

Series: Jesus, At Night #1670

Title: John 12

Jesus Dines at Night

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. I hope you have been with us as last time we established more details about a specific place, called Bethany, and specific people – friends of Jesus whom Jesus loved – Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. We read about them in John’s Gospel chapter 11. And in Luke’s Gospel chapter 10. Today we will meet up with them once again. These are *some* of the friends with whom Jesus will share fellowship, food, and some rest before His betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion at the end of His earthly life. He will spend this time with them *at night*. Jesus in the night time is the theme of our recent teaching.

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I want us to pick-up the reading in the Gospel of John, chapter 11, verses 53 and 54. I will comment and then also read verse 55. Do keep your place here because we will also be reading in John 12, as well. But first we pick up after the Lord resurrects Lazarus from the dead. This is John 11, verse 53, **“So from that day on they planned together to kill Him. ⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.”** Sadly, but in keeping with their animosity towards Christ, the Jewish religious leaders are so outraged that Jesus has raised the dead that they plot to kill Him. Because the time was not right for Jesus to die, He withdraws with His disciples to a city called Ephraim. This is about twelve miles (or about 20 kilometers) from Jerusalem.

There is a gap of time, and then verse 55. Between John 11, verse 54 and John 11, verse 55 is Luke’s account of the life of Jesus chapters 17-19. That’s a little tidbit for those of you who want to know the specific timeline for these events in Christ’s life, a detail I am, let’s just say, obsessed with. I *love* figuring out how all four Gospels work together to present to us our Lord in all His glory. Anyway, let me read verse 55. Remember, there is a gap in time and then, **“Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves.”** This is the third Passover mentioned in John’s Gospel and it is at this Passover when Jesus will die.

So, verse 1 of John chapter 12 begins as such, **“Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.”** Ah, here comes Christ again *to...Bethany!* The time is now right for Jesus and His disciples to walk back to Jerusalem, via the village called Bethany where Lazarus was because Jesus had raised him from the dead. And guess who else is there? Verse 2 of John 12, **“So they made [Jesus] a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. ³ 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.”** You heard it. Martha and Mary were with Lazarus at Bethany when Jesus arrives. Once again, these friends converge at the Bethany Bed & Breakfast.

It is dinnertime, the evening, and in the dark “they made [Jesus] a supper there.” Matthew and Mark tell us this was actually in the home of a man named Simon the Leper. This dinner party did not take place at Martha’s house. Although Simon still lived in Bethany. I am reading Matthew 26, verses 6 and 7, **“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, ⁷ a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined *at the table*.”** John tells us that woman was Mary, Martha’s sister. So we get key details from all the Gospels combined.

This was six days before the Passover, so on Saturday. The Lord may have arrived after sundown on Friday. They are going to eat this meal together and then spend the night there, actually more than one night. But do not let me get ahead of ourselves. While the enemies of Jesus are looking to capture and kill Him, this group is looking to honor Him. The Lord has at this supper Lazarus, whom He has raised from the dead. Lazarus, the former dead man. And I think we can safely assume He has Simon the Leper, actually Simon the former leper, because if he had leprosy there would be no way for him to host this meal, given how ostracized lepers were. Friends, Jesus had healed this Simon of his leprosy. Imagine these guests! A former dead man. A former leprosy man. Both immediately healed by the Christ! What dinner conversation they must have had.

Also, of course, along with Jesus are His twelve disciples. They're all His friends, well, except for one, Judas. Verse 2, "Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him." Martha, in keeping with her well established personality (remember what we saw of her in Luke 10), is serving, something that here the Lord welcomes. And Lazarus is reclining at the table with His friend and Savior Jesus. Typical of this meal they lay on one elbow with their heads towards the table and their legs and feet stretched out. And then there is Mary. Along with her she has brought a "pound of very costly perfume of pure nard."

A pound then is the equivalent of about 12 ounces now, so quite a bit. Matthew says it was in an "alabaster vial." This was made of a very fine marble, likely from Egypt. Mark's Gospel says this was worth "over three hundred denarii," which is the equivalent of nearly a year's wage. The nard was a fragrant oil extracted from a plant native to India or maybe China. So it had been imported from a long way off. This indicates that Mary had some financial resources and she is willing to spend them all on Christ who is reclining there. Mark says she broke the expensive vial, so she is holding *nothing* back! Mary breaks this prized possession and "anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." This was pure nard, so no wonder it filled the whole house with its beautiful fragrance.

Just today, on my morning walk, a woman passed by me on her way to work and her perfume was so strong it wafted in the air behind her and I smelled it for quite some time after she was gone. Fortunately, the smell was tolerable. Personally, I find some perfumes sickening. Anyway, this made me think of what this home in Bethany must have smelled like after Mary's act of pure love and devotion.

According to Matthew and Mark, Mary anointed Jesus' head. John says here, His feet. I do not see a contradiction. Rather the perfume was poured over Christ's head and then down His body and she left some to pour over his feet. And what was really shocking about what Mary did was she "wiped His feet with her hair." For a Jewish woman to let her hair down in public was considered at best in very poor taste and even immoral, but Mary is so enraptured with Jesus that she doesn't care. She just wants to express her love to Him. Second, to wash someone's feet was considered the very lowest of the low as a task that you could do for someone. Think of the disciples at the Last Supper, their reaction, when Jesus starts washing their feet!

In Mark chapter 14 and verse 9 Jesus says this, "**Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.**" Let me repeat this. Regarding Mary's act of love towards Him, Jesus says, "Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her." And of course, Christ was right. After all, we're talking about Mary and the broken vial of pure nard today, aren't we? She and her love for Christ is remembered throughout the whole world.

One footnote, if I may, this is *not* the same story that Luke tells in Luke chapter 7. While similar, there are many differences. These are two different episodes in the life of Christ.

Well, I have wanted us to see yet another time where Jesus is at night and, in this case, what is done for Him. The text says, "They made Jesus a supper there." So simple, so poignant. Our Lord enjoyed fellowship, food, and rest with His friends at night in a place called Bethany. And we will talk more about this when we are next together, because God Is. ---END---