

John 11.47-12.19 / COB / 10.19.14

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Monastery]** I asked Ryan and Kevin if they wanted to come up with me on stage, but they were feeling a little shy, so I will announce this for them: Ryan has decided to postpone college for a year, during which he is going to join this monastery where he will focus his time on worship; and to honor his son's decision, Kevin is going to donate all his business profit from that same year to upgrade our church's worship equipment and signage.
- Now if that really were true, would you applaud them or tell them they were crazy? When I first felt called to the ministry, I quit my full time banking position, so I could become a part-time pastor's assistant. I was hoping people would encourage me in making this significant financial and career sacrifice, but instead most of the lay leaders in the church told me I was an idiot.
 - Later, when LeeAnn and I were married and we decided I should do unpaid ministry work and we would live off of her salary, some Christian friends accused me of being sinful by not supporting my family. If someone you knew wanted to make a great sacrifice of pure worship to God, would you admire them or think they were crazy?
- † Another question. As a church, how much of our time and money should go into pure worship? At a Sunday service, less than a third of our time is spent in worship. I know, the whole service is worship, but the part when we are purely focused on offering praise, instead of on learning or requesting, is only about twenty out of seventy-five minutes.
- During the week it is less, right? I'm sure Linda, like me, spends some time each day praising and thanking God, but during our working hours, only a very small portion of our time goes toward the worship of the church. If we added volunteer hours, it would be better, because the praise team practices a couple of hours a week. Still not a lot of resources devoted purely to worship. Financially, we spend less than 1% directly on worship. Maybe we should add in the building costs to make it look better.

[Slide 2: 11.47-48] Turn with me to John 11.47. Today we are going to see one person offer extravagant worship to Jesus while a multitude of others honors him as their king. Let's pray and we will get started.

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- † Last week, we saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead! As a result, many of those who had gathered to mourn believed in Jesus, but some ran off to the Pharisees to report what Jesus was doing.

John 11.47-48 NET: So the chief priests and the Pharisees called the council together and said, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many miraculous signs. If we allow him to go on in this way, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away our sanctuary and our nation."

- † The Greek term for "council" here is συνέδριον, which can mean any council, but probably means the Sanhedrin here. Under the Romans, the Sanhedrin had control over internal Jewish political and religious affairs. The chief priests, all descendants of Moses' brother Aaron, controlled the Sanhedrin, and most of them were Sadducees.
- The Pharisees and Sadducees were like different denominations today, they agreed on many of the essentials, but differed in other ways. It is particularly interesting that the Sadducees did

not believe in the final resurrection of the dead, so they would have seen no important symbolism in Jesus resurrecting Lazarus from the dead.

- † Remember, these most of these Jewish religious leaders already decided to have Jesus killed. They already despised him and saw him as a religious heretic.
 - Now, as Jesus continues to do miracles and grow in popularity, they start to be concerned that things might get out of hand. One of the expectations for the Messiah [or Christ] was that he would be the Ultimate Davidic King, a king descended from David, who would deliver Israel to independence. The religious leaders now fear that the crowds, in their exuberance, will declare Jesus to be this king, and bring about a destructive response by the Roman army, including destruction of the Temple sanctuary.

[Slide 3: 11.49-52] John 11.49-52: Then one of them, Caiaphas [Καϊάφας], who was high priest that year, said, “You know nothing at all! [like we say today, “You don’t know what you are talking about!”] You do not realize that it is more to your advantage to have one man die for the people than for the whole nation to perish.” (Now he did not say this on his own, but because he was high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the Jewish nation, and not for the Jewish nation only, but to gather together into one the children of God who are scattered.)

