

November 17, 2013

here we have a picture of what true worship really looks like. Jesus is recorded to have said, “What this woman has done, I want it to be known everywhere My Gospel is preached. People will know what this woman has done at this moment in time.”

Well, in this passage we really have a blueprint for how to make an impact for God. How to make a real difference in the world, and not just when we leave, but on a daily basis. We’re going to see that the most impactful thing that we can do as human beings, the most influential thing that we can do as image-bearers of God, is do what He created us to do, and that is to worship. When expressing the Trinity, dialoguing there in Genesis 1, isn’t it interesting that the Doctrine of the Trinity there in Genesis 1, when the Godhead, we hear the Lord as He is creating? He has created all the way up to the sixth day. He has created the animals, and then we hear into the counsel of the Godhead, “Let us make man.” What does He say after that? “In our image and likeness.” So He made man in the image and likeness of God. The word ‘*image*’ means ‘*to replicate and to reflect*’. He made man to be a visible representation of Himself, and the idea was that as man lives in communion with God, he then reflects the glory of God to the creation. He reflects the reign and power of God to the creation. We talked about, we’ve been singing about the greatness of God today. What makes man great is when man humbles himself and worships. That is what makes you the greatest that you could ever be. You reach your full potential when you find yourself on your face before Christ, and that is what will mark everyone around you, it will have a dramatic impact.

The Ground of Worship

In previous weeks we saw that Jesus, as He is anointed, in His wisdom in inspiring John to give this to us, is giving us a blueprint for how to worship. We saw that, as the passage unfolds, we talked about the setting. It is in Bethany, and that is the setting, the first two verses of this chapter, he lays out the setting. He wants you know where this happened, who was there. Thank you, brother. Before I asked, God answered. I didn’t even think about that, but I am thirsty. Thank you so much. Praise His name. The setting, Bethany, two verses devoted to that, and then Verse 3 is the act. That is what Mary does, the act in Verse 3 shows us what she does, and when she pours the perfume, and anoints the feet of Jesus, and wipes His feet with her hair. That is the act. And then the rest, from the end of Verse 3, all the way to Verse 8, is the reaction. It is kind of like setting, action, reaction.

The setting gave us the ground of worship. When you understand why God told us so much about the setting, He wanted us to know that Mary was there, that Martha was there, that Lazarus was there, and they were in Bethany. And remember, he says at the beginning of this passage, “Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.” With all that in view, that shows that Mary’s motive was connected to what Jesus had done in their lives. The hopelessness, and helplessness that she had at her brother’s tomb, knowing that her brother was dead and gone, and yet Jesus comes in and raises her brother with a word. That is the fuel, or the ground of worship. What we said in that message is that the ground of worship is a right apprehension of myself, and a right apprehension of Jesus Christ. Those two things. It is a right apprehension of myself, my helplessness, and my hopelessness, and it is a right apprehension of Jesus Christ, the glory of His person, and the majesty of His work. When we are contemplating those two things side-by-side, when we see the magnitude of our need, and the glorious sufficiency of His salvation, we cannot help but worship. Worship arises from within us. That is the ground of worship.

The Expression of Worship

Now the expression of worship we saw in Verse 3, the act, the action of Mary. Jesus is at the table, she takes a pound of very costly perfume, anoints the feet of Jesus, wipes His feet with her hair. So we saw, in those three things, that she takes the pound, she sacrificially surrenders. Worship, in its essence, is to surrender yourself. The value that she, \$20,000 in today’s currency, a \$20,000 bottle of perfume she pours out on Jesus and anoints Him. She spends it all. So to worship is to surrender yourself. It is also to humble yourself, she is at His feet. Then it is to lose yourself, she loosens her hair to wipe His feet. She is so enthralled with Jesus there is a sense of abandon. That is the essence of true worship, and we looked at that last time. The expression of true worship, the elements of true worship, that is what makes up the action.

So for us, we have to learn how to be grounded in true worship, that is continually seeing our emptiness so that we can celebrate His fullness. That is the ground of worship, and that happens when we stay in the word, and we just live life. Because if we are really honest with ourselves, we continually see our emptiness. I know I do. Every day I have opportunities, again, and again, and again, to see how empty I am, how much I fail, but to see how full, and glorious, and sufficient Jesus is. So we stay focused on the cross, and the cross keeps reminding us as well, if we think too highly of ourselves, if you go to the cross you can’t keep doing that, because what the cross says is that you and I deserve that. To save me it took God leaving

the glory of Heaven, coming down, and in His sinless, spotless life, offering Himself as a sacrifice, and being treated with unbridled anger of God, the wrath of God poured out upon Jesus. That is what I am, that's what I deserve, but then the cross also tells me the sufficiency of Jesus. "Look what Jesus has done," and so the ground of worship is rooted in that. The expression of worship we have to work at, learning how to surrender ourselves to Him, to humble ourselves, to lose ourselves in His presence, to focus our attention upon Him. When we do that, then we come to today's message—the impact of true worship. We will see the force of it, and the reaction to that force. Kind of the action and the reaction. Look with me at the first eight verses of John 12.

