

Mary and Her Gift

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Preacher: Matthew Garrett

[0 : 00] How great thou art. And how's that for volume this morning?! Is that okay? The voice.

Okay. So, we're just really glad to see everybody here this morning. We say, well, we're not going to emphasize offerings.

But we do. I've been reminded that we ought to occasionally let folks know that we will accept an offering. And we just leave the plates at the back.

And as you feel led to give, you can just put it in there before the service. And so, God bless you.

But what reminded me to say that was, I want to thank you for your generosity.

Roger has already counted our funds this morning. And you know that our own Finley Garrett, who happens to be my granddaughter, is going to be a summer youth counselor at a Christian camp and had to raise her own funds to do that.

[1 : 13] And just mentioned it to you last week. And Roger said that the account now, she needed \$750. You've already given \$900. God bless you.

So, Becky, we're going to take... So, Becky, when we get home, cancel our check. She didn't need... Okay.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer this morning. Father, we thank you for this marvelous opportunity to come and worship.

And we have already worshiped you in song. We've worshiped you in praises. For those who came to Sunday school, we've worshiped in Bible study. Now, Lord, we want to worship as we study the Word of God together.

Speak to our hearts, Lord. Speak to our hearts. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Have you ever had the thought, why doesn't God give me something really great or really important to do?

[2 : 26] Why doesn't he really use me in some wonderful way? Maybe you've never had that kind of thought. Maybe it's just people like me that have too much pride and arrogance that have thoughts like that.

But if you've ever had that thought, then look at this side of the question. What if the thing that God really leads you to do and wants you to do is something that seems very insignificant and small?

And then you faithfully do that. How will God use that? And that just really ties into today's

message. We are going through the book of John together. And for those who are visiting, our church members that chose to are reading through this daily devotional guide together.

And then we are, and it's straight through the book of John. And then we are preaching excerpts from it on Sundays. And today we're going to be talking about the story of Mary.

And that is Mary, who is the sister of Lazarus. Last week we looked at Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. This is his sister, Mary. She's also the one that has the sister, Martha.

[3 : 36] And so we're going to be looking at this. Today's story is actually told in three of the Gospels. It's in Matthew, it's in Mark, and it's in John. And we're going to be kind of drawing a little bit from all three.

But primarily we'll be going from the book of John. So having said that, let me, oh, I forgot. I got a little clicker here today.

Let's see if it's going to work. It's working. You can follow along and I'm going to read this to you.

First of all, John 12, starting with the first verse. Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. I'm going to pause a moment because, you know, we picture, in fact, all through the Middle Ages, when they would, during the Renaissance and all, when they would paint pictures of Jesus, he would always be seated at a table like we're used to.

But in the time of Jesus, in the Jewish culture, the table was a real low thing. And they actually reclined at the table. You kind of leaned on your elbow with your body stretched out, your feet behind you or your feet to the side.

[5 : 00] You leaned on your elbow and ate. And so that's why it says they were reclining at the table. And that kind of makes the rest of the story make a little more sense also. So let's continue.

Then Mary, Lazarus' sister, took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume. And Mark chapter 14, verse 3, adds right here that she broke the jar open.

She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

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 300 denarii, a year's wages.

[6 : 01] He did not say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. And as the keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

I've always thought it was interesting that Jesus, who knew everybody's heart, knew what they were thinking, that in his own organization, he permitted a thief to be the treasurer for the group.

Isn't that a strange thing? Jesus would have always known he was stealing money. And, you know, sometimes we get very uptight about things like that. And for his own purposes, Jesus permitted this.

So anyway, Judas has just really severely criticized Mary. So what does Jesus say? 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.

[7 : 08] Now, if you've not been reading through this book, I'm going to read a little excerpt of how our author treated that this week because I thought his writing was exceptional on this particular.

In fact, I always think he's a pretty good writer. Oh, and we haven't told you. The author of our book is going to be our guest speaker at Family Day. How about that?

