



(Scripture: John 12:1-8)

Today, we will see one more Mary and Martha story. Similar kind of story is listed in Luke chapter 7 also. But the places are totally different. Matthew, John, and Mark tell us that this incident takes place in Bethany, but in Luke it happens at the Sea of Galilee. In John we see it clearly that the woman was Mary, Martha's sister. In Luke, the woman's name is not mentioned, but some scholars think that the woman in Luke could very well have been Mary Magdalene! Similar anointing passage is also found in Mark 14 and Mathew 26. When we put them all together, we get a very beautiful picture.

John 12:1.2. 1Jesus therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where was the dead [man] Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from among [the] dead. 2There therefore they made him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those at table with him.

This time Jesus comes to Jerusalem not only to observe the Passover, but He would soon become a Passover Lamb! Only six days left! As usual, Jesus stayed in Martha's house. But according to Mathew, and Mark, this dinner took place in the same village but in Simon the leper's house. He was a Pharisee, but I assume, his leprosy must have been healed. Otherwise, he could not have sat with the people!

There was a surprise among that crowd. Lazarus who died for four days was sitting with Jesus. It does not matter how long our loved ones may have died, our Lord Jesus Christ can raise them up! Let us be sure that one day we will see our loved ones. Even though we may grieve for the loss of our loved ones, let us grieve with hope because we will be sitting with Jesus with our loved ones on that great wedding banquet together!

Martha here loved to serve as usual. Probably she cooked special food and brought it to Simon's house. It may have been a thanksgiving supper on behalf of Lazarus. Martha was born for the hospitality!

John 12:3. 3Mary therefore, having taken a pound of ointment of pure nard of great price, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

While Martha was busy with hospitality, Mary was busy worshipping Christ. For Mary, everything else stops the minute Jesus steps into her life, and she becomes a worshipping person. We must learn this habit from Mary. When the presence of God takes hold of us, we start praising Him, thanking Him, and worshipping Him. Often when I drive alone without the radio noise, it happens, and what a glorious time of my life. Also, it happens when I am preparing my sermon. That time I feel the joy of His presence, and as I prepare, I worship Him



sitting at His feet listening to His interpretation of Scripture. I can stay in preparation mode all seven days, twenty-four hours. But we have to pay attention to our mundane daily tasks also.

Grab the opportunity, when Jesus is near you. Start worshipping as you hear His voice!

But there is one thing mysterious, though! Why does Mary do this again while Martha is serving? Could she not have helped Martha first and then done this? Was cooking and serving the least favorite thing to do for Mary as for some of us?

Mary took a pound of costly perfume, it is Roman pound that has about 11 1/2 oz. NIV says as a pint. The important point to remember is that she took some of the perfume, poured and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. The sweet fragrance filled the whole room. It was one of the most expensive perfume oil! According to Judas Iscariot, it would have cost over 300 Denarii. One denarius is equal to one day wage. That was worth 300-day wages. That is a lot of money! For us to save one-year income of ours, it may take us many years. Mary chose to spend her life time savings on this kind of worship! She gave it all to Jesus!

We quibble about giving 10 percent. But New Testament again and again teaches us to give it all. 100 percent giving is what is expected from us by Jesus. 10 percent is a good start. But don't just stagnate there. Keep increasing your giving every year. Let your tax paper show every year increase in your charity contribution. Press on to give it all for Jesus. It is very very hard. But press on!

Mark adds a fascinating detail.

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. (Mark 14:3 NASB)

Here Mark says that she poured it on Christ's head! It could very well be both, on the head as well as feet. But Mark gives a critical detail. The woman brought an alabaster vial, and she broke the vial and poured it over Jesus!