*John 12:1-8 ~ 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 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 betray Him, *said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for 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 it for the day of My burial. 8 For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."*

Let's pray together.

Father, we ask that You might grant us grace to enlighten the eyes of our hearts. That You might open our understanding, that You might help us to see how high, and great, and wide, and deep is the love of Christ. And we pray this in His name, Amen.

The Impact of True Worship

So today we are looking at the impact of true worship. Basically, the very last clause in Verse 3 through Verse 8. Interesting that so much time is spent on the impact, isn't it? So much detail given to the reaction. We have an action and we

have a reaction, and here we're looking today at the reaction. What happens when you worship? When you truly learn to make life, all of life should be worship. We should be worshipping Jesus Christ as we go about our day, as we're at work doing our best. There should be moments where we remember, "I'm doing my work as unto the Lord. I'm overlooking the slight that my boss gave me, or a coworker gave me because of what Jesus has done for me." When you are at home as a housewife, you're doing the things that you need to do for your family. You're doing that unto the Lord. Children at school are studying, at home, you are doing your studies for the Lord. You are worshipping Him, you are interacting with each other. It all should be worship, and when that is the case, what happens? It definitely leaves its mark. We see this first of all at the end of Verse 3.

John 12:3 ~ Mary then took 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.

1) The Force of the Act:

Here we have the force of the act. The house was filled with the fragrance. I think one of the things we know, that this is why we know that all of it was used. I think that the NASB mistranslates at the end of Verse 7, when it says: ***...so that she may keep it for the day of My burial.*** I think really the force of the word is: *She has kept it unto the day of my burial.* It is a tense, or a mood in Greek, the subjunctive mood that speaks of possibility, and so in one sense it could have been taken that, "She may keep it for the day of My burial," but I think in context, clearly it means, no, that she has kept it. "The reason that she did this was for the day of My burial," because Judas is lamenting the fact that 300 denarii has been wasted. He's not trying to say, "Hey, stop! We can save 150." And the fact that the whole house is filled with it. And when we look also at the other Gospels, as they give us eye-witness accounts of this same event, we find out in Mark that she broke the top of the bottle, she poured it out on His head to start with, and she's actually anointing His feet too, so the whole bottle has been used, 12 ounces basically that has been poured out over Jesus.

The force of it was it filled the house. Now what that tells us is when we worship, when we are worshipping God, and this is one of the things the Lord uses throughout His word, that our worship is a fragrance to God. He uses that metaphor. An important part of even the tabernacle worship was the lighting of incense. In Revelation, the last book of the Bible we have, in fact the prayers of the saints ascend as incense to Heaven. That our prayers are incense to God, there is a

fragrant aroma when we are praying to God. So when we are worshiping, there is some sense, this fragrance idea is a part of the whole picture of worship. I think the Lord uses that because the sense of smell, He made us so that the sense of smell is an incredibly powerful sense, isn't it? In some ways it is the most powerful. I mean think about good smells and bad smells that you have experienced. One of the things that's true is that you can remember those better than you can just about remember anything that has happened to you. If there is a scent associated with something, it is like it engrains it on the brain. Especially, I think, the most powerful, poignant moments when you had something different, you can remember it.

I mean, it's like I remember when I ate some, well, let's just say, I won't go into what I ate. It is one of these unplanned illustrations that can get you in trouble. When I was young I ate some SpaghettiOs and got sick after that, and from then on, the smell of SpaghettiOs, to today, if you have SpaghettiOs please don't bring them around me. Give me a warning, "Unclean! Unclean!" as you are coming. Because that smell, I mean there is nothing wrong with SpaghettiOs, but the association, right? I remember that, and when I smell that it does something. There are wonderful smells, the same thing, I mean think about some of the most pleasant and beautiful aromas you've ever smelled. Walking through a garden of beautiful flowers, or entering your grandmother's house for Thanksgiving dinner. Isn't that an amazing blessing that God has given us this sense of smell? He says our worship is like that to Him. That we are offering up a fragrant aroma to Him.

