

# Mary Anoints the Feet of Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Just a wee word to the young folk before we sing again. One of the easiest things for us to do at any time is to grumble and to complain about people.

It's so, so easy and probably we're all guilty at different times of doing that. It's sometimes, I'd have to say, it's sometimes we're slower to praise people and build people up than we are to put people down.

It shouldn't be the case, but far too often we do that. And the Bible, in fact, warns us against grumbling about people. Where we say to somebody else, oh, see so and so, what they did, what they are.

They're this, they're that, the next thing. The Bible warns us against that. Because it warns us in different ways, but there's a particular verse, and I know that the young adults just now are studying in the book of James.

And it warns us there because the Bible tells us, that's what it says, do not grumble to one another about one another.

[ 1 : 17 ] Because, it says, the judge is standing at the door. And it's got the idea there of Jesus who is the judge and Jesus who is going to return.

And the idea is that Jesus is, as it were, just at the door. It's as if he's going to just have to put his hand on the handle and open the door and return.

And the Bible is saying to us, remember that when you grumble about one another. That Jesus is just behind the door.

And that he's hearing, he's listening. You and I know sometimes if we're going into a room, we're coming to the door as closed, that often you will, you might catch just a little of what is being said before you go in, just as you're going in.

If people are speaking loudly. But the thing is, Jesus is hearing everything. And we would be, I think we would speak differently. And we would live differently if we were thinking about that all the time.

[ 2 : 27 ] And I suppose it's the same. We do things that we would never do if we knew we were being watched. And I suppose it's, I suppose to the young people here, sometimes, so you might be with your granny or with your mum or dad or something, they're baking.

And they say, now don't touch that baking, don't go near it, because there's people coming. And it looks beautiful, and you're alone in the kitchen. And it's very tempting to say, well, I'll just take a wee taste.

Nobody will know. And it's awful, isn't it, when you just decide to just slice a wee bit off when the door opens and in comes mum or dad.

And you, oh, you didn't realise they were coming. And I'm sure you'll remember in school, I certainly do, when the teacher would go out. And we'd start doing stupid things and throwing things about and wrestling.

And sometimes it would be two or three people sitting on top of somebody. You'd never do that if the teacher was in the class. And then sometimes there would be the shout, teachers, come here. Everybody's running back.

[ 3 : 31 ] Open the book. Kidding on, you were working. But sometimes you didn't get time. All of a sudden the teacher came in. And you were made to look so stupid. What are you doing?

Well, that's the idea. That Jesus is standing with his hand, as it were, on the handle of the door, ready to return. And so that should make us think.

And that's what the Bible is saying. Don't grumble about one another because the judge is standing at the door. It would, I believe, I certainly, as I was thinking about this, I would say, I'd say to myself, if only I could keep this picture before my mind, it would help us in what we say and in what we do.

And one day Jesus is going to return. Pray that we will all be ready and that we will live as if each day was a day he's coming back.

We're going to sing again now from Psalm 118. And this is from the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 118.

And at verse 19, Psalm 118 from the Scottish Psalter.

[ 4 : 45 ] And we sing from verse 19. O set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness. Then will I enter into them, and I, the Lord, will bless.

This is the gate of God. By it the just shall enter in. Thee will I praise, for thou me heardst, and hast my safety been. That stone is made head cornerstone, which builders did despise.

This is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes. Down to verse 26. Blessed is he in God's great name, that cometh us to save. We from the house which to the Lord pertains you.

Blessed have the tune of Solly. It's on page 399. Psalm 118, verses 19 to 26. So set ye open unto me. O set ye open unto me.

The gates of righteousness. Then will I enter into them.

[ 6 : 00 ] And guide the Lord with bless. This is the gate of God by it.

The just shall enter in. Next shall reap. There will I praise.

For thou reform. And dost may safely lead. The Son is made in the forest stone, which rivers made its pies.

