

John 11:55-12:11 (Partial)

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[0 : 00] We'll see God's people in worship. And then we will see God's people in witness. If you've been with us in John, you'll be aware that part of the scaffolding he uses to structure his gospel are Jewish festivals.

Chapters 7 and 8, he mentions the festival or the feast of the booths. In chapter 10, he indicates the feast of dedication. And here John gives us another pointer.

Another pointer in the festive calendar of the Jews. It was Passover in 1155. The Passover of the Jews was at hand.

And many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. 12 verse 1, six days before the Passover.

This is certainly not the first time John mentions Passover in his gospel. It's probably Jesus' third Passover in his adulthood. But we're not supposed to miss the importance of this festival.

[1 : 06] This three-time mentioned festival in our text. For those of us unaware of the Passover celebration, it emerges in the book of Exodus. You might remember Moses goes to Pharaoh and requests that Pharaoh set God's people free.

Pharaoh refused. And so God brought plagues and acts of judgment upon the people of Israel. And the tenth and final judgment was the death of the firstborn.

And in order for the firstborn of Israel to be spared, they were to prepare a one-year-old male lamb without blemish and kill it. The people were then instructed to take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts along the house and the lintel across the top of the house.

And the Bible tells us that as a result, the blood served as a sign. When the Lord saw the blood, he would pass over them. And the plague of death would not inflict or destroy them.

And it would become a perpetual feast. So that when the children began asking mom and dad, what is the meaning of all these things? They would reply, Exodus 12, 27 reads, The Passover was reason to worship.

[2 : 38] And here in 1155, we see this unfolding. The people are preparing for worship. Hence, they're participating in cleansing and purity rituals.

The scene is incredibly ironic. You have to picture this. The nation was preparing herself for Passover.

While God himself is preparing his son for Passover. Jerusalem was being flooded with many entering into the city to purify and prepare themselves for the worship celebration.

You can imagine this. The text tells us they are coming from the countryside into the city. But they're not coming alone. They're certainly coming with their sacrifices.

And here, entering into Jerusalem, the most valuable livestock, the most precious and pure, innocent stock. We're entering into the gates of the city.

[3 : 43] The hustle and bustle of Jerusalem is surging with people and livestock. And the discussion is now oriented along the lines of whether or not Jesus was going to show.

As the people prepare themselves and prepare for the ritual slaughter of the Paschal lambs, they have no idea that God himself is preparing his one and only son to be the final Passover slaughter.

It's incredibly ironic. We know that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. It is one of the first titles attributed to him in John's gospel.

He would be the ultimate Passover lamb whose blood could spare people from divine judgment. And so John chapter 12 is set up with this backdrop.

There's tension. For Jesus' life is being summoned by the religious authorities. There is irony. Because the people, the nation is engaging in a Passover celebration.

[4 : 59] And God himself is preparing his own son for Passover. As the nation prepares for worship, John takes us into a home where worship is not being prepared, cared for, but where worship is actually being performed and demonstrated.

We come to the celebratory dinner in chapter 12. It's a dinner given to Jesus. The occasion is one of celebration and delight and joy.

There's an aura certainly of thankfulness and gratitude. And it's all in response to what happened in chapter 11, namely the raising of Lazarus.

Lazarus is here, Lazarus is here, present, reclining at table. Martha, his sister, is there serving. The disciples appear to be there, according to Matthew and Mark's account.

And according to the other gospels, it probably took place at the home of Simon the leper in Bethany. And there's never been a meal quite like it, where the formerly deceased is now reclining at a table, eating a meal.

[6 : 13] And though, I must admit, what I would be most intrigued by is how the conversation went. So Lazarus, from your point of view, how did this happen?

And, hey, can you write a book on what it meant to go from death into life? But instead, John records for us what is most memorable to him.

And it unfolds in verse 3. There's an act of extravagance that came from Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus whom Jesus had raised.

The act of one of great humility, for she stooped as a servant, performing an act that was only reserved for the help of the day.

It broke every social norm, for the letting down of one's hair, particularly an unmarried woman, was inappropriate and even suggested. There are no words from Mary for her actions.

