

## John 12:1-11, “King Jesus Came”

12.18.22

If you know anything about history, you know Jesus Christ divides time. How? What is today's date? December 18, 2022. 2,022 years from the birth of Jesus Christ. When I was in school, time, as I knew that was **before** Jesus' birth was called “BC” (Before Christ) and time after Jesus' birth was called: “AD,” no, not “after death,” but Latin, Anno Domini, which means in the year of our Lord.

However, we know that now BC and AD have been replaced with BCE and CE...before common era and Common Era. Why? Because Jesus is offensive...and secular humanists want “religious neutrality,” so they continue to seek to remove BC and AD from our cultural lingo. Makes sense to me. The name of Jesus and what He stands for is powerful. After all, when people cuss, they often take the Lord's name in vain, they don't cuss using Muhammed's or Buddha or Allah. God or Jesus.

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Jesus divides because He says, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” It's the “THE” that's the problem. He's not “A” way. And that creates problems for people who want all roads to lead to heaven. Jesus is THE WAY...well, that's offensive. It's not all inclusive. We need diversity, inclusion and equity of all religions! So, Jesus divides. He's polarizing. Jesus said, “You are either for me or against me.” John MacArthur says it this way:

**“He came not to bring peace, but a sword. There's no one else like Him who evokes the antithetical extremes of love and hate, devotion and rejection, worship and blasphemy, faith and unbelief. He divides believers from unbelievers, sheep from goats, wheat from tares, children of God from children of the devil. Again, you are either for Him or against Him, and the ‘for’ is extreme and the ‘against’ can also be extreme.”** John MacArthur

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Church, we're going to see that today. The extremes. We're going to see lavish and selfless love juxtaposed against greedy and blatant selfishness. We're going to see a lady named Mary, the sister of Lazarus vs the apostle Judas...for they are symbolic of the extreme division that Jesus evokes.

### **John 12:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. <sup>3</sup> Mary therefore took a pound<sup>[a]</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii<sup>[b]</sup> and given to the poor?” <sup>6</sup> He 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. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it<sup>[c]</sup> for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.” <sup>9</sup> When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus<sup>[d]</sup> was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well,<sup>11</sup> because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

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Today we begin a new series, which will lead us through Christmas and the first of the year.



**“King Jesus Came.”** This series will take us into the second half of the Gospel of John, because at this point in John’s account of Jesus’ life, we know we’ve been through the first eleven chapters, and through these first 11 chapters we’ve basically seen the entire three-year ministry of Jesus, except for the last week and then the 40 days after His resurrection. Well, that’s what we get for the rest of the Gospel of John for the next half of the book, for the next 11 chapters, we get the last week (primarily) and then the 40 days leading up to His ascension to heaven. 3 years versus basically a month and a half and that means from here on out, everything is going to get very intense...and that intensity is seen first at a dinner given in honor of Jesus.

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Now, you will remember, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and word of this has travelled throughout the region of Judea...literally permeating every home. You will remember from last week, this news reached the ears of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, and they decided Jesus must be killed. And now they’re looking for a way to get their hands on Jesus. Thus, Jesus can no longer walk publicly among the Jews.

He went north to a town out in the boonies called Ephraim, which is about 12 miles north of Jerusalem. Some scholars say Jesus may have gone even further north into Samaria and Galilee for a few days, as Luke 17-19 seem to indicate. But eventually, the time came and Jesus knew His death was at hand, so He heads back to Jerusalem. But first, He goes back to the small village of Bethany, where He and His disciples find themselves at a dinner hosted by Simon, a former leper.

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BTW...this account is also found in Matthew chapter 26 and Mark chapter 14. And so, as we look at John 12, we’ll also pull in some of Matthew and Mark’s accounts as we look at this dinner at Simon’s house...and we see... guess who is busy serving? Martha...

**John 12:2-3**

<sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. <sup>3</sup> Mary therefore took a pound<sup>[a]</sup> 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.

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Now let me quickly say this...there is an account of a prostitute who anointed Jesus' feet found in Luke 7, but that is not this account. This is Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and she is not a prostitute. Scripture never indicates that. These are two different accounts; I wanted you to be aware of that.

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Take a look at this depiction of Mary. It's powerful!



Church, I believe what we see pictured there is the worshipful heart of Mary wanting to show Jesus how thankful she is. For what? Well, for raising her brother from the dead, (which makes sense). But I also believe perhaps she carried some regret that she hadn't gone to Jesus initially when He had come to Bethany. In her mind, He was late and you'll remember, she had stayed seated in their home and Jesus ultimately had to call for her to get her to come out. She ultimately did and collapsed at His feet in anguish. Mary had a huge heart...a tender heart.