This is the duty of the Lord, and wondrous sin arise.

This is the day God created it, with joy triumphantly.

[ 7 : 24 ] Save thou thy pain, the Lord I pray, save thou prosperity.

Blessed is he in God's great name, but come and pass to save.

We from the house wish to the Lord, hurt him to bless him.

Let's read in John's Gospel, John chapter 12. And we're going to read the first 19 verses.

John chapter 12, from the beginning, in the ESV, it's 108.3, page. Reading at the beginning.

[ 8 : 41 ] Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there.

Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table. 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. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, he who was about to betray him, said, Why was this ointment not sold for 300 denaria, and given to the poor?

He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. Jesus said, Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.

The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me. 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.

[ 9 : 58 ] So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him, many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion.

Behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt. His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.

The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

[ 11 : 06 ] So the Pharisees said to one another, You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him. Amen, and may God bless to us this reading of his holy word.

I'm going to sing again from Sing Psalm, Psalm number 2. And we're going to sing from verse 6 to the end of the psalm. That's on page 2, Psalm 2, page 2.

The tune is Warrington. The Lord has made it known to them, My chosen king I have installed. On Zion, my own holy hill, he is the one whom I have called.

The king then solemnly declares, I will proclaim the Lord's decree. Today your father I have become. You are my son, he said to me.

And so on to verse 12, Pay homage to the royal son, lest you in wrath aside our thrust. For swiftly can his anger blaze. Blessed are all who in him trust.

[12:08] Psalm 2, verse 6 to the end. The Lord has made it known to them. The Lord has made it known to them, My chosen king I have installed.

On Zion, my own holy hill, He is the one whom I have called.

The king then solemnly declares, I will proclaim the Lord's decree.

Today your father I have become. You are my son, he said to me.

As we unfold your heritage, I'll give you nations near and far.

[13:46] You'll break them with an iron rod, And smash them like a potter's shine.

Now therefore, King, Now therefore, King, True wisdom, Find, Who judges all The earth in here.

With reverence come, And serve the Lord, Bow down with joy, And trembling fear.

ahilasting Oh, and dull His commend our clans for swiftly come his anger please bless you thou

who in him trust let's turn again to John chapter 12 and as we're working through this gospel I want us just to consider the section that we read today the really two main sections the first one we'll look at in more detail where Mary anoints

Jesus at Bethany and then the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem we see there that six days before the Passover Jesus therefore came to Bethany where Lazarus was whom Jesus had raised from the dead so they gave a dinner for him there Martha served and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard and anointing the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume and so on as we know the cross is coming ever closer for Jesus and we found at the end of the previous chapter that because of the growing hostility and hatred of the religious leaders towards Jesus that he had to move out and remember we saw that he went to a region near the wilderness to a town called Ephraim and he stayed there with his disciples and one of the things that the Bible shows us so often in the life of Jesus although Jesus was completely keeping to a heavenly timetable and he knew when his hour was to come and when his hour hadn't come yet one of the things that Jesus is teaching us is that he used and I say this reverently he used common sense he wasn't presumptuous he didn't push against boundaries so that he put himself in the place of unnecessary risk even although he was a son of God and I think it's important to understand that because a lot of people might think that as the Jews are threatening to kill Jesus that because he is the son of God and because he is under the divine protection of his father in heaven surely it's absolutely safe for Jesus to stay there surely God will look after him well we've got to understand

[17:54] Jesus is here in our nature as our representative and he operates in a human way and yet living in complete dependence upon his father all the time keeping to a particular timetable and program and when there is a threat where they are wanting to take him and put him to death Jesus goes away we find that on several occasions and I think that's important for us to understand because some people think that once they become Christians right I'm a Christian God is for me I can do anything and sometimes people throw logic out the window and common sense out the window and they say well I can do anything and sometimes we see people in fact launch out into Christian work with no thought with no planning with no preparation with nothing and saying well God will provide God will help me now don't get me wrong I wish myself and I wish that we all exercised more faith and that we did more by faith but there's always got to be a distinction between faith and presumption and yes we have to move forward prayerfully we have to move forward in dependence upon God move forward according to the leading of God and when we're persuaded that God is leading us then we go irrespective of what others might say if we are absolutely persuaded we have that inward conviction and we have the word directing us then that is the way we must go however just to say because I am now a Christian then everything will be sorted out then we're not applying common sense and logic and that's what

