

One Savior, Five Reactions

Scripture: John 12:1–11

Code: 43-61

We come back to the twelfth chapter of John and we pick up the biography of Jesus, the history of Jesus in the gospel recorded by the apostle John at just the point that the Passion Week begins. The first eleven chapters describe the whole of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ from John's perspective, covering a period of three years. But the second half of the book from chapter 12 to the end covers one week, so everything gets very intense from here on.

The scene is set really toward the end of the eleventh chapter and into the twelfth chapter. We meet very important characters that are going to be a part of the drama as it unfolds through the end. But particularly at this point, I want to emphasize that we're going to begin to see the polarization of love and hate. We see it here, first of all, in the very passage before us. It doesn't need to be said because it's been said plenty that Jesus Christ divides everything. He even divides the calendar of history. Everything before Him is B.C. Everything after Him is A.D. He divides humanity. All people are either for Him or against Him. He divides destiny. He divides families. He divides marriages. He divides friendships. He divides association.

He came not to bring peace, but a sword. There's no one else like Him who evokes the antithetical extremes of love and hate, devotion and rejection, worship and blasphemy, faith and unbelief. He divides believers from unbelievers, sheep from goats, wheat from tares, children of God from children of the devil. Again, you are either for Him or against Him, and the for is extreme and the against can be extreme. John wrote this history to present Christ as the second person of the trinity in human form; fully God, fully man as the promised messianic King that God declared would come to take back the earth, establish His rule, and bring an everlasting righteousness.

John presents Him as the only Savior of the world, the only means of forgiveness, the only hope of eternal life. So John is telling us all of this through the 11 chapters that we have already studied. But also in those 11 chapters, there is the constant relationship between faith and unbelief. Every chapter, every chapter starting at the very beginning faces the issue of believing or not believing. This is, as I've told you before, the gospel of belief, but it could also be the gospel of unbelief because it records belief and unbelief in very stark terms.

Unbelief and belief are extreme reactions to Christ. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is so extreme it leads to eternal life in heaven. Not believing in Jesus Christ is so extreme it leads to eternal death in hell. There are extremes in this gospel. Now, as we come to chapter 12, those extreme becomes crystallized, in particular, through two characters in these opening verses. One is Mary and the other is Judas. They're symbolic of those extremes. Let's begin in verse 1.

"Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. 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. But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor people?' 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. Therefore, Jesus said, 'Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you will always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.' The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus."

This is really a stunning narrative setting the stage for the events of the final week of our Lord's life. Just remembering what has taken place prior to this in chapter 11 you have the account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Everybody knows about it. Lazarus has become the most well-known resident of the small village of Bethany, a couple of miles east of Jerusalem. The word is out that Lazarus has been risen from the dead. This final culminating public miracle of Jesus is a stupendous miracle with vast implications.

It was saved for proximity to Jerusalem so the knowledge of this miracle would transcend the village, the town of Bethany, and sweep through the conversations in the great city of Jerusalem. The evidence that this was widely known is indicated in verse 9 when you have large crowds of people coming on Sunday to Bethany to see not only Jesus who is there, but particularly see a man who had been raised from the dead, the man named Lazarus.

Now, prior to this period of time when our Lord arrives for Passover Week, there has been a bit of an interlude. You remember He had raised Lazarus from the dead. This was highly disturbing to the religious leaders of Israel. They never denied it. They couldn't deny it. It was a fact. But they want to do all the damage control they can possibly do, so they plan openly at least in the conversations that Jesus heard, verse 53 of chapter 11, to kill Him. Now, this has been coming for a long time. He's been very aware of it, but the plan has been escalated by the impact of the resurrection of Lazarus.

Jesus then can no longer continue to walk publicly among the Jews. He can't stay in the proximity of Bethany and Jerusalem because the leaders are ready to execute Him. So He went away from there, verse 54 says, to a country in the wilderness, a little place called Ephraim and stayed with His disciples. Some think it was a few days. Some think it was weeks. In fact, there are some – and this may well be the case; I lean this way – that there were a few weeks in there in which He actually went into Samaria and into Galilee. What He did in Samaria and Galilee is recorded in Luke 17, 18, and 19. So if you're looking for where that segment of His ministry Luke records belongs, it looks like it fits here if indeed He had a few weeks between the raising of Lazarus and His arrival for Passover.

