

Grow Group Resources

Sermon Series: According to John

Sermon Title: Extravagant Love

Text: John 12:1-8

Sermon Summary

John 12:1-8 sits between the miracle of Lazarus being raised and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The scene is a quiet, intimate dinner, featuring Jesus, his disciples and friends: Martha, Lazarus and Mary. During the meal, Mary anoints Jesus' feet with costly perfume, wiping his feet with her hair, eliciting a strong reaction from the disciples.

Three Characteristics of Mary's Love

The sermon highlights Mary's love for Jesus and the way her actions expressed true discipleship through three lenses:

- **Extravagant Love:** Mary poured out a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume worth roughly a year's wages. Her love wasn't "sensible" or frugal; it was a total outpouring of her most valuable possession.
- **Uninhibited Love:** She broke social taboos by letting down her hair to wipe Jesus' feet. She disregarded the "scandalous" nature of the act and the judgment of the room to express deep, personal intimacy with her Savior.
- **Humble Love:** Mary is consistently found at Jesus' feet throughout the Gospels. By anointing his feet, she took the posture of a servant, foreshadowing Jesus' own act of washing the disciples' feet in John 13.

The Contrast: Judas and False Piety

Judas Iscariot's words provide a stark contrast to Mary's devotion. He masks his greed with "pragmatism," questioning why the perfume wasn't sold and the money given to the poor. The sermon notes that Judas focused on a show of piety while being "empty of substance," a false discipleship. The irony of the event is emphasized as he immediately departs to betray Jesus for a mere 30 pieces of silver.

Jesus' Perspective

Jesus defends Mary, calling her act a "beautiful thing" (cf. Mark 14:6). He reframes her gift not as a waste, but as a preparation for His burial. We see that Jesus doesn't look at the "logic" of the gift but at the love prompting it. God doesn't look at human wisdom, but at our heart.

In talking of Mary's act being a preparation for his burial, Jesus ties the act to his impending death, even though Mary most likely did not understand the full meaning of what she was doing.

A Foretelling of the Cross

Mary's broken jar serves as a powerful symbol of Jesus himself. Just as the perfume was poured out and "wasted" in the eyes of the disciples, Jesus—the ultimate treasure—would soon be "broken and poured out" on the cross. Mary's extravagant love is a reflection of God's even more extravagant love for us, shown in the death of Christ for us.

Grow Group Discussion Questions

1. Start your group discussion time with a word of prayer for guidance and wisdom as you study the Scriptures.
2. Take turns reading John 12:1-8 out loud. What stands out to you? What questions come to mind?
3. We see Mary at Jesus' feet in Luke 10:38-42 (learning), John 11:28-32 (grieving), and John 12:3 (worshipping). What does this consistent "posture" tell us about her relationship with Jesus?
4. Mary's perfume was worth about \$30,000 in today's value. If you were in that room, what would have been your response to her? Would your first instinct have been to worship with her, aspire to be like her, to calculate the "waste" like the disciples, or something else? Why?
5. Why is it difficult for us to be "extravagant" in our faith or love for God?
6. Mary let down her hair and touched a Rabbi—actions considered scandalous at the time. What are some "social taboos" or cultural expectations today that might hinder us from being fully uninhibited in our devotion to Christ?
7. Judas called the anointing a "waste." Jesus called it a "beautiful thing." Have you ever made a sacrifice for Christ that others—even other believers—thought was unnecessary or "too much"?
8. The sermon mentioned that our expressions of love for Jesus will look different for everyone. Based on your personality and gifts, what might "extravagant love" look like for you (e.g., time, service, generosity, art, etc.)?
9. Mary's broken jar points to Jesus being "broken and poured out" for us. How does Jesus' extravagant love for us change the way we view Him or approach Him?

10. This week, identify one "resource" you have—whether it is time, a specific talent, or a financial gift. How can you "pour it out" for Jesus in a way that feels extravagant rather than just "sensible"?
11. Close your time in prayer. Thank God for His extravagant love for us. Invite the Holy Spirit to free you to express your love to God extravagantly.