

“Giving Our Best To The Lord”

Galations 6: 1 – 10; 2nd Corinthians 9: 6 - 15; Romans 12: 1 – 21; John **12:1-8 (Sermon)**

Our lesson from John tells us that this event happened 6 days before the Passover.

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to die on the cross.

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus’s sisters, Mary and Martha, had a big dinner party for Jesus.

This is the same Lazarus that Jesus raised from the dead so we can easily assume that the dinner party was given to show Jesus their gratitude for bringing Lazarus back to life.

Jesus was the guest of honor.

It must have been a joyous occasion celebrating Lazarus being raised from the dead. Lazarus had been bought back to life.

Jesus, Lazarus, and Jesus’ disciples were reclining at the table eating.

Martha was busy serving and then Mary did something very unusual.

Mary took a pint of pure nard, which was an expensive perfume, and poured it on Jesus’ feet.

Then Mary wiped Jesus’ feet with her hair.

We are told the fragrance filled the house.

Mary’s acts must have stunned the group and they certainly quieted **all** of the talking and laughing.

After Judas Iscariot had quickly calculated the value of the perfume as one year’s wages, Judas broke the silence by objecting to what Mary had done calling it wasteful.

“Why wasn’t the perfume sold and the money given to the poor?” (John 12:6)

Judas’ statement looks so spiritual on the surface but verse 6 also tells us: Judas ***“didn’t care about the poor but about himself, since Judas was the treasurer and a thief who helped himself to the groups’ money”***.

Jesus put an end to this debate, saying, ***“Leave her alone”***. (Verse 7)

Jesus’ comment was the only comment that mattered to Mary because Jesus had accepted Mary’s gift as an anointing for His coming death.

Jesus reminded the group that He would not be with them much longer.

Jesus was saying that we can spend our entire life helping the poor, giving to the poor, and miss the joy of knowing Jesus.

From this account I think we can glean several valuable lessons from Mary’s actions about the way our giving to The Lord should be.

Mary's act of giving is a model for the way we are to give to The Lord.

First, **Mary's gift to Jesus was given out of a heart of gratitude.**

Remember the dinner party was to honor Jesus.

They were so happy about their brother Lazarus being alive again that Mary and her sister Martha wanted to show Jesus how much they appreciated what Jesus had done for them.

Lazarus had died physically and Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

Lazarus was alive again!

When we think about it, Lazarus is a picture of us also.

We all were dead in our sins and Jesus has given us spiritual life.

Jesus took our place on the cross. Jesus suffered and died for your sins and my sins.

When we accepted Jesus as our Savior we were pulled from the grips of death in Hell and Jesus gave us a new life that will last throughout eternity in Heaven.

We all need to ask ourselves; *Is my giving a true reflection of my gratitude to Jesus for saving me from burning in hell throughout eternity?*

Secondly, we see **Mary's gift to Jesus was given out of love.**

Mary's motive for giving was love of Jesus.

Yes Mary's act was extravagant.

The perfume was very expensive but to Mary Jesus was worth so much more than the cost of this expensive perfume.

What about us?

Have we given anything to The Lord recently just because we wanted to; not because we were expected to or we were asked to?

Whenever love exists in a person's heart, there is a desire to sacrifice for the person we love.

The object of our devotion to Jesus should be worth every penny we have.

Judas did not understand that love comes before giving!

When a person loves Jesus, they will **want** to give so that other people can know about Jesus.

When a person loves Jesus they will give generously.

Next, we see that **Mary's gift to Jesus was sacrificial.**

Mary was not selfish. Mary did not pour out just a little perfume; Mary did not calculate how much she wanted to keep for herself.

Mary did not measure out just enough perfume to cover the feet of Jesus.

Mary poured out the whole container on Jesus' feet.

Mary poured out so much that she needed to mop up some of the perfume with her hair.

Mary gave all that she had.

We all need to ask ourselves is my giving to The Lord a sacrifice or is my gift just a token gift.

Next, we see that **Mary's gift to Jesus was spontaneous.**

Mary was responding to the way she felt about Jesus.

Mary did not care about what other people would say.

Mary let down her hair in public which Jewish women did not do.

Mary did not calculate the cost of the perfume.

Mary was responding to the way she felt about Jesus.

Mary responded to Jesus out of love and gratitude.

How can we consider offering anything less than everything we are and we have to the one who gave us life, the one who brings hope to hopeless situations?

Christian giving does not flow out of a selfish heart of obligation.

