

John 12: Surrendered or Self-Serving

All for Jesus, All for Jesus

John 12.1-11

All for Jesus, all for Jesus! All my being's ransomed powers:
All my thoughts and words and doings, all my days and all my hours.
All for Jesus! All for Jesus! All my days and all my hours;
All for Jesus! All for Jesus! All my days and all my hours.

Let my hands perform His bidding, let my feet run in His ways;
Let my eyes see Jesus only; let my lips speak forth His praise.
All for Jesus! All for Jesus! Let my lips speak forth His praise;
All for Jesus! All for Jesus! Let my lips speak forth His praise.

Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus, I've lost sight of all beside;
So enchained my spirit's vision, looking at the Crucified.

All for Jesus! All for Jesus! Looking at the Crucified;
All for Jesus! All for Jesus! Looking at the Crucified.

The Significance of John 12

“You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you.”

- ❖ Chapters 11-12 form the transition from public ministry to private ministry. With chapter 12, we come to the final week in the ministry and life of Jesus before his death on the cross. There will be no more miraculous signs, and after one significantly prophetic public event, Jesus will withdraw into private with his disciples.
- ❖ In restoring Lazarus from death to life, Jesus has set in motion the actions that bring about his death—his substitutionary death for the sins of the world. The necessity and fruitfulness of his death is one of the themes of this chapter.
- ❖ Having determined to kill Jesus, the resolve of the authorities will harden; they have passed the point of no return in their unbelief. The controlling power of unbelief is revealed again in this chapter.
- ❖ John devotes almost half of his Gospel to this final week, with most of his record focusing on the final evening that Jesus spends with his disciples.

Sequel at Bethany

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. . . . Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

- ❖ This is the second of two appearances by this family in John's Gospel; John is the only Gospel writer to devote this much attention to this family and their significance to Jesus and in the revelation of Jesus to the Jews. This family is the home of peace that Jesus instructed his disciples to find on their evangelistic tour.
- ❖ In this last week of Jesus' life, Bethany—and evidently their home—will be the “base of operations” for Jesus. At their home, many came to believe in Jesus (11.48; 12.9-11); from their home, Jesus will leave to enter Jerusalem in fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy; Jesus will return to Bethany each evening until he meets with his disciples in Jerusalem for the Passover (John 13.1).
- ❖ Bethany is only two miles from Jerusalem. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus are openly collaborating with Jesus and against the authorities who have issued an arrest warrant for Jesus. In contrast to others, they are flagrant in their association with Jesus, unashamed to honor him before even the most hostile authorities, and willing to pay any cost associated with being his disciple.

A Heart Like Jesus

Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But thank God! He has made us his captives and continues to lead us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now he uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing.

2 CORINTHIANS 2.14, 15

- ❖ John tells us three significant details: nard was an expensive perfume, Mary poured it on the feet of Jesus which she wiped with her hair, and the house was filled with the fragrance. These details represent important spiritual lessons for us.
- ❖ Nard was not local or easily obtained; it was imported from the Far East. Judas' calculation put its worth at a year's wages (over \$54,000 in US dollars). Its value easily made it Mary's most valuable personal possession.

► What is your most treasured possession?

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

LUKE 10.41-42

In reality, the nard was not her most treasured possession, but evidence that she had already given to Jesus what is everyone's most treasured and personal possession: her will. Every time we see Mary, she is at the feet of Jesus in a posture of surrender. Having given her will, everything else was secondary in value and a delight to give to Jesus as an expression of worship.

❖ Mary bathed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair—these feet that in just six days would stagger to Golgotha and be nailed to the cross.

► How far are you willing to go in service to Jesus?

In the time of Jesus and Mary, there was one right that everyone had: no one could be forced to wash another's feet. Even a slave could not be compelled to wash the feet of his master. Again Mary chose; she chose to do what no one else except Jesus himself would choose to do (cf. John 13). And like Jesus, Mary's willingness in service revealed a fully surrendered heart.

- How conscious are you of others and what they think?

In wiping the feet of Jesus with her hair, Mary was risking scorn and judgment. It was such a scandalous matter for a woman to unbind her hair in public that, if she did, a married woman could be divorced and single woman stoned. Mary was indifferent to others; all that mattered to her was that Jesus knew what he meant to her—the truth of which is only revealed before others and when the risks are the greatest.

- ❖ Mary's act of worship at such great cost to herself filled the house with its fragrance. The Apostle Paul wrote to the self-absorbed Corinthians to show them that there is no worth in playing safe:

[God] has made us his captives and continues to lead us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now he uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?

To render a fragrance involves the process of extracting, usually by crushing or grinding. This was Paul's point to the Corinthians, our lives have the greatest fragrance to God's glory as we yield in surrender and die to self (cf. 2 Corinthians 4.7-11, 16-18).

Beware of the Judas-spirit

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

- ❖ In contrast to Mary, Judas represents those who profess association to Jesus without true devotion or surrender.
- ❖ The “Judas spirit” views everything from a materialistic, monetary, and self-benefitting perspective: “What’s in it for me?” Regardless of its words, such a perspective always hides an ulterior agenda.
- ❖ Jesus responded to Judas:
“Leave her alone. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

The words of Jesus reveal an critical truth that Judas never learned:

Acceptable service flows out of deep devotion and complete surrender. Anything less and there will be a limit to the price that I am willing to pay.

For Jesus and for Mary, no price was too great in honoring the One they worshiped and served.

Willing to Go How Far?

Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me.

But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same.

MATTHEW 26.31; MARK 14.31

- ❖ Caiaphas had said that one man should die; now the authorities determined that Lazarus must also die because his life is a testimony to Jesus.
- ❖ “On account of him.” Lazarus is already what the disciples claim to be, but will fail in being, because of intimidation and fear for their lives.
- ❖ No words are attributed to Lazarus and little is said about him apart from his resurrection, but his life is an irrefutable testimony for Christ. Is your life so evidencing of the presence and work of Christ that it is a threat to the powers of unbelief?