

# ***“What Do You Think?”***

John 11:55 – 12:11

May 11, 2014

**INTRO:** Last week... *“Did You See That?”*

This week... ***“What Do You Think?”*** (Jn 11:56)

**11:55...** *Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves.*

**“Now”** - What do you think?

- We are making a chronological change...
- Timing is being underscored (important)

**“the Passover... at hand”** – What do you think?

- Time stamp: 3<sup>rd</sup> Passover recorded...
- Festivals mean something in John’s Gospel...
- Alerts us to a “national gathering”
- Like musical score in a movie...builds tension

**“to purify themselves”** - What do you think?

- Purity is a key contextual point...
- Watch how the “purifying” theme unfolds...
  - People coming to be purified...
  - Christ is anointed for His coming cross!

**56** *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?”*

**“They were looking for Jesus...” - What do you think?**

- Look at what you *could* make that say...
- Look at what you cannot make that say...
- Look at it with realistic eyes (context is key!)

**“What do you think?” - What do YOU think?**

- Again, the context speaks volumes...
- What images come to mind as you read?
  - **Gossips & Gamblers...**
  - “I bet He will... I bet he won’t...”
- Why did God include this question?
- What’s this got to do with me/you?
- Remember the question from ch.11:
  - **“Do you believe?”**

**57** Now the **chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.**

**Religious leaders “gave orders” – What do you think?**

- Who or what should have ultimate authority?
- How can you tell who you should trust?
- What if Christ’s Word & Christ’s (alleged) church disagree?
  - See 2 Timothy 3:16-17
  - See Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1ff
  - See the Reformation (1517)
  - See Revelation (21:19 & Deut. 4:2)

**“...if anyone knew... let them know”** – What do you think?

- First... **see the perversion:**
  - **Properly applied... = Great Commission!**
    - \* **Jesus says: Surrender self & champion truth...**
    - \* **Satan says: Surrender truth & champion self...**
  - Improperly applied = **“great collision”**
    - \*\*\* *Heaven & Hell collide*
    - \*\*\* *Hope & Hate collide!*
    - \*\*\* *Love & Lies collide!*
- Notice how evil solicits evil... from top down.
- See eternal consequences of being deceived

**“...so that... they can arrest Him”** - What do you think?

- Think about the “crowd” in this process...
- Consider their “role” & their “responsibilities”
- Remember from last week... Are YOU...
  - *Miracle* (i.e. Laz – raised from the dead)
  - *Many* (those who believe to some level)
  - *Multitude* (those who still don’t believe)
  - *Murderer* (those who seek to kill Jesus)
- The “multitude & the murderers” are mutual partners in crime(s) against Christ
  - *You are either for Me or against Me...*
  - *You either help me gather or you scatter*
- Make no mistake... this is the Devil’s work!

**T/S:** Before we go into what we know as chapter 12, take heed of where we've been in ch.11 & the closing message the Messiah wants us to take into this transition...

What do you think?

- Jesus said & proved He is the resurrection and the life!
- Laz is the Lord's living proof...
- Notwithstanding the facts, the faithless multitudes still side with the murdering ministers. – JDP (still true today)

***Mary Anoints Jesus at Bethany***

**12:1...** *Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.*

What do you think?

- Timing?
- Location?
- Clarifications?

What do you think?

- People?
- Points?
- Purpose?

**2** So they gave a dinner for him there. **Martha** served, and **Lazarus** was one of those **reclining with him** at the table. **3** **Mary** therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and **anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair**. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

**“...they gave a dinner for Him”** - What do you think?

- Christ's true followers honor Him...
- Faith conquers fear!
- Love is the Christian's birth certificate. - JDP

What do you think?

- **Multitudes** DIVIDING
- **Murderers** SCHEMING
- **Martha** SERVING
- **Lazarus** FELLOWSHIPING
- **Mary** WORSHIPPING

- T/S:**
- **Monster...** SELF-SERVING
  - **Messiah!** SAVING & SERVING!

