

Mount Olive Wednesday Night Bible Study and Prayer Meeting

May 12, 2021

John 12: 1 - 11

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. 2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. 3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. 4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, 5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. 7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. 8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. 9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; 11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

Pastor Tom gave 2 questions for us to think about during our study tonight. We will discuss them at the end.

Question 1. Why do we anoint people in church?

Question 2. For anyone who has been anointed - what did that mean to you?

Verses 1 through 3

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. 2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. 3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

*The setting:

When: 6 days before Passover (Did Jesus know His ministry time was short ?)

Where: Bethany was less than 2 miles from Jerusalem. From nearby Mount of Olives, Jesus could have seen the city of Jerusalem, beyond Gethsemane, across the Kidron Valley. This account puts Jesus at the home of Lazarus and his sisters.

Who: Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Remember the story from Luke 10: 38 - 42 when Martha was preparing a meal (serving, working) while Mary sat at Jesus' feet and worshipped Him by listening to Him. The sisters seem to be consistent with their personalities here.

Why do people have different personalities?

We can't all be Marys/worshippers. We can't all be Marthas/ workers.

We need both worshippers and workers in church. And in our own lives we need a balance of worship and work/service to Jesus. If we don't make time for God (worship), He only gets the 'scraps' of our time! When we become too comfortable, we get slack in our service and in our worship!

*So Mary worships Jesus by anointing Him with oil.

The measurement for one pound in Bible times was only $10 \frac{1}{3}$ ounces. Curiously, a pound nowadays is 16 ounces.

And the oil was costly, perhaps a year's wages back then.

Also it was a custom then to wash the feet of guests dirtied from the dusty roads where they walked. But Mary poured the oil instead of water on Jesus' feet. (Imagine the griminess of the dirt mixed with oil) And then

she wiped His feet with her hair! (Ask any cancer patient how much they value the hair they may have lost during treatments).

John also helps us imagine being there by referring to the fragrance that filled the house.

*Pastor Tom had us read the account of this story from Mark 14: 3 - 9 to point out some contradictions in the details:

- Not at Lazarus' house, but at Simon the Leper's home.
- Time frame is slightly different
- Jesus is anointed on the head, not His feet
- And Mary's name not used, only woman

But does it matter that Mark and John wrote slightly different accounts of this event or will this cause us to disbelieve the whole Bible?

What matters is the anointing itself. This act, an example of worshipping Jesus, should be our focus because the bottom line is that the anointing was intended to glorify Jesus!

Verses 4 through 6

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, 5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

*Here Judas enters and spoils the moment. 'Why did you waste this oil that could have been sold for money to feed the poor?' This was a rude statement to both Mary and to Jesus: It shamed her out-poring act of worship and at the same time implied that Jesus was not even worthy of the worship!

*Studying more about Judas we learn that he did not genuinely care about the poor people and he was a thief. He was not 'on board' with Jesus' ministry or identity. Judas was 'Christian' with his own purpose which was to steal from the treasury he was responsible for.

Verses 7 and 8

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. 8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

*Mary gave her very best to Jesus. When we donate any particular item to the church, is it our junk/hand-me-downs?

*Recall the good solid theology in the old hymn, 'Give of your best to the Master'.

*Recall also what God told Solomon to use when building the Temple...ONLY THE BEST!

Verse 9

Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

*This explains why many of the people came to this particular home: not to worship Jesus but to see Lazarus, a man raised from the dead.

Verses 10 and 11

But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; 11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

*These chief priests were now conspiring to kill Jesus as well as Lazarus! Lazarus was now an example of Jesus' divinity.

[Could Mary have anointed Jesus to draw the attention back to Him and away from her brother? To point to the One who should be glorified?]

Pastor Tom then made time to open the phone lines to discuss the questions he posed:

Question 1. Why do we anoint people in church?

Comments included:

- *for healing
- *it is a physical act as a community, to lay hands on a person or raise hands towards them.
- *a symbol of consecration to God's care
- *combine giving prayer shawls with anointing to solidify the holy moment

Question 2. For anyone who has been anointed - what did that mean to you?

Comments included:

- * Knowing that believers were confident in their faith and that God could heal her eyes.
- *Knowing that everyone was believing even though they did not know/understand how God would heal. Sharing their faith in God.
- *A feeling of warmth or heat that was different at the altar than in the pews.
- *A cleansing and closeness/nearness to God.
- *Knowing that God is the One in control and that others are praying for you.

Even though the story in today's scripture is found in the New Testament, because it happened before Calvary, it is an Old Testament story. So in the Old Testament, anointing only happened to 3 types of people: Priests, Prophets and Kings. When Mary anointed Jesus, did she understand that He was our High Priest, a Prophet in His own land and the King of the Kingdom of God? Do we know this?

Go in peace, go in joy, go in love!

May the Lord watch between me and thee
While we are absent one from the other.
