

The Heart of Worship: Treasuring Jesus Above All
The Gospel of John: That You May Believe | John 12:1-11
Southern Hills Baptist Church
April 2, 2017

Introduction: What is worship? How would you define worship? Is it the singing of songs? Is worship being in a church building at a certain time each week with other believers? These certainly can be expressions of worship, however, worship has a lot more to do with our hearts than our voices or our actions. Our text gives us a great picture of what true worship looks like and this example reveals the driving motivation of worship.

Context: In John 11 Jesus just raised Lazarus from the dead after having laid lifeless in a tomb for 4 days. The Pharisees responded to this incredible miracle by plotting Jesus' assassination. This shows how blinding and enslaving sin really is. Those of Jesus' flock responded very differently, which is what we see in our text tonight.

A Dinner for Jesus: Lazarus, Mary, and Martha all wanted to express their deep gratitude for the miracle that Jesus had wrought so they put on a dinner in His honor. Martha was the hostess, serving and making sure everyone was comfortable. Lazarus kept Jesus company and provided fellowship. Mary presented a gift meant to communicate the depth of their gratitude.

A Gift for Jesus:

The centerpiece of this story is the gift given to Jesus by Mary, where Mary poured out a pound of pure nard, a costly and fragrant ointment, on the feet of Jesus, wiping it up with her hair. There are 4 observations we can make about Mary's gift that will teach us about the nature of true worship.

1. Treasuring Jesus with our Treasures

- **Big Money:** Judas notes that a pound of pure nard would be valued at 300 denarii, which is the modern equivalent of \$26,000! That is quite an expensive gift to pour out on someone's feet, isn't it?
- **Expression of Depth:** Mary knew the value of this gift, she had counted the cost. The extravagance of this gift was meant to communicate the depth of her love. She was offering up one of her most valuable possessions to express that Jesus was of greater value to her. Jesus was her True Treasure.
- **Application:** What is it that you treasure/value in this life apart from Christ? Entertainment? A prized possession? Your time? Your family? Financial freedom? How might you use your treasures to show that Jesus is your True and Great Treasure?

2. Communicating the Supremacy of Jesus

- **Smelly, Dirty:** Mary took a very valuable ointment and rather than anointing Jesus' head as would normally be the case, she anointed His feet. The feet that wore sandals on dirt roads and were constantly dirty.
- **His Lease, Our Best:** What are we to take from this? "The least of Jesus is worthy of the best of us. (Piper)" In giving the gift this way Mary was communicating the absolute supremacy of Jesus above all. Does your life communicate the same?

3. Serving as a Living Sacrifice

- **Her Hair, His Feet:** Mary wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair. This is not only striking b/c of the use of her own body to clean Jesus' feet, but this means her hair was down, which went against custom, as this would have been saved for her husband. She didn't care what others thought, she longed to serve Jesus.
- **Humility:** Mary took a posture of incredible humility in the way she served Jesus. She became what Paul describes as a "living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1).
- **Application:** Do you see your passions, possessions, time, and talents as offerings that you can give unto the Lord? Better yet, do you see them all as His and not your own, given to you to steward, to manage, for His glory? How often do the perceptions of others get in the way of you serving Jesus?

4. Foreshadowing of Jesus' Death

- **Preview:** Spikenard was often used to anoint the body of the dead upon burial. Mary's anointing here is a foreshadowing of what is to come in less than a week's time.
- **God's Working:** Just as Caiaphas was unaware of the deeper truth God was communicating through Him, Mary was unaware of what her actions meant beyond the worship she intended. How cool is it that God works through us even when we can't see it?

A Challenge to Jesus: Judas chimed in saying the nard could have been better used on the needs of the poor. The problem was that Judas didn't care about the poor. He was hiding his selfishness behind spiritual platitudes.

A Response from Jesus: Jesus protected Mary by telling Judas to back off so she can keep hold of the awe and love she had for Jesus, as she would need the spiritual strength in the days to come when Jesus died, going against all expectations. His time was limited, so the time that remained was special and He thus invited Mary's extravagant worship.