

For several weeks we've been discussing who Jesus is based on His personal encounters w/ people during His earthly ministry. We've learned Jesus is GENEROUS, that He is MERCY, that He is HEALER, that He is POWER, and that He is LIFE. This AM, we're going to learn how Jesus is WORTHY of our worship.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table w/ him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet w/ her hair. And the house was filled w/ the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this b/c he cared about the poor but b/c he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." John 12:1-8

Have you ever noticed how some people can be negative about anything? I heard of a man who visited his barber to get a trim. While there, he shared w/ the barber that he was leaving on a trip to Rome where he hoped to see the Pope. Being the critical type, the barber said, “Rome? Don’t go there; that’s the dirtiest city in the world. And don’t fly United, the food is awful, the seats are crowded, and they’re never on time. Besides, you’ll never get close to the Pope – you’re wasting your time/money.” After a few weeks, the man returned and said to the barber, “You were wrong about United. The food was good, the seats were fine, and the flight was on time. And Rome was charming. I not only visited the Vatican, I walked right up to the Pope, knelt before him, and he placed his hand on my head and spoke a personal word to me.” The barber was flabbergasted. He said, “What did the Pope say?” He said, “My son, you need a new barber b/c that’s the worst haircut I’ve ever seen!”

Today we’re going to witness a very telling moment in Scripture that shows us the difference b/w a person w/ a loving/positive spirit and a person w/ a critical/negative spirit.

To grasp the situation at hand, beyond John’s account, we also gain some insight from *Matthew 26* and in *Mark 11*. Apparently Jesus and His disciples had been invited to a dinner in His honor at Simon the Leper’s home in Bethany (6) days before the Passover. Also attending this dinner were Mary, Martha, and Lazarus – who were also from Bethany.

If you remember, Mary and Martha sought out Jesus to heal their brother Lazarus – who died and Jesus brought back to life. Simon, by all indications, was also touched by Jesus as he was healed of leprosy – otherwise, according to **Levitical Law**, he wouldn't have been able to own a house in the city since lepers were outcast. So what we have here is a shindig in Jesus' honor hosted by Simon but served by Martha/Mary.

While everyone was enjoying the evening, an amazing moment of love/worship took place that wouldn't soon be forgotten as Mary took her most prized possession and poured it over Jesus. I believe we have much to learn from Mary about how Jesus is worthy of our worship – and what is required to have a type of worship that's worthy of Jesus.

I Why is Jesus WORTHY of Worship?

On many occasions I've shared that – **every heart has a throne and every throne has a god – the question is who or what is sitting on the throne of your heart.**

Let me say it another way – *everyone worships something or someone at some time and in some way – ALWAYS!*

What is worship? Worship is the activity one gives to someone/something when they've pledged their devotion and allegiance. It involves one's mind, emotions, and will. It is about what you're willing to align your life to.

William Temple wrote – *Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It's the quickening of conscience by His holiness; It's the nourishment of our mind w/ His truth; It's the purifying of our imagination by His beauty; It's the opening of the heart to His love; It's the surrender of our will to His purpose... all of this gathered up in adoration...*

The crucial factor in worship in the church isn't the form of worship, but the state of the hearts of the saints. If our corporate worship isn't the expression of our individual worshiping lives, it is unacceptable. If you think you can live anyway you want and then go to church on Sunday and turn on worship w/ the saints, you're wrong. *John MacArthur*

So what's your view of worship? Is it what happens in church on Sunday? Is it based on an emotional experience, a spiritual thought, or a performance of rituals? True worship isn't defined by a place, feeling, or ritual; but by a desperate heart seeking to be rightly aligned and honoring of God.

And we're all good at it. Think about it. Today, people will align their lives in an act of worship today – but not at church, but in NFL stadiums as people will invest their time, money, and attention to tailgate, dress in team colors, paint their faces, yell/scream, and even bet. They'll hold nothing back to cheer their team – and **this will be true worship** – only it is the worship of an idol instead of the Creator.

A Jesus is Worthy b/c of Who He IS

Mary apparently understood what everyone else appeared to have missed or forgotten – Jesus wasn't just a man – He was the Messiah/Savior – God wrapped in flesh for the sake of rescuing us from sin and into a relationship w/ God.

Jesus isn't just some man who walked the earth; He was God in the flesh – God's single solution to the problem of sin. If for no other reason – this makes Him worthy of our worship.

B Jesus is Worthy b/c of What He has DONE

For Mary, He was worthy for healing her brother Lazarus. But for us, He is worthy b/c He laid down His life on the cross for our sins to make it possible for us to be forgiven and restored into a saving relationship w/ God.