Jesus is doing we find him on several locations acting in this way anyway we find Jesus moving back and he comes and we find that it's six days before the Passover and we find him again in Bethany and a dinner has been set in his honour and we're told that Lazarus is there whom he

raised from the dead that Martha as usual is serving and we find Mary in her customary position at the feet of Jesus of course we know this was a special place for Jesus Bethany had a special place in the heart of Jesus because of this particular family that was here because we're told that Jesus loved Mary he loved Martha and he loved Lazarus and this was a place that had a a very powerful place in his heart and you know how it's been suggested remember when Jesus ascended remember 40 days after the resurrection when Jesus ascended in full view of his disciples that he didn't ascend from Nazareth where he had been brought up or from

Capernaum where he did many mighty works or on the shores of Galilee which had been so much part of his ministry or from outside the temple in Jerusalem but it was from Bethany and we're told there how he led them out as far as Bethany and lifted up his hands and blessed them and it came to pass that while he blessed them that he was parted from them and carried up to heaven and a lot of people think that it was a testimony to the love that he had for this special home and particularly the special woman Mary because Mary was probably the most discerning follower that Jesus had she understood things that even James and Peter and John didn't understand so a lot of people think that it's that it's almost like a token of acknowledgement that as Jesus leaves his world and ascends to the father that he does so from this little place

Bethany anyhow we find quite a crowd are gathered at this meal and as was the custom Jesus is reclining at the table and it's then that we find Mary stepping forward to do something that she's always remembered for because in this extravagant lavish outpouring of her love for Jesus what she did is something that is spoken about to this very day obviously that's what we're doing we're preaching about it but Jesus says that and if we go to Matthew's parallel account it says truly I say to you wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world what she has done will be told in memory of her and so here is Mary coming with this really really expensive perfume this ointment or oil that came from northern India from the root of the stem of a plant there and a lot of girls and women used to try and save up in order to buy some of this type of perfume for special locations it was very very expensive but Mary here has a huge amount it's probably the equivalent of half a litre so that the container the box or the jar that she had the flask that she had there was a lot in it and so when we're told in fact that it would have cost in today's money thousands of pounds there's 300 denaria which was one denaria was a labourer's wage so we're talking here about a labourer's annual wage that's what this ointment this perfume would have cost and Mary breaks it breaks the flask because we're told quite clearly in Mark's gospel tells that she broke the flask and poured it out over Christ in other words

Mary didn't just kind of open it a wee bit and say well I'm going to take a little bit out I'm going to keep the I'm not going to pour all that out I'll keep the rest for later I'll keep the rest for myself at another occasion because that would be too much she doesn't think like that she breaks the flask breaks it because that's it she's finished with it and she pours all of it over Jesus and that's what love does love doesn't sort of measure the cost and sort of say well I can only do this I can only do this much or that much love doesn't work like that love pours itself out upon its object love is sacrificial in its nature and of course the greatest demonstration of love that we will ever see is God's love in giving his son and the son's love in giving himself if they had yes to a certain extent they did count the cost they knew what the cost was and the cost was so awful that

[ 25 : 10 ] Jesus said Lord Father if it's possible let this pass from me but the other side and when I mean that they didn't count the cost they knew what they had to do love knew what it had to do and love was going to do it and that's what love does and that's what Mary did because Mary had a heart full of love to both the Father and to the Son and I think it's one of the wonderful things about about Mary because what Mary does here Mary did what nobody else was able to do all the other women wanted to anoint the body of Jesus and remember they prepared their spices and they prepared their to come to anoint Jesus body but they couldn't because remember when they came to the grave Jesus was no longer there he had risen so