He's going to come in next to the last weekend in September. He's going to come in on Saturday night. We're going to have a big dinner together. He's going to come in and share his testimony, and we'll have a little question and answer time.

And then he'll be back with us on Sunday morning to preach our sermon. So we're going to get to meet Gary Weber, who is really not a big, famous, world-famous preacher.

He just has his own Baptist church in Florida, and he's a good brother. And the Lord led him to write a good devotional book. So here's how he handled what we just read.

[8 : 09] The house was overflowing with people. Given the size of the crowd, Martha needed another pair of hands. Where was her sister?

But Mary wasn't much for the domestic scene. She preferred to be where the action was. Quietly, unnoticed, she got up and left the room.

She passed by the other women and went to her room. She knew right where it was and precisely what she was going to do with it. She had been saving this for years.

It was her future. It was all of her hopes, all of her dreams. It was her security. It would provide for her and protect her.

Then she slipped back into the crowd. She pressed herself along the wall to get back to his feet.

[9 : 12] The crowd was really loud and noisy. Everyone talking at once as they were eating. As she opened the vase, the pungent aroma of the pure nard began to permeate the air.

The noise level decreased as the scent pushed the sounds out of the space. Eyes turned to find the source of the fragrance.

There was Mary emptying the final drops of nard on Jesus' feet. Then she slowly took her hair down, revealing long black locks that should never be seated public.

This was getting embarrassing. Slowly, she began to wash his feet with her hair. Not a sound was heard in the room.

The fragrance of her offering, the audacity of her actions made everyone very uncomfortable. This was totally inappropriate.

[10 : 26] You know, we read a story like that many times in the Bible and then we began to lose the feeling for what it must have been like for the people who were there.

And maybe what Mary was dealing with. Before we get back into this story, let me take a moment to clear up since we're looking at three different versions of this story.

Some critics say, ah, look at all the contradictions. How can you believe it? Well, I'm going to take a moment to clarify some of what are called contradictions, some discrepancies between the different people who were witnesses to the event and wrote about it.

Matthew, Peter, who dictated to Mark, and John. Slightly different versions. So, what were some of the things? By the way, Luke tells a similar story, but it's a different person, a different time.

It's very early in the ministry of Jesus. It's a different story altogether. It's just similar. Forget the one in Luke. Look, the other three are all talking about something that happens the last week of Jesus' life.

[11 : 35] This is the last week. So, some versions say it was at Simon's house. And the people who want to be critical read this in John and say, it wasn't at Simon's house, it was at Lazarus' house.

But if you just read what we just read, it never says whose house it was in. It says that Martha was hosting. So, I don't see that there's a discrepancy at all.

There was a guy named Simon the leper. He is no longer a leper, or people wouldn't be coming to his house to eat. He's been healed by Jesus. He lives in the same town with Lazarus, who's also been raised from the dead.

It is easy for me to believe in a small village like Bethany. These guys had to know each other. I mean, there weren't but a hundred or so people living in that village.

And so, Simon has been to see Lazarus and said, man, I thought I had it good. I got healed from leprosy. But I got nothing on you. You got raised from the dead.

[12 : 35] And they got to talking and said, we need to have Jesus back for a special dinner. Really celebrate. This is wonderful. And Simon said, let's do it at my house.

And Martha said, but let me serve. Let me serve. I love to cook. And so, there's no discrepancy at all unless you're trying to find fault with the Scripture.

Now, in Matthew it says two days before Passover. In John it says six days before Passover. I think they're merely telling the events in a different arrangement.

For example, I might say to you, on May the 15th, I went to court. I had been driving down Horner Boulevard, not paying attention.

I ran through a stoplight. And then I got a ticket. So then I was in court. But then I could also tell the story and start with, I ran the stoplight.

[13 : 38] And then I was in court. So, Matthew begins with saying, the Pharisees and Sadducees were looking for a way to kill Jesus. He had been at a dinner at Simon's house.

And he leads into how Judas gets upset by what Jesus says. And then he says, then Judas went to the officials. So, I don't think there's a discrepancy between two days and six days.

