

Extravagant Generosity

John 12

INTRODUCTION; We have been in this series on Money where we have looked so far at a couple of major principles as it relates to Generosity.

- We began with a simple recognition that God owns everything. We are stewards. It is required of Stewards that they be found faithful. We said that a disciple of Christ holds all things loosely.
- Last week we saw that God has woven certain principles into the fabric of life, one of which is the law of **Sowing and Reaping**. We saw that God is no man's debtor. If we are faithful over the little, we will be entrusted with more.
- Today, I want to show you one of the most Extravagant displays of generosity anywhere in scripture.

CONTEXT: When we come to John 12, Jesus has come to his final week before the Cross. Several times throughout my life, I have been with men who knew death was imminent, yet still had the capacity to communicate. When a man is about to die, he will say what he wished he had said his entire life. Every word, every decision, every action taken by Christ in this final week is packed with meaning.

This story is recounted in all four of the Gospels, although each Gospel writer emphasizes different aspects of the story. All place it in the final week of Jesus life before the Cross.

Luke 9:51 (ESV) tells us that...

⁵¹ When the days drew near for him to be taken up, **he set his face to go to Jerusalem.**

Jesus is on a mission as the sacrificial lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. He is determined, He is resolute.

Look with me there in John 12

TEXT: John 12:1–19 (ESV)

¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.

- Matthew and Mark's account tell us that **Simon** the Leper hosted the meal - Simon was a very common name in Israel. At least eight men bearing that name appear in the Bible.
 - **Simon Peter** was one of our Lord's closest companions (Matthew 10:2)
 - **Simon the Zealot** was another of Jesus' disciples (Luke 6:15)

- **Simon of Cyrene** (Matthew 27:32) carried Christ's cross.
- Thus, "**Simon the Leper**" was a label given to distinguish this Simon from many others in the Bible.

It is assumed that Jesus had healed Simon of his leprosy, although the account of that healing is not recorded in the Gospels.

Matthew and Mark's account tells us that this event happened in Simon's home. Luke tells us that the host was a Pharisee.

So we may deduce that **Simon had been a Pharisee** afflicted with leprosy who had been healed by Christ.

This could also explain why the Pharisees were more determined than ever to destroy Jesus, as some from their own ranks were beginning to warm up to Jesus. Remember Nicodemus had already fallen under the influence of Christ, now Simon.

We are also told that **Mary, Martha, and Lazarus** were there at the dinner. These three were more than disciples of Jesus, they were His dear friends.

***If there was one moment in history that I could experience,
I think this would up there.***

The Pharisees were plotting to arrest and kill Jesus. Jesus knows His time has come. His friends knew what was coming.

But here for a moment, there is an evening of peace with friends. A calm before the storm. It doesn't appear that Jesus is distressed. They are reclining, enjoying a meal, I fully expect laughter and music is in the air.

But there is also, the realization that this would be the last time such a meal would take place. The last supper will happen soon - but this meal is different. It isn't ceremonial it's celebratory. There was no verse in the Law of Moses that commanded this meal. **This is the sweet fellowship of friends.**

- **Lazarus** is there - the man raised from the dead. He was a living testimony to the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. He was a living epistle.

As a matter of fact, verse 9 tells us **John 12:9–11 (ESV)** ⁹ When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to **put Lazarus to death as well,** ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

What a testimony! Oh that it would be said of us, on the account of him many were

going away and believing in Jesus.

Jesus was a problem for the Pharisees, but so was Lazarus! They wanted to kill him too! But I don't imagine it bothered Lazarus very much... he had been there and done that. Death was no longer a threat.

- **Martha** is there - What would the world be without Marthas? She thinks ahead, she makes sure her bases are covered and everyone else's. No doubt she did the lion share of preparation for the feast they are enjoying. And maybe by now, she had learned to sit down and relax and enjoy a few moments with her friend.
- **Mary** is there - Like Simon, Mary was a common name and we see several Mary's in the Gospel accounts. This is not the mother of our Lord, this is not Mary Magdalene of who 7 demons were cast out, this is Mary of Bethany.

What do we know about this Mary?

- **She had witnessed great miracles** - not the least of which was the resurrection of her brother Lazarus.
- **She was an attentive student** - Remember Martha asked Jesus to reprove Mary early in the story for sitting and listening to Jesus teach while Martha was doing all the work. BTW, every time we see this Mary in scripture, she is sitting at the feet of Jesus, learning and worshipping.
- **She was affluent** - It was her family home in Bethany that served as a base of operations for the disciples when they were in the vicinity. The perfume she is about to pour out was very expensive, it was rare. It was a Luxe product that would not be found in the home of a blue collar family. So we see among the followers of Jesus the down and out as well as the up and in.

