

# Mary of Bethany

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[ 0 : 00 ] to words which we find in the post and read in the Gospel of John, chapter 12. And we can read from the beginning of the chapter.

John's Gospel, chapter 12, from the beginning. 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 at supper, and Martha served. But Lazarus was one of them that sat at table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spicing art, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.

And the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then, says one of the 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 said he, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then, said Jesus, let her alone.

[ 1 : 28 ] Against the day of my burying has she kept this, for the poor always ye have with you, but me ye have not always.

This is a very interesting chapter. It's a chapter that's made up of proclamations of the glory of Christ.

And it's a chapter in which there are three particular incidents recorded for us. There is, first of all, the supper at Bethany.

Then there is the entrance into Jerusalem. And lastly, there is the quest of certain Greeks.

These three incidents bind this chapter together. And today, by the leading of the Lord, we're hoping to look at this first incident, what happened at the supper in Bethany.

[ 2 : 47 ] Now I would like to look at this incident from three different angles. First of all, I would like just to consider the setting of this incident, the setting in which the incident took place.

We have a supper being made for Jesus in the house, as we find out from other quotients of the gospels in the house of Simon the leper.

And then secondly, I would like just to note the heart of this incident. Then took Mary, a pound of ointment of spicing iron, very costly, and anointing of the feet of Jesus and wife to speak with her hair.

And the house was filled with the order of the ointment. And then thirdly, I would like to look from different characters in the story at the effects that this incident had in people's lives.

First of all, then we're going to look tonight at the setting of this incident. Now, you notice that this chapter 12 and the incident that we have recorded at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper is here as a sequel to the raising of Lazarus.

[ 4 : 24 ] And I think it's all tied up with the raising of Lazarus. In fact, it seems to me that this supper that was prepared for Jesus is, if anything, a supper of thanksgiving, a feast of thanksgiving for the wonderful deed that was done in Bethany when Lazarus was raised out of his grave.

And it seems that this whole incident in its setting foreshadows glory, what glory is going to be. It was almost what we could call a foretaste of heaven on earth for the people who were gathered there at the supper in Bethany.

So, it seems that there were at least 17 people there. Jesus and his disciples and also the family at Bethany.

There was Mary and Martha and Lazarus. But I would like us to begin by looking at Lazarus being at this supper.

He sat there at the table with Jesus. He was seated in the company of the one he loved most in the world.

[ 5 : 50 ] He was seated in the company of the one to whom he owed most. What a privilege it must have been for Lazarus at this time in the very sequel of what happened in chapter 11.

What a privilege it must have been for him to be seated there at the table with the Lord. It was indeed for Lazarus, I'm sure, a foretaste of glory.

It was an earnest of what was awaiting him when he was going to be with Jesus forever. That at supper on that particular evening, he sat in the presence of the one whom the family of Bethany loved to call the master.

But then notice, Martha was there. Lazarus was there and all we read about him is that he was seated in the company of the Lord. It's almost as if he was so happy basking in the sunshine of the presence of Emmanuel.

But then, Martha was there. And oh, what a different Martha to the Martha we saw in Luke chapter 10.

[ 7 : 07 ] Do you remember what Martha was doing in Luke 10? Martha was serving. And what's she doing here? Martha is serving here as well.

But what a difference. You know, before we go on, as I said, this seems to me to be a foretaste of heaven. Do you remember what the book of Revelation tells us about God's children in heaven? It just says one little sentence and what a shaft of light it casts on what heaven is going to be like for them. And his servants do serve him.

And his servants do serve him. And here is Martha at the supper feast in Bethany. And what's she doing? She's serving her blessed Lord.

But do you notice the difference between Martha's service here and the service of Martha in Luke 10? Do you remember what it says there? Martha was cumbered with much serving.

[ 8 : 15 ] And Martha began to complain and to be irritated both by her sister and by the master. Irritated by everything.

But there's no irritation here. You see, here was a Martha who is in the circle of whom it is said, and thou all thy children even Martha all thy children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of thy children.

Thank God that we are a master children of God that puts us right and rebukes us and even chastens us when we go wrong.

Thank God that we are such a master. even when our service is wrong he puts us right why does he do it? So that we will learn to be amongst those servants who do serve him.

Amen. Mary was there. Mary was at the feast. Mary was at the supper. And where was she? She was in her usual place. Mary worshipped at the feet of Jesus.

[ 9 : 32 ] And I don't want to say too much about Mary because when we come to the heart of this incident we are going to try and concentrate on Mary. So we are just going to pass it by that the one that I do all is this there was Rome in this supper for Mary for Martha for Lazarus.

Why? Because the Lord loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. And there's Rome at this supper for everyone that the Lord loved.

