

John 12

by John Hunter

The sermon explores the contrasting responses to Jesus through the actions of Mary, Martha, and Judas, emphasizing the importance of true devotion over criticism.

Duration: 27:27

Scripture: Matthew 26:6-13, Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1-2, John 12:1-8

Topics: "Worship And Sacrifice", "Greed And Deception"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Mary anointing Jesus' feet with expensive ointment. He highlights the contrast between Mary's worshipful act and Judas' criticism of her actions. The preacher emphasizes that Judas' criticism was not genuine concern for the poor, but rather a facade to cover up his own greed. The sermon also explores the significance of Jesus defending Mary and connects it to her previous act of sitting at Jesus' feet and learning about his impending death.

Transcript

Well, but verse one, please. Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

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 action of Mary, verses one to three. Now let's look at the assessment of Judas.

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him. You'll notice John always tells you who people are. He always will locate places.

For he's writing sixty years after the event, to a generation that would not know the originals. So it's Judas, Iscariot, Simon's son. Chapter fourteen, it's Judas, not Iscariot.

Elsewhere, it's Thomas called Didymus. John will always identify people and places. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him.

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? 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. Now you'll understand, please, that what you read of in verse six, John didn't know at the time. He didn't know

at the time that Judas was a thief.

But later on he got to know. This verse is one of many of John's illuminating comments as he writes. Later they learned that the man who was the treasurer of the itinerant band was a thief.

So he tells us, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Four to six, the assessment of Judas. Verses seven and eight, the defense of Christ.

Then said Jesus, let her alone. Against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you, but me ye have not always.

You'll keep your Bibles handy, won't you? Now, times without number you've read the passage. Maybe nearly as many times you've heard it expounded. And I've no doubt at all in my mind when I asked you to turn to John 12, and then to read the first eight verses, you maybe were saying not again.

There's nothing more can be said. Well now, there's always a danger in reading familiar passages. Because we know them so well, they run through and out of our minds.

Sometimes we maybe just fail to grasp, because of our familiarity, some of the things that are lying there. I wonder if I could draw your attention tonight to one or two things that you may have missed, as I draw attention to other things that you know well. As I said, the scene is well known.

The setting is Bethany. During the last week of the Lord's life on earth, many times after the day he would return to Bethany. There the man of sorrows found refreshment, in the home of two sisters and a brother.

You will note, won't you please, what it says. It says, he came to Bethany where Lazarus was. Interesting.

Chapter eleven, verse one. Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and Martha. So Bethany was known, because this family was there.

It was the town of Mary and Martha. It was the place where Lazarus was. You know, some of us who move around many countries, when certain places are named, we think of certain people.

That's right. Bethany, Bethany found its value to heaven, because of this family that resided there. They gave it all its importance, as well as providing a home for the Lord Jesus.

There they made him a supper. It was just for him. And he was to be the guest.

Times without number you've heard all about it. The Lord there, the centre of attraction. Mary worshipping, Martha serving, Lazarus sitting.

Now let's have a look at Lazarus. Where Lazarus was which had been dead, who may raise from the dead, Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. So Lazarus is sitting in the dignity of resurrection life.

Now tell me, tell me, have you ever noted that it's never recorded that Lazarus spoke after he was raised from the dead? Quite a lot. In these meetings I've been trying to teach you to read more carefully. Have you ever noted it's never recorded that he spoke? No, I'm not saying he didn't speak.

It's never recorded that he spoke, yet he had spent four days on the other side, and everybody would be desperate to know what are the conditions on the other side. Tell us all about it, Lazarus. But Lazarus is

not speaking.

Tell me, tell me, did you ever notice in 2 Corinthians 12 that when Paul was taken up to the third heaven and came back that he's not talking either? He heard unspeakable words. It was not lawful for a man to utter, so he's not talking either. Tell me, tell me, did you ever notice in Matthew 27 an incident only recorded by Matthew that I thought the four would have recorded, but they didn't? You get surprises like that.

That when the veil of the temple was rent in twain, etc., that there was an earthquake, the rocks leant, and certain bodies of the saints rose after the resurrection of Christ and went into the holy city and appeared unto many, it's never recorded that they spoke. They're not talking either. This is interesting.

Would all this not tell you that the wonder and glory and exquisite beauty of heaven cannot be conveyed in human language? That even the English language is not competent to declare the wonder and glory of God's house and God's heaven and God's administration? That eternal glory can't be expressed in human language? That's why, when you come to heaven, a great deal of what is said is in the negative. That is, you're told what's not there to try and indicate to you what is there. So much for Lazarus.

Now let's have a look at Martha. Very simply, very briefly, very tersely, it just says, Martha, sir. Now, do you remember in Luke 10? You good sisters.

Do you remember in Luke 10 that the Lord came to the house? And do you recall that in the midst of it all, the Lord had to very kindly, very tenderly, but very firmly rebuke Martha. She was complaining about Mary not helping her, getting things ready. She was troubled and quite harassed, cumbered with much serving.