[7 : 15] Rather, her actions conveyed clearly what words could not express. And here we see devotion is often best expressed not through the mumbling of excessive speech, but really through extravagant action.

And there it is unfolded, the dispensing of pure ointment, valuable on the feet of Jesus.

And it's certainly emblematic of Mary's heart pouring forth her affections and gratitude. It is certainly an act of worship ascribing worth to a deserving recipient, namely Jesus.

It is an act of an individual that pours forth whatever substance an individual has to ascribe value to the one who deserves it.

John, for us, John, for us records the monetary value. 300 days of wages for the normal worker. Given our state's minimum wage, it would amount to nearly \$20,000.

[8 : 23] Instantly dispensed. Instantly depleted. Instantly disposed. Commentators have argued, where did she get this?

Some have even linked it possibly to her marriage dowry. The gift the family gives to the groom's family upon marriage.

If this is the case, socially speaking, she has given up her potential of gaining a husband. In a moment of worship, she empties everything upon the object of her worship, the Lord Jesus.

It was excessive. It was extravagant. It was extreme. That's the thought of the modern mind. That is simply too costly.

Why expend that much? And we, as contemporary thinkers, especially situated in maybe North America's capitalism, we put religious actions and we measure them with economic categories.

[9 : 35] But I have to quote a British commentator here. He says, we need to be reminded that devotion cannot be measured by pounds and pence.

We know Jesus is not looking for quantity. We know that we only need to remind ourselves of that moment where the disciples are gathered around, and Judas included, and they sit outside the treasury.

And there, they're observing people walk in to give. And you would certainly hear the rattling of coins. I'm unsure.

I don't think they had checks. I'm pretty sure they didn't have Venmo or push pay in those days. And there, Jesus observes a widow.

And the Bible tells us the widow dropped in two copper coins equivalent to a penny. And Jesus tells his disciples, out of all the people we've observed, out of all of those who have heaped in large portions, large quantities of money, this woman gave the most.

[10 : 46] You see, Jesus, you can say, oh, Jesus, you're a terrible accountant. The woman didn't give the most. The person before gave more.

But you and I know very well, well, that Jesus is not quantifying devotion through monetary gifts. Devotion and worship are not measured by denarii and dollars.

Devotion and worship are measured by desire and discipleship. So Jesus comes to Mary's defense. Her act is actually commended.

Leave her alone. He says. So she may actually keep it for the day of my burial. The ESV footnote gives us an alternate reading that may bring clarity to this text.

What Jesus is saying is leave her alone. She intended to keep this for the day of my burial. Jesus defends Mary's act.

[11 : 53] For he tethers it to his burial. In other words, Jesus justifies Mary's extravagance, though excessive and extreme, because it points to his impending death.

The lavish act is embedded here to lead us to the lavish act of Jesus. Jesus would soon demonstrate his own extravagance. A gesture of grace.

A gesture of grace in his death. As Mary poured forth the invaluable ointment.

John wants you to be clear. That is being dumped on Jesus. Jesus, the one like the lamb led to the slaughter, Isaiah tells us.

For he will pour out his very life unto death. This is a literary advertisement. You think about advertisements today.

[12 : 55] The thousands of dollars spent on billboards. On print material. Commercials. They're all signposts. To a product or a person.

They're extravagant. Excessive. Flamboyant. Extreme. But they're all undertaken by these marketing companies or companies.

Why? Because we need to show you a product or a person. And here, this is what John is doing. Let me show you the most extravagant, costly advertisement.

As we go into Jesus' death, it was this act. Do not miss. The fact that Jesus is walking towards death.

So here you have it. Two miles away in Bethany. Two miles away from Bethany where Jesus is at the time. Jerusalem is filling up with what most people say one million people.

[14 : 00] Preparing to remember and worship the God that delivered them out of the bondage in Egypt. And John turns the camera and he goes, hey, look in Bethany.

Don't focus in on the one million. Focus in on the one single heart pouring forth. Worship. On the individual who delivered her brother from death.

Thousands of lives are assembling in Jerusalem. Thousands of denarii are being spent on the slaughtering of innocent lambs.