**\*\*\*\*\* COMMUNION \*\*\*\*\***

**4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 5“Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” 6He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.**

**“But Judas Iscariot...”** - What do you think?

- “BUT” announces a contrast to the previous
- If contrasting vs “good,” this must be BAD.

What do you think?

- “...one of His disciples...”
- “...about to betray Him...”
- ...when Judas pompously asks: “Why?”
- ...when Judas pretends to care for the poor
- “one of His disciples... was a thief”
- “one of His disciples was a thief in charge...”
- ...a disciple with a pattern of sinful abuses...

**7 Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. 8 For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”**

**“Jesus said...”** - What do you think?

- Are you in an immediate, submissive posture
- Do you accept EVERYTHING Jesus says
- Do you recognize the voice of Creator-Christ
- What is to be said of those who don’t...
- Is Jesus dividing or unifying here???

## What do you think?

- **“Leave her alone”** – do you care like Jesus
  - Will you clarify right from wrong?
  - Will you confront wrong-doing?
  - Will you challenge wrong-doers?
  
- **“...keep it for the day of My burial...”**
  - What is Jesus referring to?
  - How are we to interpret this phrase?
  - What do you see?
  
- **“but you do not always have Me.”**
  - If we KNOW Jesus is “the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11:25-27), what does He mean here?
  - Is Jesus pointing us/them to something?
  - What does this say about our priorities?
  - How are we to apply this to our lives?

### ***The Plot to Kill Lazarus***

**9**When the **large crowd** of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see **Lazarus**, whom he had raised from the dead.

**“...the large crowd”** - What do you think?

- What do we already know about the crowd?
- What does the Bible teach about the crowd?
- Think: broad vs. narrow road – few vs. many

## What do you think?

- **“they came, not only on account of Jesus**
  - What does motive have to do with faith?
  - Does “Jesus +” doing anything for you?
  - Can Jesus be an “add-on” Savior?
  - **NOTE:** your motive in *coming* does NOT limit your potential in *going home transformed* – **Amen!**
  
- **“but also to see Lazarus...”**
  - Ever been to a “Christian Circus?”
  - Those who attend Christian Circuses (as a primary means of religious entertainment and/or moralistic motivation) typically get exactly what they want... Sadly, however, most of them end up going home to hell, cramped & complaining in one of Satan’s crowded clown cars... - JDP

**10** So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well,

**“plans to put Lazarus to death”**

SIMPLE QUESTION: What do you think?

**Are you living dangerously?**

**11** because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

Context: (Original Meaning)

Just six days before the Passover, our Lord was approaching Jerusalem. The city was thronged with priests. In just six days our Lord would be stretched on the cross to give his life for those who hated him. That is the setting for the opening verses of [chapter 12](#). - Preaching the Word

**IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to understand the dramatic forces at work in [John 12](#) if someone has not watched the story of Jesus' life unfold for the past eleven chapters. [John 12](#) is a turning point, a critical juncture in the story...** - NIV Application Commentary

[John 12:1-11](#) recounts the celebration dinner commemorating the resurrection of Lazarus, recorded in [John 11:1-44](#). But we also need to be aware of what took place between those two events.

As we can well imagine, **Lazarus' resurrection made the religious authorities a little nervous.** Put in modern terms, it was *not* one of those incidents where the patient's vital signs temporarily cease and he experiences himself floating out of his body. Rather, **this was the resurrection of a decaying corpse. From the opposition's point of view, this was absolutely devastating. Any time your star witness is a resurrected corpse, you have a pretty good case—in this instance, for the validity of Jesus Christ...** John describes the Pharisees' reaction in [11:47-48](#): - Preaching the Word

**The struggle between light and darkness, described in the prologue ([1:1-18](#)), now reaches a fever pitch.** - NIV Commentary

The light is shining with brilliance in the world, calling people to join its ranks. At the same time, the forces of darkness are working to extinguish

it. Men and women are being forced to choose - NIV Application Commentary

**Jesus' popularity has become a problem (11:48; 12:19), and he must be arrested. No compromise seems possible. Jesus must be eliminated or the stability of Jerusalem will be at risk (11:45-53).... These two dramatic threads in this Gospel will climax at one place: the cross.**

