

John 12:1-8

1 Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 2 There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. 3 Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" 6 (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) 7 Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. 8 You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

The message today is about great love. There are different degrees of love but this love is so great that it is willing to sacrifice. This love comes from the heart of God. There are different degrees of faith but what people fail to appreciate is that we worship a God that is of the highest realm of love.

In today's Scripture the main character is Jesus. The setting is a dinner that has been prepared for him by his friends. I want you to take a minute and think about Mary. In the Bible there are many Mary's: the mother of Jesus, the mother of Mark who hosted the 1st Christian meeting in Jerusalem, the mother of James who was present at the crucifixion, and Mary Magdalene. Today I am going to be talking about Mary of Bethany. Her and her siblings, Martha and Lazarus, were close friend of Jesus. She opened her home to him and sat at his feet while he talked.

In chapter 10 the religious leaders try to kill Jesus so he goes to Perea, which is east of the Jordan River, where it is safe. In chapter 11 Lazarus became ill and the sisters sent for Jesus with the report "He whom you love is ill." The Gospel makes a point that Jesus loved Lazarus. This is not romantic but sincere love that comes from the heart. Jesus delays in returning to Judea. When Jesus is close to town Martha finds out about it and runs out to meet him. Then she finds Mary and tells her that Jesus is asking for her. Then Mary ran and fell at his feet and Jesus is moved by her tears. Jesus goes to the tomb where Lazarus is buried and raises him on the 4th day. This is a very significant event. Old Testament prophets multiplied food and brought people back to life. However, the raising of Lazarus is proof that Jesus is the giver of life. He has full power over death. This is not just someone that died a few minutes ago. This is a death that has already led to decomposition. Jesus says that he is the resurrection and the life. Jesus is the giver of life. This miracle was done in front of a large group of people and as a consequence the miracle became known to those that plotted to kill Jesus. Therefore, the resurrection of Lazarus became a death sentence for Jesus.

Mary would have known that Jesus is going to go to Jerusalem and she would have known that it is extremely dangerous for him to do so. She is also highly appreciative of Jesus for giving her brother back to her alive and well. She is very much devoted to Jesus and full of love and appreciation. She is hosting a dinner of appreciation for Jesus and is overwhelmed with emotion. Jesus saved her brother from death and now faces his own death. She responds by anointing his feet. In a tender act of compassion she

wiped his feet with her hair. This is love that comes from the heart. She uses an entire jar of expensive perfume. This shows the intensity of her emotions because impulsive anointing is a well meaning act of love. It is met with criticism but Jesus rebukes the criticism because love is the most important thing and her actions come from the heart.

Mary spent a year's wages on this act of devotion. Mary is a model of faithful discipleship. The words of Jesus confirm the arrival of his hour. The disciples have a limited amount of time to be with Jesus. Mary recognizes this limited time frame and responds to it. The disciples of Jesus are normal everyday people like you and me. We are people that Jesus loves and people that love him. The question for all of us is in regards to how we respond to this love. What do you do out of love and appreciation for what the Lord has done for you? Mary was overwhelmed with emotion because the Lord saved her brother and died for all of them. We should also be appreciative of the Lord for saving us and dying for us.