

Men's Breakfast - Mary's Love For Christ

1. If you had a year's wages to spend on friends, which would you choose: (a) Big party? (b) Glorious trip for a few? (c) Extravagant gift for one?

2. When have you indulged another person with an expensive gift?

3. How do you deal with the tension of helping people in need while enjoying your wealth and possessions?

4. If you could become any one of these four people, which would you choose?

(a) The richest, most successful businessman in the world;

(b) The most popular, most attractive movie star in the world;

(c) The president of the United States;

(d) An aids orphan in southern Africa.

Which do you choose?

John 12:1-11 (NCV) *Jesus with Friends in Bethany*

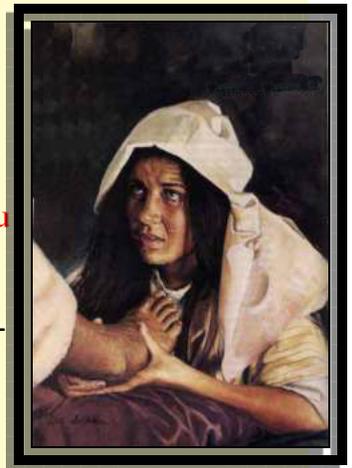
12 Six days before the Passover Feast, Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus lived. (Lazarus is the man Jesus raised from the dead.)² There they had a dinner for Jesus. Martha served the food, and Lazarus was one of the people eating with Jesus.³ Mary brought in a pint of very expensive perfume made from pure nard. She poured the perfume on Jesus' feet, and then she wiped his feet with her hair. And the sweet smell from the perfume filled the whole house.

⁴ Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' followers who would later turn against him, was there. Judas said,⁵ "This perfume was worth three hundred coins. ^a Why wasn't it sold and the money given to the poor?"⁶ But Judas did not really care about the poor; he said this because he was a thief. He was the one who kept the money box, and he often stole from it.

⁷ Jesus answered, "Leave her alone. It was right for her to save this perfume for today, the day for me to be prepared for burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me."

The Plot Against Lazarus

⁹ A large crowd of Jews heard that Jesus was in Bethany. So they went there to see not only Jesus but Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead.¹⁰ So the leading priests made plans to kill Lazarus, too.¹¹ Because of Lazarus many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus.



DISCUSSION: Three similar events are recorded in the other Gospels. Two are the same event from a different perspective, the third is a totally different event - similar but different person. In Matthew and Mark it says Jesus was at the home of Simon the Leper, could be that Martha was married to Simon the Leper. This embalming perfume was an commodity many people invested in like gold.

As this chapter opens, it is only six days until the Passover and Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus repeated the truths He had been stressing, and we are given a special insight into how Jesus Himself felt as the tension grew. We will also see in brief vignettes the reactions of those around Jesus.

1. When did Jesus arrive in Bethany? (12:1)

2. What was done in honor of Jesus in Bethany? (12:2)

3. What did Mary do to Jesus? (12:3)

Normally only a menial slave would attend to someone's feet. And Mary wiped Jesus feet with her hair which the Jews considered to be a woman's glory and a Jewish woman never unbound her hair in public - it was a mark of loose morals.

4. How do you interpret Mary's feelings and reasons for what she does in 12:3? Was she knowingly doing what Jesus said in verse 7?

5. Given the value of the perfume (v. 5), how would you have reacted as you watched Mary? Why?

6. How did Judas respond to Mary's act? (12:4-5)

7. What motivated Judas's response to Mary's act? (12:6)

8. Why did Jesus say that Mary had anointed Him with perfume? (12:7)

9. How does Jesus interpret Mary's action?

10. What did Jesus say about the poor? (12:8) How is his comment especially applicable to Judas?

11. What attitudes about Himself, His mission, and His friends' priorities does Jesus express in 12:7-8?

12. Mary's act involved a year's wages, Judas' payment would maybe buy an ox, what value did they put on Jesus life?

13. Why did the large crowd come to Mary and Martha's home? (12:9) What really motivated them?

14. What did the chief priests plan to do? (12:10)

15. What motive did the chief priests have? (12:11)

16. Why did the Jewish Leader want Lazarus dead?

Similar accounts of the same event:

Matthew 26:6-13 (NIV)

⁶ While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, ⁷ a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. ⁸ When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. ⁹ "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." ¹⁰ Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹ The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. ¹² When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Mark 14:1-9 (NIV)

¹ Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. ² "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot." ³ While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of

pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. ⁴ Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume?" ⁵ It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. ⁶ "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. ⁹ I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Different event: Luke 7:36-50 (NIV)

³⁶ Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ³⁸ and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. ³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know

who is touching him and what kind of woman she is--that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. ⁴¹ "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. ⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." ⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹ The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

REFLECTION:

1. Most likely you have never been involved in planning someone else's murder; but, have you ever wished someone would disappear, or found yourself hoping they would make some kind of humiliating mistake that would ruin their career or reputation? Have you secretly desired to have their power or position and justified the wish by claiming "I could do a better job"?
2. How do you worship Jesus with your resources?
3. What concern should we have for the poor among us?
4. In what way can we help those less fortunate than ourselves?
5. Why are there poor people?

6. How do we selfishly use God's resources for our own pleasure?
7. When have we masked our own selfishness with the appearance of concern for others?
8. How can you worship and honor God with your resources today?
9. How can you help someone less fortunate than yourself this week?
10. What impure motives do you need to confess to God and ask Him to purify?