- NIV Application Commentary

**In this passage, which relates the story of Mary's anointing of Jesus, the themes of belief and unbelief are particularly clear. The worshipful act of Mary epitomizes faith and love; the cold, calculated, cynical response of Judas epitomizes unbelief and hatred. The section also records other reactions to Jesus, including the devoted service of Martha, the indifference of the crowd, and the hostility of the religious leaders.** - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

John's account of Jesus' life has now taken a critical turn. Two stories are building as we come to this juncture. On the one hand, Jesus is being praised by growing numbers of people. At Bethany, the Lazarus miracle led many to faith (11:45; 12:17), so that enthusiasm for Jesus is growing. When Jesus crosses the Mount of Olives from Bethany to enter Jerusalem, crowds gather to cheer him on (12:12). Even non-Jews are intrigued and show interest in him. On the other hand, the authorities are increasingly determined to stop him. - NIV Application Commentary

**The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ marks the zenith of history. His life not only divides the calendar (B.C. means "before Christ"; A.D. ["anno Domini"] means "in the year of the Lord"),**

**but also human destiny. As Jesus Himself warned those who rejected Him, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" ([John 8:24](#)), and on another occasion, "Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division" ([Luke 12:51](#);cf. [Luke 2:34](#)). Like no one else, Jesus Christ evokes the antithetical extremes of love and hate, devotion and rejection, worship and blasphemy, and faith and unbelief. How people respond to Him divides the sheep from the goats; the wheat from the tares; believers from unbelievers; the saved from the lost.**

John wrote his gospel to present Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah ([20:31](#)). In so doing, he also recorded how people reacted to Jesus' messianic claims and miraculous signs. - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

**The cross will not be a place of humiliation, but of glory.**  
- NIV Application Commentary

**From the account of the supper given there in His honor, five varied reactions to Jesus emerge: Martha responded with heartfelt service, Mary with humble sacrifice, Judas with hypocritical self-interest, the people with hollow superficiality, and the religious leaders with hostile scheming.** - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

The chief contextual difference is that Mark and Matthew record the anointing following the triumphal entry, whereas John records it before. However, Synoptic chronologies are often fluid. - NIV Application Commentary

*Lazarus was, really* restored to the blessings of life and friendship. Calmet thinks that this was about two months after his resurrection, and it is the last that we hear of him. **How long he lived is unknown, nor is**

it recorded that he made any communication about the world of spirits. It is remarkable that none who have been restored to life from the dead have made any communications respecting that world. See [Luke 16:31](#), & [2 Corinthians 12:4](#). - Barnes' Notes on the New Testament.

## I. Martha's Heart-felt Serving (v.2)

Mark tells us that the house belonged to Simon the Leper ([Mark 14:3](#)). Matthew reveals that the rest of the disciples were there ([Matthew 26:8](#)). So evidently the table was set for at least seventeen. The dinner was a celebration, a "thank you, Jesus" dinner for Lazarus' resurrection. - Preaching the Word

Martha's service on this occasion was primarily directed at Jesus, and was commendable for two related reasons: it was motivated by loving gratitude to Him, and by a desire to generously honor Him in the way she best knew how. There was no rebuke as in the earlier incident. Like her, all Christians are to be engaged in selfless service ([Rom. 12:11](#); cf. [Gal. 5:13](#); [Col. 3:24](#); [Heb. 9:14](#)). Jesus said, "The greatest among you shall be your servant" ([Matt. 23:11](#)) and declared of Himself, "I am among you as the one who serves" ([Luke 22:27](#)), and, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" ([Matt. 20:28](#)). Paul repeatedly described himself as a bond servant of Jesus Christ ([Rom. 1:1](#); [2 Cor. 4:5](#); [Gal. 1:10](#); [Phil. 1:1](#); [Titus 1:1](#); cf. [1 Cor. 3:5](#); [4:1](#); [2 Cor. 3:6](#); [6:4](#); [11:23](#)), as did James ([James 1:1](#)), Peter ([2 Peter 1:1](#)), Jude ([Jude 1](#)), and John ([Rev. 1:1](#)). Although it tends to be overshadowed by Mary's dramatic act of worship, Martha's humble service on this occasion was no less

commendable and pleasing to the Lord. - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

