

THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE

(A Study of the Gospel of John)

Messiah – Worshiped, Acknowledged, but Not ...

Matthew, tax collector turned apostle

John Mark, who caught the wrath of Paul the Apostle for going home early on a mission trip, later proved to be a man of great faith and the earliest of the gospel writers.

And our beloved Apostle, Pastor John,

... all write in their books about Jesus concerning an incident that took place during the week before Jesus was nailed to the cross. It is really impossible to read the three accounts and not recognize they are all talking about the same dinner party, hosted in the home of one Simon the Leper whom Jesus had healed.

However, though the accounts do not at all disagree, each of them tells us of some details the others omit. Let me put them all together, trying to give you the story as told by all of the gospels.

The Savior left the bustling city of Jerusalem to spend the night in Bethany, the home town of Lazarus whom He raised from the dead and Lazarus' two sisters Mary and Martha. He was to eat a meal in the home of Simon the Leper, with his friend Lazarus joining Him for dinner.

While Jesus was eating, Mary, the sister of Lazarus slipped quietly into the room. She carried an alabaster container, some called it a flask, others a box, we do not know. It was a container made of alabaster stone, but what was in it was what really mattered. It contained a full pound of very precious perfumed ointment. It is probably hard for us to picture just how precious this ointment was. It would have cost nearly a year's wages for the average person. Without question, it was Mary's most precious possession.

Mary had undoubtedly used some of the ointment before. When very special occasions arose, she dabbed a bit behind her ears and the fragrance testified to the importance of an event. She probably had used some to anoint the dead body of her brother Lazarus when they prepared him for burial. But even though she was probably generous in its use on her brother, it was so potent, so powerful, and so precious, that with all of its uses up until now, hardly any was gone. There was enough here for the rest of her life. Mary looked at Lazarus, alive, healthy, robust, seated with the Master, sharing a meal together. What Jesus had done for her and her family caused her heart to swell until it felt like it would burst from her chest.

No one noticed her movement across the room or what was in her hands. Martha was busy serving the table, and Jesus and the disciples were absorbed in conversation. Mary

eased up behind the Savior and with a simple motion broke open the box and poured the entirety of its precious contents over the head of her Lord. Immediately the room was hushed, and all eyes focused upon her and Jesus. The whole house was immediately filled with the fragrance of the ointment and with the testimony of Mary's extravagant love.

But Mary was not finished with her act of worship. She quietly slipped down to Jesus' feet, and with the ointment that had clung to her hands as she anointed the Master's head, she anointed His feet as well. Then, in an act of self denial and humiliation, she loosed her hair that was always tightly bound upon her head, for no self respecting Jewish woman would let her hair down before the men of a city; she let her hair fall to her waist and then threw it over her shoulders and wiped the excess ointment off of the feet of her Lord.

I am convinced that Mary's worship was motivated not only by what Jesus had already done for Lazarus and her and her sister Martha, but by what she understood Jesus was about to do. He was going to the cross, and He was going there for her. She had sat at His feet before and heard Him teach, and she understood. He was going to die upon that cross and pay the penalty for her sin. As she thought about His sacrifice, no gift she could offer was precious enough to express the gratitude of her soul. Worshipping Him in genuineness and humility, offering the best she had, was all she knew how to do to express the love and devotion of her heart.

TEXT: John 12:1-8

Two things of importance we should note about Mary's act of worship.

I. MARY'S WORSHIP WAS MOTIVATED BY GRATITUDE AND EXTRAVAGANT LOVE.

A. Mary was deeply grateful for what Jesus had done for her by raising her brother.

1. Jesus had done what no one else could do for her.
2. How many of us have also had Jesus do things for us no one else could ever do? I have.
 - Giving us eternal life when we did not deserve it
 - Changing our life in ways we could not
 - Saving and transforming some of our loved ones
 - Healing us of a deadly disease
 - Providing miraculously to meet a great need

Genuine, heartfelt gratitude will always lead to worship.

Psalm 100:4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, *And* into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name.

B. Mary also had a deep love for Jesus that motivated her extravagant act of worship.

1. We all recognize the difference between giving out of obligation and giving out of love.
2. **When we are obliged to give, we ask, “How little can I spend and still do what is considered acceptable?”**
 - a. And such is the giving of many people to the Lord.
 - b. When these are told that the tithe is the minimum that God says we should offer to the Lord Who gives us everything, some shrink back aghast saying, “Ten percent seems like so much.”
 - c. Those same dear souls would be delighted if their government would settle for so little!
3. But giving out of genuine love is very different. As William Barclay says,

**“Love never calculates;
love never thinks how little it can decently give;
love’s one desire is to give to the uttermost limits;
and, when it has given all it has to give,
it still thinks the gift too little.” - William Barclay**

And you might be saying, **“Pastor, don’t you wish people gave like that today?”** But I tell you, **“No! I wish people loved like that today.** Then the giving would take care of itself.”

You see, our problem is not that we lack the resources. The problem is that we love ourselves more than we love the Lord. So we use most of what God provides for ourselves and upon ourselves rather than upon and for the Lord.

