

WORSHIP LEADS TO SERVICE?

(Scripture: John 12:1-3)

John 12:1-3. **1**Therefore, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. **2**So they made Him a dinner there, and Martha was serving; and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. **3**Mary then took a pound of very expensive 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.

Introduction:

Two weeks back, an interesting conversation popped up in our Bible study! It was about Mary who loved to worship Jesus all the time. On the other hand, Martha, her sister who was all about serving! Two extremes! Can we be like Mary who is all about worshipping, and should we ignore the serving part? Does worship lead us to service? These are very interesting questions, and that triggered me to dive into Scriptures for answers! I must admit, it was a fascinating study! It was a fruitful study, and it gave me enough material to preach 3 sermons and I learned a lot through this experience! I thank God for it, and I hope and pray that you would all be blessed by this message. I am just opening up a conversation through this message today, and I covet your feedback from you so that we can all learn and grow together.

Mary is indeed a fascinating character. It is obvious that she loved Jesus very much, she was very keen on worshipping Him all the time. Let us see some examples of Mary's love and adoration for our Lord Jesus Christ!

The Scripture reading, we heard today is from John 12, but a similar kind of a story is listed in Luke chapter 7 also. But the places are totally different. In the gospel of John, Mathew, and Mark tell us that this incident takes place in Bethany, but in Luke it happens at the Sea of Galilee and the name of the woman is not known. Is it the same woman as Mary? Perhaps, Luke misquoted the name of the place? Here in John, we see it clearly that the woman was Mary, Martha's sister. Similar anointing passage is in Mark 14 and Mathew 26. When we put them all together, we can get a very beautiful picture. Another interesting fact. Mark and Mathew say that the oil was poured upon Jesus' head, Luke and John say that it was poured on the feet of Jesus. Let us see John 12 first.

John 12:1.2. **1**Jesus therefore, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where was the dead man Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from among the dead. **2**There 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 himself 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!

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

John 12:3. Mary 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 must start praising Him, thanking Him, and worshipping Him.

Mary took a pound of costly perfume; it is a Roman pound that has about 11 1/2 oz. NIV says as pint. So, the important point to remember is that she took some of the perfume, and anointed the feet of Jesus with that, and wiped His feet with her hair. The sweet fragrance filled the whole room. It was one of the most expensive perfume oils! According to Judas Iscariot it would have cost 300 Denari. One denari is equal to one day wage. That was worth 300-day wages. That is a lot of money! In order for us to save one year income of ours, it may take us many years. Mary chose to spend her lifetime 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 do not just stagnate there. Keep increasing your giving every year. Let your tax paper shows every year increase in your charity contribution. Press on to give it all for Jesus. It is very, very hard. But press on, and God will bless you more abundantly. Test and see if the Lord reciprocates!

Mark describes this way:

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 [1]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 very important detail. The woman brought 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 broken relationship. Sweet fragrance starts coming out of us through our broken, contrite heart surrendered to Jesus. When we are broken, sweet spirit starts coming out of us. It is the sweet Aroma of just loving every one 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 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 the Holy Spirit brings out His love to people all around us!

John 12:3 says that Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her hair after anointing His feet!

Mary loved Jesus so much, she gave it all. She was so attached to Jesus like a magnet! The following familiar story brings out Mary's devotion for Jesus.

Luke 10:28-32. 38Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39And she had a sister called Mary, who was also seated at the Lord's feet, and was listening to His word. 40But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do the serving by myself? Then tell her to help me." 41But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42but only one thing is necessary; for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

We have dealt with this story many times, and I just want you to focus on Mary's attitude here today. She just felt that Jesus and His words are more important than any mundane duties of this world. When she saw the bright light of Jesus, everything else grew dim for her in this world!

But in Lazarus story in John ch. 11, we see a different attitude. Mary was upset because she felt abandoned by Jesus. She said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." (John 11:32b). But Jesus proved to her that He never abandons! He did raise Lazarus from the dead. She must have been thrilled by this miracle, and she loved Jesus even more and adored Him.

Then we see Mary's love for Jesus while He was hanging on the cross. How touching that scene must have been! What great love for Jesus! Then she took active part in His burial also. She loved Jesus with all her heart, and she gave it all for Him!

But Mary experienced the mountain top experience when she met the resurrected Jesus Christ on the first day of the week - on Sunday morning! She thought first that, He was a Gardener. But when Jesus called Mary by her name, she realized that it was Jesus. She was ecstatic, and was about to embrace His feet, and worship Him, but Jesus stopped her from doing it.

John 20:17,18. 17Jesus *said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" 18Mary Magdalene *came and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.

Why did Jesus stop her! Jesus was in interim period. God, the Father withdrew His Spirit from Jesus when He was dying on the cross. But He did quicken Jesus through His Spirit after the 3rd day, early morning on Sunday. Jesus had to fulfill the law concerning His dead body. He had to be ceremonially washed according to Law so that He can connect back with His Father. In other words, after the washing of the waters as per law, He must have been glorified through His Father. Father left Him on the cross, but later, He reconnects with the Son. That is what is meant by ascending to the Father in this context. After being glorified by His Father, His disciples could touch Jesus' glorified body. Jesus basically stopped Mary from becoming ceremoniously unclean by not letting her touch His body which was completely dead just few hours before!

There are lot of interpretations concerning this passage, and they are all speculations at best, and if you ask hard questions, they will all collapse. If you don't like my interpretation, put it on hold, and when we meet Jesus' face to face, let us ask Him for explanation!

Jesus used an interesting word here! It is not “touch me not” as in KJV. That Greek word implies a touch that holds onto something or clinging to something. Most of the translations will use “stop clinging to me.” NIV uses the word, “Do not hold on to me!” It is more like present continuous... do not continue holding me or hold me not!