Even though Mary, who had no doubt been helping serve the meal, had wandered back to the feet of Jesus, **Martha seemed to be at peace. What had happened? Circumstances had not changed, but Martha had.** She had not mistaken what the Lord said on the earlier occasion. - Preaching the Word

**She knew that service can be worship, if it is done with the right attitude.** Many of us are familiar with [Romans 12:1](#). There Paul tells us to pre-sent our "bodies," our entire lives, as "spiritual worship." **Martha understood that true worship also involves service.** - Preaching the Word

Mark only tells us that it was Simon's home, not that he is at the meal. At any rate, it is an important meal attended by many who want to honor Jesus publicly and remember the great event of Lazarus's life ([John 12:9](#)). - NIV Application Commentary

**Martha served" ([John 12:2](#)).** That was what Martha loved to do. From what the Scriptures tell us about her, she was in her element. She was a guest in Simon the Leper's house, but she was in charge. - Preaching the Word

**Martha knew that when her spirit was right, her service was akin to the dramatic outward worship of Mary.** - Preaching the Word

**The transcending point is that loving service is always the characteristic of those who have had their hearts truly touched by Christ.** - Preaching the Word

## **II. Mary's Humble Sacrifice (v.3)**

**Perfume made from nard was very costly because of the great distance from which it had to be imported. Mary's nard was pure in quality, making it even more valuable.** Some were thinking it was worth "over three hundred denarii" ([Mark 14:5](#)), and Judas agreed with that valuation ([John 12:5](#)). As noted in the discussion of [verse 5](#) below, such an amount would be equal to a year's wages. The expensive alabaster vial in which it was stored also added to its value ([Matt. 26:7](#)). She broke the vial ([Mark 14:3](#)), thus giving up the whole thing—both contents and container. The perfume likely made up a sizeable portion of Mary's net worth. **But like David ([2 Sam. 24:24](#)), she refused to offer the Lord something that cost her nothing. She acted in unrestrained love.**

Matthew's ([26:7](#)) and Mark's ([14:3](#)) parallel accounts note that Mary poured the perfume on Jesus' head, while John says that she **anointed His feet**. All three accounts are in perfect harmony. - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

Mary's dramatic gesture (which fits her portrait in [Luke 10:38-42](#)) is astonishing. While Judas objects ([12:4](#)), Jesus finds in it a pleasing expression of devotion. **Nard was a rare and precious spice imported from northern India.** The Latin writer Pliny gives us a full description of it in his *Natural History* Nard is a shrub whose leaves and "shoots" were harvested and taken by caravan to the west. Sometimes it was mixed with its own root to increase its

weight. **Note that Mary's gift is called "pure" nard, meaning it had no additives.** Nard smelled like gladiolus (gladiola) perfume (Pliny: "a sweet scent") and had a red color. - NIV Application Commentary

**Mary had been influenced by an incident that had taken place earlier in Jesus' ministry. In fact, Luke described it in the seventh chapter of his Gospel. In that incident Jesus was reclining at dinner at the table of a curious Pharisee. The Pharisee had not been considerate. He had not washed Jesus' feet or anointed his head, and as they were reclining with their feet away from the table, in came a prostitute. She was clutching a vial, and as she came to Jesus, she was intending to anoint Jesus' head. But she lost control and began to weep, and her tears fell on Jesus' feet, which were all dusty, making quite a mess. The prostitute did not know what to do, so she used her hair to clean his feet. As she did so, she was again overcome with emotion. So, according to [Luke 7:38](#), "she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them," thus anointing his feet.**

**Mary undoubtedly had this incident in the back of her mind. She thought, *I want to do the same thing for Jesus. I want him to know how much I love him.* It was not an impetuous act. It was calculated. She knew exactly what she was doing.** - Preaching the Word

