

**Series: Loving Jesus #1160**

**Title: John 12.3-8**

**Christ Above All**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. When we left off yesterday we had come to the end of verse 3 of John chapter 12. In the scene described for us by the Apostle John we join him, the other disciples, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus as well as Simon, the former leper, and Jesus at Simon's home. They're all there to celebrate Jesus, and to thank Him and praise Him for such compassionate and miraculous ministry like curing this man Simon of his leprosy and raising Lazarus from the dead!

Honoring Jesus Christ: I just wonder, how do you, Christian, celebrate what He has done for you?

We who love Jesus tend to get trapped into thinking that "worship" is what we do Sunday mornings in our church service. As the instruments play and the "worship leader" directs us, we sing our praises to God. But that's only one expression of the believer's worship to God. If you're reserving your worship of the Holy One for Sunday mornings only, then I invite you to seriously consider in what other ways you can tell of His excellent ways, and lift your heart and soul to Him in adoration for who God is! As we have seen in John 12, verses 1-3, the earliest followers of Jesus exalted Him around the supper table. We can too! So please, in your own life, consider doing so. Follow the example set here in the Scripture.

And with that being said, let's return to John 12 at verses 4-5. I am reading now John chapter 12 and verses 4 and 5. After reading this, I'll make comments placing these verses in context. Are you ready to hear God's very Word to you? John 12, at verse 4: **"<sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray [Jesus], said, <sup>5</sup> 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?'"**

Sounds like a fair question, right? That Judas, he just has such a heart for the poor! Ah, but not so fast. There is a little, but very powerful three-letter word at the start of verse 4 that you need to hear emphasized. It is the word "**But...**" B-U-T. But. "**But Judas Iscariot...**" By using this little conjunction, the writer John intends to sharply contrast what Mary has done for Jesus in verse 3 – her *devotion* to the Lord, with the opinion of Judas in verse 4 – his *distaste* for the Lord. This is distaste versus devotion.

And I hope you do remember Mary's bold action in verse 3. Let me read it for you just in case you can't quite remember what she did. John 12, verse 3: **"<sup>3</sup> Mary then took a pound of very costly 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."** We talked about that in detail yesterday.

Mary pours forth the perfume over Christ's whole body in admiration for who He is. And yet, right on the heels (that is, the very next verse) this man Judas Iscariot breaks in and utters the first words the Bible records that he speaks. Yes, the first words out of the mouth of Judas that we read in the timeline of when they were spoken are right here in John 12, verse 5 and he says, **"<sup>5</sup> Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?"**

And how do I know these words reflect a response to Jesus that is one of strong distaste for Christ? Well, let's keep reading. Listen now to verse 6 of John 12. This is John chapter 12 verse 6: **"<sup>6</sup> Now [Judas] 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."** Ah ha. This is a fine detail. Judas is a thief!

Remember that we also discussed previously the estimates on how much this perfume of Mary's was worth and Mark chapter 14 and verse 5 says it was worth **"over three hundred denarii..."** And so when Judas sees an opportunity at three hundred denarii (more than a year's wages), he is ticked off that the perfume was (in his view) wasted on Jesus' body! This is the motivation of his corrupt heart: "Mary! I could have that money for myself!" We must understand this. When Judas says the perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor this is not an admirable statement made from the motivation to help the poor! No. He's driven by his own greed!

Listen to Bible commentator Colin Kruse, (quote) “Judas’ disapproval of Mary’s action related not to loss of opportunity to do more for the poor but to his own loss of opportunity to steal from the common purse.” I’ll repeat that, because it is so well said. “Judas’ disapproval of Mary’s action related not to loss of opportunity to do more for the poor but to his own loss of opportunity to steal from the common purse.” You see, the motivation of Judas is dark not bright. It is evil not good. It is meant not to honor the poor, but to dishonor the Christ!

And that is exactly why Jesus speaks firmly in the next two verses. Hear now the words of Jesus in John chapter 12 and verses 7 and 8: “**7 Therefore 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.’**” Did you hear Jesus there? “**Let her alone...**”

The Lord quickly and defiantly defends His disciple Mary. In other words, “Stop Judas. I know the true motivation behind your sweet sounding words!” Jesus calls out Judas and the other disciples for the way they dishonor Jesus by seeming to side with the poor. The point here is not that Jesus is against serving the poor. Neither is Mary! When you read Jesus and watch Jesus in the Gospels it will be abundantly clear to you that He loves and serves the poor.

This is in keeping with His divine nature. Listen to what God says to us directly about service to the poor. Proverbs 14, verse 31: “**He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.**” On a Friday, tired as you are likely to be, let me repeat the Word of God. Proverbs 14, verse 31: “**He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.**” Do you want to honor God? Then it’s simple: be gracious to the needy, give to the poor, and serve them.

Now you say well, “I am poor!” Fair enough. But there is always someone poorer than you. Be gracious to him or her. That’s the message from God and Jesus perfectly and in every way obeyed His Father. I say it again: Jesus is not against giving three hundred or so denarii to those who have not. But He is opposed to picking on Mary, because He knows why Judas is saying this. He sees through to the motivation of the dark heart of Judas.

In John 12, verse 8 Jesus has said, “**...you do not always have Me.**” I’ll just insert here in our study of this passage, that these are prophetic words. Jesus is once again telling this group at Simon’s house: I am going to die. Jesus is predicting His own crucifixion, which is now just days away. This is His final week with them in the flesh. In other words, you need to prioritize Me over even the poor!

Christ, as always, both then and now is more important than the poor, because Jesus reigns and rules supreme over all people: rich and poor and middle income! We are all subject to Him. He is more important than all of us. And so let us not be like Judas and try to – in a very smooth manner – make ourselves look good by doing good deeds for the poor, even giving a large sum of money – all the while with such strong distaste for Jesus Christ!

I’ve met people like this in churches. They do not love Jesus. They do not even have genuine saving faith in Him. But there they are being very philanthropic, giving generously and even large sums of money to (quote) “help those less fortunate.” But, even though they give their gifts via the church, they honor not the Lord of the church. They give to make themselves look good, and to get a tax-deductible receipt! Let’s monitor the motivations of our own hearts! Let’s be aware that sometimes we think like Judas Iscariot.

By going further in John 12 today and meeting Judas I am not launching us into an in-depth look at him. The reason I have mentioned him today is to contrast Mary to Judas. Mary loved Jesus. And Judas betrayed Jesus. And next week I’ll start off saying a little more about Mary as we continue to prepare for the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

Today I’ll leave you with the words one of my favorite Bible commentators, F.B. Meyer. Here’s what he wrote of Mary: “And could [Mary] ever forget that [Jesus] had summoned her brother from the grave? There was no doubt the strong pure love of her heart to Jesus, the man; but shining through this, as light through air, was the devout reverence of the believer [Mary] to the Saviour, of the servant [Mary] to the Lord.”

Mary of Bethany gives us a lot to think about. Primarily, how do we treat Jesus? If we love Him, do we show Him? I am convicted by her action at this dinner. I hope that you are also, and that together, we too will show our love for Christ. Join us again on Monday for God Is!

---END---