

Extravagant Devotion to Christ

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John 12:1-8

The major themes of this text are explicitly stated in the parallel passages (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9).

1) The PREPARATION of CHRIST for DEATH;

- Matthew 26:12 – [12] *In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial.*

2) What TRUE DEVOTION to CHRIST looks like.

- Matthew 26:13 – [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.*
- What is remarkable about Mary is her EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION.
- Devotion – Loyalty; Faithfulness; Affection; Worship; Adoration
- Mark 12:30 – [30] *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*
- Romans 12:1, 2 – [1] *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

Application question: *Does CHRIST have all of YOUR HEART? Are you COMPLETELY DEVOTED to HIM?*

The Essentials of Devotion

John 12:1 – [1] *Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.*

- Six days before the Passover. Jesus would have been crucified many think on 14 Nissan, 30 A.D., so that means that Jesus would have come into Bethany on the Sabbath evening – a Saturday evening – 8 Nissan.
- Notice, the word, *Therefore*, in reference to the Passover.
 - Jesus is coming towards JERSULEM on a divine MISSION.
 - John 1:29 – [29] *Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*

The RESURRECTION of Lazarus represents the NEW LIFE in CHRIST. *The new birth is the beginning of the devotional life.*

John 12:2 – [2] *So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.*

- Three elements of Christian discipleship. Two that are essential to Devotion.
 - 1) Service – Martha served the guests, not in a distracted way, but out of a reoriented devotion to Christ.

- 2) Fellowship – Lazarus enjoyed being in Jesus’s presence; just enjoyed the FELLOWSHIP with CHRIST.
- 3) Devotion – Mary pours out his extravagant perfume on Christ’s feet; showing her love and affection for HIM.

Service – Like Martha models, we are to SERVE. This is FUNDAMENTAL to the Christian life.

- Mark 10:43 – [43] *But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [44] and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. [45] For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*
- In the CHRISTIAN life, we are first a SERVANT to CHRIST. And then a SERVANT to others.
- 1 Corinthians 4:1 – [1] *This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ...*
- You are to use your GIFTS of SERVICE in the BODY of CHRIST.
- Paul says in Romans 12:11 – [11] *Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.*
- How often are we to serve? 1 Corinthians 15:58 – [58] *... always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*
- How long are we to serve? 2 Timothy 4:6 – [6] *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. [7] I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*
 - There’s NO RETIREMENT in the CHRISTIAN LIFE.
 - We are to be FAITHFUL in our SERVICE until the END.

Fellowship – Like Lazarus you enjoy the fellowship of Christ and Christ’s people.

- John 14:3 – [3] *...that where I am you may be also*
- 1 Corinthians 1:9 – [9] *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*
- For LAZARUS and the DISCIPLES it was direct fellowship with the LORD.
- For us this FELLOWSHIP is through the MEDIATED PRESENCE of the HOLY SPIRIT.
 - John 14:16 – [16] *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, [17] even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*
 - The PRACTICE of FELLOWSHIP
 - Word of God – Psalm 1:2 – [2] *but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.*
 - Prayer – Paul says 1 Thessalonians 5:17 – [17] *pray without ceasing*
 - Being with God’s People
 - The OUTFLOW of FELLOWSHIP
 - The result of FELLOWSHIP is OBEDIENCE.
 - John 14:15 – [15] *If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*
 - John 14:21 – [21] *Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”*
 - John 15:10 – [10] *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.*

- Matthew 12:50 – [50] *For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*
- 1 John 2:3 – [3] *And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.*

The RESULT of this SERVICE and FELLOWSHIP leads to this third and HIGHEST PART of CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP exhibited by MARY.

The Elements of Devotion

DEVOTION is the APEX of the CHRISTIAN LIFE.

