

LEADING LADIES

"MARY: BREAKING YOUR BEST FOR CHRIST"

MATTHEW 26:6-13

Worship is an intensely individual and personal experience. God seeks worshippers who worship him "in spirit and truth," which points to "heart to heart," unadulterated worship. Corporate worship is only truly corporate if each individual involved is personally engaged in worship—worship goes beyond attending a worship service. That said, Mary's act of worship, the anointing of Jesus with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, illustrates the intensely personal nature of worship. What's more, as an archetype of extravagance in worship it challenges each of us to follow her example. While we can't do *what* she did; we can do *like* she did.

This Week's Core Competency

Worship – I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me.

On the night before Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he ate dinner at "the home of Simon the Leper" in Bethany (Mt 26:6). "As he was reclining at the table," Martha's sister, Mary, anointed him with "an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume" (v. 7)—much to the chagrin of his disciples. They called what she did a "waste" (v. 8); the unguent could have been sold for a "high price and the money given to the poor" (v. 9). But Jesus called it "a beautiful thing" (v. 9); what she did would be told "in memory of her" (v. 13) wherever the

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– R. T. France

gospel is preached.

On the meaning of the word translated "beautiful," one commentator writes: "What for the disciples was 'waste' is for Jesus a 'lovely' gesture. It may be overtranslation to render *kalos* here as 'lovely,' since Matthew seems to use *kalos* equally with *agathos* in the general sense of 'good' (see p. 285, n. 5), and *kalos* was used for 'good deeds' in 5:16. But the original sense of *kalos* as 'beautiful,' 'fine' is still sometimes discernible in the NT period, and offers a powerful 'aesthetic' contrast here to the disciples' pragmatic accusation of waste" (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, 975).

Again Mary chooses what is better (Lk 10:41-42). On a much earlier occasion, Jesus dined with Mary and Martha. While Martha was preparing dinner, Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet—on this occasion, much to the chagrin of her sister. When Martha protested, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" (v. 40), the Lord refused. Instead, he told her, "Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (v. 42). In a very academic way, interpreters typically focus dispassionately on the fact that by seating herself at the feet of Jesus to hear his word, Mary began to assume the role of a disciple. One writes: "She is beginning to respond to Jesus' call to hear his words and do them (6:47)" (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 1:137). But the desire to learn from Jesus doesn't tell the whole story. Mary was motivated by more than just the pragmatic desire to learn. Unlike her sister, perhaps, Mary was no pragmatist, no realist. If

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the opposite of *realist* is *romantic*, Mary was a romantic—one with an appreciation of aesthetics and love of beauty. Underlying this romantic's desire to learn from Jesus, was a deep-seated affection for him, fueled by an equally deep seated appreciation for his messianic person. These were accompanied by a virtual compulsion to express both, others' objections notwithstanding.

On the night before Jesus' triumphal entry, Mary not only did what was right, she did what was lovely, beautiful, heartfelt, and touching. Her act of anointing Jesus was all of these because it was an intensely personal, intimate, unfeigned, extravagant act of worship and devotion. Mary was filled with gratitude and awe for the one who had raised her brother from the dead and was filled with love and devotion for the one she believed to be Israel's Messiah. Suspecting that Jesus would soon die, she seized the moment to do what could not wait, namely, prepare him for his burial.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 26:6-13

6 While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, 7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

8 When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. 9 "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."

10 Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 11 The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. 12 When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13 Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Cf., a complementary passage

John 12:1-11

1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the

dead. 2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." 6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

7 "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

9 Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, 11 for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

* Circle "Bethany" in v. 6.

* Bracket "Simon the Leper" in v. 6.

* Circle "a woman" in v. 7.

* Circle "perfume" in v. 7.

* Circle "beautiful" in v. 10.

* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 11.

* Box "to" indicating *purpose* in v. 12.

* Underline "wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world" in v. 13.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What do you know about *Bethany*, where Jesus was anointed in Simon's house?
2. Speculate regarding the *mood* of the dinner guests, given what you know about the setting.
3. Simon the Leper hosted the dinner. What do you infer about him from his name?
4. Are you surprised by the fact that Mary (cf., Jn 12:3) is the unnamed woman in the narrative? Explain.
5. Put what Mary did in its *cultural* context for those who think it seems strange.
6. What do you think of what she did?
7. Explain the *contrast* in verse 11.
8. Jesus said, "She did it to prepare me for burial." Did she know that?
9. **Discussion:** Jesus is not *physically* present today. Talk about how we might imitate Mary's scandalous, audacious, extravagant act of homage and devotion.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, did something she would never live to regret—one truly audacious, scandalously extravagant act of homage and devotion to Jesus, recorded in Matthew 26:6-13 (cf., Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:1-11). While Jesus was reclining at the dinner table, she "came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head" (v. 7). According to one commentator: "She covers Jesus' head (v.7) and feet (John 12:3a), presumably pouring the liquid over his whole body, just as corpses were to be immersed in sweet-smelling ointments in preparation for burial" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 384).