The interlude is now over. He heads back, as we see, in verse 1 toward Jerusalem. What should He expect when He comes back? Well, the people according to verse 56 of chapter 11 were looking for Jesus. He was the most popular person in the nation. There had never been anyone like Him as a teacher or miracle worker. They were looking for Him to show up at this Passover event and to show up early because people showed up early for all of the ceremonies to purchase their animals, to change their coins, and to do the cleansing and preparation necessary to celebrate the Passover at the end of the week.

They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That He will not come to the feast at all?” because they knew that the leaders were wanting to kill Him. That had already been declared. Back in verse 53, they planned to kill Him. That was public knowledge. Verse 57, the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it so they might arrest Him, seize Him with the view to execute Him.

So in spite of the intention to execute Him or rather because of it, He comes back. Up to this point, when they wanted to kill Him, it was not God’s time. It was not His hour, but now it is, and He will die at this Passover on Friday at the very time that the Jews are slaughtering the Passover lambs. He will die as God’s chosen Passover lamb to satisfy God and to provide the sacrifice for the sins of His chosen people.

So as we come to chapter 12, as it says there, we are 6 days before the Passover. This would be Saturday. This is Sabbath. By the way, this is the last legitimate Sabbath. This is the final Sabbath in the Old Covenant because on Friday, Jesus will die and ratify the New Covenant. The Old Covenant will fade away. The New Covenant being ratified is in place, and there’s no more authorized official Sabbaths. So the church immediately gathers itself on Sunday when He was raised from the dead, and continued to do that every Sunday up until this very Sunday today.

The symbol of the New Covenant is not the Passover in Egypt. The symbol of the New Covenant is the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the first day of the week. So this is the last official authorized Sabbath. What we see in this text, in verses 1 to 11 is the obvious division that was occurring by simply the presence and ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ causes faith in Martha, Mary, Lazarus, and another person that we’ll meet in a minute. Jesus Christ causes unbelief of the severest kind and the rankest kind of vitriolic, hateful, venomous, apostasy in the man Judas.

Then, of course, there is that level of hostility among the leaders of Israel. Then there is the sort of curious indifference of the crowd. Finally, at the end, there are those who believe. These are all the characters that are in these few verses. They help us to look at the world now in the same way that the people of that day are described. There are Marys and Marthas and Judases, and there are hostile leaders, and there are indifferent crowds, and there are believers.

But you ask the question, how can this person Jesus from the standpoint of those of us who believe, how can this person be so violently rejected with some extreme animosity as displayed in the religious leaders who hate Him and want Him dead and Judas? How can that be? How can this one man’s life and teaching and testimony, how can this produce a Mary and a Judas placed side by side? Deep mystery, but Christianity still does that. The gospel still does that even to this day. All of the characters that you see here are still around. This becomes very instructive, not only historically, but for us.

So let’s break the characters out of the story a little bit. We’ll talk about Martha, Mary, Judas, the crowd, and the leaders. We’ll look at their attitudes, but let’s just get the setting. Verse 1, “Jesus therefore, six days before the Passover – ” The “therefore” points back. Even though He knew the crowds were looking for Him because they wanted more miracles. They were curious to see what else He would be doing. They were looking for Him. The leaders were looking for Him with a view to kill Him. Therefore, because all of this was waiting in Jerusalem and God’s timing was right, six days before the Passover, He came to Bethany.

Now, by the way, this incident recorded here is in Matthew. It is in Mark, and it is in Luke. So if you want to get the whole picture of this meal, this amazing event that launches Passion Week, you need to read all of those accounts; or get out your copy of *One Perfect Life* and see how all of it is blended into one single narrative. He arrives on that Saturday, comes through the little tiny village of Bethpage, and then into Bethany. I'll be weaving into some of the other gospel accounts. That's where we read about Bethpage.