Mary alone really is the one who is able to do what she wanted to do and Mary of course has amazing learning abilities and discernment and people say well where did she discover this well I think the key to Mary's discernment and Mary's understanding is that you will always find Mary her position was at the feet of Jesus speaking of humble learning and there's a big difference between learning and what we might term submissive learning or humble learning a person can come to learn bringing their own knowledge and their own understanding and their own preconceived ideas and sometimes accept things and challenge things and reject things but if we come without any

preconceived ideas we come with completely open hearts we come deciding to be taught then we will learn and that's how Mary came

Mary sat at the feet it was a picture of submission before Jesus her heart her life her everything and she was wanting to learn and it's the same for ourselves that's how we have to come and Jesus is a teacher the Holy Spirit will teach us the things the Bible promises us that that's part of what Jesus said when he was going away that the Holy Spirit would come and would teach all things open our minds and that's why we need to go and say Lord show me your ways teach me the psalmist was always saying that people often wonder how was how was David in the Old Testament such an incredibly wise man how was he so theological and he spoke about concepts and things that really are almost New Testament concept it is because he was always asking the Lord Lord teach me teach me and that's what you and I have to do is to go to the

Lord with his word say Lord open my heart help me to understand speak in as I read this word may your spirit apply this word so that it goes right down into my heart and affects my life not just that I hear it but that it influences me that it redirects me this is what we need this is what the word does remember Jesus it's part of the high priestly prayer sanctify them through the truth thy word is truth so that as we come under the word the word should have this sanctifying impact and effect upon us and so this is where Mary has discovered where Peter and James and John it was even remember when they went Peter Peter and John ran to the tomb the empty tomb it tells us John tells us that when he saw it he saw and believed it was like ah all the teaching that had gone before it came together just like in a moment it was like this moment of inspirational flower yes I get it now it was what did all come together but Mary had got it before

Mary had understood that Jesus because Jesus tells he says that it's in light of his death that she has done this of course when Mary anointed at that time there were four different anointings that you would find kings were anointed priests were anointed prophets were anointed the dead were anointed and when Mary did this to Jesus it was in all these capacities because he is king of kings he is the great high priest he is the prophet and he is the one who is going to die but is alive forever more so Mary is actually doing something that's altogether wonderful and again Mary stands out as somebody who gives her all you know we sometimes have to look at ourselves and examine ourselves and we say have I given my all to the

[ 30 : 37 ] Lord now I know that when we become Christians we give our heart to Jesus Jesus comes in and he becomes lord and king of our life and that is true but is it not also true that we want to keep little bits to ourselves and we say Lord you can have most of my life but there's this part I want to keep for you well I think Mary is the kind of person who had no part kept for herself she was the kind of believer who gave it all for Jesus and the impact of a life that is totally given to Jesus is quite extraordinary the impact the effect of what happened it tells us that the whole room was full of the fragrance everybody everybody was impacted everybody was affected by what Mary did and it's true that there are some

Christians that their lives are so Christ-like that they impact people's lives without them really saying anything there's something about them something about them that almost sets them apart it's not that they'd not for one moment are they any person who is trying to be pious or trying isn't a pious person a really committed pious Christian isn't trying to be there is no efforts it is somebody who is just given to the Lord everything my whole being and that's the kind of person Mary was and it's a wonderful example to us unfortunately as Mary did this wonderful act and performed what she did for Jesus she was criticized it really is quite extraordinary because there is there is almost when you go to the other accounts