The anointing took place in the home of Simon the Leper, no doubt a man who was formerly a leper but had been healed from his horrible condition by Jesus. Simon's home was in the village of Bethany on the outskirts of Jerusalem—Jesus' home away from home. It was where Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus lived and where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. It may have also been where he healed Simon of his skin disease. Apparently, those who gathered for dinner with Jesus and his disciples on this particular night, Saturday night before Jesus' triumphal entry on Sunday morning, had developed close personal relationships to him over the duration of his ministry.

The narrative is short, only eight verses. Verses 6-7 describe Mary's act. Although the room was full of people, Mary is oblivious to everyone except Jesus. Her act is very personal, between her and Jesus, and the fact it's hers should come as no surprise. On a previous occasion, when at dinner with Jesus, her attention is riveted on him. While Martha is preoccupied with preparing the meal, Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet listening to his every word (Lk 10:38-40). Here again Martha is serving as Mary anoints Jesus with the costly unguent (Jn 12:2-3).

Verses 8-9 describe the disciples' reaction. They are indignant—scandalized by what she did. They call it a "waste," protesting that the perfume could have been sold for a tidy sum and the money be given to the poor. After all, what use was the perfume when it was so recklessly poured out? What's more, it was a woman's act, and they were

men. "For them the beauty of the woman's action and the wealth of devotion to which it gave expression were of no consequence" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 648). Of course, charitable giving was a legal obligation to be taken seriously. Still, perhaps they did protest too much. As one commentator observes: "John speaks of Judas Iscariot as leading the complaint and goes on to point out that he was the man who kept the money box and would have the disposal of what was put in it; John says that he was dishonest and pictures Judas as looking for some personal profit (John 12:4-6)" (Morris, 648).

And verses 10-13 describe Jesus' commentary on both. On the disciples' reaction, Jesus says: "Why are you bothering this woman?" (v. 10), reminding them, "The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me" (v. 11). He isn't relieving them of their responsibility to care for the poor; he's simply pointing out unlimited opportunities to be charitable to the poor await them in the future. But he will be gone soon. Mary performed an act of homage that could only be done while he was with them. One commentator writes: "It is a matter of priorities. A definitive moment is upon them, and even the duty of helping the poor must take second place. Once this unique drama has been played out, the claims of the poor will rightly reassert themselves" (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, 974).

On Mary's act, Jesus says: "She has done a beautiful thing to me" (v. 10). It was a bold, intensely personal, and extravagant act of heartfelt love and devotion. And he says: "She did it to prepare me for burial" (v. 12). Did she really have Jesus' death in mind at the time? Perhaps not. "Anyone who had heard Jesus' announcement in v. 2 and who knew the reality of Roman crucifixion should have realized that he must expect to be denied the proper burial rituals which were so important among Jewish people (see below, p. 1088). It is possible that the woman had been there to hear those words and so had consciously planned to make good the lack of due respect to his body, but it is more likely that this is Jesus' own interpretation of

what had been in her intention simply a spontaneous act of love and loyalty" (France, 975). Her scandalously extravagant act has been preserved for us in the Gospels, and

consequently, has rightly been told for two centuries wherever the gospel has been preached in memory of her just as Jesus predicted.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

The Message of the Passage

Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, did something neither she nor we would ever live to regret—one truly audacious, scandalously extravagant act of homage and devotion to Jesus.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22.

You cannot do *what* Mary did. How can you do *like* Mary did?

List 3 specific ways you can express your love and devotion to Jesus.

Pick one to do this week.

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

vv. 6-13 "Matthew (and Mark 14:3-9) recounts the story of Jesus' anointing thematically, placing it in the context of the conspiracy to arrest Jesus, whereas John 12:1-8 narrates the story chronologically, showing that it occurs on the Saturday night before Jesus' triumphal entry" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 828).

v. 6 **Bethany** This village on the farther side of the Mount of Olives about 3 km from Jerusalem on the road to Jericho, is first mentioned in the Gospels as the home of Jesus' beloved friends, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Jesus' raising of Lazarus, Jesus' anointing during the feast at the home of Simon the Leper, and Jesus' ascension are all linked to Bethany, his home away from home.

v. 6 **Simon the Leper** "Simon 'the Leper' is otherwise unknown. Presumably his nickname derived either from some family connection or from his having been previously cured of a skin infection (see p. 305, n. 17); someone with active 'leprosy' could hardly have hosted a dinner" (France, 974). "On Saturday evening, just after the end of the Sabbath at sunset, Jesus and the disciples attend a dinner at the home of 'Simon the Leper' in Bethany. Since Simon is hosting a meal in his own home, he has probably been healed of leprosy by Jesus, for lepers were required to live away from the common population. According to John 12:2, Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, are there. Lazarus, of course, was a celebrated figure because he had been raised from the dead by Jesus, and Martha and Mary were long-time followers of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42)" (Wilkins, 828). One commentator speculates that Simon may have been the father of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, since the meal was at his house (Mt 26:6), and Martha was serving (Jn 12:2) (see Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 646-47).