There's Rome at the heavenly supper that this was a full taste of for them all. But you know the supper would have been a very empty supper apart from the presence of one another.

Jesus was there. And oh, this is the wonder of wonders. where Jesus said, till heaven there and he was blessed.

He shared this meal. Do you know what somebody said about him at this meal? It was his joy.

Listen to this. It was his joy to behold and to share in their joy.

[ 10 : 47 ] Isn't that lovely? It was his joy to behold and to share in their joy. And that's what heaven is going to be.

It is his joy to behold and to share in their joy. Because he says, Behold I and the children that God has given me.

And what's he saying when he says, Behold I and the children that God has given me. He says, I behold and I share in their joy.

Wonder of wonders that that's what it should be. But no, we don't want to spend all the time on the setting of the incident. We want to come to the heart of the incident.

And let me tell you what I think the heart of this incident really is. It says, Before the hands of enemies could be laid on Jesus, the hands of love anointed him.

[ 11 : 55 ] Oh friends, isn't that wonderful? In the valley of the shadow of death through which the Son of God was passing, that there were hands of love that anointed him.

That there was a broken box of alabaster full of spikenard very costly that was poured out on his head and on his feet and that there was one who cared so much that she would wipe his feet with the hairs of her head.

Wonder of wonders. This is where we come to Mary now. And I want us to look at this act of Mary because usually, you know, we think of Mary as the silent one, the quiet listener, the noble learner, as we saw in the last two weeks.

But tonight we're looking at Mary, the ardent lover. We have, first of all, the quiet listener. Then we have the noble learner.

But now we have the ardent lover. And you know this, my friend, love must always act. Love must always act. It must always express itself in deed.

[ 13 : 12 ] This is love, that it be expressed not in word, but in deed and in truth. And where did her deeds express themselves?

Her deeds of love expressed themselves at the feet of the Savior. That's where they expressed themselves. She went to the feet of Jesus.

Now let's look at one or two things about this act of Mary of Bethany as she expressed her love to her master. The first thing we can say is this, it was a loving act.

And you know what makes me feel that it was such a loving act is this. It wasn't just an act that was carried out on the spur of the moment.

You know, some people think that the greatest acts of love were acts of spontaneity that happened in the twinkling of an eye that happened in a moment.

[ 14 : 12 ] But no, I think we can say that this loving act of Mary was a thoughtful act. It was an act into which she had put much premeditation.

sometimes people tend to give me the impression that premeditation isn't a spiritual way of living. That you're not supposed to think about things. That everything must be done spontaneously and in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. But you know this my friends, the most spiritual acts of our lives are acts that are given great premeditation.

Oh, my dear child of God, remember that one of the secrets of our spiritual life, one of the secrets of the kind of life that Mary had, is a life that is given over to concentration and meditation on the Master so that our acts of love are premeditated acts.

Notice what it says here about Martha's box of ointment of alabaster with the ointment of spikenard very costly. Listen to what it says.

[ 15 : 36 ] What did Jesus say about it? He said this, Let her own against the day of my burying that she kept this. Now the word kept there, do you know what it means?

It means against the day of my burying she diligently preserved this oil of spikenard, this ointment of spikenard.

The word kept there is used twice on the lips of our blessed Lord. The same word, the same care over which Martha, over which Mary acted in respect of this box of alabaster as you're keeping it for the Lord.

It's expressed concerning one other and they come from its own looks. Do you remember what Jesus says in his high priestly prayer in John 17?

He says, These, he says, are in the world. And they're there in the world, open to all the scorn that the world can ever throw on them and that the devil can throw on them.

[ 16 : 46 ] But he says something about them. These, he says, have I kept through thy name. And none of them is lost save the son of perdition.

I kept them. What did he do to them? He diligently preserved. And you know the same lips that said that he kept his people, said that Mary kept this box of alabaster.

All the diligence over which she looked on this box. Because, you know, my friends, in her premeditation, it seems to me that there was a shaft of heavenly light given to the soul of this ardent lover that said for his study, I'm going to keep this.

I'm going to keep this. You know, it's very interesting. There were other women that kept sweet spices for his study. But it was after he died there the privilege of going to the tomb that was empty. Little good were the spices and the ointments that it repaired. When they came to the tomb, the stone was sold away. But Mary, in her premeditating love, found a use for that ointment of

Spikenard very costly.

[18:19] She found a use for it and she anointed him prior to his burial, prior to his death. Oh, she grasped the moment that she was given.

You know what, there's a text of scripture wings in my ears as I consider Mary of Bethany and it says, redeeming the time, redeeming the time for the days are evil.

