

47. Jesus Was Anointed by Mary

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why many religious people reject Jesus. They reject Him because they know that Jesus and the Word of God expose their sinful actions and they are not ready to repent of their sin. In contrast, in our topic today, we are going to learn about one who had a great love for Jesus and showed that love by her actions.

We see that the time had come for Jesus to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. John 12:1-3 says, “Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.” Bethany was just a few minutes’ walk from Jerusalem. As a result, His arrival in this town six days before the Passover shows that the time that the Trinity planned before the foundation of the world for Jesus to die had come.

Jesus and His disciples arrived at the town of Bethany and they came to the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. It was only a few weeks earlier that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus and His disciples had eaten meals at this home on earlier trips to Jerusalem. Luke 10:40-41 tells what Martha said and did on one such visit. Those verses say, “But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.’ And Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.’” Here, we see that Martha was again the one who was serving the dinner to Jesus and His disciples.

In contrast, we see that Mary had done something very different on that previous visit. Luke 10:39, and 42 say, “And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word... ‘But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.’” In these verses, we see that Mary had chosen to just sit and listen to Jesus teach and Jesus said that privilege should not be taken from her. We see that Mary also did something very different on this visit. Mary chose to show her love for Jesus by anointing the feet of Jesus with a very expensive perfume.

We read that Mary took a pound (about twelve ounces by our modern measurements) of oil of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus. Spikenard came from the head or spike of a plant that was grown in the country of India. This spike produced a juice that gave a very wonderful smell. However, this ointment had to be brought from India to the land of Israel. As a result, this was very expensive oil and the amount that Mary poured on the feet of Jesus was worth more than a year’s wages. Then, we read that after pouring this ointment on the feet of Jesus that she wiped His feet with her hair. This was an act of great love. We see that the fragrant smell of this very expensive oil filled the entire house with the wonderful smell.

This great act of love by Mary caused a reaction by one of the disciples. John 12:4-8 says, “But

one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.'" We see that Judas was the disciple that reacted. Then, we are told that Judas was the disciple who later betrayed Him.

Judas made it sound like he had a great concern for the poor. A denarius was the main silver coin of the Roman Empire and was the amount of wages for a full day of work. Matthew 20:2 says, "Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard." In this passage, we see that the worker had agreed to work a twelve-hour day for this wage. Since this oil was worth three hundred denarii, it was more than a laborer made in a year of work so Judas knew that it was worth a large amount. Judas suggested that the size of the value could have been a great help to the poor.

However, it was not his concern for the poor that caused Judas to say what he did. We see that Judas was actually a thief. Jesus had given him the responsibility to carry the money box and the money that was in it. The disciples realized later that Judas used to take part of the money that was put in the money box for himself. This leads us to ask the question, "Why would Jesus appoint Judas the one who was to be responsible for the money when Jesus knew that he was stealing part of the money? Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Jesus knew throughout His ministry that Judas had an evil heart. John 6:70-71 says, "Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?' He spoke of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve." Jesus knew the condition of the heart of Judas but Jesus wanted Judas to know the condition of his own heart. That was why Jesus gave Judas the responsibility to carry the money box. In this way, Jesus provided Judas with a reminder of the condition of his heart every time that he stole money from the money box. Jesus recognized that it was more important for Judas to know the condition of his heart than it was for Jesus to make sure that none of the money was stolen. Each time Judas took some of the money for himself he was reminded of the condition of his sinful heart.

Jesus just told Judas to stop speaking against Mary. This Jesus added, "She has kept this for the day of My burial." Matthew and Mark wrote in greater detail the words that Jesus spoke about Mary. Mark 14:6-9 says, "But Jesus said, 'Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.'" Mary may have had the best understanding of any of the followers of Jesus of His statements about His coming death. Jesus said that she had come before the time of His burial to anoint Him for that burial.

Jesus reminded Judas and the other disciples that there was always an opportunity for them to help the poor but that He would not always be there for Mary to show her love for Jesus. The other disciples did have a great concern for the poor and continued to have that attitude throughout their ministry. Galatians 2:9-10 says, “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. *They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.” Their concern was shown more than twenty years later when they encouraged Paul and Barnabas to have this same concern for the poor.

Meanwhile, the religious leaders saw that their power was slipping away. John 12:9-11 says, “Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.” Word quickly spread among the Jews in Jerusalem that Jesus was at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus which was just a few minutes’ walk from the city of Jerusalem.

As a result, many Jews came to visit the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They actually came for two reasons. These Jews wanted to see Jesus. However, they also wanted to see Lazarus since they had heard earlier that Lazarus had been raised from the dead and many people probably saw this as a good opportunity to see a person that had been raised from the dead now that he had been alive from the dead for several weeks. Those two things together caused a great many Jews to walk from Jerusalem to Bethany so that they could see both Jesus and Lazarus.

However, the chief priests had a very different reaction when they heard that Jesus was at the home of Lazarus and many people were going to see them. The chief priests saw that many of the Jews had believed in Jesus because of the fact that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. As a result, the chief priests began to plot to put Lazarus to death also. Here, we see the results of their fear of the loss of control over the people. The chief priests and Pharisees had been plotting the death of Jesus from the day that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Now, they added Lazarus to those that they were willing to kill in order to maintain their control over the people. Here, we see the evilness of the heart when people are controlled by sin. These men who were supposed to be religious leaders were ready to kill innocent people in order to maintain their power and control over the other people.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand both the love of Mary for Jesus and also the hatred of those who felt like they were losing their power and control. This is why it is important to help our children understand the nature of sinful man. It is also the reason why we want to help them see how their lives are changed when they allow the love of Christ to take control of their hearts. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow in their understanding of both.