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Now, some say this is a spontaneous act by Mary, but I respectfully disagree. Here's why. You see, if this event had occurred at her home, perhaps it could be spontaneous; but it's at a neighbor's house and she's carrying around ½ a liter of perfume. A VERY EXPENSIVE bottle of perfume that's called nard. Let's talk about this perfume, which is actually a fragrant oil.

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In Matthew 26:7 it's recorded that Mary brought this oil in an alabaster jar. You say, "What is that?"



Well, alabaster is a white, translucent stone that could be carved. It was beautiful and it was sturdy, which helped in the transport of the oil. This oil, this nard was produced from a very rare herb grown in the high pasture lands of China, Tibet, and India. It was carried to Israel by way of camels. **This made** it very, very expensive and so it was used only on very special occasions, mainly funerals...to cover the dead body with it, to anoint...since there was no embalming and the perfume would keep the stench down as the body began to decay.

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According to Mark 14:3, which is Peter's account of this event, Mary breaks the alabaster jar and opens it. Now, Matthew and Mark also tell us she poured the perfume on Jesus' head and, as we just read in vs 3, she also anointed Jesus all the way down to His feet. And did you notice that Mary loosened her hair and used her hair to wipe his feet. You say, "Aw, that's nice...why?" Well, foot washing was to be done by household servants at a meal...perhaps that had not been done and Jesus' feet were dirty. But, here's the thing...women didn't let their hair down in the presence of men.

Now don't see this act as something off-putting...see, this as, "it needed to be done...dirty feet...she apparently didn't have a towel, she just did it." This was likely done in stunned silence, until Judas pipes up.

**John 12:4**

<sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii<sup>[b]</sup> and given to the poor?"

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You may be wondering about the value of 300 denarii. Well, a denarius is a day's wage. So, counting weekends this perfume would essentially be worth a year's wages. Think about that... in today's money...maybe the nard cost...well, what do you make in a year, plug that in: \$\_\_\_\_\_ \$50,000-\$60,000, \$70,000, \$100,000, \$150,000. MORE!

It's at this moment, we now see the extreme juxtaposition we've been talking about. We see selfless worship versus selfish lust for money. You see, Judas didn't care anything about the poor at this point. He had been helping himself to the moneybag for some time. You say: "What happened to bring him to this place in his life...what's the problem?"

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Church family, I believe for Judas, he realized Jesus wasn't what he had hoped that He would be. While everyone else was growing to love Jesus more and more, it seems he was growing more and more disillusioned. I'm convinced Judas, (in the beginning, perhaps), believed Jesus was going to set up His kingdom by overthrowing Rome and that would mean Judas would be the Treasurer in that kingdom. The idea of a kingdom was now out of reach. He saw the handwriting on the wall. The Jews were after Jesus to kill Him. Jesus was a marked man! This wasn't turning out as he thought.

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So, as Mary's perfume filled the house with an unbelievable aroma (and that's BTW how we are told we're to be in Ephesians 5...to offer up our lives, as a sweet-smelling aroma); unfortunately, the poison of Judas' words turned the event toxic. Judas criticized Mary's act as an extravagant waste and church, I find that's often the case when you and I show total devotion to Jesus. We're easily criticized by people who don't understand that kind of devotion. They think we're crazy! (My accountant). They thought Mary was crazy, a year's wages \$70,000-\$150,000? She's crazy!

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Now here's something else you need to know, so that we're clear that the complaining about Mary's waste wasn't just Judas. In Matthew's account (chapter 26), Matthew tells us that the other disciples joined in with Judas on his complaint as well. Was Matthew part of that? Watch Matthew 26:8...

**Matthew 26:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? <sup>9</sup> For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor."

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Church, the disciples were copying their Treasurer, Judas...and isn't it amazing that all the way to the very end...right up to the night that Judas would betray Jesus, (in exactly five days), all the disciples were deceived by Judas. They thought he was a devoted follower of Jesus. Yet, He was a fake. He was a tare...a weed...and his life, without question is perhaps one of the greatest tragedies in human history because of his proximity to Jesus. Think about it: Judas was with Him for 2 ½ years, eating with Him, travelling, ministering...seeing all those miracles. Maybe performing miracles (Matthew 7:22). Church, listen: the closer someone is to the truth to only reject that truth...count on it...the more severe that person's eternal punishment will be. Judas' punishment in Hell will be immense!

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Let me state this: the safest place to be, if you are a believer, is in the church...but the most dangerous place to be if you refuse Jesus and never accept Him is to be in the church. Why? Because if you ultimately reject Jesus, and never get saved, you will be held accountable for all the knowledge you amassed by being here every week...knowing that knowledge never produced a thing in your life, but your rejection of Jesus. If that's you, you will face a greater punishment for all that knowledge. Oh, this is a very dangerous place for those who sit in obstinance and refuse to surrender their lives to Jesus. Please don't be a Judas. Jesus loves you too much for that! See the love!

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Watch Jesus' response:

**John 12:7**

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it<sup>[c]</sup> for the day of my burial."