The Old Testament sacrifices were a fragrant aroma to Him. Our New Testament living sacrifice is a fragrant aroma to Him. That is our worship from the heart is a fragrant aroma to God. So when we are thinking of Him, and magnifying Him, and glorying in His Son, we are bringing a pleasing smell to Him. He wants us to think about it that way, we are blessing Him in that way. Now when you are blessing God, and you are making a fragrant aroma, everybody around you is going to smell something too. I think this is what he is saying. You can't be making a fragrant aroma to God and it not have some impact on those around you. And for some people, it is going to be an offensive aroma, and for others it is going to be sweet, but the most important thing is how God sees it, and the impact it has in the courts of Heaven. But the first point is in its force, you cannot, if you are going to be a worshiper of God, and you are going to live your life continually seeking to walk in the presence of Jesus, and love Him as you go about your day, that you are going to from time to time, people are going to catch a scent of it, and very often they are going to reject you for it, as Mary was rejected.

2) The Reaction:

After looking at the force from Verse 3, we get to the reaction, and we have the reaction of Judas, and the reaction of Jesus. Verses 4-6, the reaction of Judas. Verses 7-8 the reaction of Jesus. When we truly worship God, when we make the glory of Jesus Christ our greatest good, that we want to be continually meditating on Him, we're thinking of Him, we don't have to say it. We don't have to say something to somebody, it is on our countenance. It is in the way we respond to the events of life. When you are praising God, and you are worshiping God, and bad things happen, it changes the way you respond to it. Sometimes you struggle for a moment, but it is very easy to get back on track because I was right here in the presence of God. Something bad happened, "Oh no, what happened? Wait a minute, the Lord is sovereign over this. I can rejoice. I can give thanks. God is doing something in this," and it changes the whole demeanor. And what this tells us is, when we are not worshiping, we are being a foul odor. We're making an impact one way or the other, either for good or for evil.

As Christians, we have the opportunity to make an impact for good. But we need to ask ourselves, "What kind of aroma am I bringing into my home, into my marriage, into my children? What kind of aroma do I take with me into the office? What kind of aroma is coming from even my interactions at the grocery store? Is there the fragrance of Heaven there? Or is it just the same old stale smell of this filthy world?" If it is the fragrance of Heaven there will be a reaction. It is going to be sometimes a very clear and opposite reaction. You know the old statement: *To every action there is a corresponding opposite and equal reaction.* We see this in the reaction of Judas, Verses 4-6. It says:

John 12:4 ~ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, *said,

First of all, the thing we need to see is the focus on Judas. Remember we've noticed before that, as I mentioned just a little while ago too, Matthew and Mark both include this story in their Gospels. Matthew 26, Mark 14. They both give us eye-witness accounts, and just like we would expect from eyewitnesses, they include different details. That's how eyewitnesses do it. They don't get together and get their stories together, they tell us different things. So Matthew and Mark focus on the head, the anointing of the head of Jesus. John focuses on the fact that she spent time at His feet, rubbing His feet, and then wiping His feet with her hair. But also we noted that in the other Gospels, when we've looked back at those passages in previous weeks, what we see is that Mark says, "Some of those who

were there became indignant and said, ‘Why wasn’t this sold? It is worth over 300 denarii.’” ‘Some’ in Mark’s Gospel. In Matthew it says, “The disciples became indignant and said,” the same thing. Here in John’s Gospel it says Judas did, now what is happening there? Again, we just put it together as you would if you were an investigator you would take eye-witness accounts, and you’d put them together, and you’d synthesize and you’d have a good picture of what happened.

What happened? Judas was the instigator. Judas was the ringleader and then surprisingly he found support among those who loved Jesus, so that some of them, so many that Matthew could say with confidence, “Really, most of us.” Right? To say the disciples were indignant, “Yeah, most of us were. When we heard that we all thought, ‘Yeah, why hasn’t that been sold?’” But John says, “I want you to know...,” I think John, he is helping us because if you really look at this, when you first read it, and you consider the impact of it, I mentioned 300 denarii, a denarius was a day’s wages. So 300 denarii is almost a year’s salary because 365 days in a year, right? There are 52 Sabbaths in a year, that means you’ve got 313 days left. Then you’ve got a number of feast days that you can’t work. So 300 denarii is practically a whole year’s salary for a day laborer. So we made the analogy that if today we had somebody who was an hourly employee, and they work 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week, \$10 an hour, that is \$400 a week. If they took 2 weeks off for unpaid vacation, they’d work 50 weeks.