Water for purification is being poured from basins upon individuals. The blood of the lambs. Sacrificial lambs is soon filled troughs.

And as the people were making preparation, two miles away, God is saying, I'm preparing my lamb.

[15 : 07] My son. I don't need to purify him with water because he's already a blameless, pure lamb. Instead, I am crowning him as king.

And you, being a student of the Bible, should know that when anointing happens, it's usually for an office. Often a king. So you can think of Samuel anointing David.

And here, God, through marriage, anoints his son. This is my man. This is your king. And we know that if you just fast forward because he's about to enter into Jerusalem.

And the whole crowd is announcing, hail the king of Israel. Such irony. But this is no king that will conquer from a battlefield.

But rather, he's going to conquer from his burial plot. Well, Mary's worshipful act is rebutted by one of the 12, Judas.

[16 : 14] He objects. He states his objection. Mary chose poorly. In Mary, if we see worship performed, in Judas, we see worship precluded.

Judas wanted it to stop. Halt. That's incorrect. That's not the right way of doing it. Mary's act of devotion is contrasted with Judas' display of deception.

And behind his suspicion of Mary's act, the writer actually tells us hid Judas' greed and avarice. He posed as someone who was concerned for the poor.

But he was rather most self-concerned. We know him as the betrayer of the Lord. But here, John tells us a little bit more about him. That Judas tended to help himself with the money bag that was reserved for the poor, ironically.

And so Judas voices his disapproval. He's the one who blurts out, no, the ointment should be sold. So he could steal. Coming from the lips of the one who would sell his very own Lord.

[17 : 28] And while Jesus commended Mary, Judas sits condemned as a thief. He only proves himself to be a fraud, while Mary demonstrates that she is actually the true disciple in this episode.

You see, the charge against Mary is economic waste. Judas proposes that the oil should have been sold. Judas seeks to undermine Mary's act by arguing that the money could have been better spent.

It could have helped more people. His utilitarian argument may have some ground. But Jesus goes on, as I mentioned, to defend Mary's act of love.

Jesus is almost saying, as one commentator has pointed out, Judas just excused her. Just this one time. If her love appears wasteful.

For Jesus, the act was so significant. That was recorded in Matthew and Mark. He is recorded saying that this act will be forever preserved and told perpetually.

[18 : 36] In Jesus' eyes, the ointment could not have been better spent. And as the watching the world observes the Christian, Judas' accusation is still the same.

What a waste of money, the world says. What a waste of time. What a waste of resources. What a waste of a brilliant mind.

What a waste of beauty. What a waste of a life. Why would you pour it out unto the Lord Jesus? And the worship, our worship to the irreligious, will always seem too extravagant.

Too excessive. Too extreme. But for you and I, let me assure you. That our worship. And the devotion.

Is a sign of our allegiance to the Lord Jesus. Jesus' follow-up statement isn't a neglect for the poor. In verse 7. And 8.

[19 : 48] Because it presumes. In verse 8. The care of the poor will continue long after his departure. Before this moment, let me borrow the language of another episode in the Bible.

Mary has chosen what is better. And it shall not be taken away from her. Truth be told, considering the next six days that are about to unfold, Jesus will be the poorest man in all of Jerusalem.

And here is perhaps the lesson behind Judas the fraud. If the accusation is that extravagant worship is wasteful.

And that there is no need to expend your resources on the Lord Jesus. We need to be warned today. That though we're not given this opportunity to anoint Jesus.

Before his death. We are entrusted to serve the poor. And I'm going to be cautious here. I'm going to read. Because I wrote it out carefully. There's a warning here.

[20 : 53] And please don't misunderstand me. Social activism. And care for the marginalized. Are necessary. They are beneficial.

And honoring to the Lord. But beware. Lest they displace. Adoration. And worship.

Of the Lord Jesus. We cannot worship. The poor. We cannot worship. Social activism. Or make it.

The pen. Ultimate goal. Don't misunderstand me. These are worthy. And necessary activities. But they emerge out of a devotion to the Lord Jesus. They cannot replace allegiance to him.

Activity for God is not the same as adoration of God. Our activities and our actions actually emerge or roll out of our affection and adoration for the Lord Jesus.