There's just a different order of telling the story. What's another one they think may have been? Oh, John only mentions Judas. Matthew and Mark say, the disciples began to criticize her.

Is that really a contradiction? I mean, I can see that Judas starts off and says, what? She's wasting this money. And then two or three other disciples go, he's right, Jesus.

She's wasting this. We should have helped the poor. And so, one author says, the disciples were getting on her case. The other author says, it was Judas.

[14 : 46] He started this. That's not really a discrepancy in the scripture. Probably the largest, if you wanted to call it a discrepancy. Matthew says that she anointed his head.

John says she anointed his feet. I look at that and I think, it's a room full of people all around the room. And so, we know from reading the book of John that John loves Jesus and is very close.

He says, I am the disciple Jesus loved. He's often seated right beside him when we see him in the scripture. I can see that Matthew's maybe across the room.

It's crowded. He starts to smell this aroma and he looks and he sees her, first of all, pouring some perfume on his head. And then she proceeds to get down, pouring it on his feet.

John, who's right beside her, is astonished. She's pouring it on his feet and then washing his feet with her hair. So, he writes about what he mostly saw.

[15 : 55] Matthew writes about what he mostly saw from his perspective. The same thing happens in every court of law. In every courtroom, the witnesses get up.

They don't tell the exact same story. They tell what they saw from their perspective. It helps us to believe that the scriptures are true. Well, what else do we know about this Mary?

We know that every time she pops up in scripture, which is only three times, she's always in the same place.

Where is that? She is always at Jesus' feet. The first time he's visiting her house and Martha's cooking. And Martha's always cooking.

And Mary's always sitting at Jesus' feet. The second time she's in, Jesus has come to raise Lazarus from the dead. She's at his feet crying.

[16:53] If only you'd been here. My brother wouldn't have died. And now she's at his feet again to worship him. And I like something that Matthew and Mark added at the end of this conversation that John didn't add.

They said, they added that then Jesus, after Judas criticized her, and he rebuked Judas, he went on to say, I tell you the truth, wherever this good news is preached, that is, wherever the gospel, the story of Jesus, wherever it's retold, throughout the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.

Why is this so special that Jesus decides it should be told everywhere that the good news is told? And that's what I want to spend a few minutes looking at. First, we have to understand a little more about this perfume. It says that it was worth a year's wages.

What would she have been doing with such a valuable bottle of perfume? Now, I don't know anything about perfumes. Becky doesn't much like to wear them.

[18:19] It bothers her if she wears them. And so we don't know a whole lot about perfumes. But I assume, what's a really expensive perfume cost these days? Who knows something about that?

No idea. Okay, we've got that kind of church. Okay. I'm good with that, you know. So how much is a hamburger at McDonald's? That's the kind of gym.

It's actually made from myrrh. And we could go back and talk about how those were the original gifts when Jesus was born. One of them was myrrh. But we're not going to go there. Nard was a very, very concentrated, refined, processed, super concentrated myrrh.

And it was a beautiful perfume. And it was frequently used to anoint the dead bodies of people. And in your lifetime, you tried to acquire a bottle of this sometime in your life so that other people wouldn't have to pay for that when you died.

How many of you, there's enough of us who are older that maybe this question will make some sense. How many of you have already made some arrangements for where you will be buried and all that kind of stuff?

[19:36] Raise your hand. Okay. Okay. About, you know, 10 people here. So she's simply, one thing she's done by having this bottle, she is making some pre-funeral arrangements so that her family won't be burdened with it.

That's one possibility. There's also another good thing for her to have this. It's her savings for a rainy day. Like when Lazarus had died and she and her sister were going to be on their own and women didn't have jobs they could do and make money.

And neither she nor her sister were married. They didn't have a husband to take care of them. Brother who had been taking care of them was dead. And she and maybe her sister has a similar bottle.

That would be their fallback rainy day fund that they could use to survive on. It would be a year's wages. Now someone here might say, yeah, but you know, how much money did they make back then?