C Jesus is Worthy b/c of WHAT He is DOING

For Mary, He was worthy b/c He was present to love, teach, and heal the people – and b/c she got that He was going to lay down His life for people. For us, we see that He is still moving and leading, drawing people to Himself to rescue the Creation from the power/penalty of sin. We see that He is interceding on our behalf as our great High Priest and holding our salvation secure in His hands.

D Jesus is Worthy b/c of What He Will DO

For Mary, I think she understood, at least better than most that Jesus came to lay down His life to give us all life. For us, we understand that He not only made salvation possible, but that one day, He will return to establish His kingdom and make an end to sin – He is WORTHY!

There is a 2nd item we learn from Mary's anointing of Jesus – we learn just what makes our worship worthy of Jesus.

II What makes WORSHIP Worthy?

A A PERSONAL Act of Love

Jesus arrived in Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table w/ him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet w/ her hair. And the house was filled w/ the fragrance of the perfume. John 12:1-3

I imagine this was quite the moment. I can imagine these guys lounging around when Simon the Leper saying, “You know, I was a hopeless leper until Jesus touched me and made me clean again – He is the great physician.”

Not wanting to be out done, Peter chimed in, “Well, I was a poor fisherman when Jesus chose me – and now we’re so close He gave me the nickname, Rocky. Then Matthew spoke up, “Well, I was a former IRS agent for Rome when Jesus changed my life. Now I my life is about recording what Jesus says and does.” Finally Lazarus speaks, “That’s nothing. I was stone cold dead for (4) days when Jesus called my name – and here I am alive! He’s the author of life!”

And while this is happening and Martha was serving as usual – and Mary decided to do what only Mary could do.

So she slips out and goes to her house to recover her most prized possession – an alabaster container of spikenard – an expensive perfume. Now imagine the scene – as she returns, she steps out of the shadows and into the spotlight as she boldly approaches Jesus to open the bottle and begin pouring out the perfume on Him. Everyone was speechless. And while no words were recorded, by all appearances, Mary made it clear the only thing in life that matters is honoring Jesus w/ the best we have. She didn’t offer Jesus her least and leftovers but her 1st and best – and she w/held nothing.

From the Gospel writers, we learn she anointed His head and His feet. She likely started pouring the expensive perfume on His head, and b/c some of it remained, she also poured on His feet – where she wiped it w/ her hair.

This is huge. A woman's hair was her glory. In essence, she offered her most prized possession and then exchanged her glory for His glory to bring honor to Him.

It was the worship of a woman who didn't know the rules – an unpredictable, untamed heart on a quest to see Jesus glorified... People in love do crazy things. *Matt Redman*

That's what Mary did. She loved Jesus w/ all of her heart, mind, soul, strength – and possessions. **She gave Him all that she was and all that she had** – to honor Him.

B A PRICELESS Act of Surrender

Worship isn't coming to God to **GET** something; it's going to Him **GIVE** something. The perfume Mary poured was very expensive – but **when you love someone, you seldom think about how much it'll cost.**

I heard of a man who went to buy perfume for his girlfriend. The sales lady showed him a bottle costing \$100. He said, "Can you show me something cheaper?" So she showed him a bottle costing \$50. He said, "I'm looking for something a little cheaper." So she produced a bottle costing \$35. The man asked, "Do you have anything cheaper?" So she presented a tiny bottle costing \$15. The man said, "Closer. But can you show me anything cheaper?" The lady smiled and said, "I can." And she handed him a mirror.

Mark tells us Mary didn't just pour a little of the perfume on Jesus, she broke the jar and poured it all on Him. John's account says the perfume was worth 300 denarii (a year's wages) – and she poured it all out on Jesus in an act of worship. To Mary, no expense was to be spared. She expressed her love for Jesus by giving her most prized possession and breaking the bottle symbolized her brokenness before the Lord.

We learn from Mary that true, God-honoring worship is a life that is opened, broken, and spilled out to Jesus.

C A PERSECUTED Act of Selflessness

You might think everyone would applaud such an act of worship, but just the opposite occurred. The disciples, led by Judas, started criticizing, “What a waste!” Let me tell you – **there'll always be people waiting to criticize you once you seek to align your life w/ Jesus and desire to honor Him w/ your life – possibly even from w/in the church.**

But one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ‘Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.’ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. John 12:4-6

I find this part of the story sadly fascinating. For juxtaposed to Mary's offering is Judas' offering of criticism/betrayal. *Mary w/held nothing from Jesus, Judas w/drew everything from Him. Mary surrendered all, Judas surrendered nothing. She wasted nothing; he wasted everything.*

Think about it. Mary gave her greatest, most cherished, expensive possession to honor Jesus, while Judas sold Jesus out for the price of a slave – 30 pieces of silver.

What a contrast! **What's Jesus worth to you?** To Mary, He was worth everything and she was willing to be criticized for it. While for Judas, Jesus was worth nothing.

