

WORSHIP

The immediate reaction of the resurrection of Lazarus was mixed. Some of the Jews who saw this believed in Jesus. The chief priests and Pharisees made it a law against seeing Jesus and not reporting the sighting to them.

It is six days before Passover, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus see Jesus. Instead of turning Him in, they gave a banquet in His honor. It is the main meal of the day. It is a meal of leisurely conversation. We do not know who all were there. Using information from the other gospels, we can account for Martha, Mary, Lazarus, Jesus, His twelve disciples, and may be Simon the leper. There may have been others.

Let's read what happens there in Bethany. It is recorded for us here in John 12:1-8.

¹ Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

² So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.

³ Mary then took a ^(a)pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

*⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to ^(b)betray Him, *said,*

⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for ^(c)three hundred denarii and given to poor people?"

⁶ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

⁷ Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep ^(d)it for the day of My burial.

⁸ For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

My focus this morning is on Mary. My focus will be on what did. She simply worshipped Jesus. We will discover that all the things she did were acts of worship. These acts of worship are not limited only to Mary or to her time, but they become timeless acts of worship that some even dare to do today.

Worship.

Old English *wordscip*, *wurðscip* (Anglian), *weorðscipe* (West Saxon)"condition of being worthy, honor, renown," from *weorð* "worthy". It first appeared in the English language around 1300.

It is giving honor to something or someone who is of great worth. It reflects who are what we value the most. It is not so much of what you say. But more, It is what you do. You can say you worship God. But if your actions, your life, your lifestyle do not match what you say, then you are not consistent with the true definition of worship. You show in your life and your lifestyle what or who you honor the most. Many times our lifestyle does not proclaim that we worship God.

Worship is more of a heart issue.

Worship is spiritual in nature. I must be in tune with and dependent on the Holy Spirit in presenting this sermon. You must be in tune with and dependent on the Holy Spirit in hearing and receiving this message in the areas of your life where it is needed.

Worship is not what we do for God as much as it is something we do for God.

Huh! Let me explain. A few weeks ago, when I had surgery, Jane and I had two of our deacons there for us. They were there to support us, to be a company to us. For that, I am truly grateful. In that sense, we do not worship. Worship is what we do for God in the sense that we receive from Him. We want an experience with Him. We want to drink from Him. We want the blessing of His grace, His forgiveness, and His strength. Are you here to drink from the springs of God? Are you here to be infused with His power within our lives? Are we here with the anticipation of having an encounter with Him that is lifechanging? That is the heart of worship.

As a deer pants for water, so my soul thirsts for You. That's the heart of worship. And, as God acts on our lives in worship, we respond in ways that acknowledges the high value and worth that He is to us. That's the heart of worship.

Worship is not something we do that benefits God. It is something we do that benefits us through God raining down His blessings upon us.

In this passage, Mary is responding to how God has revealed Himself to her family through the Lord Jesus Christ. He had just revealed Himself. "I am the resurrection and the Life." He demonstrated that claim by raising Lazarus from the dead.

Mary has seen His glory. Mary has tasted His grace. Mary has glimpsed His truth. And Mary's heart has been formed by this experience. And she has reached for the most lavish thing she could find to express the inexpressible: a heart that matches His worth. How much is He worth to you? Your actions show it.

Let's look at her actions.

Her worship was sacrificial

This is reflected in the ointment. It is a perfume of pure nard. The language gives evidence of what this perfume was. It was a fragrant oil extracted from the root and the spike of a plant that was native to the mountains of northern India. The nard was pure. The nard was costly because of where it came from. Judas tells us how much it was worth. He loved money enough to know what different things cost. He prices it at 300 denarii. One denarii is one day's wage for the average person of that day. Using that as a standard, it would be worth in the neighborhood of \$25,000. From Matthew, we learn that the vial in which it was contained added to the cost. She broke open the vial and poured the entire contents on the feet of Jesus.

Three hundred days' wages is gone in one moment of lavish affection! Think what she could have bought with this! But her brother is alive. And Jesus is the one who raised him and Jesus is the reason that it's worth living. He is the resurrection *and* the life. There is no measuring the value of Jesus. There is no quantifying his worth. So there is no way to calculate the cost of love. There is no way to put the heart in a scale and say, this much affection for Jesus and no more. Jesus is inexpressibly wonderful, and Mary is inexpressibly worshipping.

