

Matthew 26:6-13

"The King Anointed"

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Intro. It was days before the cross, and the feast of Passover. Passover commemorates God's deliverance from bondage in Egypt. It is critical to know that the Jews were not simply being set free from slavery, but were being set free to worship God [Ex. 5:1]. It is not only, "Let my people go" but "Let my people go that they may worship me." We too can be set free from slavery to sin, and set-free to worship God. What is worship? Worship is more than songs of praise, although they can be a great expression of worship. **Worship involves passionate devotion, reverence and adoration.** What does true worship look like? How do you become a worshiper? Today we'll find out ...

Subject: The anointing at Bethany [A case study of Mary]

Object: Worship Jesus

I. What true worship looks like [6-13]

A. Gives God your best [6-7]

⁶ And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, ⁷ a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured *it* on His head as He sat *at the table*.

Jesus was in Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem, at the home of Simon a leper [6] who was presumed to be the father of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. He held a feast to honor Jesus, who had healed him of his leprosy [6, 26:6]. It was days before the Passover [Jn. 12:1] and thus the cross. The woman [7] is identified by John as Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha. John also notes the very costly fragrant oil [7] was essence of nard an extremely expensive fragrance from India. The perfume would likely be used on her wedding day. In John's gospel, Judas declared the oil could have been sold for 300 denarii [Jn.12:5] the equivalent of a year's salary for a soldier or worker. Matthew tells us that it was an alabaster flask, and Mark tells us that the flask was broken [Matt.26:7, Mk.14:3]. Once broken the entire contents would be poured out. There was no holding back in her generous and extravagant sacrifice to honor Jesus.

1. I want to sacrifice and choose to give God my best

When King David sought to purchase land to build an altar to God, Araunah offered to give his land at the summit of Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem to the king. David refused the offer noting that he would not offer sacrifices to his God with that which costs him nothing. All true worship involves sacrifice, and choosing to give God your best. Unfortunately, too often God is at or near the bottom of our priorities. We want to give him our firstfruits rather than leftovers.

I desperately want to give God my best, and I'm challenged by other affections that compete for my attention. And like Mary and David, when given choices, I want to choose to give God my best.

2. I want to fill my world with the fragrance of Christ

Mary poured the oil on Jesus's head as he sat at (or leaned before) the table [7]. John records that Mary anointed Jesus' feet with the oil and wiped his feet with her hair [Jn.12:3]. There is beautiful humility in her actions that is characteristic of all true worship. As you imagine the scene, you appreciate that the same fragrance that was upon Jesus was then upon Mary. John notes that the house was filled with the fragrance [Jn. 12:3]. Imagine that your life spread the aroma of Jesus. The fragrance of Christ will fill your home, workplace, school, and community, when you are a true worshiper of Jesus.

B. Ministers to Jesus [8-13]

⁸ But when His disciples saw *it*, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? ⁹ For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to *the poor*." ¹⁰ But when Jesus was aware of *it*, He said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. ¹¹ For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. ¹² For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did *it* for My burial.

¹³ Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

1. I want to bless Jesus despite opposition

Matthew records that the disciples were indignant, and complained that it was wasteful [8], and John notes that it was Judas who exclaimed that it was wasteful and that the perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor [Jn. 12:4]. It sounds spiritual, but John informs us that Judas didn't care about the poor, but as the treasurer he would steal from the disciples' money [Jn.12:6]. It appears that Judas influenced the other disciples to think that Mary's act was a waste.

There will always be people who will oppose true worship of the True and Living God. They will say it is a waste to spend time learning the Bible, praying, and taking time to contemplate God. They will say that going to church to worship God, or serving the marginalized in the name of Jesus is a waste. They will declare that giving of your money to advance the gospel is a waste. And they will ridicule involvement in small group to grow as a worshiper as a waste. Nevertheless, true worshipers continue their extravagant worship despite opposition.

When King David participated in a procession to return the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, he was overcome with joy and he danced before the Lord in his linen ephod. His wife, Michal, rebuked David for uncovering himself like a common fellow. David replied that he would be even more undignified before the Lord as He humbled himself [2Sam. 6:14-21]. Forget what others think, and their opposition and seek to bless the Lord as a true worshiper. The Hebrew word *hallal*, the root of hallelujah, is frequently translated simply praise, but it also means to be clamorously foolish or mad before the Lord. When was the last time you just poured out your heart to God without thinking about what others were thinking?

2. I want to care for the needs of others as an act of worship to bless Jesus [10-13]

The Lord corrected the disciples for troubling Mary, and He was quick to defend her. What Mary did blessed Jesus, and anointed Him for his burial [10-12]. Jesus predicted that Mary's anointing would be remembered wherever the gospel is proclaimed as a memorial to her devotion to Him [13]; and her passionate worship is remembered to this day.

Jesus was not intimating that the Church should neglect the poor. But He was making it clear that worshipping God is the priority. All of our social justice and charitable deeds (good works) should be motivated by a desire to worship and glorify God [Matt. 5:16].

There will always be needs of the poor to help,

“For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land’ [Dt. 15:11]

Remember, caring for needs of others, especially the marginalized, in Jesus’ name is an expression of worship that blesses Him; and it is as if we were ministering to Him directly [Matt. 25:34-40].

II. How to become a true worshiper [Jn. 10-11]

A. Spend time with Jesus

Mary is known for spending time at the feet of Jesus while her sister Martha was busy cooking. When Martha complained to Jesus that Mary should be helping her, Jesus declared that Mary had chosen the better part and it would not be taken from her [Jn. 10:42]. Martha’s service was an expression of worship too, but true worship flows from spending time with Jesus not independent of Him.

“We belittle God when we go through the outward motions of worship and take no pleasure in His person.” - John Piper

B. Grow in faith and understanding of Christ’s glory [Jn. 11]

John 11 records the miracle of Jesus restoring Lazarus’ life after he had been in the tomb for four days. When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Mary fell at His feet and said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” Jesus saw Mary weeping, and heard her words and then He groaned and wept [Jn. 11:32-35]. Many who were there assumed that Jesus wept, because of His love for Lazarus.

However, since Jesus knew He would momentarily raise Lazarus from the dead it seems unlikely to me. I believe that Jesus’ sorrow is because Mary did not appreciate that as the Christ, the Anointed One, that He had all authority over life. And although Lazarus had been dead for four days, Jesus had the ability to restore life. Through the experience with her brother Lazarus, Mary would come to realize the Jesus is truly “the resurrection and the life.” Thus, her understanding of Christ’s glory and her faith grew from her experience with Jesus. Those who are growing in their faith and understanding of Christ’s glory feel compelled to worship Him. No other person or thing that is worthy of our worship, and Jesus is because of who He is, what He has done, and what He will do.

God is seeking people who worship Him in spirit and truth [Jn. 4:22-24]

Study Guide Qs

- 1. What are some ways that you’ve experienced opposition to your worship of God?**
- 2. How do you plan to spend time with Jesus in the next six months?**
- 3. How has growing in your faith and understanding of Christ’s glory impacted your worship?**
- 4. Discuss with your group how you could care for the needs of others, either as a group or individually, as an act of worship to bless Jesus**