Mark says that Mary "breaks the bottle" when she pours it. This refers to her breaking the stopper-seal at the top of the alabaster vase **The quantity is so great that the entire house is filled with its fragrance ([John 12:3](#)), which underscores the extravagance of the gift. John emphasizes Jesus' feet to show the sheer act of humble devotion on Mary's part and to provide a contrast with the footwashing of the next chapter.** That she uses her hair to dry

his feet is peculiar; in a similar story in [Luke 7:38](#), such behavior inspires sharp criticism from the dinner host. **Women did not let down their hair in public, and the only one who saw a woman's hair was her husband. Mary is acting with abandon, extravagant abandon, hoping that the close circle of friends will understand.** - NIV Application Commentary

**Like Caiaphas in [11:50-51](#), her deed (like his words) bears a meaning far beyond what is intended. Jesus has now been prepared for burial (figuratively) as he heads toward the day of his death and glorification.** - NIV Application Commentary

**But even more shocking than her costly and lowly washing of Jesus' feet was the fact that Mary let down her hair. For a respectable Jewish woman to do that in public would have been considered indecent, perhaps even immoral. But Mary was not concerned with the shame she might face as a result. Instead, she was solely focused on pouring out her love and in honoring Christ, with no thought of any perceived shame that it might bring to her.** - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

**John's note that the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume is the kind of vivid detail an eyewitness would recall. It also testifies to the extravagance of Mary's act of humble devotion. She was heedless of its cost, both financially and to her reputation. The measure of her love was her total abandonment to Jesus Christ. Consequently, Mary's noble act would, as the Lord declared, be spoken of as a memorial of her love wherever the gospel is preached ([Mark 14:9](#)).** - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

**This story is all about devotion, and Mary is the perfect character to model this. Wherever she appears both in this Gospel and in Luke, she appears at Jesus' feet.** This is a symbol of her interest as a devoted disciple of Jesus, and it is significant that **Jesus defends her, giving her a respected place as one who knows better even than Jesus' apostles.**  
- NIV Application Commentary

While the men surrounding Jesus will ask questions in the Upper Room and will find Jesus' decision to die incomprehensible ([13:36ff.](#)), here is the image of Mary who asks no questions but gently begins to prepare her Lord for the grave. She has accepted Jesus' humble mission long before Jesus' leading disciples have understood it.

The comparison with the disciples of Jesus is apt from another angle. **Inasmuch as Mary bathes Jesus' feet in perfume, she has anticipated the footwashing scene in chapter 13. In fact, Mary is the only one who does precisely what Jesus will ask in [13:14](#) before he asks it.**  
**Thus this story is really about the cross** - NIV Application  
Commentary

**It is a profound signal to us (as readers) that Jesus is really going to die. It is also a statement that no gift can be too precious that shows gratitude for what Jesus is about to do.**

**How can I show Mary's devotion today?** - NIV Application  
Commentary

Mary gave her most treasured possession to Jesus, but our treasured possessions may not be worth as much as Mary's. That was true for **Martha. I get the feeling that Martha did not care about perfume. She valued work, acts of service. Her sacrifice to Jesus was perspiration instead of perfume, and it was just as noble and just as valuable as Mary's sacrifice.** - Preaching the Word

**What would we give for Jesus? What is our most valued possession? For some of us it is our bank account. For others it is our position. For some it is a relationship. The question is, would we give it? Will we make it available for Jesus' use? - Preaching the Word**

"And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." This tells us Mary did not use just a tiny pinch of spikenard to anoint Jesus. She broke the container. **The aroma of Christ, so honoring to him and so refreshing to others, does not occur when we give him half our heart or half our pocketbook or half our talents or half our ambition or half our lives or half our boyfriend or half our girlfriend. It comes by giving him everything.** - Preaching the Word

**QUOTE: G. Campbell Morgan has a beautiful thought: "I would rather be a successor to Mary of Bethany than to the whole crowd of the apostles." Mary certainly had a beautiful spiritual profile.**