v. 7 **perfume** "Unguents were used among the Jews much more freely than in modern Western societies (cf. Ps. 23:5). For example, it would be expected that when a guest came for a meal, oil would be provided to be put on his head (Luke 7:46). The use of this costly unguent rather than the cheap oil that would be more commonly used is a mark of devotion. Mary did not regard Jesus as a casual, run-of-the-mill guest but as a very special person; for him a very costly offering was just right" (Morris, 647). "Mark gives a fuller description of the unguent and its value (over three hundred denarii, a year's wages; so also John 12:5). The Myron is perhaps oil of myrrh (see on 2:11), or a compound of it, but the term was also used more generally for fragrant anointing oils . . . Oil for the head was an expected part of hospitality at a meal" (France, 974).

v. 10 **beautiful** "What for the disciples was 'waste' is for Jesus a 'lovely' gesture. It may be overtranslation to render *kalos* here as 'lovely,' since Matthew seems to use *kalos* equally with *agathos* in the general sense of 'good' (see p. 285, n. 5), and *kalos* was used for 'good deeds' in 5:16. But the original sense of *kalos* as 'beautiful,' 'fine' is still sometimes discernible in the NT period, and offers a powerful 'aesthetic' contrast here to the disciples' pragmatic accusation of waste" (France, 975).

v. 11 **but** "Curiously, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their seemingly laudable objection. He views Mary's act as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to demonstrate a special kind of sacrificial love (vv. 10-11). She has created an object lesson for everyone present; Jesus points out the symbolism in her anointing him as preparation for burial (v. 12). There will always be opportunities to help the poor; this may be the last opportunity for Mary to minister to Jesus before his death" (Craig L. Bloomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 385). "Jesus here emphasizes that the woman is performing an act of homage to him that can only be done at this time while he is with them (cf. similar comments about not fasting in 9:14-17). There are special circumstances that affect the disciples' practices while Jesus is still with them" (Wilkins, 829).

v. 12 **to** Jesus introduces his interpretation of the significance of Mary's act with a preposition indicating purpose. "It is not impossible that Mary is able to see from the gathering storm clouds of opposition from the religious leaders that Jesus will soon be arrested and executed and so comes here to prepare him for that fate. However, this seems unlikely, for we do not find evidence that anyone really understood his prophecies of the cross and resurrection until after the fact. Rather, Mary's anointing of Jesus is more an act of special tribute and thanksgiving for him for what he has done for her and her family. It also may be an intended act of worship, as she may be increasingly recognizing his true identity. But whatever her actual motivation, Jesus tells his disciples that what she performed is an act of homage far more significant than even she knows. She unknowingly has begun the preparations for his burial, which will come sooner than any of them conceives possible" (Wilkins, 829-30).

v. 13 **wherever** "Mary's deed will be so praised that Jesus promises it will become a regular part of the story of his life. He thus assumes that the story will indeed be retold. Its inclusion in three of the four Gospels ensured that it was. As in 24:14 Jesus also foreshadows the disciples' obedience to the Great Commission, as they proclaim the gospel 'throughout the world'" (Blomberg, 385).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

What will you sacrifice for Jesus? If you're like me, you might be willing to give some things but not others—your trials but not successes or your struggles but not your finances. What about your time? My son really loved playing sports in elementary school and junior high. When he got into eighth grade, he realized that most games were played on Wednesday nights and he would have to miss church. Without giving it another thought, he quit the team. Honestly, I wrestled with it. I looked at the whole schedule, weighing the times he would miss against his love of the sport and sat on the fence. But not him; he was all in for Jesus. He gave up something costly that he enjoyed and excelled at for the sake of the gospel. Would he have done that if our family had not been so devoted to church in his younger years? Right now, today, you are shaping foundational truth in your kids and teaching them to have a high view of God. Is church attendance another block on your calendar that's easily moved around? Is it easier to sleep in on Sunday? Your time is costly, will you give it to the Lord today? Better yet, will you go beyond and invest in a child today by giving your time to serve in children's ministry? We are praying for your family to go all in this week, giving away your life for the sake of the kingdom.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Mt 26:6-13

1. What did the woman pour on Jesus? Why?
2. Why were the disciples upset about this?
3. What was Jesus' reaction?

What Do You Think

Do you think what she did was right or wrong?

What R U Going To Do

How will you show Jesus you love him? Sing a worship song or journal a prayer.

Core Comp

Worship - I celebrate God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Memory Verse

2 Timothy 1:7 - *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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