It is time for Mary to do ministry for the Lord. She had to go to the spiritual brothers and sisters of Jesus and proclaim about His resurrection.

Her worship leads to a service of proclamation. Mary held onto Jesus too long, but now she must become a messenger, and a servant for Jesus.

We tend to stay always in the moment of worship! We will see that in the following example. Last time when I preached about faith that moves the mountain, I glanced over the story of transfiguration of Jesus! Let me bring that passage again!

Mark 9:2-8. 2And six days later Jesus *took with Him Peter, [a]James, and John, and *brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was [b]transfigured before them; 3and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4And Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. 5Peter responded and *said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here; let’s make three [c]tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” 6For he did not know how to reply; for they became terrified. 7Then a cloud [d]formed, overshadowing them, and a voice [e]came out of the cloud: “This is My beloved Son; [f]listen to Him!” 8And suddenly they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.

It was a terrific worship moment for those who witnessed this awesome transfiguration! Peter was so enthralled by it, he started making plans for a permanent stay on the mountain top! But the time of worship was over for God, the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ. Now it was time for Jesus to come down from the mountaintop experience, and serve people in the valley of human suffering. Worship is to strengthen us, once we are strengthened, we must move to serve the people. We cannot escape that.

Moses spent 40 days worshipping the Lord on top of mount Sinai, but after that he was summoned to go down and serve the People. He had to take the law of God to the people, and enforce those laws, and judge them. Service must always follow worship.

You cannot stay on mountain top always worshipping. You must come down to serve the people. We cannot cling to Jesus always without serving! He will push us down to the valley of suffering to serve.

Jesus not only wants us to love Him dearly, He wants us to love everyone, and serve them also! We cannot escape loving everyone, including our enemies.

John 15:12-14. 12“**This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.** 13**Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends.** 14**You are My friends if you do what I command you.**

Our love for Christ, and our passionate love and worship of Him must translate into total service to others! Jesus loved His Father. Yet He came down, emptied Himself, and became a servant to serve us. So, should we!

John 21:15-17. 15Now when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you [e]love Me more than these?” He *said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I [f]love You.” He *said to him, “Tend My lambs.” 16He *said to him again, a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you [g]love Me?” He *said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I [h]love You.” He *said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” 17He *said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you [i]love Me?” Peter was [j]hurt because He said to him the third time, “Do you [k]love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I [l]love You.” Jesus *said to him, “Tend My sheep.

Jesus wants us to love Him dearly like Mary. But at the same time, He wants us to serve His people! Our love for the Lord, and service to our brethren must go hand in hand. We cannot leave one or the other.

1 John 3:17,18.17But whoever has worldly goods and sees his brother or sister in need, and closes his [e]heart [f]against him, how does the love of God remain in him? 18Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but indeed and truth.

It is not enough just loving God with our 24-hour prayers and worship. We must roll up our sleeves and show it in action also among the common people.

1 John 4:7-12. 7Beloved, let us love one another; for love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9By this the love of God was revealed [a]in us, that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we may live through Him. 10In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the [b]propitiation for our sins. 11Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is perfected in us.

Our love for God is revealed through our caring love for people. People can see God’s love manifested among us if we have genuine, authentic love for each other.

“if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is perfected in us.” This is what I am pushing us all for. We are so far behind. Why? We put our heart and soul to love God through our prayers and worship fervently, which is fine, but we neglect and ignore people all around us daily. I do not want to pretend to be a saint in this area. I am the chief culprit in this area, and I have a long way to go, and the Lord is working on me. Let us focus on becoming connected with everyone in love and service, that God’s love may be perfected among us!

Mat. 25:41-43. 41“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you accursed people, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; 42for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’

Your passionate prayers and worship must result in service and action. Otherwise, it will turn out to be an empty ritual, and we will be like cloud with no water vapors.

Mat. 5:13-16 You are the salt of the earth....

14“You are the light of the world. A city set on a [e]hill cannot be hidden; 15nor do people light a lamp and put it under a [f]basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

If you are the salt, then people around you must taste your saltiness. If you are the light, then your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Your worship and love for God is important, but your service among people is also equally important. Do not neglect it.

Jesus is the ideal example! He loved God, the Father so much, yet He loved every person, and tried to redeem them. The most amazing thing about Jesus is that how He connected with all kinds of people, Prostitutes, tax collectors, leper, uneducated fishermen, even Pharisees, and scribes. How did He manage to stoop? so low to connect with all kinds of people. This is going to be my sermon topic next time. Can we try to connect with all kinds of people, and love them very much like Jesus did? We are all taught to love God, but we are not taught to love people in a nonjudgmental way. Learn to connect with all people, see their need, and try to touch them by meeting their needs. If we cannot love people whom we see, how can we love God whom we cannot see? Beloved, let us love God as well as love people!

Mountain top worship should last only few days. Don't try to stay there permanently. After strengthened, we must constantly serve people!

Important command of Jesus: love one another as I have loved you! My third sermon will be all about the commandments of Jesus, and our obedience to it!

Conclusion:

Mary loved Jesus passionately. Let us love Him dearly like that!

Worship and prayer are to strengthen us and it must drive us back to ministry of the needy.

Intimate worship of Christ must lead to caring ministry for all kinds of people.

Mountain top experience of worship is to strengthen us temporarily. We must not try to stay there forever. We must come down to the valley to serve the humanity.

Worship and prayers are like the phone chargers. Once we are charged, we must go to work to serve the people!

We shall know genuine Christians by their fruits of Compassionate, caring service for “ALL” people, and their fervent devotion toward Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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