Bethany is known as the place where Lazarus was whom Jesus raised from the dead. By the way, that is still how Bethany is known. If anybody says Bethany in Israel, "Oh yeah, that's where Lazarus was whom Jesus raised from the dead." That's timeless; the most famous person who ever lived in Bethany because nothing like that had ever happened in Bethany or ever will happen. It's time for Him to come to the Passover and be the Passover, be the sacrifice depicted in the Passover lamb whose blood was sprinkled on the doorposts and the lintel back in Egypt to signify that sacrifice had been made and the death angel would pass by. That family would be spared.

Well, Christ is the true Passover lamb that satisfies God forever for the sins of His people through all human history. He comes to die at Passover as the true Passover. On that last Sabbath, last legitimate Sabbath before He is crucified and bears the sins of the world, He chooses to share His hours with His beloved friends in Bethany. Tender moments for our Lord Jesus. He knew these people. He loved these people. He had spent time with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. We know that from earlier gospel accounts. Six days away from the thorns. Six days away from the nails. Six days away from the spear. Six days away from the hatred, the sin-bearing, the loneliness of being God-forsaken. Six days ahead but vivid in His mind, He seeks the warmth and the love and the affection of dear, dear friends. But sadly, in the midst of those few hours that He had to be with those who loved Him, the ugly, scandalous, apostate Judas rises to commandeer the event, to scar the occasion. His hate is relentless.

Now, as we look at the story, let's look at the characters. We'll start with the heartfelt service of Martha, the heartfelt service of Martha. I need to rescue Martha a little bit because Martha gets bad press. That comes out of the account in Luke 10. On another occasion, when our Lord was traveling, He came to Bethany and came to the village and Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary who was seated at the Lord's feet listening to the Word. Martha was distracted with all her preparations. She came up to Him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."

She's a little obsessed with this serving stuff. The Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha –" and if you're named Martha, you have heard that many, many times. "You are worried and bothered about so many things, but only one thing is really necessary, and Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Let me tell you something. The truth that Mary is listening to is forever. The meal and the stuff in the kitchen, that has a short shelf life. So instruction, divine truth, worship is a priority.

Based upon that experience, and you can go back to John 12. We sort of degrade Martha a little bit, and I think we need to lift her back up. She served and service is regarded nobly in scripture, very nobly. In fact, the word "serving" there is the word *diakone* from which we get the word "deacon" and servers in the church were a very important part of the life of the church. People were first appointed in the sixth chapter of Acts. There are references all through the book of Acts to people

who served. Paul in Romans 16 talks about all the people who served, men and women who served his ministry and the ministry of those associated with him. So we don't want to belittle this service that Martha rendered. I'll say more about it in a moment, but let's look at the event itself.

The city or town is known because of Lazarus who had been raised from the dead. So when Jesus comes to Bethany, they made Him a supper there, *dapenon*. That's the evening meal, the prolonged meal, the meal at which you recline. The day is over; the work is over, and you relax and conversations are long, around a U-shaped table. People are in a reclining position. It's a slow meal full of conversation. They made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving. Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.

Now, we know this is not at the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus because the other gospels, and this of course is recorded also in Matthew 26 and Mark 14 tell us it happened at the house of a man named Simon called Simon the leper, Simon the leper, Simon the leper who also lived in Bethany. So this event takes place not at the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, but at the house of Simon the leper. Just to let you know, he couldn't have been a leper at the time or there wouldn't be a party at his house because lepers were excommunicated, and they were put out of the social occasions like this permanently.

So, if I may be so bold, I just need to inject that we should be calling him Simon, the ex-leper. Now, how do you become an ex-leper in the ancient world? There's no way unless you are healed by the Creator Himself, which then gives us information as to why Simon would host the event. Because he also had had a miraculous restoration, not unlike that of Lazarus. So there are two very special people sitting at the table or reclining at the table. One is an ex-leper and another is an ex-dead man. That should make for some fascinating conversation, frankly. Fascinating conversation.

Then you can add the Lord Jesus to the middle of it, and the conversation, can you imagine them talking about what happened to them when they received His power that gave them back health and life. Pretty incredible meal, a real feast, but it wasn't in honor of Lazarus, and it wasn't in honor of Simon. It was in honor of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's juxtaposed against the end of chapter 11 where the leaders of Israel want to arrest Him and kill Him. They want anybody who knows where He is to report that to them so that He can be arrested.