Tell me, how many do you think were there? Well now, let's go back. The Lord was there, that was one. And we're told Mary was there, that was two.

And Martha was there, of course, that was three. Now that's all you're told. Maybe Lazarus was there, we don't know, it doesn't say.

So you have the minimum of three, the maximum of four, and she's harassed to death. She's harassed to death. And she's full of complainings, bless her heart.

Now you come to chapter 12, and there's no complaining and no bitterness. No cumbered about much service, no rebuke from the Lord, Martha's serving. How many do you think were there? Well now, let's count.

The Lord was there, that was one. The twelve were there, that was thirteen. Mary was there, that was fourteen.

Lazarus was there, that was fifteen. And Martha was there, that was sixteen. She's not harassed to death.

Eh? She's got four or five times the company at the home that day. And gladly and joyously she's serving. Now sisters, now sisters, would that not tell you that in this great and good business of hospitality, if you do it unto the Lord, it takes all the burden and drudgery away.

You're just doing it for him. You're not doing it to try and make it as good if not better than where you were last week. You're just doing it.

They made him a supper. The Lord wouldn't be at all critical of what was on the table. But Martha's been freed from the spirit of complaint, freed from the spirit of drudgery, just happy to know that when the company came along, the Lord was with them.

Isn't that good? Now let's have a look at Mary. Mary comes with her box of ointment, of spikenard, very costly, and she anointed the feet of Jesus. Interesting.

When you go to Matthew's gospel, she anointed his head. Oh, by the way, let me say this, please. It's only a technical point.

We won't be falling out about it. But I made that statement in such a way as to convey to you that I believe both incidents are the same. Understand? Have a map, by the way.

But tell me, why was it that Matthew says she anointed his head but Luke says she anointed his feet? Now this is interesting. No discrepancy. Watch the accuracy and precision of your Bible.

When Matthew presents Christ, he presents him as king and sovereign, Israel's Messiah. Now, when Britain's queen is crowned, or king, he or she is crowned by England's high priest, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Go on, Caiaphas.

As Israel's high priest, crown your king. But Caiaphas, as Israel's high priest, is blind to his glory. He fails to recognize the royalty and sovereignty of Christ.

All right, says Mary. Matthew's Gospel. If you won't crown him, I'll crown him.

And taking her box, she crowned him Lord of all. But when you come to John's Gospel, amazing. Amazing.

John just depicts her bending low at the feet of Jesus. Why would that be? Well now, John is not presenting Christ particularly as Israel's sovereign and king, his royalty. John is presenting Christ as God manifest in flesh, the son of God himself.

So John says she anointed his feet, because in the presence of deity, you can rise no higher than the ground. Before God manifest in flesh, you can only prostrate yourself. So in John's Gospel she's down at the feet of her God.

Actually what she did do was, she took the box and she shattered it. She allowed the content to pour upon his head and bending low, she anointed his feet. But as she bent low to anoint his feet, her long hair came forward.

And she wiped his feet with her hair. And the odour filled the house. And what impregnated his person, impregnated her glory and filled the house.

Tell me, tell me, have you ever noted that John alone tells you the weight? John alone tells you that the box was a pound weight. They'll all tell you it was costly. They'll all tell you that it was spikenard of ointment, so to speak.

John alone tells you the weight. It was a pound weight. Nothing superficial or light about this.

Quite clearly, quite clearly, the cost of the ointment would lie in its quality and in its weight. More about that later. So there it is.

There's Mary. There's Lazarus sitting. There's Martha serving.

There's Mary worshipping and her hands going out to the Lord. Tell me, tell me, have you ever noted that up until this point, nobody has spoken? There's not a word. Not a syllable has been uttered.

Yet the house is filled with the odour. And everything is calculated to give Christ glory, and not a syllable has been uttered. Listen, brethren and sisters.

There is a silence that's golden. There is a silence that's rich. There is a silence that tells out the wealth of a company.

You know, brethren, you don't always need to be in your feet. It's not necessary to keep the meeting going. After all, sisters must get an opportunity to worship.

You forget that. Oh, I know there are silences that are barren too. I know that.

But here's one that's rich. There it is, and the house is filled. Not a word has been spoken.

Tell me. Tell me. Have you ever noted who broke the silence? Judas.

Verse four, then. Judas. Do you know what he's saying? He was saying, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? My, that sounds good.

Sounds godly. It sounds as though he's got a concern about things. See how the whole thing's been covered up? John exposes that immediately, as I told you.

Later on he recognised it. He was only a facade to cover up the covetousness of his heart. He wanted the money for himself.

Just a minute, will you? Time and again this has been applied to a Lord's Day morning, hasn't it? Could you take that forward to tomorrow morning? There's Mary worshipping and Judas criticising. Come on, brethren. Come on, sisters.

Worshipper or critic? When you come together, is your heart going out like Mary, absorbed with Christ? Or are you sitting back, criticising? What a challenge. Worshipper or critic? Look at verse five. Three hundred pence.