- † The Old Testament says the Jews should choose the high priest for a lifetime appointment; the Romans had other ideas. Because the high priest was the head of the Sanhedrin, the Romans made this a political appointment, and moved men in and out of office; so to keep your position as high priest, you had to please the Romans. Καϊάφας was appointed back in AD18, so he must have been good at pleasing the Romans. He would be removed in AD36, a few years after these events.
- † Καϊάφας was speaking in sinful human terms, but unintentionally spoke a prophecy from God the Father. Καϊάφας was noting that the religious leaders would all be better off if Jesus died, rather than have the nation perish at the hands of the Romans.
 - God’s thought was it was better for Jesus to die than for the nation to perish in sin. Jesus died to save the Jewish people from sin and God’s condemnation for sin, and to provide the same salvation to all who believe in him from the Samaritans and Gentiles around the world too, and to gather all believers into one flock as we learned in John 10.
- † **[Slide 4: top line]** I want to point something out here. In the days before Israel was ruled by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, when they had their own kings, one of the repeated mistakes the kings and nation made was to seek peace by relying on diplomatic relations with pagan nations, rather than relying on God for deliverance from those nations. They took the bottom line instead of the top line. Do you remember this chart? They used human ideas and human methods to try to obtain their desired goal, instead of relying on God’s revelation, or God’s methods, and God’s deliverance. There is a handout on this at the resource table, if you need it.
 - In our scene, we have the Jewish religious leaders worried about keeping their authority, so they try to appease the pagan Romans, rather than rely on the Messiah-deliverer God the Father has sent to them. So they are making the same mistake. In the devotion this week, I ask you to consider how we might be making the same mistake today.
 - The results of bottom line thinking might seem good in the short-run, you might obtain your goal; but it is never beneficial in the long-run to deviate from God’s will. The religious leaders

would succeed in removing Jesus from the scene, but the Jewish people still revolted a few decades later, and in response the Romans destroyed the Temple – tearing down every block of stone and throwing it off the temple mount; you can still see many of them at the base today! – they also exiled all Jews out of Jerusalem, and took away the authority of the Sanhedrin. The New Testament says that God allowed this destruction, this judgment, because of this rejection of the Messiah.

[Slide 5: 11.53-54] John 11.53-54: So from that day they planned together to kill him. Thus Jesus no longer went around publicly among the Judeans, but went away from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and stayed there with his disciples.

- † They don't want to arrest Jesus to bring him to trial; they want to arrest him because they have already decided to kill him. The full Sanhedrin is out to kill Jesus now, but it is not yet time, so he again retreats. Either someone told him what the Sanhedrin decided or he just divinely knew. In any case, he will act to maintain God the Father's timing of events.

[Slide 6: 11.55-57] John 11.55-57: Now the Jewish feast of Passover was near, and many people went up to Jerusalem from the rural areas before the Passover to cleanse themselves ritually. Thus they were looking for Jesus, and saying to one another as they stood in the temple courts, "What do you think? That he won't come to the feast?" (Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was should report it, so that they could arrest him.)

- † Passover is approaching, the crowds are flocking to Jerusalem, the religious leaders have put out the word officially that Jesus is to be arrested and anyone with information of his whereabouts should come forward, so the crowds are wondering what will happen, will Jesus even come.
 - Remember, for these festivals, we are talking about packing the city to bursting. There are people visiting from all over the empire, the streets are crowded with them. If you have ever been to a big city like New York or even Washington at rush hour, it was like that! And everyone is excited already because of the holiday, the festival, and all that it signifies, and now the Sanhedrin drops this bombshell, a decree to have Jesus arrested!

[Slide 7: 12.1-2] John 12.1-2: Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom he had raised from the dead. So they prepared a dinner for Jesus there. Martha was serving, and Lazarus was among those present at the table with him.

- † Bethany, remember, is less than two miles from Jerusalem, just on the other side of the Mount of Olives. So Jesus and his disciples again are very close and in danger.
 - Since Jesus recently had raised Lazarus from the dead in this very village, they treated him like a celebrity and threw him a supper. Jesus would have arrived on Friday evening, at the start of the Sabbath by Jewish reckoning, and this supper would have been the next evening, after the Sabbath. Everyone would have been involved.

[Slide 8: 12.3] John 12.3: Then Mary took three quarters of a pound of expensive aromatic oil from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus. She then wiped his feet dry with her hair. (Now the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfumed oil.)