But rather Christian giving spontaneously flows out of a heart of gratitude and love.

Mary's gift to Jesus was the opposite of the world's view.

Mary offering was costly and her offering was precious to her.

The cost of perfume that Mary poured out on Jesus' feet was the equivalent of one year's salary.

Mary's offering was extravagant and beyond what many thought was reasonable.

Judas Iscariot could not grasp Mary's offering because, if Judas gave at all, it was a cold and calculated kind of giving that does not ask how much can I give but rather how much will I have left for myself after I give?

Today there is a disconnect somewhere when over 80% of all Americans professing a faith in God and in His Son Jesus Christ and yet surveys show that the average American Christian household gives less than 2% of their gross annual income to The Lord's work!

When Judas saw Mary gift to Jesus, in effect, Judas said “*what a waste*”.

But love is never a waste!

Generosity is never a waste! Sacrifice is never a waste!

The point that the others missed is that Mary did not consider it to be unusual to pour out something that was worth a year’s wages.

Mary was expressing her love and her appreciation for her Savior and her Lord.

We also need to notice the damage that Judas did?

Mary’s sacrifice had drawn attention to our Lord Jesus Christ.

But Judas statement turned the people’s attention away from Jesus.

Judas was not in love with Jesus; Judas was in love with himself.

Why did Mary do it?

Why so much perfume?

Why not some now and some later?

Why did Mary wipe Jesus’ feet?

I believe that Mary was giving something much more than an expensive vile of perfume to Jesus, Mary’s act was an act of worship.

Mary was worshipping Jesus her Savior and her Lord.

You see true worship is never partial or just what is required.

That is a ritual not worship.

That is being religious but it is not worship.

We may look religious when we only offer a partial amount of ourselves but that is not worship.

True worship does not hold back; true worship involves our whole self.

True worship is pouring out our whole heart, soul, mind and body before Almighty God who alone is worthy and God alone deserves our worship.

In the Old Testament, worship always involved sacrificial giving.

A person’s sacrifice was always to be an animal without spot or blemish.

Their sacrifice was not just any animal it was the best animal they owned or could buy.

The best animal meant it was a true sacrifice.

True worship always involves a sacrifice.

When we looked at the sacrifices God commanded in The Book of Leviticus we saw that the worshipper presented their animal to the priest at the entrance of the Tabernacle.

The priest examined the animal to insure that the animal was perfect, without spot of blemish, before it could be sacrificed.

Now I am not suggesting that we practice that today.

I do not know what any of you give nor do I want to know. Giving is between you and The Lord.

But the point is this; *would you be embarrassed if what you gave to The Lord was public information?*

In 1st Chronicles 21:24 David, the king of Israel made a great statement: ***“I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing”***

Mary learned the secret of true worship.

Mary sat at Jesus’ feet listening to Jesus’ teaching.

Then Mary responded to The Word spontaneously and lovingly with her sacrifice to Jesus.

Mary did not come to impress her neighbors.

Mary did not come to be entertained.

Mary came to tell Jesus how much she loved Him!

Mary did not come to ask Jesus for something; Mary came to give something to Jesus!

Mary did not come because she was tired and needed a positive stroke by hearing that Jesus loved her; Mary came to tell Jesus that she loved Him!

Today we have the privilege of celebrating The Sacrament of The Lord’s Supper.

This is an excellent time for each of us to examine ourselves and see how we are responding to Jesus’ love and His sacrifice for us.

In this account there were **4** people that responded to Jesus in different ways.

Are we like Martha so busy with other things that we are missing out on spending quality time with Jesus?

Are we like the disciples and Lazarus; just being with the group and enjoying the fellowship, but failing to catch the spiritual significance of what Jesus was saying?

Are we like Judas Iscariot; hypocritical and so concerned with ourselves that we miss out on the spiritual significance of what is going on around us.

Are we quick to criticize others who were openly expressing their love for Jesus?

Are we like Mary; kneeling at Jesus' feet, giving our whole self in worship and devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ?

You see Jesus' true disciples are people that are like Mary, people who love Jesus and live out that love in all that they do and say each and every day.

We all need to ask ourselves *"What would Jesus say about my worship this morning?"*

What would Jesus say about my attitude about giving?

What would Jesus say about my response to His love for me?"

God's word to us today challenges each one of us to ask ourselves; *"am I giving my best to Jesus?"*

"Is my life a living sacrifice for Jesus?"

Remember Jesus gave His life so that you and I could experience spiritual and eternal life.

AMEN