It was worth the same year's wage to her as your year of work would be to you. Some of you, I don't know, I don't keep up with you, but some of you, maybe you make \$40,000, \$50,000 a year.

[20:51] Some of you maybe make \$300,000 a year. We may have some folks here getting more than that. And if so, why don't you ever invite me out and take me to dinner? Take me on a cruise, you know, something.

But anyway, most of us are somewhere in between those extremes. And this was a very valuable offering. Would you take your year's salary and give it to a mission project?

If you will, I mean, we'll make the opportunity for you. I mean, there's plenty of mission projects that could use a couple hundred thousand dollars right now. That's the kind of offering she gave.

Think of it. It's her whole nest egg. How many of you would take your entire, right now I'm forgetting what they're called, the retirement fund?

A 401K kind of thing, okay. How many of you would take that whole retirement fund and donate it for a Christian purpose? That somebody's building a Christian orphanage?

[22 : 00] Or they're going to buy a mercy ship to take medical care to nations of great poverty. And they're trying to raise \$50 million. And so you will feel led, maybe, to take your entire retirement and donate it to that?

You'd say, that's outrageous. God would never ask us to do that. I don't know what the Lord might ask you to do. And he didn't even ask Mary to do this.

But it was on her heart. She took her entire retirement fund and wasted it in a moment on Jesus' feet. When I say wasted it, I'm using Judas' term there.

So this is a very valuable thing. Now, it's so weird that Judas fusses at her. 300 denarii?

This is ridiculous. And before two days have passed, he goes and sells Jesus for less than one-tenth of that amount.

[23 : 05] What does that tell us? It tells us that he didn't value Jesus, the Christ, at all. He placed no value on the man. And there's all these theories.

Maybe he was trying to force Jesus' hand or whatever. None of that's in the Scripture. The Scripture says he was a thief. And so he saw a chance to, you know, it looks like Jesus is going downhill.

I might as well cash in on this. I was hoping he might be the Messiah. And I could have ridden in on that coattail. But I see that he's heading downhill fast. I'll make a little money on this before it's over with.

That is more of the guy that John portrays, no matter what Hollywood and popular theories portray him to be. He didn't value Jesus.

And so he thought Mary was crazy. But the same thing happens today. If you do more than going to church once in a while, the world thinks you're crazy.

[24 : 06] The world thinks you're wasting your time. If you give God more than a \$50 offering every now and then, people will think you're nuts. I remember Steve, my son Steve, who's not here today, some years ago told me about at work, back when we were doing mission trips to South America.

And he was getting ready to go. And he was going to be gone a week. And a co-worker was saying, well, where are you going to be? And what are you going to be doing? And the co-worker finally says, well, what does that cost? And Steve says, well, that's about \$3,000.

And he said, oh, man, you're going to get a paid vacation on the church. And Steve said, well, we kind of take care of most of that ourselves. And the guy said, that's crazy.

Why would you take your own money and go do something like that? And Steve says, well, because I'm a believer and I just feel like that's what God would have us do.

And the guy said, you people are nuts. I can't imagine doing such a thing. And so this is the attitude of Judas, that you're crazy if you would give a generous offering to the Lord's work or in whatever capacity.

[25 : 22] That would be crazy. But she takes her most valuable possession and she wastes it on Jesus. Now, all of us like our money.

And we can all relate to the financial part of that. But that may not be your most valuable possession. Your most valuable that you really hold dearest to you, it might be your home.

Would you actually give up your home if the Lord wanted you to, needed you to? Think about that. That's the kind of offering she was giving. Would you give up your career?

A lot of people have. There's been a lot of people with an excellent career. And they felt God leading them to retire, to resign, not retire so much early in life, to resign from that and go into ministry.

Many people have done that. I won't tell stories on that. You've known some people that did that. For some, it's maybe your time. You think, I don't have time to do that.

[26 : 26] I don't have time. I can't possibly help with vacation Bible school. I don't have time. I don't have the talents. I can't go mow the church grass. I can't go help with this or with that. I can't go help with a class.