It seems apparent that Mary recognized that ***the death of Jesus was imminent***. She likely understood to some degree that her redemption was somehow wrapped up in his death.

³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

- Mark's account tells us that she **broke the top** of the vase container.

The container was designed with a long narrow neck to limit the ***accidental over use*** of the expensive oil. But Mary did not intend to limit the use. Her generosity would be abundant, she would cover Jesus with this fragrance.

Olive Oil would have typically been used for such a display of affection. Olive Oil was a common household item that most homes had in abundance. It was used for cooking, cleaning, anointing, medicine.



SPIKENARD on the other hand was an expensive perfume imported from India. It was made by *distilling the oil of a wild rose that grew in the Himalayan Mountains*.

The resulting fragrance was something like that of a rose blended with a woody spice.

Today it is still as an essential oil and known for its calming and soothing properties.

John tells us it could be sold **300 Denari**. One denarii was a days wage, 300 would be close to a year's salary.

Mark tells us that this was genuine Nard, not some cheap knock off.

Scents have an almost mystical effect.

- Many **veterans** testify that their anxiety shoots up when the smell burning rubber, gunpowder, or various flammable liquids.
- You can catch the whiff a certain meal cooking and suddenly you are transported back to your **grandma's kitchen**.
- But there is something about perfume.

ILLUSTRATION: When Julie and I were dating she had a bottle of **Beautiful by Estée Lauder**. I'm 47 years old, but when she wears that fragrance... I'm 23 again.

Coco Chanel said it best, 'Perfume is the invisible, unforgettable, fashionable accessory that announces your arrival and prolongs your departure,'.

Isn't that what Mary wanted to do? She wanted to **ANNOUNCE** that the Lamb of God had come to take away the sin of the world, while also **PROLONG** His departure?

ILLUSTRATION: This substance would be something like **Parfum VI** by Gianni Vive Sulman. A bottle of Perfume VI sells for \$89,000. If you were to get close enough to **Mike Tyson** or **Michael Jackson** at the height of their Careers, you would have enjoyed the scent of Parfum VI. Someone said, "*it smells like fame*".

Well Mary's Nard was very much in the same category. She had a full bottle of it. And she poured it all over Jesus, wiping his feet with her hair. **Luke tells us she was weeping as she did so.**

See her there. Contemplating the cross. Enjoying sweet fellowship with her Savior. She is overcome with emotion and wanted to do for Jesus something that only she could do.

Three things this text teaches us about EXTRAVAGANT GENEROSITY

1. Extravagant Generosity Occurs When We Recognize an Opportunity

Someone has said, *“the opportunity of a lifetime only exists in the lifetime of that opportunity”*

Opportunities for generosity happen every single day, but some are rare and fleeting.

Mary recognized that an amazing opportunity was before her. In one week Jesus would be on the cross, pouring out his life for the sin of the world and for the sin of Mary of Bethany.

- Soon he would be sweating drops of blood in Gethsemane
- Soon he would be betrayed and arrested
- Soon he would be in the hands of the Pharisees then the Romans.
- Soon He would be nailed to a cross of wood.

But tonight He is here. She knew that this was her last chance to do something very special for her Lord.

Her mind races, how could she communicate her love, her appreciation, her worship of Jesus while she had the chance. She rushes from the room to find the most expensive luxurious substance in her possession and pours it out on Christ.

NOW - My research suggests that 3 drops of SPIKENARD would give off a fragrance for over 48 hours. Imagine what a pound of the stuff would do.

DON'T YOU SEE?-

- As Jesus cried out to the Father in **Gethsemane** - and experienced the utter loneliness of a silent Heaven... while his disciples slept... the scent of Mary's oil remains.
- As Jesus is taken in **custody** due to the betrayal of Judas he scent of Mary's oil remains.
- As Jesus is put through a series of ridiculous sham **trials**, as he is denied by Simon Peter... he scent of Mary's oil remains.
- As you imagine **the CROSS**- the pounding of the nails, the jeering of the Crowds, the blood of Christ falling to the ground, drop by drop. ***In the air around the cross would be the scent in the air was that of Mary's perfume.***

It would serve as a gentle reminder to Christ that in His darkest moment, He was

loved. Every breath our Lord would take would sample the fragrance of Mary's worship. What a gift!