You see, here was a woman who had learned the secret of hitting the nail at the right time and in the right place.

It was a loving act, it was a thoughtful act, it was a humble act. Where did she go? She went to his feet and she wiped his feet with the hairs of her head.

What did she do? What did she do? She wiped his feet with the hairs of her head. What were her hairs? Her hairs were her glory.

[19:20] That's what the Bible says. The woman's hair is her glory and therefore in the worship of God let the woman's head be covered because her hair is her glory.

And what was she doing? She was laying her glory in the dust. Oh, Mary, you knew what worship really entailed.

You knew that worship meant laying her glory in the dust. You knew that worship entailed wiping the head of the feet of your Savior with the hairs of your head.

You glowed what laid by. And all the glory in this incident at Bethany belonged to Emmanuel God with us. That's what it means.

That's what it means to be a spiritual worshipper. A spiritual worshipper is one who learns by the grace of God to lay all glory by and to be like Jesus.

[20:25] Mighty he lays his glory by, born of man, no man, only die. And that's what Mary learned when she went to his feet, to wash his feet with the hairs of her head.

She was putting her glory down. She became a nobody. She was putting her glory to the feet of Jesus. And there she learned the spirituality and the humility that becomes a real worshipper of the Lord.

You see, it was not only a humble act, it was a devoted act. If you look at what was made up in this act, there was four things. Adoration, homage, worship, and blessing.

In fact, as Mary went down there to the feet of Jesus, what could she say? She could say this, he must increase, he must increase, but I must decrease.

That's what love always learns when love comes to worship Jesus. Faith in Mary had laid hold on the fact that he was going to die.

[21:48] Her faith laid hold on what faith always lays hold on. And faith went to the feet of Jesus to pay her homage and her adoration and her worship and her love to the Saviour.

But what was the effect now of this incident? Well, the first effect that I want to mention is this. The house was filled with the order of the oil bed.

The whole house, not just the room. Did you notice that? Did you notice it doesn't say the room was filled with the odour of the ointment?

That would be wonderful and yet it would be no wonder that the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

And you know, my friends, when in the house of God, the pillar and ground of truth, the church of Christ, when men are taught real spiritual worship, as Mary was taught real spiritual worship, the whole house will be filled with the fragrant odour of the ointment.

[23:09] Do you know, that's I believe, my friends, the difference between a living New Testament church and a stagnant pool? Worship.

That's the difference. Where the spirit of worship, you have a living church. And where the spirit of worship dies, you've got a stagnant pool.

That's what the church in all day needs most of all. It needs a fresh vision that would bring it with Mary to break the box of alabaster.

Because you see what happened in this incident. How was the house pool? Because you see, my friends, that spiritual worship always contained a cameo of what the Lord himself is to his church. What happened here was this. There was the costliness of that ointment in the box, in the alabaster box, and it was so precious. the value of the person of Christ was foretold in what Mary had to do here.

[ 24 : 22 ] But you see, there were two other things that had to happen. The box had to be broken, the box had to be broken, and the ointment had to be poured.

Box broken and ointment poured, ointment, and what was signified in the broken box and in the poured ointment, was surely this, that our Savior was a broken Savior.

Our Savior had his body broken for us, this is my body broken for you, this is the new and the living way by which you will come into my presence, by my broken flesh.

And there you had in the worship of Mary, that fragrance that was nothing but a reflection of Jesus in his finished work, as his life was poured out a ransom for many.

There you have it. Notice, my friend, the effect on the house. But notice then the effect on Judas.

[ 25 : 35 ] Notice the effect on Judas Iscariot. He was led to criticize Mary. Notice what it says, Then said one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him.

Why was not disowned when sold for 300 pence and given to the poor? God, you know what you have in Judas Iscariot?

You have base covetousness. Base covetousness. That was the sin of Judas Iscariot. Base covetousness masquerading under the guise of benevolence.

benevolence. This covetousness masquerading under the guise of benevolence. And you know, my friend, the spirit of Judas is in the world today.

Just give me, let me give you one example. Look at the country in which we live today. You'll find that there will be fun runs for charity, and always these fun runs will take place on the Sabbath day.

[ 26 : 53 ] And people will say, oh, you're not going to be a killjoy, you're not going to spoil the half marathon, it's being done for charity. It's being done for charity.

What is it? I'll tell you it's the spirit of Judas Iscariot. Base covetousness, whatever it masquerades as, because it loves not the Lord, and it loves not his day, and it masquerades in the guise of benevolence, but it's nothing but the spirit of Judas, the spirit of the world.

And isn't it interesting, I want to give you three examples now of what happened to Judas Iscariot here, because you have them in scripture again and again. Do you remember when the voice of the Lord proclaimed the sonship of Christ at the banks of Jordan or over Jordan's river when he was baptized?