Very contrary to that, and this is another extreme, another division again, there is a feast to honor Him put on by two people who have experienced personally His creative power. Now, Martha is serving. This is noble service. Somebody has to do this. It's God-honoring service. "If anyone –" said Jesus in Matthew 20, " – would be chief among you, let him be your – " what? " – your servant." The Bible honors service. The Bible honors service. She will always be remembered for her service. That's how she was hard-wired. She was a doer. Sure, Mary was more contemplative, more reflective, more maybe spiritually-minded. Martha was a doer. Thank the Lord for doers. Thank the Lord for those who serve. In fact, the Lord Jesus says in Luke 22:27, "I am among you as He who serves. I am among you as He who serves."

I think the nobility of service is probably best expressed in the twelfth chapter of Luke, and I want to take the time just to read that to you. Our Lord is talking, and He looks ahead to glory and He says in verse 37, "Blessed are those slaves whom the Master will find on the alert when He comes." He's talking about His own Second Coming and believers. "Truly I say to you that when He comes, He will gird Himself – " put on a slave's apron, " – and have them recline at the table, and will come up

and wait on them.” Just an amazing statement that when the Lord returns and establishes His kingdom, He’s going to put on the waiter’s apron and serve us. That’s how elevated service is. That’s how exalted service is. What is the spirit of service? Acts 20:19, “Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, serving the Lord with all humility of mind.” Paul even says, “Serving the Lord will all humility of mind and many tears,” heartfelt service. What is the extent of service? Galatians 5:13, “By love, serve one another.” We’re all called to be servants, all called to be slaves of God and servants of the Lord and servants of each other.

It’s very important for us to see the nobility of service in Martha. It is elevated service, exalted service. She does it because she loves her Lord and she loves the people she serves. She needs to be lifted up from the somewhat degrading image that many would give to her. The Lord rebuked her because she needed to recognize that as noble as service is, hearing from the Lord Himself is a higher calling. So we see the heartfelt service of Martha.

Then we see the humble sacrifice of Mary. This is amazing; the humble sacrifice of Mary in verse 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.” It strikes me that this is kind of a detailed description of what she did that doesn’t advance the story at all. It doesn’t have anything to do with theology. It doesn’t give us any insight into doctrine and yet these details are laid out here to describe the lavish nature of her affection for Christ, her sanctified love for her Lord. It’s as if the Holy Spirit delights in every detail in Mary’s expression of love, measuring each element of it as if the divine Spirit is putting the stamp of approval on the deed in every feature and every aspect.

A great illustration to remind us of sacrificial, total completely, unrestrained love. I don’t really think this is something calculated, premeditated. This is the heart of Mary bursting, “And she took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard.” That’s a lot of pure perfume, pure fragrant oil. The term is “myron” which is a term for oil. Nard was a very rare herb grown in the high pasture lands of China, Tibet, and India. It wouldn’t find its way into a home in Bethany unless it had been carried there by camels from India, from China, far, far, far away. Because it came so far, because it was so pure, it was very valuable, very valuable. In fact, its value was known by the man who always thought only about the price of things: Judas. He named the price in verse 5 as 300 denarii. A denarius is a day’s wage. That’s 300 days of work. That’s essentially a year’s work if you take some days off out. Very expensive.

In Matthew 26:7 we read that it was in an alabaster jar. Alabaster is a white translucent stone that would be carved out to contain this nard. Probably, that’s how it was shipped and delivered and kept. Now, why would people have this? Well, for one use and we’ll see more about that in a minute, this kind of fragrant oil was used at a funeral. Since there was no embalming, to somehow lower the impact of the stench of a decaying body, fragrant oils were placed on the body. You remember Joseph of Arimathea. Nicodemus did that to the body of Christ. They anointed His body with spices and things like that at His own burial.

This is a very valuable thing to the family. They’ve got some of their estate in this very valuable oil in this alabaster jar. Maybe it was to be used for the funeral of family members. It hadn’t been used for Lazarus’s funeral, so that maybe open to question, but families did use perfume like this for purposes like that. It could also be used just for the ladies to enjoy the fragrance and the home to enjoy the fragrance. Its value is set by the man who knew the price of everything, but the value of nothing:

Judas.