You see Mary saw this opportunity to do something out of the box for her Lord!

What about you? What can you do that others can't?

ILLUSTRATION: Last year a couple approached me and said they wanted to do something big for Jesus here are First Baptist. They wanted to make a contribution and they wanted to know if there was anything they could give toward here. Dearly beloved that answer is always YES! They wanted to give \$250,000. We began to cast a vision for what the children's area of this church could look like. What if we hired the folks who designed the rides at Walt Disney World to come in here and make it really special. It was an opportunity and they seized it.

- We don't build buildings every day around here. We don't plant new campuses every day. This is an opportunity that will pass eventually. That building will be paid for whether you give or not. Could this be your opportunity to do something significant?
- I would like to take the sermons preached from this stage and place them on Sirius XM radio 5 days a week. It would instantly cause the work here to cover the entire US, Mexico and Canada. That will cost about \$125,000 a year. But for someone that may be YOUR opportunity.
- I have a dream of hosting Pastors here on Amelia Island for a week and investing in them, their marriages, their ministry. It would cost around \$35,000. That may be YOUR opportunity.
- We need a campus in Central Nassau - if we do not develop a campus model people will eventually be turned away simply because of the lack of parking. That could cost around 2.5 million to do it right. Perhaps that is YOUR opportunity.
- ANNIE ARMSTRONG EASTER OFFERING - 100% goes to Missionaries across North America.

I could go on and on, but if you want to do something special for the Lord, get with us. ***Let's find out where your passions and our opportunities intersect.***

Extravagant Generosity occurs when we recognize the opportunity...

2. Extravagant Generosity Occurs When the Heart is Moved

Sometimes, we allow our HEAD to rob our HEART of a blessing.

God moves on us to do something big, and we say, “You know we need to think about that - maybe next year, maybe after the tax return comes in, maybe once the kids get through college”.

Sometimes you just need to give BIG.

Do you have a generosity bucket list? Things like....

- What would life be like if you were able to give a family in need an anonymous gift of \$1,000 at Christmas?
- What if you had the capacity of financing the education of a young preacher to receive theological training?
- What if you were able to buy lunch somebody every day of your life?
- What if you pay for a well to be dug to provide an entire village with water?
- What if you could write a 1 Million Dollar check to your local church?

You see, if you dream about that sort of thing.. and the opportunity arises, you'll recognize it and you'll be moved to give BIG.

ILLUSTRATION; *Benjamin Franklin used to go and listen to George Whitfield preach and without fail, God would motivate him to give all he had. But he figured it out, he knew how to beat this God anointed preacher, Next time he went, he left his wallet at home. But he got under the preaching of God's Word, the Spirit of God started moving and he told the man beside him, "Loan me some money that I might give it to the Lord!"*

*Extravagant Generosity occurs when we recognize the opportunity...
Extravagant Generosity occurs when the heart is moved...*

3. Extravagant Generosity Occurs When We Allow a God Idea to Trump a Good Idea

FOR MARY THIS MADE ALL THE SENCE IN THE WORLD, but not for JUDAS.

⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”

Here's the deal, critics can always come up with good points. Their logic is very sensible.

- **David's wife Michal** had a good point when she told David that it was undignified for him to dance before the Ark of the Lord.
- **Satan** had a good point when he said, that Jesus ought to be able to turn a stone into bread if he were the Son of God.

But friend, sometimes you have to turn a deaf ear to the reasoning of critics because you have been motivated by a higher logic, a clearer truth.

REMEMBER – SOMETIMES A GOOD POINT IS TRUMPED BY A GOD POINT.

⁶ 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. ⁷ Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.”⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

Remember the law of sowing and reaping? Mary made much of Jesus, and for all of history Jesus will see to it that much is made of her.

Matthew adds in Matthew 26:13 (ESV)

¹³ Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: What can you do for the LORD right now?

ILLUSTRATION: In 2017 Oakland Raider Derek Carr became the highest paid Quarterback per year in NFL history. 125 million dollar contract. After signing the contract he was asked, “What are you going to do with this pay day?” Now everyone assumed he would do something ridiculous like buy a tiger. He said this, “The first thing I will do is pay my tithe like I have done since I was in college, getting a \$700 scholarship check.”

You will never tithe on 125 million dollars if you are first faithful to tithe on \$700.

You aren't responsible to do what I can do, you are responsible for what YOU can do.