Can you say today Jesus is worth everything to you? **Everything you are and everything you have.**

BTW – There are (2) important things to note here:

- 1 No matter how spiritual criticism may sound, it's always indicative of a heart out of sync w/ God.
- 2 Judas' life is a warning for all who pretend to know and serve God but whose hearts are actually far from God and only concerned for self. It isn't the surrendered life that's wasted; but the unsundered life that's wasted.

son of perdition (John 17:12) means *son of waste*.

Even as we sit here today, people are driving by our church thinking – what a waste! They think we’re wasting our time, money, and energy. **But the worship of the One who is truly worthy of worship is never a waste.**

D A PERPETUAL Act of Inspiration

Jesus said this act of worship would be commemorated all around the world. Jesus said, *“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.”* Matthew 26:13

I love this! The disciples said, “What a waste!” Jesus said, “What an investment!” The disciples said, “How foolish!” Jesus said, “How beautiful!” Why? The disciples could only see the COST – Jesus could only see the VALUE.

I find it interesting that today, some 2000 years later, we’re still telling this story of Mary’s act of loving worship. If you went up to someone in the Roman Empire in the 1st century and asked, “Who’ll have a greater impact on the future? Nero or Mary?” No doubt they would’ve said Nero. But few of us think of Nero today. We name our daughters Mary – while maybe, we might name our dogs Nero!

If you want to build a life that matters and resonates into eternity; then get at the feet of Jesus and worship Him.

E A PLEASING Act of Adoration

There's one final lesson I take away from this beautiful act of worship. Worship isn't about coming to get something from God; it's all about giving Him something. And when you bless the Lord, you can't help but be blessed in return.

And the house was filled w/ the fragrance of the perfume.

Did you notice what happened when Mary poured out the perfume? John wrote that the fragrance filled the house. And when she wiped His feet w/ her hair, that fragrance was now on her. **What she had poured out on Jesus came back to her as a blessing** – a fragrant aroma.

You can imagine that for the rest of the evening and into the next day, wherever Mary went she carried w/ her the fragrance of worship.

I can tell when I'm around someone who's poured out to Jesus. There's a certain fragrance about them. Paul wrote,

For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 2 Cor.2:15

I read a true story about a 9 yr. old boy from rural TN. One day a church w/ a bus ministry knocked on his door. The boy answered the door and was greeted the bus pastor. The bus pastor asked if his parents were home and the small boy told him his parents take off every weekend and leave him at home to care for his little brother. Surprised, the bus pastor asked a few more questions, and wanting to help, he asked to boy if he could sit down and talk w/ him. As they sat on an old couch w/ springs exposed, the pastor asked the boy if he went to church. The boy replied, "I've never been to church in my life." The pastor said, "Really. You've never once been to church? The boy replied, "Never once." Then the bus pastor said, "Well son, more important than going to church, have you ever heard the greatest love story ever told?" He proceeded to share the Gospel w/ the boy. The boy's heart began to be tender to the Gospel, so when the pastor asked if the boy wanted to receive God's gift of love, the boy exclaimed, "You bet! So the boy and the bus pastor got on their knees and kid invited Jesus into his heart receiving Jesus as His Savior. After they stood up and the pastor asked if he could pick the boy and his brother up for church the next AM. "Sure," the boy replied. The next AM, the pastor arrived early and found the lights off. He let himself in and woke the boy and his brother and helped get them dressed. As they got on the bus, he fed them a donut as they drove to the church. Now keep in mind this boy had never been to church before. In the service, the boy just sat there clueless of what was going on. Then a few minutes into the service

these tall men walked down to the front and picked up some wooden plates. One of the men prayed as the boy watched in utter fascination. As they moved through the aisle collecting the offering, the boy was trying to figure out what was happening. All of a sudden, like a bolt of lightning, it hit the boy what was taking place. These people must be giving money to Jesus. As he reflected on the free gift of life he had received just 24-hours earlier. He searched his pockets for something to give to Jesus. But by the time the offering plate was being passed down his aisle, w/ a broken heart, he just passed it on saddened that he had nothing to give. As he continued to follow the plate as it was passed along, the boy suddenly had a bright idea. This 9 yr. old boy, in front of God and everyone, got up out of his seat, walked about (8) rows back, grabbed the usher by the coat and asked if he could hold the plate one more time. Once the usher handed him the plate, the boy did the most astounding thing I have ever heard of. He took the plate, sat it on the church floor and stepped into the center of it. As he stood there, he lifted his little head up and said, "Jesus, I don't have anything to give you today, but just me. I give you me!"

Today we all have a choice – like this boy and like Mary – we can worship Jesus by giving Him our all – or we can be like Judas and only be concerned for ourselves. You can attempt to use Him, or you can decide to be used by Him for His glory. The choice is yours to make.