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You say, "How would she keep it, the jar is broken." Well, a better translation is: "she intended to keep it for my burial." But I believe she saw this was her opportunity. I believe her brother's death had changed her. No more waiting around. I'm going to do what I need to do. Sometimes death does that to us...the things that used to matter, don't anymore.

She saw the chance to prepare Jesus for His funeral. She was listening. And you see, it was not unusual to use a pound of nard for a funeral; and so, I believe in Mary's mind, she saw her chance and DID IT! Mary anointed Jesus' body for His burial. Think about this now: literally up to the point of His death, there is no question He could smell this nard. He would smell it in the upper room at the Lord's Supper, He would smell it at the betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane, as sweat mixed with blood and that PERFUME and these fluids were emitted from His body. I wonder if He could still smell it on the cross, five days later? I wonder!

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Church, I want you to see something else that Jesus said, as recorded from Peter's perspective, written down by John Mark in:

**Mark 14:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. <sup>9</sup> And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

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And here we are today, over 2000 years later still talking about Mary. Jesus' words are true! BTW, Mark also records something about Judas, right after this event... Watch Mark 14, verse 10:

**Mark 14:10-11**

<sup>10</sup> Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. <sup>11</sup> And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

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I believe this event at Simon's house sealed the deal. To Judas: Jesus was a dead man...so for Judas, it was like this: "I'm out...there's no more money to be made from this deal with Jesus. He's not who I thought He was." And so, for 30 pieces of silver...(the price of a slave in that day), Judas would sell out his Master. He cashed out!

Verse 8...Jesus continues:

**John 12:8**

<sup>8</sup> For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

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This is not Jesus being harsh... If anyone every loved the poor...(or anyone else for that matter), it was Jesus. What He was saying is: "There will always be the poor...they will be here even after I'm gone and so, it's good that you take care of them, but what Mary did is also good...because I'm going to soon be gone.

Well, it appears that word has gotten out that Jesus is back in Bethany...watch verse 9...

**John 12:9-11**

<sup>9</sup> When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus<sup>[d]</sup> was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well,<sup>11</sup> because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

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Amazing, isn't it? For the Jewish leaders, not only do they want Jesus dead, now they want to kill the man Jesus raised from the dead. They want to get rid of the evidence of the miracle. That's why they threw the blind man that Jesus healed out of the synagogue. So, they've got to get rid of Lazarus too!

Church, can you see the extreme hatred that the religious elite had for Jesus? And can you see just how irrational it is? But, sin is irrational! You know, you and I can look at the actions of people who don't know the Lord, and it makes no sense and that's because there is no sense in it. **But, we have to remember, when you and I see people who are not followers of Jesus, do crazy things...it shouldn't surprise us...**when we see crazy things in the news...when we see it in entertainment, sports, you name it...we shouldn't be surprised. They're lost and lost people act like lost people. What we need to do is bear down in prayer for them. They need Jesus and we need to pray for them! Pray for them!

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I want you to look at this depiction of Mary again and I want you to think with me:



How did you think she grew up? Obviously, as we've learned, she came from a wealthy family. So, did she have all she needed? Probably. Was she well provided for? Probably. It would seem she had all she needed. It also seems likely, perhaps someone in her family had given her this amazingly expensive bottle of perfume. What a gift. You say, "A gift?" Yes, she likely couldn't have earned the kind of money it would have taken to purchase it on her own...women, by and large had to depend on men. So, this was perhaps the most valuable possession she owned; and yet, she gave it all! Why?

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Church, I believe she realized in Jesus was everything she ever needed... I would say she was listening when it seems the other disciples weren't. They never did grasp that He was going to die. In Simon's house that day, they were concerned about money...while she was concerned about her Savior. How about you? What occupies your heart and mind? Can I ask you: What is your alabaster jar? Are you willing to give it up for Jesus? To sacrifice it for Jesus? Some might consider that a waste. Don't listen to them, listen to Him. How much are you willing to give Him? Jesus, said, "Deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me."

Yes, today, is December 18, 2022 and we're still talking about Mary. She made a choice to give her all to Jesus. She saw Him as Emmanuel...the Savior of the world. As we close today, I want us to watch a video that we've made to the song we sang earlier "Emmanuel." And I want you to see Jesus

for who He is. Like I believe Mary did and I want you understand that He came for you and He loves you and He wants to save you. Let's watch.

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See the screens. See the lyrics.

**Emmanuel**

**He meets you where you are**

**He holds your heavy heart**

**Our God is with us all**

**Emmanuel**

**Emmanuel**

**It was no mistake that He arrived**

**Lost without a home**

**Helpless as a baby**

**So if we're feelin' lost in our own lives**

**We are not alone**

**He has felt the same things**

**Because He lived**

**In flesh and blood**

**We can know His love**

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