**Mary and Martha both gave their best, and they both spread an aroma—one with mundane acts of prosaic service, the other with exotic spikenard. Both aromas came by pouring lives out in dedication to Jesus. When we do that, we can expect the fragrance of Christ to follow us. - Preaching the Word**

**These set forth three aspects of the Christian life. We see in Martha, service; in Lazarus, fellowship; in Mary, worship. Service, fellowship and worship—how much do we know of these aspects of the Christian life?** - H.A. Ironside Expository Commentary

**QUOTE: Service here comes first— "Martha served." When we are saved we are no longer our own. How natural it is to yield ourselves to Him as those alive from the dead, that we may serve the Master who has done so much for us. I do not understand those who profess to be saved but give no evidence of a desire to be of service to the Lord Jesus Christ. That should be the first proof of the new birth: "He saved me; now what can I do to show my love for Him?"**

- H.A. Ironside Expository Commentary

**Lazarus sat at the table with Jesus, Lazarus, who had been dead, and lived again! You and I, who are saved, are men and women of the resurrection, and it is our blessed privilege to have fellowship and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ as our glorious Head. It takes two to have fellowship. One speaks and the other responds. We have fellowship with Him when we get before Him over His own Word and He speaks to us, and when we draw near to Him in prayer and pour out our hearts to Him. Worship is the next thing. It was the expression of her heart's adoration, for that is what worship is. We worship as we give back to Him of that which He has given to us.** - H.A. Ironside

### **III. Judas' Hypocritical Self-interest (vv.4-8)**

**The conjunction *de* (but) introduces the stark contrast between Mary's selflessness and Judas's selfishness.** - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

**QUOTE: The reigning love of money is heart-theft.** -Matthew Henry.

## Exegetical Commentary:

### ***“Attitude”***

by Chuck Swindoll

**"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company ... a church ... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past ... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude ... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you ... we are in charge of our Attitude."**

**Note that Mary's act filled the house with the sweet fragrance of perfume, which is an incredible metaphor for the church's role here on earth (see Mark 14:8-9; 2 Corinthians 2:15)**

When we properly place our affections on Christ, and the gospel transforms our life, doing things like helping the poor become second nature (Proverbs 14:31; Matthew 25: 34-46 ). We have the only transcendentally logical motivation to help the poor, but that motivation comes from the gospel working in our lives, and not out of duty, guilt fear or pride!

*Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7.1.1 states “The fragrance of good oil is diffused from the bedroom to the dining hall, but a good name is diffused from one end of the world to the other.” If such a saying were known in the first century, this might be John’s way of indicating that Mary’s act of devotion would be spoken of throughout the entire world (compare [Mark 14:9](#)).

**12:7-8** *ejj" thVn hJmevran tou' ejntafiasmou' mou* This incident, along with the interwoven references to Judas, forms part of the foreshadowing of the passion narrative to follow in chapters 18-19. Mary’s action in anointing Jesus’ feet is **interpreted by Jesus as preparation for his burial**. In this regard it is interesting that John is careful to point out in verse 3 that it was **Jesus’ feet** that she anointed. Normally one would not anoint the feet of a living person (rather the head—cf. Mk 14:3) but one could anoint the feet of a corpse while preparing it for burial. **Thus Mary performed (unconsciously) a prophetic or symbolic action—one which Jesus understood but which the disciples almost certainly did not at the time.**

- W. Hall Harris (N.T. Prof at Dallas Theological Seminary)

PIPER

We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith [O, Judas!] and pierced themselves with many pangs. ([1 Timothy 6:7–10](#))

You are devoted to money. And therefore you cannot comprehend what Mary is doing. The desire for riches has blinded your eyes. So leave her alone.

3. Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial (verse 7).

Verse 7: Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.”

This is a very difficult verse. The clue that holds the most weight with me is that Jesus seems to imply that the words of Judas, if they infect Mary with his disease, could keep something from happening. Judas, back off. Leave her alone, so that . . . so that something. You be quiet, and let her get on with what she is doing—including at my burial.