I wouldn't say it's universal criticism but there's a lot of criticism of Mary and in fact they were almost angry against her and they were looking at it as a waste that's what some of the gospel writers what a waste and of course Judas launches in and said could this not have been sold and given to the money given to the poor now of course we know Judas had his own self interest you know one of the most obnoxious things you can ever come across is somebody using pious language for their own self interest Judas comes along there as if he's saying oh that could have if we had sold that we could have given that money to the poor sounds good John adds Judas had the bag he was the treasurer as were amongst the disciples but he was a thief and the reason Judas wanted to sell that was so that he could pocket some of it himself that is why pious language that is serving self is horrible and

Judas is demonstrating that but even the others saw it as a waste but Jesus of course defended he defended Mary Jesus said you have the poor always among you but you don't always have me now Jesus is not there saying don't give to the poor not at any point and we can say how do we know that because they carried an alms bag they carried a bag which meant an alms bag was that they they at times gave to people who were in need the disciples and Jesus that's what they did to people who were in need they gave out of that so Jesus in no way is saying don't give to the poor because Jesus encouraged God you go back to Deuteronomy and in the Old Testament is encouraging there's always been provision and a place for the poor but Jesus is trying to get the focus on them and saying look you'll always have the poor with you but you're not always going to have me with you and he's wanting them to focus at this particular time upon himself and so Mary took the opportunity and that's what we must do as well because life is all about opportunities Mary had this this was the last opportunity she was as we said the only one who managed to anoint Jesus I'm sure afterwards supposing she hadn't done that she'd be kicking herself she'd be saying oh I wish it was in my heart it was something I was thinking about but I didn't do it how often that happens to us isn't it so often our life is full of regret I had an opportunity there and I missed it I wasted it well let us take the opportunities in life when they come along and use them wisely and use them well and here was one and Mary grabbed that opportunity and she poured out not only the ointment but really she was a picture of pouring out her heart on

[ 36 : 06 ] Jesus as well but then we see following on from that there were the large crowds had gathered on account of coming to see both Lazarus and Jesus and do you see the impact sin is unbelievably twisted the hatred of Christ in this world it just knows no bounds and here see the reaction see the reaction of the chief here are the religious leaders because the crowds were gathering not only to see Jesus but also to see Lazarus who had risen from the dead they were making plans to put Lazarus to death as well isn't that unbelievable that is just it shows devilish how horrific how twisted how poisoned the human heart becomes my friend none of us here

I don't think any of us have grasped just how poisoned our hearts really are were it not for grace were it not for saving grace were it not for common grace just look around this world just now and sometimes we see things and we say you know there are some things that we read about and you can't get your head out they are so horrific and you say how is it possible for a human being to do that to somebody else it is so gruesome so barbaric so brutal so awful but that is the poison that is within the human it's right there and you know there's that poisonous in everybody's heart but if it weren't for God's common grace and his restraint in so many places and if it weren't for his saving grace but you know there are times the Lord will give us a little glimpse of what our heart is really like and that is why there is no power that can save us or deliver us or set us free or cleanse us but the power and the blood of

Jesus and so we find then following on from this we find the triumphal and just a word on this the triumphal entry of Jesus in and it's really quite extraordinary as you find Jesus riding into Jerusalem and as he makes his way to Jerusalem and he would have been coming down the Mount of Olives we read elsewhere that Jesus before he actually comes into the city he bursts into tears we go to Luke's gospel that's what it tells us why did Jesus burst into tears and break his heart weeping because as he was on the Mount of Olives making his way down towards Jerusalem coming from Bethany he looked upon the city and he saw this city rejecting him he saw what they were going to do and he saw and he was saying if only you could see what you were doing and that's why he wept over the city oh

