

**Subject: *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly***

**Scripture: *John 12:1-11***

What would you do if you knew you had only six days to live? Jesus went to a home for a special dinner in His honor. At this dinner were His close friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, as well as His disciples. Verse 1 tells us that this took place six days before the Passover. Jesus was crucified at Passover. The Gospel of John has two parts:

- Jesus' public ministry (Jn. 1-12) – lasted 3 ½ years
- Jesus' private ministry (Jn. 13-21) – lasted 2 weeks

As you can see from this basic outline, about half of the Gospel of John is devoted to the events that took place in the final week of Jesus' ministry and the week after His resurrection. In John 12 we have a record of the final event in Jesus' public ministry before the crucifixion. From the parallel passages in Mt. 26 and Mk. 14, we know this dinner was at the house of Simon the leper, probably a man Jesus had healed. We learn from John 12:2 that the dinner was sponsored by several people and not just Simon. "They" probably refers to some good-hearted people of Bethany who wanted to honor Jesus for the great miracle of raising Lazarus that He had done in their town. It was a celebration dinner. At that dinner we see the best and the worst in people. Let's call it the good, the bad, and the ugly.

### **THE GOOD**

At this dinner we see three people from the same good family, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Together these three make a complete picture of the Christian life:

- Martha is a picture of Christian work and service

We see Martha busy serving the meal and that's no surprise (Lk. 10:38-42). Mary was a servant at heart and if you're a servant, you serve. That's what you do.

- Mary is a picture of Christian worship and devotion

We see Mary lovingly anointing Jesus with the ointment and wiping His feet with her hair and that's no surprise. Three times in scripture we find Mary at Jesus' feet (learning, grieving, and worshiping). We see her generosity and the fullness of her gift. She took a box of very costly ointment and poured it on Jesus. Mark 14 tells us she broke the alabaster box of ointment. The container itself was expensive. It was a costly gift, but Jesus was worth it. Rick Coram tells the story of a man who went to buy some perfume for his wife. He asked the department store lady to help him. First she showed him a bottle that cost \$75. He asked if she had anything less expensive. She showed him a bottle that cost \$50. He shook his head and asked if she had something a little cheaper. She pointed to a bottle for \$20. He asked her to show him something real cheap. She reached under the counter and handed him a mirror.

We see not only the fullness of Mary's gift but the fragrance of her gift. When you do something special for Jesus everybody around you gets a blessing. Are the places you go filled with the fragrance of Christ because of you?

We see not only the fullness of Mary's gift and the fragrance of her gift, but we see the faithfulness of her gift. She anointed Jesus' body ahead of time for His burial. Jesus had said that He was going to die on the cross, but Mary really believed Him. Jesus said: "She has done what she could. She has done a good work on me." She did what she could for Jesus when she could, and Jesus said this act of devotion would be a memorial of her. What do you want to be remembered for?

- Lazarus is a picture of Christian witness and joy

We see Lazarus sitting at the table eating the meal. In chapter 11 he was in the tomb, but now he's at the table. He has life, liberty, and now he is enjoying good fellowship.

### **THE BAD AND THE UGLY**

What a contrast we see in Judas. He criticized Mary and said the expensive ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor. These are the first recorded words of Judas in the Bible and what a window into his soul. We are told that Judas wasn't concerned for the poor, but he was a thief who wanted to get his hands on more money.

Mary was unselfish and giving. Judas was selfish and greedy. Mary did something special and meaningful for Jesus. Judas only criticized. Mary had spiritual insight. Judas was spiritually blind. Mary is remembered for her love and devotion. Judas is remembered for his betrayal. *Proverbs 10:7 The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot.* What's even worse is that the other gospels tell us that it wasn't only Judas who criticized and said the ointment should be sold. The other disciples said the same thing.

There's one more thing that fits into the category of bad and ugly. Look at verses 9-11. The chief priests wanted to kill Lazarus because many of the Jews were believing on Jesus. They "went away," that means they were making a conscious and deliberate decision to move away from established religion toward faith in Christ. There was another reason why they wanted to kill Lazarus. The chief priests belonged to a group called the Sadducees and according to Acts 23:8, they claimed there was no resurrection. So they wanted to kill Lazarus because he was a living testimony to the awesome power of Jesus and he was a living refutation of their teaching that denied the resurrection.

### **APPLYING THIS MESSAGE TO YOUR LIFE**

1. We should look for tangible ways to honor Jesus
2. We must use opportunities to honor Jesus while we can
3. When we honor Jesus we can expect some criticism and hatred from others
4. When we honor and please Jesus nothing else matters