[21 : 55] Well. We see it. We see it. In worship. And far more quickly. In verses. Chapter 12. Verses 9 to 11. We see it in witness.

Mary testified to the Lord Jesus. The value of the Lord Jesus. In regards to his death. Her anointing. Was anticipatory. For the day of Jesus' burial.

And when we come to chapter 9. This little piece here. Lazarus also testifies to the value of the death of the Lord Jesus. Not necessarily through worship.

But in witness. He was certainly a dead man walking. And that alone had undermined the power of the religious authorities. According to chapter 11. Verse 47. John will tell us about the Lazarus effect.

You see it in verse 9. When the large crowd learned that Jesus was in Bethany. They came. Not only account of Jesus.

[22 : 56] But to see Lazarus. There's a Lazarus effect. On account of Lazarus. And again in verse 11. On account of Lazarus. Many of the Jews were going away.

And believing in Jesus. And to steal a verse from next week. I'm sorry Dave. In verse 17. The crowd is gathered. Because of Lazarus.

And I am confident. That Lazarus was not simply walking around. And saying nothing. He was certainly bearing witness. Let me tell you.

About that day I died. And let me tell you. About the most bizarre exit. I've ever had. You see.

Many Jews were believing. Because of Lazarus. The Pharisees are so concerned. That they're able to assert the whole world. Has gone after Jesus.

[23 : 57] Because of Lazarus. He certainly could have written a book. About dying and returning. And as a result. The same sentence.

That his Lord Jesus bears. Is now put upon him. That the religious leaders. Want to put him to death. As well. Worship.

And witness. Both commended by John. Both greatly. Opposed. And if it was true. In the days of the Lord Jesus. It remains true in our day.

And to conclude. I wanted to say this. I don't believe this is too far fetched. To assert. There is no more substantial death. In all of human history. Than the death that Jesus was walking toward.

There is no other death. That has consumed the same number. Of canvases. As the death of the Lord Jesus. There is no other death.

[24 : 55] That has filled. As many sheets. Of sheet music. As the death of the Lord Jesus. There is no other death.

That beckons universal claim. As the death of the Lord Jesus. No other death. Is effectively. As vicarious. To the degree. Of the Lord Jesus.

You can certainly. Measure it. Quantitatively. He gave up the most. If you want to measure it. Qualitatively. He gave up the best.

In Jesus. You will find the greatest. Act. Of generosity. And excess. He depleted. All of heaven. To save. Earth. To redeem.

The lowly of earth. He emptied. The storehouses. Of his treasury. To secure. The. And redeem. The lost on earth. He exchanged. His ultimate.

[25 : 50] His infinite glory. For human. Frailty. It is the most. Excessive. Lavish. Extreme. Act. The world.

Will ever. Know. You see. No thought system. Will ever. Esteem. The death march. Yet. In Jesus.

We find. John. Exalting it. Because. He knew. That in him. Was life. And that life.

Is the light. Of all men. That he would come. To his own. And his own. Would not receive him. Yet. But. To all. Who did receive him. To those.

Who believed. In his name. He gave the right. To become. Children of God. Who are born. Not. Of blood. Nor the will. Of man. Nor the. Nor the will.

[26 : 44] Of the flesh. But born. Of. God. And here you have it. Jesus. Is headed. Toward death. And guess what.

He heads that way. With great confidence. Knowing. That he had just. Raised Lazarus. Knowing. That at the other end.

God would raise him. Back up. As well. And therefore. In the death. Of the Lord Jesus.
You have the most significant event. Of all of human history.

Which beckons. My worship. And my witness. And your worship. And your witness.
Father.

We come to you this morning. And. We are staggered. By the reality.

[27 : 49] Of the son of God. Became. The son of man. To experience. Death as a man.

For our behalf. Oh father. As we. Reenter. Into passion week. Even though it's.
Transpired. In our. Calendars.

We pray. Lord. That you would. Recalibrate. Our hearts. And we would. Walk behind. The
Lord Jesus. As he approaches. Agony.

And glory. For our behalf. We ask these things. For Jesus sake. Amen.