I’m making some clarifications because my wife pointed out something I said last week. I shared this on Wednesday night, so there are some folks that are in the know about what I’m talking about. I said last week that I’m a numbers guy. Some illustration, I said, “When she says, ‘What time is it?’” I say, “11:27.” She’s like, over the years she has put up with it, but she’s like, “Why don’t you just say 11:30?” Or 11:29, I’ll say 11:29. “Isn’t 11:30 okay for you to say? Why can’t you say that?” I just think, when I look at the clock, “11:29.” That is what I think of because I’m a numbers guy. Well she said, she and my daughter were helping me last week, she said, “You know you said you were a numbers guy, but you said 300 days of work is a year’s salary.” “There are 365 days in a year, Dad,” that was Maggie. Patti also helped me with, “Yeah, and you said there are also 50 weeks in a year.” So anyway, do you see why I am explaining now? I am blessed to have the helper suitable in my life and God has given me another one He is raising up beside my precious wife.

But anyway, seriously, it is a help to get feedback, but the point is, this is a tremendously valuable bottle of perfume. Essentially \$20,000 poured out in an instant, in one seemingly rash moment. When Judas says what he says, the other

disciples said, “Yeah, wow! \$20,000! How many poor people could we have fed with that?” John is clarifying for us, “Hey, don’t be fooled by that apparently high-sounding rhetoric.” “We would have helped a lot of poor people with this.” “Don’t be fooled,” he’s saying. Now let me show you how you can see he is saying, “Don’t be fooled.”

First of all he tells us it is Judas, “...but Judas Iscariot said.” He could have just said, “*Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?*” But he didn’t just say that did he? He said ...*Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, *said*, He’s got a big parenthesis in front of what was being said. He breaks the narrative to give you an editorial comment because we are just looking at the event. Look what Mary did, look what they said. “Before you look at what they said, let me tell you who said it, and let me tell you what he was thinking in his heart when he said it.” And not only that, when he gets through saying it he’s got another parenthetical remark. After he says, “300 denarii and give it to poor people,” *Now he said this*, (Here is the second parenthesis.) *not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief*,... Those are strong words from John, aren’t they? “I want you to know, don’t be fooled by what Judas said because I know what was in Judas’ heart.” By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he does know what was in Judas’ heart, and what was in Judas’ heart came out shortly afterward. He doesn’t want us to be fooled by this.

In fact, it is interesting the contrast between Mary and Judas that goes on in the passage. It is also interesting, in the Greek it is even brought out in another way. You may have this if you have the NASB, they have a footnote, or a mark in the text at the end of Verse 4 when it says: *But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, *said*, The word ‘said’ in my NASB has a star beside it, and when you look at the note it says what it should say is ‘saying’. I don’t see it there, but it is supposed to say that. It has that star. Whenever you have that star there in the NASB, what they are telling you is they are translating it as a past tense, but in reality it is a present tense verb. This is interesting because in Verse 3, you have this shift of tense that you really don’t expect, and what it is is a dramatic present. We actually use this in our own interactions and exchanges, but let me tell you what the force of it is.

When it says Mary took a pound, that’s aorist tense verb, past tense. She took a pound of perfume, and then she anointed (past tense, point in time action). She took (past tense, point in time). At a point in time she took it. She anointed. She wiped His feet, and the house was filled. All four of those verbs—past tense, point

in time. And then it says Judas is saying. It's kind of like if I was telling you a story and I said, "I went to the store, and I met this person, and I asked her what she thought about this, and then she said that, and then I said something else, and then she *says* to me," do you see what I just did? I went to the present tense. "She says to me," and that's a subtle thing we do to try to make it more vivid, and the Greek present has even the force of ongoing, continuous action. It's like suddenly, boom, boom, boom, finished act, finished act, finished act, finished act, and then look at this. Look at what He's saying, and look at what He's intending, because when it says ...*who was intending*... that is also a present tense verb.

