



September 1, 2013
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Bonus Material: The One with the Perfume
John 12: 1-8

This time last year, Larry and I were worshipping with the church who called us into ministry in Signal Mountain, TN. After church, we had our favorite Mexican meal with the folks we had served in college ministry and then drove to Memphis to finish the last 2,000 miles of driving to arrive here in Gig Harbor by this time next week.

And do you remember what that sermon was about on September 9, 2012? John chapter 1. A year later, and we've just about made it on the last leg of this 879 verse journey. There are 8 verses to go. In this little mini-collection of bonus scenes, Pastor Larry encouraged us that God can do a lot with our little bit. For the boy with the lunch, the loaves and fishes were no little bit. He didn't give him just 1 loaf and 1 fish, he gave him everything he had. Last week, Lance Brown showed us the value of following Jesus leaving behind everything we thought we knew God would be. And today, I want to share a story of what it looks like when we go all in and give him everything. Loving Jesus means giving him our all. (Pray.)

Our story of life with Jesus comes today from John 12:1-8. Page #909. Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

Quick pause: Did you see that? This is a bonus scene, so I want us to remember where we are. We're in the town of the living, dead man on the day before Palm Sunday... a week shy of the death of our sacrificial lamb, Jesus, on the cross. It's the perfect time for a radical display of love and devotion for Jesus as we look to the cross. Let's continue and see what happens.

Verse 2: Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 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.

Let's stop there. The purpose of this dinner was to honor Jesus. The disciples are here who for 3 years have heard his teachings and seen his miracles. Jesus' friend Lazarus is here who has gotten his very life back from Jesus. Martha declared a profound theological statement about who Jesus is at Lazarus' resurrection in John

11:27, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." She honors him by serving these men. And then there's Mary.

Mary wasn't one of the Twelve or the dead now living witness or the theological thinker. Mary was the one always at Jesus' feet. She was at Jesus' feet listening to his teaching when Martha complained about her not helping. She was at Jesus' feet weeping when Lazarus was dead. And here she is again at Jesus' feet. The way that she honored Jesus was not by also performing miracles like the disciples or by being out front with her testimony or by her intellect. On the eve of what would be the hardest week of Jesus' life, before he is utterly rejected by masses and friends alike, we have this moment when Mary honors Jesus. At this dinner, among these devoted followers of Jesus, Mary shows Jesus the fervency of her love for him by giving him everything she had.

And everything she had was her pride and her possession. If you were there at that dinner table, and you knew that Jesus was in danger, but you had one safe moment to show Jesus how utterly you loved him, what could you offer him? (Leave this up, Dean)

Mary knelt down at Jesus' feet to pour perfume over them. This posture is a surrender of cultural expectations. She takes the absolute lowliest position—that of a slave in the house. She lets down her hair in front of a gathering of men! That's culturally unprecedented. But she cares nothing for her status or her reputation. She shows only her devotion and love of Jesus.

She loved Jesus by pouring out the most expensive perfume imaginable. This bottle of perfume, if I bought it at the department store, would be \$50. And it's diluted with water. It's not pure oil. It's 3.4 ounces. Yet, I'd imagine, if I poured this out here (And I won't—I know some of you are scent sensitive), but if I did, I imagine you could smell it up there in the balcony. Here, we're talking 33 ounces of pure nard, a scented oil. The translation of the Bible in your pews said it was expensive. Yes it was! It was literally 300 denarii, which is a year's wages of an average worker. In Gig Harbor, an average worker makes \$70,000. Could you imagine buying perfume that cost \$70,000? And Mary loves Jesus by pouring over his feet this expensive perfume, laying down her possessions and her pride in this one moment.

It's an extravagant scene, and one that captures our senses—sight, smell, touch, and emotion. Let's see if we can actually picture this going down at a dinner party. I need a crowd, so can all the kids come up here on the chancel?

I already have a sibling pair willing to demonstrate this for us. Emery's going to sit in this pool as if she's Jesus at the dinner table. Her sister, Lexi, is going to demonstrate just how extravagant pouring out this perfume was.

Here is a liter of water. How much do you think this cost?

The one in the Bible cost \$70,000. What could you go out and buy that cost \$70,000?

Two other books of the Bible tell this story, Matthew and Mark. Mark says that Mary broke the bottle of perfume and poured it over Jesus. If I broke this bottle-- How much of it could I keep for later?

None of it! The bottle would be broken, there'd be no saving anything. How much of this bottle do you think Lexi needs to cover Emery's feet?

Go ahead, Lexi, and cover Emery's feet. Do you want to wipe her feet with your hair? Just kidding, I won't ask you to do that.

The books of Matthew and Mark say that Mary anoints Jesus' head with oil. Kids, how much of the liter do you think you Lexi needs to cover Emery's head?

A liter of perfume would have been enough for Jesus' head and his feet! Kings were anointed with oil on the head, and Matthew and Mark are reminding us that even as Jesus was going to die, he still is our King. And John wants to emphasize the way that Mary loves Jesus. She loved him as his servant, so she served him by pouring oil on his dirty feet. Jesus is her king, so she pours oil on his head. And she is the king's servant, so she pours it on his feet. Who likes the smell of perfume?

If this hadn't been water, but perfume, how smelly would Emery be?

How many days do you think Emery would still smell like perfume?

Well, the Bible tells us that when Mary poured out the perfume, the whole house was filled with the scent of it. It was soo much, that Jesus likely smelled this perfume still on his skin while he was hanging on the cross. Mary pouring her whole bottle of perfume on Jesus was an extravagant, expensive, lowly display of her love for her King.