Now, would that convey anything to you? Would you learn the lesson from that? Now, because that Judas was chosen to be the treasurer of the itinerant band, I reckon he was a very shrewd type of man. I would say so. I would say, I would accept that Judas' calculation of the value of the box was commercially correct.

I accept that. It was worth three hundred pence. Does that convey anything to you? Well, now, when you go to Matthew 20, to the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, you find that a man worked for a penny a day.

Got that? A penny a day. Now, you take away Sabbath days, holy days, feast days, which there was no work, and into that box the woman had concentrated approximately a year's wages. A year's wages in the

box.

That's the extent of her giving. That's the limits of her sacrifice. A year's wages.

Oh, I didn't ask you what you put in the box. A year's wages. How do you feel? How would you feel if it suddenly came to light that what you put in the bag is your value of Christ, all things considered? Hmm? Ah, but just a minute.

Stop. This man that's valuing Mary's appreciation of Christ, he's going out to value Christ. Oh, yes.

He's on his road out to value Christ. He'll put his price on it. What's his price? Thirty pieces of silver.

Does that convey anything to you? Thirty pieces of silver. Now, if you went to Exodus 21, you would find that a man's ox gored another man's slave. The man who owned the ox paid to the man who owned the slave thirty pieces of silver.

Judas's valuation is the value of a dead carcass. Got it? I wonder how we value Christ. Now, quickly now, the clock's going to beat me.

Verses 7 and 8. A rare insight to the person of Christ. One of those few occasions in which Christ appears as the defender of the saints. He jumped to defend Mary against the criticism.

He says, let her alone. Against the day of my burying has she kept this. My, that's interesting.

That's interesting. Listen again. Against the day of my burying has she kept this.

What would that mean? Well, that means this. That in Luke 10, yonder, when she sat at his feet, she learned that he was going to die. My, this is interesting.

You good brethren and sisters will know that from Caesarea Philippi onward, Matthew 16, the Lord constantly taught his disciples that he was going to die, and not one of them took it in. Not one. But this woman did.

Sitting at his feet, she learned that he was going to die. Now, I want to talk to you sisters. The brethren can listen, and it will do them a world of good.

Listen, sisters. Mary was far more intelligent than the twelve disciples put together. She was streets ahead of them in her intelligence, while they were totally ungrasping as to the truth.

She accepted it and acted on it. Now, sisters, because of the observance of divine order in the churches, it is not permitted for you to speak publicly. That doesn't mean to say that you shouldn't be as intelligent as the brethren.

That you shouldn't be able to converse about the scriptures. And I'll just state that Victoria Drive here, because I'm here as an illustration, you make it to your own assembly. You see, I would reckon that Victoria Drive in this way is probably not much different from any another assembly.

That owes an incalculable debt to a backbone of godly women that not only know their place but know their book. Mind you, these good brethren sitting in front of me will find this hard to accept. They'll likely be shaking their head and saying I'll have a word with Jack at the close of the meeting.

But you know, I know assemblies where there are some sisters that are more intelligent and discerning than the brethren. That's right. And who take no part in government or order but who would be taken privately into consideration as they converse with the brethren.

I've known on the odd occasion when they've kept things right. And good women that know their book and know what should be done are a great asset in an assembly. Could I say to you good brethren, never forget, that many a time when we arise to our feet to minister before the Lord, we do so in an atmosphere that has been created by godly women.

Do you know what the Lord said in Matthew? Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, what this woman hath done shall be told of her. For where the gospel went, the scriptures went. Little did she think that day that her action would find a niche in the temple of Holy Scripture.

And you and I would be considering it tonight. Now I'll need to stop. Let me say this.

Mary's shining as brilliant as the noonday sun, and Judas is as dark as midnight. Maybe I would surprise you good folk, if I said this, that the Lord would either have you to be a Mary or a Judas. He would have you either to be out and out or not at all.

Tell me you good folks that know your Bible. What was it that made the Lord want to spew Laodicea out of his mouth? Come on now. What made Laodicea so nasating to Christ? Listen.

I know thy works, thou art neither freezing cold nor boiling hot. I would that thou wert freezing cold or boiling hot. But because thou art lukewarm, tepid, neither one nor the other, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

Somehow, somehow it's not expected amongst us that everybody should be out and out. Tell me. Here's this woman.

She's so absorbed with Christ, she's hardly aware of anyone else. As she performs her sacred act and function, Christ was everything to her. I want to ask you something, please, as I close.

What does Christ mean to you? Now, let me come just a little closer. Now I want you to be perfectly honest. You don't need to answer me.

I'm no judge of you. But just you answer in your heart of hearts to the Lord now. Tell me.

Do you love Christ better than anybody else on earth? Is Christ first? For if Christ is first, everybody else gets the right place. And if he's not supreme to you, everybody else is in the wrong place. There's somebody intruding, something intruding.

You know, I wasn't reared in a Christian home. I have a deepening longing to see the man that stopped me in my sins. Not only change my destiny, but transform my life.

Brethren and sisters, I've learned to love Christ better than anyone else on earth. I'm learning to love heaven better than earth. So may the Lord bless his word.

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