So it's basically saying, "Mary does this. Look what Mary did, and look what Judas is saying, and I want you to know when he's saying this, I want you to know what he was intending in his heart at that moment. He's intending at that moment to betray and murder the Son of God." What he's saying is this apparently high-sounding rhetoric, and this basically campaign for good works of feeding the poor, which we know God loves feeding the poor, caring for the poor, and Jesus does too—but this is saying that there are going to be throughout world history many people who are counterfeit Christians who do good works, and the fruit and the test of whether they really are His isn't just the work that they do or that they advocate, because a lot of times what you're going to find out is there's a lot of greed going on in there somewhere, greed either for money, or greed for honor, and the praise of men. How many good works are done for the praise of men? And we have to look at our own hearts at times, don't we? How much do we think about what other people think rather than: *Is this pleasing to You, Lord?*

So don't be fooled by this apparently high-sounding rhetoric, this apparent logic to what he said. *300 denarii, \$20,000, couldn't we have just gone with the \$500 bottle of perfume? Then we could have given the \$19,500 to the poor.* It seems reasonable to me at first glance. That's until I get a right perspective on what is really happening here, and that's why we have to watch out. And even the fact that His disciples, by the other gospels, we know were caught up into this. It shows how deceptive it is, how quick we are to be led astray off of the straight and narrow.

You see, Satan is a master counterfeiter, and this has been true. I mean, think about it. Way back in the very beginning of the Old Testament, the giving of the Old Testament and the life and ministry of Moses, remember when Moses goes to Pharaoh and God gives him some signs to show that the Lord is with him? Remember He says, "Throw your rod down, and it'll become a serpent." What did he do? He threw his rod down. What did the Egyptian magicians do? They threw their rods down and they became serpents. Now, how did they do that? They did it

by the power of Satan. Now, we need to remember that Aaron's rod that turned into a serpent, ate all of their rods, but still, had Aaron not been there, that would have been an impressive miracle. So it's not just the sign that somebody does. So you see, Satan counterfeits, and so it's not just the good work that somebody does, because Satan is a counterfeiter. He always disguises himself as an angel of light. So how do you recognize counterfeit Christians and counterfeit Christian ministries? What is the quintessential mark or distinguishing mark of the counterfeit?

I think we see in the text that the thing that the counterfeit Christian or the counterfeit Christian ministry does not want to do is truly give glory to Jesus Christ. They don't want to lift Him up. Now, they might say they do. Judas would never have said, "I don't want Christ to be lifted up," but when He was being lifted up, he resisted that, and in reality, if we would have been able to talk with Judas and watch him, he wouldn't have been spending a lot of time talking about the greatness of Jesus. And this is a test that we can test all kinds of ministries by. I mean, some of the most impressive ministries that people point at, you know, for doing great works in the name of Christ, look and see: What did that person really say about Jesus? How much were they talking about Jesus, and did they speak truly about Jesus? And how often did they speak about Jesus? And if they weren't speaking about Jesus that often, and if they didn't have that high a view of Jesus, then you can know more than likely, only God knows, but I'm thinking that's a counterfeit.

The mark of the true follower of God—though we at times will struggle, because there's something that's indicting and convicting, but the reason the other disciples got roped into it, why was that? And Judas was a counterfeit. We know that. He wasn't truly saved. He wasn't truly of God, but the other eleven were. I think there are times when one of our brothers or sisters is really caught up into a sense of worship and doing something for God. Maybe it's an interaction that we have with them. Maybe it's something we see or we hear about what they did, and there is the reality that we can be tempted to cast aspersion on them because this kind of worship doesn't just expose the counterfeit, but it also exposes and convicts the half-hearted.

Complete devotion to Christ also exposes half-heartedness, and we all can find ourselves growing cold, and when somebody else is hot, sin in us wants us to excuse our coldness and sometimes cast judgment on the other person. *They're just too much. They take these things too seriously. They're so heavenly minded they're*

no earthly good. We say things like that, but what we ought to do is affirm and love and get close to, and actually, if you're cold, what do you do? You get close to the fire. "Hey, tell me what's going on? I want to hear. Why are you so excited?" "It's what God's been doing in my life." "Tell me about it. Here I am cold." The Lord has put this person in your life partly just to let you hear their testimony so that if you will hear it humbly and not sit there and say, "Why don't I have..." say, "Lord, help me warm myself in the glow of this person. Get my eyes back on Jesus." Humble yourself and let the Lord bless you.

Now, sometimes people are fanatical and excessive, and there's not the lifting up of Jesus. Remember, that's the test. When you start getting close to somebody and they're not lifting up Jesus, well that's not a fire you want to warm yourself around. You want to point them to Jesus. "Hey, I hear you're so excited, but you know, let's talk about Jesus. Isn't He wonderful?" This is what we need to do to so many Christians who are really fired up about how they're going to have a more wonderful life. They're learning all these principles about how God is for them in everything. "Well, let's talk about Jesus. Isn't it wonderful what Jesus has done for us?" rather than shoot them down to say, "Well, you know, you shouldn't be listening to that guy or reading that guy," or whatever. I mean, there's a place for saying those things. I'm not saying there isn't, but you don't come out of the chute with that. Start off with, "Let's talk about Jesus," or gently direct them. "I get amazed at what God has done for me through Jesus Christ. Don't you? I mean, to think about how sinful we were before He came and died for us," and you focus on Jesus, and then you kind of will see if their heart is open to Him or not.