If you had been Mary, and you had the opportunity to anoint Jesus or sell this bottle of perfume, what would you have done?

People who love Jesus give him everything they have. Thank you, you can go back to your seats now.

Mary surrendered everything she had—her status and this prized possession—because she loved Jesus. Larry reminded me of the concept of opportunity cost. Here Mary had a \$70,000 opportunity to prepare Jesus for his death at the cost of whatever that \$70,000 would have meant for her personally—maybe life savings

or dowry. What would that be for you to surrender everything in love for Jesus? Could you see the opportunity to serve Christ with what you have over the risk of other investments? Do we think of the person of Jesus in this way, that we could actually give him things that are precious to us? Could you give Jesus your house? Could you give up the prestige of being a sought after management coach? Could you give up your prized free time? Could you give up your party reputation because you love Jesus? If you did something that radical, what do you think your friends and family would say about you? What would they think of your opportunity cost assessment?

Well, you've got a case study right here with Mary. Let's keep reading.

Verse 4: But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected. Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.

In Matthew and Mark, the reaction was summarized, What a waste!

What a waste! That's what people might say when you radically love Jesus by giving him your all. If after your kids are grown you continue parenting adopted or foster children, your friends might say, what a waste of your empty nesting years! If you were to leave a cutting edge medical career behind to serve in Thailand, people might say, what a waste! You had such research potential.

I have a friend who radically loves Jesus. I had the unique opportunity to watch her come to know Jesus personally. When we first met, she told me that she hoped that she could grow in prayer so that when she prayed to Jesus, she felt like she was actually saying the name of a person she knew. Well, I tell you what, 10 years later, she does know Jesus. She was a promising graduate of the psychology program in one of Forbes top 50 schools. Graduate school and a sure career were ahead. She decided to go on staff with a college ministry. She has been Jesus' witness across states, cultures, and nations. And do you know what she battled from parents, friends, and professors? What a waste.

What a waste, that's what Mary's onlookers thought when they saw her act of devotion to Jesus. Judas voiced the question, but the other Gospel writers are clear that he wasn't the only one thinking it. This perfume was worth a year's wages. How dare Mary disgrace herself, sit at Jesus' feet and wipe away hard-earned money. They looked at the opportunity cost and thought, there was a better use of \$70,000 than worshipping Jesus.

Now don't think Judas noble for thinking about the poor. He wasn't really choosing between Jesus and the poor. Listen as John continues with verse 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.

Judas didn't have it in him to give money to the poor. He saw 300 denarii and saw money in his own pocket. Judas didn't have it in himself to give his all in love for Jesus. He would always choose serving himself to serving Jesus. We get this chance all the time: worship and serve Jesus?; or worship and serve myself? That's the risk assessment of the believer. That coming week, Judas chose himself. The authorities paid him 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus. Mary poured out 300 pieces.

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

Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 15:11: "For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy, and to the poor in your land.'" Jesus didn't quote this to say, be callous to the poor—you can be extravagant instead. He's quoting it to remind Judas, the greedy thief, of the commandment to open your hand to the poor!

Jesus was going to the cross to secure eternal justice and provision for all his children! And in this moment, six days before Passover, the night before Palm Sunday, it was appropriate for his followers to honor him by expressing their love and devotion for him. Judas counts the opportunity cost and says—this perfume is a waste, but I'll take 30 pieces of silver for Jesus. Mary, however, has this one moment before Jesus' death to show him in her own love language her fervent devotion to him, and she surrenders what she holds most dear to Jesus.

Can you look to the cross of Jesus and say, the sacrifice that Jesus made for me is worth everything I have? Mary's preparation for the cross came at great personal cost. Are you willing to pay the cost of being a follower of the cross? Can you lay down your possessions and status out of love for him?

The surrender of Mary's status wasn't a waste. In a room full of men with a woman in a very vulnerable position, hair down, taking the slave's place, Jesus affirms Mary. And even the expensive perfume is not a waste because it is with clear purpose. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial, Jesus says. Here, Mary has taken the opportune moment to anoint Jesus not only with the anointment of the King, but with the anointment of death. She alone in this crowd of devoted followers is preparing for the cross. Her preparation for the cross of Jesus came at great personal cost.

Many of you have already worshipped Jesus at great personal cost. Yesterday as we prayed and cried over the Dickerson's, I was asking God to bolster their faith that they might continue to believe that Maari's life has tremendous value to God. Their worship of Jesus in light of Maari's death and resurrection comes at great personal cost—of parental hopes and dreams of a miracle just to scratch the surface. They, like Mary, can fall at Jesus' feet and even with a heavy heart,

worship saying, "Lord, if you had been here, she would not have died!" And Jesus will weep with them over the state of the broken world just as he did with Mary.

But who was there when Mary was pouring out her love in her life savings to prepare Jesus for death? It was Lazarus! Mary's brother, Lazarus, was sitting at that table as the living hope in the resurrection. Everyone knew that the resurrection was real! Mary anoints Jesus for his death, knowing that he will rise again. We mourn Maari, knowing that she has already risen and is with Jesus.

But the cost of our resurrection, the cost of Maari's resurrection, was the death of Jesus Christ. You don't have to pay anything to know the forgiveness of all your sin. You don't have to give anything to know eternal life now and forevermore. Jesus has already paid all that! The question is, how will you respond to such an extravagant gift? How will you show your love for him? Will you give God everything you have and everything you are? He will give you everything—his very life in exchange for yours.

I invite you to sit with that question—How will you show your love for him? —as we are led in worship.