup>But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial.

<sup>8</sup>For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

### ***"Mary's Gift to Jesus"***

#### ***John 12:1-8***

INTRO:

When we begin to read John's eyewitness account of Mary's anointing of Jesus, we witness an event that had very great and eternal significance to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When His disciples treated Mary badly because of her extravagance, in **verses 7** and **8** the Lord Jesus came to her defense. ***"Therefore***

*Jesus said, 'Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.'*" Sometimes when we evaluate what folks give to the Lord, we do so from a distinctively world-oriented point of view. The importance of this event to our Lord should make us look at these things a little differently from how we usually to see them.

In this text and two parallel texts in **Matthew** and **Mark** we will see some truths about how Mary gave her gift. Then we will evaluate how others saw that gift, and seek to make some applications to our lives. Our study will follow this outline.

### **I. Mary's Gift (v. 1-3)**

### **II. The Responses to Her Gift (v. 4-8)**

#### **I. Mary's Gift (v. 1-3)**

**A. The first thing John showed us was that Mary's gift was made in the shadow of the cross.** He makes us understand this through his mention of the proximity of the Passover. *"Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead."*

1. John mentioned other Passovers which occurred during the Lord's earthly ministry. However, this Passover is significant. This is the Passover in which the Passover Lamb, *"the lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world"*, would be offered. In a real sense, every Passover ever celebrated since the first Passover in Egypt all prefigured this last Passover. For while the Jewish people were looking back to the time God redeemed them from Egypt, they did not realize that they were, at the same time, looking forward to the time when the Lamb of God would redeem His people from their sins!

2. And this fateful Passover was only six days away. Jesus knew it was near.

**But Mary, sensitive Mary, also somehow understood it was near**

**too.** This was the time that Jesus the Good Shepherd would lay down His life on behalf of the sheep! The time that “[God the Father] would make Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21) was very near at hand.

**B. Not only do we learn that Mary’s gift was given in proximity to the cross, it was given in a public event.** Mary did not choose to be God’s secret agent. She desired all the world to know that she followed Jesus. **We know this was public for several reasons.**

1. **We know it because it was given at what appeared to be a formal dinner.** In the parallel accounts in **Matthew** and **Mark** we learn this was Simon the Leper’s house. At any rate, Jesus is there and Lazarus is reclining at the table with Him!

2. **Second, Martha seemed to be an official server.** Hence the statement in **verse 2**, *“and Martha served.”* Virtually every time we meet Martha (other than the time she is grieving for Lazarus) she is busy serving the Lord. I don’t know about you, but I would like to be found always serving Him! **Matthew 24:45-46** says, *“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.”* The last time I looked, the Lord’s church doesn’t suffer from too many servers, it has too few!

3. **A third reason we can assume that this was somewhat formal and public is that Lazarus was there and he was reclining at the table (verse 2).** *“So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.”* Reclining at dinner indicates this was a formal supper. Also, others came to see Jesus and him, which indicates this was not a private affair. *“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.” verse 9*

C. The third thing we need to see here is that **Mary understood**

**what she was doing.** In the parallel text in **Mark 14:3-9**. *“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. But some were indignantly remarking to one another, ‘Why has this perfume been wasted? For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.’ And they were scolding her. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. 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. She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. ruly 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.”* While the disciples each were lost in their

own world of self-aggrandizement, she heard what Jesus was saying.

That is why she takes this bold step. She keeps her investment by giving it to Jesus now while He is with them.

1. **We need to understand this was no small gift.** This was a relatively large amount. A Roman pound weighed about twelve of our ounces. Spikenard or nard was imported from India. Perfumes and aromas were very important to Jewish women of that day, and very expensive.

2. **We are told that the value of this gift is 300 denarii.** Three hundred denarii was a year's wage. To make a proper comparison today it would be somewhere between a third and a half of the cost of a typical house. This was a once in a lifetime gift. **IT WAS AN EXCEEDINGLY EXPENSIVE GIFT.**

3. **It also was a personal gift.** Jesus said in our text. *"Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."* Mary did not give it to the poor, **she gave it to Jesus.**

### **Psalm 133**

*A Song of Ascents. Of David.*

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is*

*For brethren to dwell together in unity!*

*It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard,*

*The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.*

*It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing— Life forevermore.*

## **II. The Responses to Her Gift (v. 4-8)**

*"But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, 'Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given*

*to the poor?’ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.’”*

**A. John underlined the response to this tremendous outpouring of love to Jesus.** This hints at the kind of response we will receive when we give ourselves to the Lord too!

**B. The disciples, of all people, said this was A WASTE!** Listen to **Matthew 26:8** *“But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, **“Why this waste?”** It was the heart of the one giving the gift more than the gift itself that mattered. You give yourself to Jesus and folks will tell you that you are wasting your life. Count on it! But you are not!*

**C. They also saw another use for the ointment.** It could be turned into money! *The very people who should have appreciated it were the ones who despised it!* When you serve the Lord, sometimes your most severe critics are the Christians around you. They don’t understand your desire to give your all to Jesus!

**D. Listen to the commendation from the Lord Jesus.**

1. I positively love this! “But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, ***“Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me.” (Matthew 26.10)*** It was more than just a beautiful gesture. It was the right thing to do. It was morally perfect and wonderful! Leave the woman alone! She is doing something good and wonderful. You can’t understand right now.

2. Then He added a blessing and a promise. **Matthew 26** ***“Verily, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”*** *The disciples looked at this gift and said*, look at the waste. Sure, it smells good now, but then it’s gone and it will make no lasting difference. *Jesus said*, “Oh, my foolish little disciples, how you do not see the truth. This little gift will make a difference more than 2,000 years from now.”

3. This was so true that when John wrote his Gospel and began to tell the story of Lazarus, he could identify Mary as that woman and everyone knew who she was! This prophecy is fulfilled in your hearing today!

**WHAT IS IN YOUR BOX?** What is the most important thing in the world to you? Would you give it up to Jesus? You can if you will pour yourself out to Jesus as Mary did.

Broken and Spilled out

And poured at your feet

In sweet abandon, Let me be spilled out

and used up for Thee!

**453 I Gave My Life for Thee**