I can't even go to Sunday school. I don't have time for that. You know, what will you give to the Lord? I'm going to brag on two daughters who came out of this church, Courtney Mathis and Emily Pena, two missionaries.

You know what they gave up? They gave up their family. Now, they were both good family girls. They loved their family. And they gave it up and went to South America.

And one's been there now for three or four years. The other one has come home, but she stayed there 13 years. Will you surrender family to serve the Lord?

And then what if you get criticized for it? Judas was criticizing her for doing this. Judas was a disciple. What if you were going to do something to serve the Lord?

[27 : 36] And you kind of expect the world to be critical. But what if other believers in the church start to criticize you for it? And trust me, that will happen from time to time. I've told some of you before that when my daughter decided to be a missionary, my own father, who was a pastor, went to her and said, you're going to do what?

I'm going to be a missionary. I'm going to be a missionary. I'm going to South America. And you're going to do what there? I'm going to be working in a home that does foster care for street children. And he said, weren't you the valedictorian of your high school class?

Yeah, God bless me. I was, she says. He says to her, didn't you get a full scholarship to the university? She said, yeah, I was blessed. I got a full scholarship.

Brenda, thank you for being her teacher and helping that happen. Got to give credit where credit's due. And my father says, and did you graduate and you got a good degree?

Top of your class. Yeah, I've been blessed with that too. Then why would you waste all of that and go take care of some, I don't like this word, but some snotty-nosed youngins in South America.

[28 : 57] What a waste. My father couldn't stand that. The value of a dollar always meant a lot to that man. He grew up in the Depression. And it was hard for him to get past the value of a dollar.

And I remember on the way home after that visit, her crying some and saying, am I doing the right thing? I really feel like God's leading me to do it. And I said, I can't tell you if you're doing the right thing.

That's between you and God. You just really pray. And then what you think God's leading you to do, then you do that with all your heart. And so with criticism from people you trust and love and believe, some people will take their most precious.

For Emily at that time, I guess her most precious thing was her family and her education. And she sacrificed both and gave them for the Lord's work. It's similar to the offering of Mary.

And so this is why we tell this in the Hall of the World. The point of the story is, what sacrifice is Jesus worthy of?

[30 : 05] There was also another factor that the author brought out in this book, brings out because John assumes that you know Jewish culture, and you don't because we're in America 2,000 years later.

Women in Israel at the time of Jesus never let their hair down in public. Only prostitutes would do that. They had their hair up, and they always wore a covering of, you know, whatever you call it, a shawl or something over their hair.

You didn't get to see their hair. Their hair was only for their husband to see. And, you know, Paul says in what verse is it? 1 Corinthians 11 and 15, a woman's hair is her glory.

There's a lot of truth to that. If there's any young guys, I got three teenagers here. I'm going to give them a little advice. Guys, someday you're going to be dating a young lady.

Don't ever mess her hair up. If you want to impress her, if you want her to like you, don't you mess her hair up.

[31 : 17] They work hours on that. It may not look like it sometime, but women are serious about their hair, and you don't mess with it. After all, their hair is their glory.

And so what is she doing? She's taking this glory that's never to be shown and letting it down publicly. What an embarrassment. What an embarrassing thing to do.

And then she uses her hair. Who's got long hair in here? Okay, I'm looking at Carla. She's got really long, pretty hair. Could you imagine washing somebody's feet with your hair?

Would that be ultimately strange? The Jews didn't go around washing feet with their hair, trust me. It was something that she truly felt led to do for Jesus.

She understood somehow. He's nearing the end of his life. It's my chance to do something really special for him. It's my chance.

[32 : 20] And so she did. She endured the value of the gift, the criticism of others, the embarrassment of it. There's no higher calling.

As simple as it seemed, as unimportant as it seemed, there's no higher calling than to do the thing the Lord has laid on your heart to do and to do it with all your heart and to be willing to waste your resources to help make it happen.