We must be broken first! We get broken through tragedies of life. Mary was broken through Lazarus death and resurrection. We get broken through serious sickness, we get broken through costly mistakes, through a broken relationship. The sweet fragrance starts coming out of us through our broken, contrite heart surrendered to Jesus. When we are broken, a sweet spirit starts coming out of us. It is the sweet Aroma of just loving everyone unconditionally, giving of ourselves that will fill our surrounding. The aroma of the Holy Spirit starts coming out of us when we have a contrite and a broken heart. Everyone who has the Holy Spirit has this aroma. But if that bottle is not broken within us, that fragrance of love of Christ will never



come out. Are you a broken vessel? Have you given it all to Jesus? Are you pouring your love at the feet of Jesus? The more we surrender, the more the oil of Holy Spirit will bring out His love for people all around us!

John 12:3 says that Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her hair after anointing His feet! When you bless Jesus, it returns to you many fold! The boy who had five loaves and two fish gave it all to Jesus. But then what happened? The boy and the crowd received that blessing back many fold, and they were all filled! When you offer your tithes, talent, and time, it comes back to you enriched and brings back blessings many fold! When you surrender something to Jesus that is not only a sweet aroma to Jesus, but to you also. Wherever you go, you carry that aroma! Give it all to Jesus!

But some people became critical of this act! Mark captures this incident very vividly.

Mark 14:4,5. But some were indignantly remarking to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted? 5. For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they were scolding her. (Mark 14:4-5 NASB)

There are a couple of things to note here. They were not complaining to Jesus. They were just gossiping with each other about it. **Let us not gossip behind anyone's back.** Let us bring our concern straight back to the person. Second, they were very harsh on her. They first talked with each other and confirmed their judgment about Mary. Afterward, they started scolding her harshly. We do this often in church. We talk about some negative aspect of a person and then go after them as a group. Beware of judging others. Pray and ask Jesus first if He wants you to cast that first stone. Examine yourself too! If you must judge and cast the first stone, exercise it with fear and trembling!

After judging as a group, they scolded her according to Mark. They rebuked her. They felt that she spent too much money on something that could dissipate in few hours. They felt that the money could have been well spent on needy, poor people? We do that also! If we spend little too much money on a fancy stained glass window in the church, some may raise their eyebrows. If we spend money on crystal cathedral, we will all complain about it immediately.

Book of John talks about just Judas Iscariot complained loudly,

John 12:4-6. 4But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 5"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" 6Now 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.

Many may have murmured among themselves, but Judas Iscariot openly started shouting about it. The author of John's gospel hated Judas with passion. Therefore he gives some extra



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information about Judas! Judas didn't say this because he was compassionate toward poor, but because he was a treasurer and a thief and he used to steal money from the common fund. He might have wished that Mary had given cash indeed so that he could have easily pocketed most of it!

Let us see what Jesus our Lord said about this:

John 12:7,8. 7Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. 8"For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

Jesus said that she is doing this for His future burial. He told them that she may keep the remaining for the day of His burial. She didn't pour everything.

If this was done just to honor someone it may have been a waste. But this was a special moment in Christ's life, and Mary did this act because of her overwhelming love for Jesus. It is true that those who are in pressing need come first. But this needed to be done for a person who will die soon on the cross and be buried. Mark concludes beautifully.

Mark 14: 6-9. 6But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. 8She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. 9And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Jesus rebuked them and told them not to trouble her. Poor people logic may be true but not in this context. Some politicians quote this passage to move the poor people budget for the rich people tax cut. That is not what this passage is saying.

Jesus says here that she has anointed His body beforehand for burial! Also, this beautiful act of giving herself entirely and preparing Him for burial will be told everywhere where the real Gospel is preached in the whole world!



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Conclusion:

Mary was indeed a true worshipper. She always surrendered at the feet of Jesus. She did give importance to His Word. Both Martha and Mary accepted Jesus as their Lord. They indeed honored and glorified Jesus!

Give it all to Jesus!

Give your best of what you have!

We must always be mindful of the poor. But there are times we must anoint and bless the prophets of God.

Let us honor our Lord, and His servants first. But let us not forsake the poor anytime.

Let us be a true worshipper like Mary and surrender everything at our Lord's feet.

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