Let her keep it all the way to the day of my burial. **The ointment has been poured out. That’s not what she is keeping. Jesus wants her to keep her thrill, her gratitude, her amazement, her wonder, her love. And specifically her amazement and wonder and love for him as the resurrection and the life.**

Do Not Listen to Those Voices

So, Bethlehem, if any voice tells you to moderate our love for Jesus, do not listen. Let your affections for Jesus be lavish.

If any voice tempts you to want to be rich in money, do not listen. Jesus is your riches, and all that money can buy cannot compare to him.

If any voice tells you that his death is anything less than the triumph over death, do not listen. He is the resurrection and the life. Whoever

believes in him, though he die, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in him shall never die.

**That he was not merely a follower of Christ, but one of the Lord's inner circle, makes his betrayal all the more heinous. It was the most despicable act in all of human history—and the one that merited the most severe punishment. In the chilling words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born" ([Matt. 26:24](#)).** - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

*"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" **Chronologically, these are Judas's first recorded words in the New Testament.** They expose the avarice, ambition, and selfishness that ruled his heart.* - MacArthur New Testament

**Mary was a selfless, giving believer, but Judas was a selfish, greedy materialist! To the heart that has never met God, worship seems a most impractical, wasteful pursuit. Judas is a profile of Hell.**  
- Preaching the Word

John, not seeing it at that moment, but writing in retrospect many years later, makes the appropriate inspired comment on Judas's real motive: *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.* - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

QUOTE: "Judas' disapproval of Mary's action related not to loss of opportunity to do more for the poor but to his own loss of opportunity to steal from the common purse" (Colin Kruse, *The Gospel According to John*)

Though some have tried to attribute noble motives to Judas (i.e., by arguing that he was a misguided patriot, trying to prod Christ into ushering in His kingdom), the New Testament portrays him as nothing but a greedy thief and a murderous traitor—even a Devil ([John 6:70-71](#); cf. [13:2,27](#)). Judas is the greatest example of missed opportunity in history - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

QUOTE: The Lord immediately defended Mary, sternly rebuking Judas (the verb translated *let alone* is in the second person singular, meaning "you") by commanding him, "***Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial.***" Jesus obviously did not mean that Mary would keep the perfume (or at least part of it) until His burial, since she had just poured it all out (cf. [Mark 14:3](#)). **While commentators disagree on how to understand these words, the most satisfactory solution is to understand an ellipsis in the Lord's statement. Supplying the missing words, the sense would be, "Let her alone; she did not sell the perfume [as you wish she had], so that she could keep it for the day of my burial"** (cf. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*,

Mary's act was a spontaneous outpouring of her love and devotion to Christ. Yet, like Caiaphas's unwitting prophecy ([11:49-52](#)), it had a deeper significance. In [Matthew 26:12](#) Jesus said, "When she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial" (cf. [Mark 14:8](#)). The **burial** of which Jesus prophetically spoke was not the actual placing of His dead body in the tomb, but the anointing she had just

done, which He saw as a symbol of His soon coming death and burial. Part of the lavish expenditures associated with many first-century funerals was the cost of perfumes to mask the odor of decay (cf. [John 11:39](#)). This act by Mary, as in the case of Caiaphas ([11:49-52](#)) revealed a far greater reality than she realized at the time. **Her anointing prefigured the one Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus would later perform on His body after Jesus' death ([John 19:38-40](#)).**

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

**"You always have the poor with you" (cf. [Mark 14:7](#)). The Lord was not disparaging the giving of charity to the poor (cf. [Deut. 15:11](#)), but rather was challenging the disciples to keep their priorities straight. The opportunity to do good to Him, as Mary had done, would not last long, because they would **not always have** Him physically present with them. **Here again the Lord's words were a prediction of His coming death**, now less than a week away.**

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

QUOTE: **Judas now stood at the crossroads. Unmasked as a hypocrite, pretending to care for the poor while in reality embezzling from the common purse, he faced the ultimate decision. He could fall at Jesus' feet in humble, penitent repentance, confess his sin, and seek forgiveness. Or he could pridefully harden his heart, refuse to repent, surrender to Satan's influence, and betray the Lord. Tragically and sinfully, he chose the latter course, with full and sole culpability for its consequences, though it fulfilled the purpose of God for the sacrifice of His Son** (cf. [13:18-19](#)).