Think of the cost God paid for our redemption. Think of the cost when compared to our unworthy, sinful, dirty, vial lives. As we taste that grace, and as we glimpse His glory, is anything we do really a sacrifice. Nothing we can do will ever match in value of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

What was Jesus worth to Judas? Certainly not worth a year's wage. He made that abundantly clear. He was worth 30 pieces or shekels of silver, the price paid for a slave who had been gored by an ox.

What sacrifice do we make? Sure we give money. Some may think of ways to skimp on that. What about your time. What about your talents and abilities. What about your total self.

Her worship was humble

Jesus was reclining with Lazarus. The table he was reclining on was low with His feet extended away from it. Mary could have easily poured the perfume first on His head, then His body, and finally His feet. When we get to chapter 13, we will learn more about the feet. It is to consider the dirtiest, lowest part of the body. Therefore washing feet was a degrading task, yet necessary. It is so menial of a task, it was assigned to a slave. If the slave was a Jew, the Jewish slave owner could not force him to wash the feet of the guests.

But Mary shocks everyone. She goes to the feet. She pours the entire content on His feet. Then she did something even more shocking. She let down her hair, the pride of a Jewish woman. For a respectable Jewish woman, letting down the hair in public was an act of indecent. For some it was immoral. She didn't care.

It is as if Mary is saying, "Jesus, cleanness and sweetness is who you are along with your purity, your holiness, your power, and your grace. But as for me, dirt and odors describes me. My hair is the most beautiful and the most clean thing I have. But if my hair could serve to magnify your purity and your sweetness, it would be my honor to turn it into a rag for your feet."

Her Worship was Uninhibited

Her worship was not held back by anything, anyone, or any custom or tradition.

It was as if she and Jesus were the only ones in the room. As far as she was concerned, that is how it was. She endured the gasps in reactions of her actions. She endured the rebuke of the disciples, especially Judas who could do nothing else but ridicule her for the "waste," or better, how he could get rich off the perfume.

Though uninhibited, her worship was influential, for the strength of the fragrance from the perfume filled the room. The place was filled with the sweet fragrance of the worship of one; one who held nothing back.

There is a pastor whose name is Mark Buchanan. He wrote in a publication I get about a lady who started coming to her church. Her name was Wanda. Wanda was not one that the church would call "one of their kind." She was an alcoholic. She was a bad alcoholic. She drank beer, wine, whiskey, rum, even vanilla extract, whatever she could buy with the money she had.

Wanda came that first Sunday. She heard the sermon of the woman at the well. She wanted that kind of water that will never leave her thirsty again. She became a believer. She got into a discipleship group of their church. She got in the celebrate recovery. She got sober and got her kids back. Then she went missing for 8 months.

One day, she called Pastor Mark. She was in a rehab in another town. She had been there for the 8 months. Could she come home?

She did. The first Sunday back, she was in church. Mark preached on the ten lepers and how only one came back. He told them, "Anyone who has been cleansed by Jesus, who wants to be made

whole by him, worships at his feet in deep thankfulness, in utmost desperation. They have nowhere else they want to go. And then, to close, I reminded people we have a tradition at our church: anyone can come up to the front and pray with one of our prayer ministers.”

Wanda came forward. But she didn't go to a prayer minister. She walked onto the platform, between the guitarist and the drummer, and stretched her hands heavenward. She worshiped like One Leper returning.

A woman was in the congregation who didn't know her, and who wasn't on the prayer team. This woman walked up, put her arm around her, and worshiped, too. Then—you could hear it—all of us worshiped with deeper thankfulness, out of greater desperation. Wanda was like Mary who opened up her heart to worship uninhibited. The fragrance of her worship spilled out into the whole congregation. Out of the storeroom had come new treasures as well as old, and the Kingdom hovered very close.

Worship made full circle in Mary's case. God poured forth His power. Mary responded. For Wanda, God poured forth His power in healing and restoration. She responded as well as the others.

How much do you value Jesus? How much worth is He to you? You show it in your worship.