

## Mary Anoints the Feet of Jesus

**John 12:1 - 11 (NASB)** <sup>1</sup>Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

<sup>2</sup>So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him.

<sup>3</sup>Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

<sup>4</sup>But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said\*,

<sup>5</sup>"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?"

<sup>6</sup>Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial.

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

<sup>9</sup>The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.

<sup>10</sup>But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also;

<sup>11</sup>because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

**John 12:1 - 11 (NASB)** <sup>1</sup>Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

- Mark 14:3 While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining *at the table*, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; *and* she broke the vial and poured it over His head.

<sup>2</sup>So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him.

<sup>3</sup>Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

- *Matthew/Mark: "A woman". Mary = Sister of Martha and Lazarus. Not the former harlot of Luke 7:36-50*
- **This ointment** or perfume was made from an aromatic herb (also called spikenard) from the mountains of India, and it was imported in alabaster bottles. This expensive imported item carried such value that people used it for investment purposes, as gold is often used today. According to 12:5, this particular nard was worth 300 denarii (the equivalent of a year's wages of a working man).
- *When supper was finished, Mary took this pure, expensive perfume and poured it on (literally, "anointed") Jesus' feet. Nard was used to anoint kings; Mary may have been anointing Jesus as her kingly Messiah.*

<sup>4</sup>But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said\*,

<sup>5</sup>"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?"

- **Mark 14:4 (NASB)** <sup>4</sup>But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted?"

<sup>6</sup>Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial.

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

- **Matt. 26:10** <sup>10</sup>But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you bother the woman? **For she has done a good deed to Me.**

<sup>11</sup>"For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me.

<sup>12</sup>"For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial.

<sup>13</sup>"Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

- **Mark 14:7** <sup>8</sup>"**She has done what she could**; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.

<sup>9</sup>The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.

<sup>10</sup>But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also;

<sup>11</sup>because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

*When you combine all three accounts, you learn that Mary anointed both His head and His feet. It was an act of pure love on her part, for she knew her Lord was about to endure suffering and death.*

- *Because she sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him speak, she knew what He was going to do. It is significant that Mary of Bethany was not one of the women who went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus (Mark 16:1).*
- *In a sense, Mary was showing her devotion to Jesus before it was too late. She was "giving the roses" while He was yet alive, and not bringing them to the funeral! Her act of love and worship was public, spontaneous, sacrificial, lavish, personal, and unembarrassed. Jesus called it "a good work" (Matt. 26:10; Mark 14:6) and both commended her and defended her.*
- *It would have required a year's wages from a common laborer to purchase that ointment. Like David, Mary would not give to the Lord that which cost her nothing (2 Sam. 24:24). Her beautiful act of worship brought a fragrance to the very house in which they were dining, and the blessing of her deed has spread around the world (Matt. 26:13; Mark 14:9). Little did Mary realize that night that her love for Christ would be a blessing to believers around the world for centuries to come!*

*When she came to the feet of Jesus, Mary took the place of a slave. When she undid her hair (something Jewish women did not do in public), she humbled herself and laid her glory at His feet (see 1 Cor. 11:15). Of course, she was misunderstood and criticized; but that is what usually happens when somebody gives his or her best to the Lord.*

### **Matthew 26:6 - 13 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup>Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper,

<sup>7</sup>a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined *at the table*.

<sup>8</sup>But the disciples were indignant when they saw *this*, and said, "Why this waste?"

<sup>9</sup>"For this *perfume* might have been sold for a high price and *the money* given to the poor."

<sup>10</sup>But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me.

<sup>11</sup>"For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me.

<sup>12</sup>"For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial.

<sup>13</sup>"Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

## Mark 14:3 - 9 (NASB)

<sup>3</sup>While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining *at the table*, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; *and* she broke the vial and poured it over His head.

<sup>4</sup>But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted?"

<sup>5</sup>"For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and *the money* given to the poor." And they were scolding her.

<sup>6</sup>But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me.

<sup>7</sup>"For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me.

<sup>8</sup>"She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.

<sup>9</sup>"Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

### **Key points in John 12:**

*There were three consequences to her act of worship.*

1. *First, the house was filled with the beautiful fragrance of the ointment (John 12:3; also note 2 Cor. 2:15-16). There is always a "spiritual fragrance" in a home where Jesus Christ is loved and worshiped.*
2. *Second, some of the disciples, led by Judas, criticized Mary for wasting her money! It sounded so pious for Judas to talk about the poor, when in reality he wanted the money for himself! (John 12:4-6) Even in the Upper Room, six days later, the disciples still thought Judas was concerned about helping the poor (John 13:21-30). It is interesting that the word translated "waste" in Mark 14:4 is translated "perdition" in John 17:12 and applied to Judas! **Judas criticized Mary for "wasting money," but he wasted his entire life!***
3. *Third, Jesus commended Mary and accepted her gracious gift. He knew the heart of Judas and understood why the other disciples followed his bad example. He also knew Mary's heart and quickly defended her (Rom. 8:33-39). No matter what others may say about our worship and service, the most important thing is that we please the Lord. The fact that others misunderstand and criticize us should not keep us from showing our love to Christ. Our concern should be His approval alone.*

*When Mary gave her best at the feet of Jesus, she started a "wave of blessing" that has been going on ever since. She was a blessing to Jesus as she shared her love, and she was a blessing to her home as the fragrance spread. Were it not for Mary, her village, Bethany, would probably have been forgotten. The account of her deed was a blessing to the early church that heard about it and, because of the records in three of the Gospels, Mary has been a blessing to the whole world—and still is! The Lord's prediction has certainly been fulfilled.*

**Monday Morning Moment:**

*Mary gave her best in faith and love;  
Judas gave his worst in unbelief and hatred.*

**1 Corinthians 13:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup>But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

**Homework Q & A:** *(Please use scripture where appropriate to support your answers.)*

1. How can you, like Mary, show your love and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ?
2. Are you typically known for what you stand for or are you generally characterized by what you stand against?
3. What is the very best gift you can give to Jesus?