Mary's heart is overflowing with love and gratitude. She is behind the scenes at first and now all of the sudden probably serving with Mary and Martha. She rushes to find this wherever it was, in a safe place. She bursts out in love. Her gentle, loving heart is literally beating. She can't restrain herself. According to Mark 14:3, she smashes the alabaster jar and opens it. Matthew and Mark tell us it went on His head and here we find in John that it went all the way down to His feet. Then she loosened her hair, which was a radical thing for a woman to do in the presence of men, and used her hair to wipe His feet. Foot washing at a meal was part of the meal because people had sandals, and there was no pavement. Dirty feet didn't suit people sitting down for a prolonged dinner in a reclining position.

This is an amazing and lavish expression. It's not the first time we've seen this on behalf of Jesus. Go back to Luke 7. It had happened before earlier in His ministry, not in Bethany, but in Galilee. Not in the house of Simon the leper, but in the house of a Pharisee. Not by a believing woman whom Jesus knew, but by a prostitute He didn't know. Luke 7:37, "There was a woman in the city who was a sinner and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisees' house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume standing behind Him at His feet weeping. She began to wet His feet with her tears, kept wiping them with the hair of her head and kissing His feet and anointing them with perfume. Now, when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.'"

That would be the most frightening things imaginable for a self-righteous Pharisee to imagine himself to be touched by a prostitute. He wouldn't survive that because Pharisees as legalists were highly seducible, even by a touch. But the touch of a most sinful woman, couldn't diminish the pure, holiness of Christ. Instead of it making Him unholy, He could make her holy. Apparently, this was a lavish way for people to express overwhelming love and affection.

Now you can go back to John 12. This is shocking. Really in complete disregard for Jewish rules of propriety for women not to loosen their hair in the presence of men, but her heart is speaking. This is love that knows no limits, love without restraint. It's extravagant. It's humble. It's generous. She gave everything of value that she could lay her hands on. There must have been stunned silence. There must have been stunned silence as that group of people who also loved Christ. That group would be Simon and whoever was in his family, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, the twelve, and Jesus. Many, many were there.

The silence didn't last. As they were contemplating the humble sacrifice of Mary, they were interrupted by the hypocritical self-interest of Judas. Verse 4, "But Judas Iscariot – ", who will be identified as he always is, " – one of His disciples who was intending to betray Him." Enter Judas, always thus described. That man whom Jesus in John 17:12 calls, the "son of perdition" of whom Acts 1:25 says, "He went to his own place." He is the son of perdition and his own place is perdition or eternal hell, a son of hell.

What a horrible interruption to such a lavish expression of believing love and devotion. The scene is tortured by the intrusion of a man identified by Jesus back in chapter 6 as a devil. Verse 70, chapter 6, "One of you is a devil," and He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, "For he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him." Always one of the twelve, one of the disciples who was going to betray

Him. That is his epitaph, and it was his epitaph before he died. That's how he was identified: greed, ambition, worldliness, self-interest, owned his heart, driving him now to a frenzy, a frenzy.

He cast his lot in thinking he would be wealthy. He cast his lot in thinking he would be elevated to some position of power and authority, and it began to become clear to him pretty early I think that this thing wasn't going the direction he wanted it to go. While everyone else was growing to love Christ more, he was growing to hate Him more. He labored in difficulty. There was resistance. There was rejection. He was left with nothing but the basest necessities of life. From day to day, it was merely survival. The idea of a kingdom was becoming ridiculous to him. Everything was going wrong, but he has to keep up the hypocrisy so he says in verse 5, "Why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii and given to poor people?" It sounds so noble, but John tells us in verse 6, "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."

When the thing began to go the direction he didn't think it should go, he began embezzling the money, the little money they had to sustain them. He wanted the money and all the money he could get. He was ready now to get out, whatever was going to be the end of this thing for Jesus. Jesus had said He was going to die. They were going to take His life. He can see the hostility, the animosity. He knows the end is coming. He knows He's not going to be able to be in the position he is to get the money that's in the box very much longer. He wants as much as he can get. By the way, this is sad. Matthew 26:8 says the other disciples chimed in on this. Yeah, why wasn't that sold and the money given to the poor? Stirred up by Judas to join the protest. It actually says the disciples protested.