- † I imagine the house reeked of perfume! Eleven ounces of nard in weight was about a pint in volume. Think of pouring a soda bottle full of perfume in your house!
 - I thought about trying this here this morning. I hoped Sarah, Katelyn, or Rebecca would volunteer and we could have them lie down up here and then pour a pint of perfume all over them. But just like with the idea of bringing in a gassy sheep, better judgment prevailed again. I'll never attain the notoriety of Hosea or Ezekiel at this rate.
- † This is not the first time this has happened to Jesus. In Luke 7.36-38, Jesus was having supper in a Pharisee's house, when an immoral woman shed tears on Jesus' feet, wiped his feet with her hair, kissed his feet, and then anointed his feet with perfume. We know that is not the same scene as this one, because the conversation then was different than the one we are about to read.
- † This scene, with Mary, is also described in Matthew 26.6-13 and Mark 14.3-9, so we know the host of this meal was Simon the Leper, not a Pharisee.
 - Matthew and Mark stress that Mary anointed Jesus on his head, like a king. John stresses Mary anointed his feet, in an act of humble devotion. I wonder if Mary did this with his feet to emulate what the immoral woman had done! Perhaps she showed humility not only by sacrificing her expensive perfume, not only by wiping Jesus' feet with her hair, but also by doing something she knew an immoral woman had done in devotion for him.
 - In Matthew and Mark, Jesus emphasized that Mary anointed his body for death, so she apparently poured the perfume all over him. You have to remember how they ate in those days. For a normal meal, they would sit on the floor around the serving dish, but for special meals like this they would lie down on a mat on the floor, reclining on an elbow, with their heads near the table and their feet pointed away. So, especially if Jesus was at the head of the U-shaped table, as we would expect, Mary could have anointed his head, poured all over his body, and then sat at his feet and wiped them dry with her hair.

[Slide 9: 12.4-6] John 12.4-6: But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was going to betray him) said, "Why wasn't this oil sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?" (Now Judas said this not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief. As keeper of the money box, he used to steal what was put into it.)

- † We know from Lazarus' funeral that the family of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus was an influential family with friends in Jerusalem. I think we can assume from this that they were wealthy too.
 - A silver denarius was a Roman coin, representing about a day's wage for the average worker. Accounting for unpaid time off for Sabbaths and feast days, 300 represented a year's wages!
- † Think of your own salary or your own family income... now imagine bringing that money into the church, dumping it into an ash can, and burning it, as an act of worship! That's what Mary did.
 - People complain when the church asks for a portion of their income, but they at least can see how we use it for salaries, building maintenance, equipment, curriculum, and helping missionaries and the poor. Mary just poured it all out on Jesus in an act of pure worship! In the devotion, I ask you to consider what you would be willing to give up for Jesus.
 - Matthew and Mark hint that other disciples were disturbed by Mary's actions, but John focuses on Judas Iscariot, and notes that his concern was selfish rather than altruistic. He would have

preferred the chance to pilfer a little of that money, had it passed through his hands as ministry treasurer. Let's hope Jim doesn't have the same attitude as church treasurer!

- † **[Slide 10: perfume]** A pint of Clive Christian #1 would set you back about \$25,000 today. That's just for the refill. When you originally buy any perfume today, a lot of the cost is from the bottle. Clive's is made from lead crystal and has a 1/3 carat diamond on the neck. You would pay \$5,500 for about one fluid ounce of perfume inside the pretty bottle. I mean, you would if you were crazy...
- † I have read that the median income for a male worker in this area is about \$38,000. Mary poured out her \$38,000 perfume onto Jesus. Let's see what he thought of that and of Judas' objection.

[Slide 11: 12.7-8] John 12.7-8: So Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She has kept it for the day of my burial. For you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me!"