**Immediately after this incident**, "Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. They were glad when they heard this, and promised to give him

money. And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time" ([Mark 14:10-11](#)). - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

## IV. The Crowd's Hollow Superficiality (v.9)

News of that sensational miracle had spread, and the curious crowd wanted to see both the miracle worker, and the one whom He had raised. - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

**Following the story of Mary in Bethany, John provides a narrative link to the next episode ([12:9-11](#)).** Many people begin to arrive in Bethany. **Jesus' reputation has spread through Jerusalem and its surrounding villages.** Now there is a double reason to see him: Not only is Jesus in Judea, but they can see Lazarus too. **Lazarus has become a source of new faith in Jesus.** - NIV Application Commentary

They were the thrill seekers, following the latest sensation, superficially interested in Jesus, but spiritually indifferent and ultimately antagonistic to Him. **Like the members of the Laodicean church, they were "lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold" ([Rev. 3:16](#)).** At the triumphal entry they would hail Him, **shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel" ([John 12:13](#)).** But only a few days later they would scream, **"Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" ([John 19:15](#)),** and some would come to mock Him as

He was hanging on the cross ([Matt. 27:39-40](#)). - MacArthur New Testament Commentary

**T/S:** ...the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death." They said, "We would rather he were dead once more than that people, through him, should believe in Jesus." - H.A. Ironside

**God's Anointed should be our Anointed.** Has God poured on him the oil of gladness above his fellows, let us pour on him the ointment of our best affections. - Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary.

## **V. Religious Leaders Being Hostile & Scheming (vv.10-11)**

**The ruthless chief priests had already plotted to kill Jesus (11:53); now they expanded the plot and planned to put Lazarus to death also. As living proof of Jesus' miraculous power, the resurrected Lazarus presented a great threat to the Sadducees, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus (cf. 11:48). He was an undeniable testimony to the Lord's messianic claims.**

**Unable to counter the incontrovertible testimony Lazarus provided by being alive, they sought to destroy the evidence by killing him. Their tangled web of deception was expanding...**

**No one is neutral regarding Jesus Christ; as He Himself warned, "*He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters*" ([Luke 11:23](#)). Whether loving and serving Him, like Mary and Martha, being indifferent and vacillating toward Him, like the crowd, or hating and opposing Him, like Judas and the chief priests, everyone takes a stand somewhere. What that stand is**

determines each person's eternal destiny, since "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" ([Acts 4:12](#)).

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

QUOTE: Leon Morris: "It is interesting to reflect that Caiaphas had said, 'it is expedient for you that one man die for the people' ([11:50](#)). But one was not enough. Now it had to be two. Thus does evil grow"

The Sanhedrin determines that Lazarus must likewise die ([12:11](#)). And this supplies some not-so-subtle humor. **They wish to return Lazarus to the place he belongs (the grave), and no doubt from Lazarus' perspective, it is a plot that has been emptied of its threat.** Lazarus now knows the power of Jesus over the grave.

- NIV Application Commentary

**Lazarus had become Jesus' star witness. I find that amazing because as I read the Gospels, I cannot find anything outstanding about Lazarus.** It seems he never said anything worth recording, and perhaps he never did anything worth recording. **Yet he ended up being one of the great witnesses for Christ. Why? The answer is not in what Lazarus did for Jesus. It is in what Jesus did for Lazarus.** - Preaching the Word

Every believer's life has been so changed that the only way it can be accounted for is the power of Christ. **If we have new life and are fellowshiping with Christ, as was Lazarus, we are great arguments**

**for the Gospel, unanswerable proofs of the reality of Jesus Christ.**

- Preaching the Word

**They resolved that the man should die whom the Lord had raised to life. The success of the gospel often makes wicked men so angry...**

- Matthew Henry