When church budgets sag, and mission giving lags, and work that everybody agrees is of the Lord goes unfunded, the Bible says it is not because God lacks or fails to provide the resources for His work. Scriptures say that God provides in abundance, more than is needed for every good work. God provides those resources by entrusting them to God’s people. The problem is that God’s people divert some, sometimes much, of what God has provided for His work to providing their own desires.

And what is the root of that problem? If we are honest, we will admit that **it is a love problem. We love ourselves more than we love our Lord.** That is one of the reasons that **Jesus said that Mary’s act would be remembered as a memorial to her as long as the gospel was preached.** Her extravagant act was motivated out of gratitude and love,

- **contrary to common sense,**
- **contrary to popular opinion,**
- **contrary to custom**

– just love, and still her love could not match the love that Jesus had for her. Nor could her gift match His gift.

Giving is only one aspect of worship impacted by how grateful we are to God and how much we genuinely love the Lord.

- How much we join in the worship of Christ through song
- How much we ourselves worship the Lord in prayer
- How much attention we give to the Word of God

When your heart overflows with gratitude for what the Lord has done in your life, you will not stand with locked jaw while others sing the praises of the God who so greatly blessed you.

When love really overflows your heart for the Lord Jesus, you will be eager for opportunity to tell Him so in prayer and you will want to hear also what He has to say to you through His Word.

II. THE ANOINTING OF JESUS WAS PROCLAMATION THAT JESUS IS MESSIAH.

The Jews anointed people for three offices:

- **Prophet**
- **Priest**
- **King**

The word Messiah means “Anointed One.”

God’s promised Messiah was prophesied to be

- **Prophet**
- **Priest**
- **King**

Mary’s extravagant act of worship did not seem extravagant to her at all, because the One whose feet she wiped with her own hair was her Messiah and Savior.

May I ask you, “Why are you here in this place today?”

- Are you here out of gratitude to the Lord?
- Are you here because you love Jesus with all of your heart?
- Are you here because you believe in the depth of your soul that Jesus is Messiah, Savior, Living Lord, and the Sovereign King of the Universe?

Brothers and Sisters, the Scripture says,

John 12:12–15 12 The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out:

“Hosanna! ‘Blessed is *He who comes in the name of the LORD!*’ The King of Israel!”

14 Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written:

15 “*Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey’s colt.*”

The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem marked one of the most outstanding fulfillments of prophecy in all of Scripture and indelibly identified Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah of God.

Although the prophecy was recorded by Daniel when he was 83 years old, it was actually given by the Angel Gabriel. He told Daniel that from the time the command was given to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem until Messiah entered the city as her coming King would be 483 years.

Few, if any, had kept up with the passing of time. Few, except for God. But from the time recoded even in secular history that King Artaxerxes Longimanus ordered the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem until Jesus rode through the city on the back of a donkey’s colt, was 483 years to the day!

At the outskirts of the city, before they entered the gate in the wall, Jesus sent two of the disciples in to fetch a young donkey. He told them to tell the owners that the Lord needed it, and they would let them have it, and they did. The disciples took some of their own coats and laid on the donkey to provide a makeshift blanket for Jesus. The master mounted the colt and rode through the gate to enter the city, just as Zechariah had also said He would.

As His donkey progressed down the Jerusalem road, people began to wave palm branches and lay them on the path before Him. Many took off their coats and spread them before the donkey to pave the way for Jesus. And then the crowd began to quote Psalm 118, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” “Hosanna,” they cried. “Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna to the Son of David.”

The people rejoiced in their praise, and acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah. Luke tells us that the Pharisees were enraged. They called out to Jesus to make the

people stop praising Him as if He were God. Jesus simply said, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.”

We might think that this week would have at least begun as a time of great joy for our Lord. He had been worshipped, anointed, and now a multitude had acknowledged Him as the Messiah and coming King.

But the Bible says that as Jesus went on up the road into the city that he wept. He wept over Jerusalem. He cried as He spoke, **Luke 19:42-44** 42 “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things *that make for your peace!* But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, 44 and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

Jesus knew that only a few of the crowd that welcomed Him really believed in Him and trusted in Him. In a few days, some of these same people would follow the lead of the priests and cry, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him.” Jesus knew that even after He was crucified before their eyes, paying the price for their sin with His own blood; and even after He rose from the dead and appeared to more than 500 of them, and even after thousands were saved as they believed in Him on the day of Pentecost, still, most,... by far most, would not believe and would forever remain lost in their sins.

God’s judgment upon Jerusalem would come. The Romans would eventually destroy it in 70 A.D., not leaving a single stone upon another. But far more tragic than that was that when those who did not believe died, they would be separated from Him and from the Father forever. They would be tormented in the flames of hell because they refused to trust Him. They refused to follow Him.

In John’s gospel relating Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, he quotes Jesus as saying these words:

John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; ...

Jesus Messiah

- **Worshipped**
- **Acknowledged**
- **but not followed.**

CONCLUSION: And so it continues to this day. Many are those who say they worship Jesus. Many say they believe He is the Messiah, the Son of God. But many of those have not trusted Jesus as the Lord and Master of their lives and begun to follow Him.

INVITATION: **John 12:26** If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me;

Do not be one of those. Turn in faith to Jesus today and follow Him, trust Him, make Him Lord and Master of your life today.