Now let's look at the reaction of Judas. We see it was powerful because he reacted really from the heart of evil against the lifting up of Christ, because Satan hates to see Jesus lifted up. And in reality, let me say this too. The Holy Spirit, how do you know where the Holy Spirit is ministering? Some people say you've got to see all kinds of signs. You've got to see all kinds of miracles happening. You've got to see people speaking in tongues and all that. I don't think the New Testament teaches that. I think the New Testament teaches that you will know where the Spirit is because Jesus is being lifted up, because the Spirit lifts up Jesus. He tells us later in John's Gospel, "When the Spirit comes He will speak to you of Me." The Spirit wants to talk about Jesus all the time. Isn't it wonderful the Trinity?

The Son wants to talk about the Father all the time. "My Father. It's My Father. These works you see Me doing are My Father's works." The Father there at the transfiguration, do you remember the transfiguration? Elijah and Moses appear with Jesus, and Peter says, "I'll make tabernacles for You, and for Moses, and for

Elijah,” and a voice out of heaven says, “This is My Son whom I love. Listen to Him.” Essentially the Father’s saying, “Listen, Moses and Elijah are okay, but forget them compared to Him. That’s My Son. Listen to Him.” And when the Spirit comes on the scene, well first of all Jesus says, “Hey, it’s better for Me to leave.” He’s going to say that later in this gospel. “It’s better for you that I leave.” Why? “Because when I leave, I’m going to send you the Spirit.” And then when the Spirit comes, do you know what He does? It’s all about Jesus.

That’s the glory of the Trinity, and we have the opportunity to be a part of that by lifting up the glorious triune God, and Jesus is to be our focus, because He’s the one God made the Word to us. The revelation of His character is Jesus to us. Now, we worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but primarily we focus on Jesus, because God has given us His book to give us Jesus Christ.

Now let’s look at the reaction of Jesus, and this is where we see how this impacts the throne of heaven. Verses 7 and 8:

John 12:7-8 ~ Therefore Jesus said, “Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. 8 For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”

I want to look at His response in two points here, or basically the two verses, really, the fact that she kept the perfume, and His statement in verse 8 about the poor. What’s going on here? When He says, “She has kept it,” and I think that is the right translation, “She has kept this for the day of My burial.” She reserved it. She watched over it, and the word for keep actually is to guard, to be a prison guard or a warden, to be watching over something caring for it every moment, making sure you don’t lose it. “She did this to prepare Me for My burial.”

Now, what’s astonishing about that, and scholars differ over how much Mary actually understood, and the truth is we don’t really know completely, but I think the fact that He uses this verb, the fact that He says, “Wherever My gospel is preached (in Matthew and Mark we have that recorded) what this woman has done will be told of in honor of her,” I think those two things together say Mary knew a lot, and it definitely says Mary knew a lot more than anybody else in the room. The disciples didn’t have a clue, but Mary did. She’s the one person in the room who recognizes Jesus and what is about to happen. She has some understanding of the momentous event that is about to happen. She, I think, begins to see as He comes back that He’s about to die. I mean, maybe partly it’s because her eyes were always on Jesus and her ears were always listening to Jesus.

Think about the pictures we have of Mary. We have this, we have chapter 11 we just spent time on, Lazarus' resurrection, and we have Luke 10:38-42, remember, where Mary and Martha and Lazarus, Jesus is in their home in Bethany sometime back, and Martha's serving the meal. Martha's busy running around fixing things and getting all the food together. I mean, she has at least thirteen people, hungry men, in addition to her normal feeding routine, and that's pretty significant, and she's like, "Lord, don't You see what I'm going through over here? I mean, I've got a cake in the oven, I've got things all over the stove, and look at Mary sitting there. Can I get some help?" And the Lord looks at Martha and says, "Martha, Martha, you worry about so many things, but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good part which shall not be taken away from her." What she was doing is she was sitting at Jesus' feet listening to what He said. She's like, "You know, in this moment, I know we need to have a meal, but we can eat sandwiches, because this is an opportunity that will not come around very often. We need to maximize the opportunity. We need to sit at the feet of Jesus." She was spot on.