- † In Jesus' day, there was much suffering in society, just like today. Many of the disciples, of the people at the supper, might have had a legitimate concern that Mary would waste so much money pouring perfume on Jesus, when she could have given that money to help the poor.
 - What about our attitudes? I'm not even going to get into how much time and money we waste, ok? It is gross how little we all put toward ministry compared to what we squander in making ourselves comfortable and fully entertained. Alright?
 - But let's think of what we do give to the church and other ministries. We know the Bible says we should give of our time, money, effort, creativity, and other resources. Let's suppose we are all doing that here in the church. What percentage of this should go to helping the poor and what percentage toward pure worship?
 - In our church, we spend very little helping the poor; about two-thirds of our financial budget goes to salaries and another 20% for keeping the building operational; we give about 1% to the PCCO to help the poor. Obviously, part of the problem is we have a small budget; as giving increases, salaries and building expenses will not, and thus the percentage going to them will shrink. But right now, very little of our money goes to helping the poor.
 - Of the time we invest in ministry, almost all of it goes to discipleship and evangelism. Since the church spends about 2% of its money on worship and the poor, and invests the rest of our money and almost all of our time in ministering to you, can you discern what our plan is for offering worship and helping the poor? Can you discern how important are you to that plan?
- † **[Slide 12: pardon]** Back then, they made animal sacrifices to God, so most would understand it could be good to invest time and money purely in worship as Mary did, even when it benefits nobody else, just God [or in this case, Jesus] and the worshipper.
 - Another way to translate Jesus' response would be, "You must pardon her, that she would keep it for the day of my burial." Jesus thought this was a good thing for Mary to do. Matthew and Mark quote Jesus as saying [NET], "She has done a good service for me."
 - Jesus appreciates Mary's worship. He also is thinking of this as an anointing for his death. When Jesus would die later in this same week, others would anoint his body with a mixture of aromatic spices and aloe gels, as was the custom. Jesus sees Mary's anointing as symbolic, that he now begins his final journey to his sacrificial death. What Mary did was part of God the Father's plan to glorify his Son and lay the preparations for his sacrifice and resurrection.

† God said in Deuteronomy 15.4-5 that there should never be poor people in Israel, because if the nation was obedient to the Mosaic Covenant then God would be faithful to provide for them. Just a few verses later, God acknowledged the nation would fail by saying there would always be poor among them – it is to this that Jesus refers in our passage – so God wanted his faithful people to be generous in helping the poor that existed.

- At the end of his writing, in Deuteronomy 29-30, Moses prophesied that Israel would fail to uphold the covenant and thus would be exiled, but later would repent and return to God. Then God would change their hearts and return them to the land under the Great Prophet [18.15].
- Jesus is the prophet Moses predicted, the one who eventually will remove the curse of poverty when he returns. He would want his people to care for the poor, but he also recognizes that until the end, the poor will always be among us, whereas he was available for Mary to worship only for that brief time. Even today, I believe it is right to dedicate some resources to pure worship, even if it benefits no people. God deserves our worship and he demands it.

[Slide 13: 12.9-11] John 12.9-11: Now a large crowd of Judeans learned that Jesus was there, and so they came not only because of him but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus too, for on account of him many of the Jewish people from Jerusalem were going away and believing in Jesus.

† This is Saturday evening. Many from Jerusalem and the surrounding area flocked to Bethany, to see Jesus and Lazarus. So the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus also, to keep him from being a witness for Jesus. You can see their hearts are not right. Even if they think Jesus deserves to die, they have no accusation to make against Lazarus; it's not his fault Jesus raised him from the dead.

[Slide 14: 12.12-13] John 12.12-13: The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him. They began to shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!"

† Sunday morning, what we now call Palm Sunday, because more people started pressing out of Jerusalem and down the road to the Mount of Olives, waving date palm branches. Date palms were plentiful in this area, so it was no problem for them to find branches to wave.

- Scripturally, palm branches were not associated with Passover, only the Feast of Tabernacles, but the tradition was to wave palm branches at many important events, including those of the major festivals. About 200 years earlier, when the Maccabees led the revolt that captured the Temple and rededicated it to God, the palm branch became a symbol of Jewish nationalism.