There's no higher calling than that. Now, some folks might come along and say, that was ridiculous, like my father did for my own daughter. But Jesus would say to him, as he said to Judas, leave her alone.

Leave him alone. They're doing it for me. And we need to keep that attitude sometimes when we see another believer doing something that we think's a bit extravagant, extreme, overboard, whatever.

Maybe we need to say to ourselves, leave him alone. They're doing it for the Lord. I want to throw in one more little detail here that Mark included, the part where she broke the jar.

[33 : 32] Now, why was that? They didn't have screw-on caps. And this particular nard is so expensive that at the place when they made it, they made it inside of a sealed ceramic or clay vase, all in one piece.

And it would be there until it was time to use it. And you could use it one time. That was going to be it. And so it had this huge value. I don't know what kind of store you'd buy it in, but there was some place where you'd have to take a year's wages to buy it.

So it wasn't like Mary was thinking, well, I'm just going to go use a little bit of it. Then I'll put the lid back on. I'll be good. Once she broke the cap on that, she had made her decision.

There was no turning back. And I think that there's something for us in that portion right there. The reason that Mark added, she broke the jar, was because when we make commitments to Jesus Christ, we need to make such a commitment that there's no turning back.

You remember the old song, the cross before me, the world behind me, no turning back. And that's our call as followers of Jesus Christ. Don't turn back.

[34 : 57] The sacrifice was so beautiful, the fragrance began to fill the house. Everybody knew about it. That fragrance filled the whole room, starting to go back into the kitchen.

I mean, it's a powerful perfume, powerful, filling the room. When you do something wonderful and even sacrificial for the Lord, I call it the scent of Christ comes upon you.

And folks will notice, they'll say, there's something different about that person. And it's because you have made up your mind to surrender your life to the master. And in making up your mind to do that, there's a scent of Christ that's on you.

So Jesus ended by saying, you won't always have me. You will have the poor. Some people think that Jesus meant, don't help the poor.

He never said that. He said, you can help the poor, they'll be with you. And so it's a good thing to help the poor. We've got a bunch of us wearing these yellow shirts today because we're going to go up and help some folks up around Boone, whose houses got destroyed in the hurricane, Hurricane Alene.

[36 : 14] And so we're kind of helping the poor. That pleases Jesus. But he said, listen, you won't always have me. How does that apply to us? Our life is about, you know, this long.

And then there's all of eternity. All of eternity filling this room. And our life is like the end of an ink pinpoint or something in comparison. This is our one chance to really honor Jesus, to really waste our lives on him, to really do some things that will honor and glorify him.

It's our one chance. Mary took advantage of her one chance. Will we? Will you? Jesus says, you won't always have this chance.

So he is worthy. And there's no higher calling than wasting some part of your life on him. The great preacher, Charles Spurgeon, one of his best quotes, in my opinion, he said, if God has called you to be a missionary, don't stoop to be a king.

Very interesting. God help us in that. And so we have this chance. And the question is, is Jesus worthy of this in our lives?

[37 : 38] Or are we more like Jesus that we don't think he's really worth it? That our plans and our money and our kingdom is worth more? Or is he worth more? And this is our chance.

In this one life, this is our chance to serve him. What will we do? Now, I'm going to, if this works, it worked last night, it worked this morning in this room.

I'm going to play a wonderful piece of music with the song called, Is He Worthy? And when I first turn it on, it's possible, we'll have a commercial come up on YouTube and hang on and I'll delete it.

I mean, I'll skip it. But hopefully it'll come right up. And then I'm going to sit down and we just, just listen. This is our closing song today. And just listen, let it speak to you.

And toward the end, I'm going to stand up to honor Christ and I invite you to stand up at that point too, as we, and you can even join in and sing at the end there if you'd like.

[38 : 41] Let's see if it's going to work. Commercial.

This is the strangest method I've ever seen to completely erase type 2 by 2026. Here's how to do it.

I'm going to be right. I'm going to be right. I'm going to be right.

I'm going to be right.

Thank you.

[40 : 56] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[43 : 26] Thank you.