He had a lot of influence. That's why he had the money box because everybody what? Trusted him. I will say this, true honor to Jesus Christ, a place where true honor is offered to Jesus Christ will always bring out the hostility of those who belong to Satan. If you honor Jesus Christ, those who belong to Satan will be hostile. This is a devil. It actually says Thursday night of this week coming, the devil himself entered into him. He was not just a devil, but the devil himself entered into Judas.

His first words ever spoken are in verse 5. These are the first words in the Scripture from the lips of Judas: "Why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii and given to poor people?" Do you want to know his last words? Matthew 27, "I have betrayed innocent blood." That's Judas. For 300 denarii, he would rob Jesus of the gift of Mary's love. Later, he would sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Three hundred denarii, that's about a year's wages; 30 pieces of silver, 4 months. The perfume was worth 3 times to him what he sold Jesus for.

So as Mary's perfume had filled the house with its fragrance, the poison of Judas's words turned the event toxic and contaminated the air. Judas was an embezzling thief. His life without question is the greatest tragedy in human history and eternity because of his proximity to the truth. The closer you are to the truth and reject it, the more severe your eternal punishment. A Judas can only rise in the context of the truth. I will say this: the safest place to be is in the church if you believe. The most dangerous place to be is in the church if you don't because if you ultimately reject Christ, will be held accountable for the knowledge that you had that produced nothing but rejection. How much greater punishment. This is a dangerous place. This is a very dangerous place.

"To whom much is given, much is required." I told you that's in a parable about flogging, about eternal punishment. You don't want to hear more if you're bent on rejecting it. Get out, and if there

is any diminishing of punishment in eternity, you can diminish it to some degree. But Judas, the apostate of all apostates. Judas is not a solitary figure. There are many apostates. I just finished a book called *Apostate*. It chronicles apostasy in influential people through Western history all the way back to the fifth century. All of the apostate philosophers and writers who brought up to this apostate generation where apostasy is the fabric of our entertainment.

Apostasy is the fabric of our music. It's in the water that we drink. It's everywhere. We live in an apostate world, a world full of apostates. What is an apostate? Somebody who defects from truth with the knowledge of the truth. You'd be amazed how many of the apostates through the centuries, the philosophers, most all of the philosophers that turned the world upside down and turned the world atheistic and evolutionary came out of Christian backgrounds, went to Christian schools, raised in churches, had Christian parents, Christian grandparents, and defected.

So Judas is not a solitary monster, but he is the apostate of all apostates. There have been many Judas kisses, those who have been close to Christ and kissed Him goodbye. That's a fearful situation. So we see the hypocritical self-interest of Judas. The Lord responds in verse 7, "Therefore, Jesus said, 'Let her alone,'" so that she may use it really for the day of My burial. I told you earlier that this could be used for burial. It didn't have to be. Didn't use it for Lazarus' burial, but it could be used for that. Our Lord here connects what she did out of an expression of love to His burial. Did she know that? Was she doing this with His burial in mind?

He had said He was going to die. Was she prepared that when He did die, did she believe? Was she prepared when He did die to anoint Him this way and didn't want to wait until He died because maybe she couldn't even be there? How was it going to happen? When was it going to happen? What would it be? Was she anointing him beforehand while He was alive to express the lavish nature of her love because she afraid she couldn't do it at the end? We don't know that. Did she even think about that? We don't know that, but we do know that Jesus interpreted what she did as anointing for His day of burial. By saying that, Jesus declares that He will die and He will be buried. What she has done is symbolic of His coming burial.

In Matthew 26:12 Jesus said this; this is the Matthew account of the same event, "When she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial?" Did she know that? We don't know. She doesn't say that. She doesn't say anything, but He said, "This is a preparation for My burial because that was a common use of such oil. Mark 14:8, Mark's account, "Jesus says, 'She has done what she could. She has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.'" So Jesus sees in this the symbol of the reality of His coming death and burial. Then I love Mark 14:9. Our Lord adds something that John doesn't include. Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world going forward, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

Not only does the Holy Spirit lay out what she did in detail, but the Lord gives its significant spiritual meaning attached to His very death. Then the Lord says, "This is going to be a permanent, everlasting memorial to the love of this woman." I guess we could ask the question honestly, how lavish is your sacrificial love for Christ? How focused are you on that? Kind of like purchasing friends for eternity isn't it? To greet you into heaven as we saw in the parable last week. So Jesus adds a word prophesying His death and burial. By the way, at that very moment when Jesus had said that, the jig was up for Judas. Mark says, "Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them."