† Hosanna is from the Hebrew for "Please save." The people were quoting Psalm 118.25-26. During the festivals, people would sing this psalm, which was seen as a prophecy about the Messiah. The people on this day were clearly identifying Jesus as the Messiah, the Ultimate Davidic King who was prophesied to come and deliver the nation from foreign oppression and reconcile people with God.

- The crowds hailing him as king was an important part of Jesus' progress to his death. So was his entrance on this date, which we believe fulfills one of Daniel's prophecies about when the Messiah-king would be presented to the nation. God is amazing! He makes his plans and then carries them out, even hundreds of years later!

[Slide 15: 12.14-15] John 12.14-15: Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, “Do not be afraid, people of Zion; look, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt!”

- † The Son of God demonstrated great humility. At the start, he was willing to leave Heaven and come to Earth as a human baby. Now, in his triumphal entry as God’s anointed king, as the legitimate heir of King David, as the promised Messiah-savior, rather than enter on a raging war horse, he enters on a donkey’s colt. This was to fulfill another prophecy, from Zechariah 9.9, which is quoted here.
 - Your translation might say “daughter of Zion,” and that’s correct: this was a common way to refer to the people of Jerusalem, which was centered on Mount Zion.
 - In the return from exile in Babylon, the Jews had failed once again to be obedient to God and his covenant, so Zechariah foretold the day when Israel would repent through the pierced Messiah, and God would return his blessing and thus defeat the Gentiles and restore the Kingdom to Israel. The promised King who would bring repentance and victory over the Gentiles would arrive at Jerusalem humbly riding on the colt of a donkey in contrast to the arrogant behavior of the pagan Gentile kings.
 - Through Zechariah, God promised the Messiah would bring peace to the nations, deliver Jerusalem from oppression, and rule over all the earth. The people out in the street were exultant, because they expected Jesus to free them from Rome and reestablish God’s kingdom in Israel. But Jesus came to fulfill other prophecies first, those about dying to set us free from sin; he will fulfill the rest of the prophecies in due time, when he returns.

[Slide 16: 12.16-19] John 12.16-19: (His disciples did not understand these things when they first happened, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about him and that these things had happened to him.) So the crowd who had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead were continuing to testify about it. Because they had heard that Jesus had performed this miraculous sign, the crowd went out to meet him. Thus the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you can do nothing. Look, the world has run off after him!”

- † So as Jesus enters Jerusalem, there is quite a commotion. The crowds are testifying to one another and they are hailing Jesus as their King and Messiah, exactly as the Sanhedrin had feared. This leads the Pharisees to despair.
 - The Pharisees spoke more truth than they knew. They were thinking “everyone” was falling for Jesus as hyperbole, meaning so many are, but we will see next week that this really was the beginning of the gospel reaching all the world, creating believing followers of Jesus from every people group.
 - Yet there also is irony, for by end of the chapter we will see that the overwhelming reaction to Jesus was unbelief: many of the people had emotional enthusiasm, but not true faith.

Conclusion

- † **[Slide 17: worship]** Let’s close with a couple of considerations. First, are you willing to sacrifice some time to offer worship to God on a daily basis. You could pray, sing worship songs, read the Bible to learn how to represent God better, reflect on scripture for application, or create something

for God. Don't tell me you are too busy, too busy to worship the almighty God who not only deserves and demands your worship, but is the only one who can help you with all that makes you busy.

- Second, are you willing to sacrifice a little money to offer worship to God on a weekly basis. This church cannot afford to upgrade the sound equipment for the worship team or even to pay my full salary right now, but that's not what I'm talking about. Would you be willing to give up a little extra money to support missionaries, the PCCO and food cupboard, or directly to help someone you know who is in need? Don't tell me you are broke, when we number not only among the wealthiest in the world, but the wealthiest in the history of the world.
- The truth is we are not too busy or too broke. We just are unwilling to sacrifice for God. This is a heart issue, for me too. Today, in church, we proclaim Jesus as king, just like the people in the street did back then. But when push comes to shove – when it comes to our leisure or our things – will we turn away from Jesus like they did, or will we be found to be children of the light? I ask you to pray about that this week.
- Let me pray right now...