

# SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

## WEEK TWENTY-THREE: THE ANOINTING OF JESUS

### READING

1 Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead. 2 A dinner was prepared in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate with him. 3 Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus’ feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance. 4 But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, 5 “That perfume was worth a year’s wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.” 6 Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples’ money, he often stole some for himself. 7 Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.” John 12 (NLT)

### TEACHING

At this point in the gospel of John, we are entering the final week of Jesus’ life. He is the guest of honor at a banquet. Lazarus (the man Jesus raised from the dead) and his sisters, Mary and Martha, are present. During the meal, Mary did something that shocked the room. There were three surprises in what Mary did:

- 1) **The extravagance of her display of gratitude and worship.** This was a very expensive perfume and a large quantity of it. In today’s economy it would probably be worth around \$40,000! Her actions speak of Jesus’ unmatched worth to her.
- 2) **The anointing of his feet.** It was custom for a host to anoint his guests heads with some perfume, but not their feet. Mary pouring out this expensive perfume was an unexpected act of true devotion and great humility.
- 3) **The wiping of Jesus’ feet with her hair.** In this culture, a woman would not let her hair down in public for a variety of reasons. We learn here that Mary will not be contained by what others may think. She acts from a pure heart to worship her Savior.

**There are two very different responses:**

- 1) Judas makes what seems to be a logical argument. Mary seems wasteful, but her heart is pure. Judas seems resourceful, but his heart is not pure. He is greedy and he is a thief.
- 2) Jesus protects Mary. Jesus knew what was coming and it is very likely he smelled this perfume during his arrest, trial, beatings, and crucifixion – and the smell would have lingered even for his burial. Mary anointed Jesus for his burial while he was still alive. Her love for Jesus allowed her to do something that no one else could or would do.

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## RESPONSE

### OPENING QUESTION(S):

- What is the most expensive thing you own? What do you like about it?

### TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, what did Mary do for Jesus?
- Why did Mary give such an expensive gift to Jesus?

### CHILDREN:

- Who was at this banquet and who was the guest of honor?
- What did Mary do and why did she do it?
- What was different about how Judas and Jesus reacted?

### TEENAGERS:

- What was surprising about what Mary did?
- What was different about how Judas and Jesus reacted?
- What would an extravagant act of love and worship look like in your life?

### ADULTS:

- How do you view others who are more extravagant than you in their devotion to Jesus?
- What would an extravagant act of love and worship look like in your life?

## PRAYER

*God, I want to give you my very best. No one is worth as much as you and no one has done for me what you have. Help me to not give you my leftovers, but help me to give you my best. Make me a Mary – seated at your feet, pouring out my life and humbling myself to worship you no matter what others may think. Jesus, thank you that you went to the cross for both Judas and Mary. Thank you that your love for me is not dependent upon my love for you. Thank you that your love for me causes me to love you more and more. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

Does Jesus teach here that the poor don't matter? Absolutely not. In fact, his statement about the poor is a reference to an Old Testament passage (Dt. 15:11) that instructs the Israelites to care for the poor. It is clear throughout the OT and the NT that God's heart is for the poor and the outcast – regardless of why they are in their condition. Jesus' words here indicate that Mary understood the unique significance of the moment (less than a week from his death) while the others were blind to the plan and purposes of God in that time and in that place.