When Jesus said, "Let her alone. She has done this symbolizing My coming death," Judas knew it was over. He was going to die. There wasn't going to be any future. There wasn't going to be any more money, but He wanted more money. All He had left to do now was to fulfill the command that was given earlier that if anybody knows where He is, report it, back in 11:57. He figured he could do that and make some cash on the way out. So he left.

Then in verse 8 Jesus said this, "You always have the poor with you." They're always going to be here. "You don't always have Me." What a beautiful statement, isn't it? You're always going to have the poor, and you're always going to want to care for the poor. They did care for the poor. That's why Judas brought that up and everybody chimed in and said, "Yeah, yeah. That's what we should have done with that." It's right to take care of the poor. It's right to care for them, but not now, not now. I'm here. You don't always have Me. I don't want to spiritualize that. I just want to say that in life there are priorities. There is temporal relief, and there is eternal worship, and you better know the difference.

So Judas stands rebuked, crushed, devastated, divisive moment. He runs to meet the leaders, says, "I want to make a deal. I'll tell you when and where you can get Him." He negotiated it to 30 pieces of silver. Bitter, greedy, murderous, betraying hatred is juxtaposed against this lavish love that is memorialized permanently. Mary overflowing extravagant, sacrificial love. Judas: bitter, greedy, murderous, betraying hate, extreme.

The story closes just briefly with two other groups. Number four, the hollow superficiality of the people, crowd. Verse 9, "The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there in Bethany. And they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead." Lazarus will always have a comma after his name. Lazarus comma, whom He raised from the dead. That's always going to be the case.

So the crowds came. You have the hollow superficiality of the people there curious about Jesus. They're curious about Lazarus. Oh, the next day, verse 12, the next day when He enters into the city they're saying Hosanna to the Son of David. By Friday, what are they saying? "Crucify Him! Crucify Him! We will not have the man to reign over us." This is the hollow superficiality of the people.

Then the account closes in verses 10 and 11 with the hostile scheming of the leaders, the hostile scheming of the leaders. The chief priests planned, listen to this, to put Lazarus to death. Talk about destroying evidence. Killing the man who was raised from the dead. You get an idea of the extreme hatred they had for Jesus. It never was about evidence. They never denied His miracles. They didn't deny the resurrection of Lazarus. They wanted to kill Him again because on account of him many of the Jews were going away, going away from the temple, going away from Judaism, going away from them and believing in Jesus. The resurrection of Lazarus allowed the surfacing of the hostile, scheming of the rulers and leaders to reach its pinnacle where they not only wanted to kill Jesus, but they wanted to kill Lazarus, but that's now how it ends.

You have the service and love of Mary and Martha. You have the selfish sin and apostasy of Judas. You have the indifference of the crowd that ends up shouting, "Crucify Him!" You have the hatred of the false leaders of Israel threatened by the truth who end up executing Jesus, but that's not the end. The end is you have people believing in Jesus, and that's how it is in the kingdom, isn't it?

There are the people who love Him, who hate Him, who are indifferent to Him, who want to destroy everything about Him. Against all that, you have people believing in Him. There's always a remnant who believe. That's why we preach, and that's why we're still on this planet to fulfill the Great Commission.

Lord, we have been blessed all morning in our time of worship. So thankful for the realities that have come to our hearts and minds through this text. I pray for the folks who are here, Lord. I pray for those who are maybe indifferent. I pray for those who are hostile. Lord, save them from a final apostasy, a final defection, a Judas kiss. I pray for those of us who are believers. May our love be lavish and extravagant and unrestrained as we express it in our willing obedience. Lord, lift up your Son even as He's lifted up in the Scripture in the minds and hearts of all of us. May we see Him for who He is, the Christ, the Son of God, and may all believe in Him and have eternal life through that faith. Grant repentance, grant faith, grant life and salvation. This we ask in His great name, Amen.

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