Here again in John 13, Jesus, six days before the Passover, I mean, they should all be somewhat aware of what's going on. Look at what John even said in Chapter 11 at the end. He tells us in Verse 56 that the people, there's all kinds of rumors going around Jerusalem. They're talking about, "Is Jesus going to come to the temple? Is He going to come to the feast at all? Because we know the Pharisees and the Chief Priests are going to kill Him." Well, Jesus comes to Bethany and He's in the vicinity. He's in suburban Jerusalem. It just makes sense to know a conflict is very likely about to happen, and I think Mary somehow by the Lord's grace is putting things together a little bit.

The Passover is at hand, the one feast that celebrates the great deliverance of God when He took His people out of Egyptian bondage, out of the darkness of Egypt by a great deliverance. He pulled them out of the hands of Satan himself, and delivered them and placed them in Canaan. How did He do it? He did it through the blood of the Passover lamb. I think in her heart God's opening her eyes and she's seeing, and we also see Jesus was constantly telling His disciples that He's got to die. Isn't it amazing they missed it? In Matthew 16, remember when Jesus says, "Who do you say that I am?" and Peter jumps up and says, "You're the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Shortly after that, it says within a couple of verses, "From that time, Jesus began to tell His disciples how He must suffer at the hands of the Chief Priests and Jews, and die and be raised again the third day." From that time, He starts teaching that. They've been at that bible study for

months, and they're missing it, but Mary is on track. I think she understands the Scriptures. She understands the moment. I think she's been watching Jesus.

We have a glorious Savior. He is the eternal God, but He is also truly and fully Man. If you want a refresher on that, read the book of Hebrews. Read Hebrews 2 and Hebrews 5. Hebrews 5 tells us that when the Son of God was being perfected, He was perfected through the things He suffered. He never sinned. There was no negative. There was no minus, but He grew in His perfection as a Savior. He had to live a perfect life, a whole life to be a Savior, and He went through all kinds of agony, a lifetime of agony, and it says in Hebrews 5 that He continually prayed to His Father with loud cries and tears. He was moved. He was struggling at times with the path before Him. We're going to see it in just a few days from here when He's in Gethsemane. And can you imagine that there were moments when even as He's sitting around with these people that He loves, the miracles that are surrounding Him, Simon the leper that used to be a leper, there he is cleansed, and who else is in the room? What lame person or blind person, and there is Lazarus whom He raised from the dead, and there's so much joy, and yet Jesus knows what is before Him.

He knows that His cross means that for an extended period of time He is going to bear the weight, and the guilt, and the pollution of every sin of every person who would ever believe for all time. He will bear all of that guilt, all of that vileness, all of that ugliness, and all of that wrath from His almighty Father. He's in the shadow of the cross, and can you not imagine? You have a surgery coming up and you're enjoying the moment. You're eating ice cream. It's your favorite ice cream. You're having a good time, and suddenly that flashes across your mind. Six days until the surgery, and you're countenance changes for a moment.

Perhaps Mary saw that on the face of her Lord. *How can I bless Him? How can I minister to such a precious Savior? He's done so much for me. I've got the stuff I've saved for His burial. I know He's going to die for us.* And the Spirit prompted her, and she went and she brings in that precious gift, and she pours it on His head. She pours it on His feet. She anoints His feet. She wipes His feet with her hair. She's saying: *Jesus, You are worthy. Jesus, You are precious. Jesus, I know the road before You is so hard. It's so dark. It must be so frightening for You, eternal God, to realize that Your Father is going to be—somehow there's some kind of real event where He turns His back upon You. How can that be? How can You think about such a terrible moment without being in complete anguish? Lord, I want to bless You. How can I encourage You? I want to encourage you. Please, go*

all the way. Don't turn back. I know You won't. She wants to bless Him, and what we see is she blessed Him. I mean, He was really ministered to by what she did.

She's in a sense saying in front of all these people who ought to be—I mean, this is one of the rare moments in Jesus' life and ministry. There's just a handful where something approximates, just barely approximates, what ought to always happen. He's born in a stable, laid in a feeding trough. The Son of God, how can that be? The Lord sends some wise men. *This is a King.* The Lord sends some angels out to some shepherds. *This is a King.*

There are little glimpses like that, moments like I mentioned a minute ago, when Peter says, "You're the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Finally somebody got it. And here's a moment where this woman who loves her Lord, seizes the opportunity. She senses what's going on. *I want to bless Jesus* and she casts caution to the wind and she just says, "I am going to bless Him. I am going to honor Him," and she does what she does and she blessed Him. That's why He says, "Leave her alone. She's done this to prepare Me for burial," and they still don't get it. "She's done this to prepare Me for burial." And then He says this: "You will always have the poor with you; you will not always have Me."

