

## John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup>A dinner was prepared in Jesus' honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate with him. <sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, <sup>5</sup>"That perfume was worth a year's wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor." <sup>6</sup>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.

<sup>7</sup>Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. <sup>8</sup>You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

<sup>9</sup>When all the people heard of Jesus' arrival, they flocked to see him and also to see Lazarus, the man Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup>Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus, too, <sup>11</sup>for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them and believed in Jesus.

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## Background

Jesus returns to Bethany where a dinner is held in His honor, likely in celebration of the raising of Lazarus. Matthew and Mark record a very similar event, but they note that Mary anointed the Lord's head. If it's the same event, then Mary likely anointed *both* His head and feet. In that culture, guests reclined at the dining table with feet extended, allowing easy access to both head and feet.

Anointing with oil was common in that dry climate, but Mary's use of extremely costly oil (worth a year's wages) and wiping Jesus' feet with her unbound hair, which was unusual for a woman in public, made her act remarkable. It reflected deep devotion and gratitude. This anointing differs from the one in Luke 7, which involved a different woman, setting, and time.

## Teaching Points

### 1. The human heart responds to the obvious work of the Lord in various ways.

In John 11, Jesus performed an undeniable miracle by raising Lazarus from the dead. In chapter 12, we see varied responses to this powerful act:

**1. Worship, Service, and Communion** – Mary worshiped Jesus by anointing Him with costly oil; Martha served by preparing the meal; Lazarus communed with Jesus, sitting at the table with Him.

**2. Selfish Unbelief** – Judas criticized Mary, pretending to care for the poor, though he would soon betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (worth only a tenth of the oil's value), revealing a heart hardened by greed.

**3. Curiosity** – Many came not for Jesus, but to see Lazarus. They were drawn by spectacle rather than seeking the Savior.

**4. Hatred** – The religious leaders, rather than believing, plotted to kill both Jesus and Lazarus to erase the evidence of the miracle.

These responses reflect the range of human reactions to God's work, both then and now.

## Application

### 1. When was the last time you gave a year's wages to the Lord?

Mary's worship was marked by sacrificial giving. She poured out a year's wages, likely her life savings, in one moment for Jesus. It was extraordinarily costly devotion, and the Lord approved.

True worship often involves sacrifice. While we're not called to neglect responsibilities, we should examine how often our giving truly costs us something. Opportunities to give sacrificially as Mary did won't always be there. When was the last time your giving truly reflected sacrifice?