Jerusalem Jerusalem he cried and he wanted to gather them just like a hen would gather its brood pulling them to himself but he said you won't come and you know there might be people here today and Jesus Jesus is doing the very same thing with regard to you week after week and month after month and even year after year the sign that is coming up over your head is still rejection you're still rejecting the king king Jesus who is pleading with you who is appealing to you week after week month after month year after year will you not come my friend what has he to do to you in order that you will bow the knee of your heart before him and say Lord Jesus come into my heart be my Lord and my saviour and if you've never done that before I would urge you even do it now say Lord Lord save me because you know something you can't save yourself salvation is a gift you cannot save yourself you ask for it but you receive that's what we do faith is our receive it's by by grace we receive Jesus by faith so we find Jesus he enters into Jerusalem now he doesn't come in like Solomon on a beautiful white horse as it were fit for a king doesn't enter the city although the

reaction of the crowd is like to a conquering king or to a king coming towards the coronation yet we find Jesus he comes on a donkey on the on the colt and I think it's although this is fulfilling prophecy I think it's quite deliberate because you'll notice the cry of the people they are saying he comes in they're saying

[ 41 : 33 ] Hosanna blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord and of course they're quoting from Psalm 118 and they're also calling him here as he comes in into the place that they're seeing him as the king of Israel Hosanna blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord even the king of Israel now they had this idea that the Messiah and there would be there was a kind of view of Jesus as this deliverer they were seeing the Messiah as somebody who was going to deliver them and make them a great nation again and Jesus to a certain extent coming in on the lowest of animals is in a sense almost demilitarizing the situation and he's saying my reign my kingdom is not a military one it's not with political power it's not with a sword it's by universal tolerance it's by gentleness it's by love it's by peace that's my mission that's my message that's my reign and there's something of this that Jesus is trying to even teach the people as he rides into the city the picture of the humility continues not coming in on the great white horse draped fit for a king but coming in on what a servant would ride upon and so

Jesus is continuing to demonstrate this and so there's that great fulfillment of a prophecy from Zechariah which says rejoice greatly you daughter of Zion daughter of Jerusalem your king coming to you righteous and having salvation humble and mounted on a donkey on a colt the foal of a donkey well here's Jesus coming in in his humility on his on the way to the cross and as Jesus enters Jerusalem this is the kind of picture so often people have of Jesus is this quiet gentle passion and that is through and today he is still saviour and today he offers you himself as saviour but you know there's another day Jesus is going to come again and it won't be the gentle Jesus meek and mild that so often people sing about he will come with a scepter with a kingly rule displaying all his authority and majesty and glory and he will come to break out in dominion over all his enemies and he will come to take his people home today he is saying here I am I'm still saviour I'm the one who is giving mercy I'm inviting you to myself well will you accept Jesus today as king I hope if there's anybody here today who has not as yet will you do one thing please ask Jesus before you go out to the church today Lord become king of my heart and of my life let us pray oh lord oh god we give thanks for this word and help us to remember that we are in the presence of king Jesus we give thanks for being able to see by faith and we pray that we may have tasted and seen that the Lord is good we pray to watch over us and bless a cup of tea and coffee in the hall and we pray to guide us eventually each one of us to take us home safely be with us and all whom we love for giving us our sin in Jesus name amen our concluding psalm is psalm 23 and great psalm and speaks of course of the the anointing the head being anointed it's a traditional version of psalm 23 going to sing it to the tune amazing grace and that's on page 229 the Lord's my shepherd

I'll not want he makes me down to lie in pastures green he leadeth me the quiet water by and down verse 5 my table thou hast furnished in presence of my foes my head thou dost with oil anoint and my cup overflows goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be psalm 23 the whole psalm Lord's Lord's my shepherd I'll not want the Lord's my shepherd I'll not want he makes me down to lie in pastures he he leadeth me the quiet waters by my soul he love restore again and me to all doth be within the part of righteousness he brought his own in stay yet though I walk in death I fear yet will I fear not live for though what will be and thy own chance that be not for still my table love Anyone to last have even...

[ 48 : 52 ] and And my love overcomes.

Goodness and mercy of my life Shall cheer in all glory.

I'll give you God's touch forevermore.

My dwelling place shall be. Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 50 : 10 ] Praise me.