This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And immediately that proclamation was made. You have Satan being stirred up and he is led of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Then again you've got the same thing in the case of Mary here. Mary anoints Jesus and you've immediately got this spirit of persecution coming out.

[ 28 : 29 ] And you have the same thing if you remember when Jesus was born at Bethlehem and when the wise men made their way to Jesus and they made their confession of Jesus, immediately the spirit of Herod was stirred up.

Always you see when you come into the presence of a worshiping church and a church which has learned the key of spiritual worship, you'll find Satan stirred up immediately.

And you know the sad thing, Judas wasn't the only disciple to be carried away with his spirit. Judas wasn't the only disciple to show this enmity because there were other disciples.

You read this incident in Matthew 26 at verse 8 tonight when you go home, it's there as well, and in Matthew 26 you read these words, the disciples said, why this waste?

Why this waste? How would you answer them? How would you answer these disciples that have fallen into the trap of the base covetousness of Judas Iscariot?

[ 29 : 47 ] How would you answer them? Well, I think you could say this to them. Love, all disciples of Christ learn that love is never wasted.

Sacrifice is never ever wasted because you know love, true love will grudge nothing on the Lord.

Love, that's what you must learn, my friend. Love grudges nothing. There's nothing too much to do for you, Lord. If it's done from the spirit of love, nothing will be too much.

you will grudge nothing if you are under the control of the spirit of love. Oh, you're saying,

somebody's saying, it's not fair having to come out an extra night in the week to a prayer meeting.

It's not fair having to go to these prayer meetings in the midweek. There are Christians like that, you know. Oh, my friend, when you're under the control of the spirit of love, love learns never to grudge.

[ 30 : 55 ] It's only when you're under the Judah spirit that there will be a grudge in your worship and there will be a grudge in your service. Love doesn't grudge.

And you know, I think Martha and Mary and Lazarus that evening at supper in Bethany knew that love bears no grudges.

It bears no grudges. But what were the effects on Jesus? The effects of this on Judas Iscariot was base covetousness masquerading in the guise of benevolence.

But what was the effect on Jesus? Three or four words. There are these disciples, there is Judas Iscariot, what are they doing?

They are turning on dear Mary of Bethany and Jesus speaks to them in three words, let her alone.

[ 32 : 05 ] What have we here? I'll tell you what we have. We have the good shepherd jumping to the defense of one of his sheep when the wolf is coming to tear it.

and you know as I know that the wolf always wants to tear God's sheep. The wolf never wants to tear the vermin.

The wolf never wants to tear the snakes or the beasts of the wilderness. The wolf is always out to tear the sheep. But oh Mary of Bethany, you are one of the Lord's flock, and the Lord jump to your defense.

And what defense did he make of you? Well, it's not in this chapter, but it's in the two others, in Matthew and in Mark. She has done what she could.

What she did is a memorial, and it will never be forgotten. See, the spirit that moved Mary was this. The spirit that moved Mary was that she wanted to do something sacred to the memory of Jesus Christ when she broke that box of alabaster ointment.

[ 33 : 24 ] She anointed him for his burial, and her memorial tablet to Jesus, it lasted but for a brief moment.

But as she made her, as she made her memorial, he, she, somebody put it like this, listen to this, Mary momentarily embalmed Christ, but he embalmed her memory forever.

Mary momentarily embalmed Christ, but he embalmed her memory forever. and what did he say? Wherever this gospel is preached, the memory of what Mary did would be told.

And tonight, you know, in Greyfriars Free Church in Vernaise, we've got a fulfillment of that prophecy of our dear Lord, who promised that Mary's act of love and devotion and humility would never ever be forgotten.

And in so doing, he rebukes the poor, he rebukes the twelve, he says, the poor you have always with you, but me you have not always.

[ 34 : 53 ] You know what Mary did when she did this act of love? she grasped the fleeting opportunity, grasped the fleeting opportunity which would soon pass them by and could never be recalled.

Me, ye have not always. Oh, child of God, remember that our opportunities in this world, they always have this character in them, they're fleeting and they're passing by.

May God bless his word. Friends, the time is gone. Let us sing together in conclusion the last four verses of Psalm 118.

Psalm 118, the last four verses at verse 24. This is the day God made in it will joy triumphantly say it now I pray thee Lord, I pray send now prosperity.

We'll sing through to the end of the psalm from verse 24. This is the day God made in it. salud for for uh to please you do of are to Pixie iPhone Without a straight path, yaitu n■■■ I contro d'ingn Student Seven Year Number 9 hashtag Thank you.