- One Commentator – “Mary’s actions express what others did not have the words to voice, but it filled the whole house with the fragrance of her love and as such would continue to spread through the preaching of the gospel in the whole world.”
- John 12:3 – [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.*

Devotion is Necessary

- *Therefore* – this is the NECESSARY response to Christ’s PRESENCE.
- When you see CHRIST as he truly is you can’t HELP but WORSHIP HIM.
- DEVOTION is the NATURAL RESPONSE to seeing CHRIST.
- Mary had seen Christ in all His GLORY.
 - John 11:40 – [40] *“Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”*
- The PROBLEM for so many... CHRIST is SIMPLY not SEEN.
- But devotion is NECESSARY once CHRIST is truly seen.

Devotion is Extravagant

- A pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard.
- Nard was made from a plant from INDIA grown in the Himalayan foothills.
 - Judas says Worth 300 denarii – an entire year of a working man’s wages.
 - Mark says it is *“very costly”* (Mark 14:3)
 - And Mary took a pound of this ointment. A pound in that time would be 12 ounces.
 - It was an alabaster flask.
 - And she POURED it OUT on the LORD.
 - The OTHER GOSPELS say that she STARTED with His HEAD.
 - John tells us that she anointed his FEET. SHE exhausted all of it.
 - Mary’s devotion to the LORD is EXTRAVAGANT. She poured it all out.
 - *“The House was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”*

Devotion is Humble

When your vision is on CHRIST you think of yourself less. You lose yourself in Christ. And you see the weight of your own SIN. You see His grandeur you’re your nothingness.

- Mary’s act of devotion is public. In front of Simon the Leper, all twelve of the disciples, Lazarus, and Martha, and all the other GUESTS.
- Devotion requires HUMILITY.
 - Devotion to GOD means that we cease to care what the world thinks of us.

- Galatians 6:14 – [14] *But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*
- Not only does Mary anoint Jesus in front of everyone, Mary even anoints Jesus's feet.
- Not only does Mary anoint Jesus's feet, But she does so with her hair.

She WORSHIPED before an AUDIENCE of ONE. God ALONE is the AUDIENCE of our WORSHIP.

Devotion is Preeminent

- 12:8 – [8] *For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.*
 - The FIRST PRIORITY is WORSHIP.
 - The GOAL is to fill the WORLD with our WORSHIP.
- What JESUS commends is this WOMAN's ACTIONS. Because WORSHIP is the highest priority.
- The CHURCH in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has said that REACHING people is the HIGHEST PRIORITY.
- The FIRST and HIGHEST PRIORITY is WORSHIP.

The Enemy of Devotion

John 17:4 – [4] *But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, [5] "Why has this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"*

- His statement, expressed the sentiment of others in the room... Mark 14:4 – [4] *Others said indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that?"*
- JESUS is unworthy of the DEVOTION that was given in Judas's eyes.

The Enemy of Devotion is the misplaced priority of putting ourselves before Christ.

John 17:6 – [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.*

- Judas was smart.
- The only disciple from Judea. He had natural accounting and managerial abilities.
- He was INTERESTED not in the WORSHIP of JESUS. But the MONEY he would GET from IT.

This is the DANGER of FALSE CHRISTIANITY. It asks, "What do I get out of it?"

- Yes, God gives good gifts to His children, but the GREATEST GIFT is HIMSELF.
 - Philippians 2:8 – [8] *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I might gain Christ.*
 - 2 Cor 5:15 – [15] *and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

John 12:7 – [7] *Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.*

- In this case Mary's devotion was used to prepare this anointing.
- "The day of his burial was at hand."
- She had kept and preserved the NARD for this day. To prepare him for his burial.

John 12:8 – [8] *For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.*

- Jesus's ENTIRE MINISTRY had been in serving the poor. The outcasts. The lame. The blind.
- *But the MISSION is not more IMPORTANT than the MASTER.*
- The most important ELEMENT is WORSHIP.
- Mary had seen the MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT.

Christ so EXTRAVAGANT. Not just that He's Worthy. But the one who is WORTHY died for those who were UNWORTHY.

- "God is infinitely and most worthy of regard. The worthiness of others is nothing to his: so that to him belongs all possible respect. To him belongs the whole of the respect that any moral agent, either God or any intelligent being, is capable of. To him belongs all the heart."