I wonder how many times the people that heard those words thought about that the rest of their life. How rare are those moments that we have where we sat with Him? They were so precious. How much did Martha think, "Why was I baking? Why was I not sitting?" This moment is so precious. We have the opportunity to worship Jesus. What this is saying is that Jesus is not saying He's unconcerned about the poor. Not at all, but He's saying this, that the one thing that matters in your life most at every moment that trumps everything else is will you worship God? And if you will not worship God, whatever you do is hay and stubble, and it will burn up, because you can't even love your neighbor if you don't love God.

Those are the two great Commandments. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. That's what Mary is doing, and when you do that, then Jesus said the second Commandment is likened to it, that is, it flows from it. If you love Me with all of your heart... And Jesus calls for an allegiance like that. He doesn't call for a part of your life. He doesn't say do your work so that you can be praised by men. No, He says, "Give Me everything," and is He not worthy of it? He's worthy of everything, and when you give Him everything, when you put Him supreme above everything else, then you have power, then you have love, and then when you go, you're not going to be living for yourself. You're going to really do works of kindness for other people, and when they're done, even those works are a fragrant aroma.

So much of what's done in the name of charity isn't a fragrant aroma to God. It's just us polluting and just making ourselves feel good about ourselves. But when worship is primary, whatever you do is blessing heaven, and isn't that the most important thing of every single moment of every single day? If you get that right, you've got it all. That's what Jesus said. If you get these two Commandments right, you've got the whole thing. You don't need the rest of it. I mean, if you get these two things right, you get it all, and you have to start with the first, first things first.

What matters more than anything at any moment is do I love Jesus? Am I worshipping Jesus? Am I putting Him above everything else? We have to ask that in all kinds of areas. How can we really apply that? I mean, is seeing and hearing Jesus the most important thing to me? We can't see Him physically or hear Him physically. Where do we hear Him and see Him? We see Him and hear Him in the pages of Scripture. We don't go off and empty our minds like some say. Some misinformed, misled people in the name of Christ even say, "Go off, empty your mind, and just think about His Name, just the Name. Contemplative prayer, just go do that." No, if we empty our minds it's to fill them with Scripture. You don't find Jesus by emptying your mind. You find Jesus by filling and saturating your mind and your heart with His word, because this book reveals Him. This book unveils Him.

In fact, John who wrote the Gospel of John, also wrote 1st John, and he says what was from the beginning, what we have seen, what we have heard, what we have seen, what we have looked at, what our hands have handled concerning the word of life, what we have seen and heard we testify to you, that you might have our joy in you, that you might have fellowship with us. The idea is what we've seen, what we've heard, we're declaring. If you listen to what we're saying, you will see what we saw, you will hear what we've heard, and you will have fellowship, and you'll touch what we've touched, and you'll have fellowship with us. It's the word of God. So how important is the word of God to us? How important is the study of the word of God? How important is family worship to us? How important is hearing the word of God? How important is meditating on the word of God? How important is that? And when you do it, don't do it mentally as an exercise, but do it as a communion. *I want to see You, Jesus. I want to see You. I want to worship You. I want to see Your glory as I'm reading through some Old Testament book.* That's what we've got to do, and the good news is the Lord was patient with those disciples who forgot, He's patient with us, and He's willing to make us a better worshiper today, and a better worshiper than that tomorrow.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

Father, we confess how often we find ourselves over in the mindset of the disciples, missing the main thing, missing the only thing that matters. Lord, we're just such foolish sheep. We're so grateful that You even gave us that metaphor, that You created sheep to show us what we're like. Sheep need a shepherd, Lord, and so we come back asking You to shepherd us back, thanking You for Your staff, Your rod of Your word that brings the conviction to make us look back at the Shepherd.

Lord Jesus, we want to run back to You. We want to run back to You every day. We want You to help us. Keep us on a short leash, an ever-shortening leash. Don't let us be content with anything but living in Your presence and loving You more. Thank You so much for Your glorious salvation. Thank You so much for dying in our place. Thank You so much for rising again, and now standing victorious in heaven, You reign and rule, Son of God, Son of Man. We pray in Your Name, Amen.

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