



A Gift of Love

Prayer:

Dear God we adore you and give thanks for the ways you have blessed our lives. Thank you for being a promise keeper and a covenant maker. Please help us to live faithfully as covenant people. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen

Connect to God:

Where have you seen God at work in your life this week?

Connect to Neighbor:

What good have you done for someone else this week?

Connect to Scripture: John 12:1-8

Mary anoints Jesus' feet

12 Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, home of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. **2** Lazarus and his sisters hosted a dinner for him. Martha served and Lazarus was among those who joined him at the table. **3** Then Mary took an extraordinary amount, almost three-quarters of a pound,^[a] of very expensive perfume

made of pure nard. She anointed Jesus' feet with it, then wiped his feet dry with her hair. The house was filled with the aroma of the perfume. **4** Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), complained, **5** "This perfume was worth a year's wages!^[b] Why wasn't it sold and the money given to the poor?" (**6** He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He carried the money bag and would take what was in it.)

7 Then Jesus said, "Leave her alone. This perfume was to be used in preparation for my burial, and this is how she has used it. **8** You will always have the poor among you, but you won't always have me."

Connect Text in Context:

Previously in the gospel of John, Jesus has risen Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, from the dead. News have spread to the religious elites that many Jews believed in Jesus because of this amazing miracle. The religious elites viewed Jesus as a threat to their power. They also worried that the people would rebel against Rome which would lead to the destruction of their religious sites. So, they began to plot to kill Jesus. Mary and Martha have the opposite response to the miracle. Mary and Martha threw a party in Jesus' honor for raising their

brother from the dead.

Connect to Practice: Remember & Celebrate

Mary blessed the Lord, Jesus. **Bless: to praise, petition for divine favor, wish someone well, convey favor. (verb)**

A blessing is a particular goodness received or given. (noun)

The spiked nard that Mary uses to anoint Jesus' feet has anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties. Just consider all the places that Jesus walked. Up until Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus walks everywhere, even on water.

Can you imagine the condition of his feet? Remember Jesus is fully God and fully human. Jesus had the full range of human needs. This is the first time in the gospel that we see the Healer is the recipient of healing. Throughout the gospels it's Jesus words and Jesus' hands that provide healing. Here Mary takes her hands and anoints Jesus' feet. She pours out her love for Jesus. She blesses Jesus.

My friends Mary's actions are grounded in the gratitude she had for Jesus. Jesus had delivered her brother from the grip of death. What has Jesus done for us today? We each need to ask ourselves how can I bless the Lord? Martha had spiked nard. What do we have? We have time, meaning our presence. We have gifts both financial and spiritual gifts, witness, and prayers. We pour out our love in those ways! We also pour out our love on the body of Christ. The body of Christ are the church. How we manage the resources and the people that God has

entrusted to us is a reflection of the love we have God and each other.

Judas complains that Mary's actions are a waste. The cost of the perfume was a year's wages for a laborer. Three hundred denarii are worth \$17,400 today. The average yearly salary in Palestine today is \$20,520.

Judas makes a good point. Mary's actions go far beyond what was necessary. He makes the case that the oil should be sold, and the proceeds be used to care for the poor. First, we know that Judas intends of stealing the money from the treasury and has little regard for the poor. The least of these will always be with us and we have a responsibility to minister to their needs.

Secondly, Jesus knows his time to endure the cross is drawing near. He tells Mary to save the remaining spiked nard for his burial preparation.

Mary demonstrates extravagant generosity because she has already made Jesus the king of her heart. Last week we talked about Gilgal being the place where the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River and erected a memorial of twelve stones. Gilgal became the sacred place where they anointed Kings. At Gilgal Samuel anointed Saul King. David was anointed King at Gilgal. Because Jesus was already the king of Mary's heart, Mary anoints Jesus King. This sets us up for next week, Palm Sunday when people shout "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel."

All I'm trying to say is that when Jesus becomes the King of hearts we pour out our love for the Triune God, the Body of Christ, and our neighbors extravagantly.

Connect Heads:

Define the word “blessing” in your own words.

What are some ways that we can bless God?

What are some ways we can bless the Body of Christ? Our neighbors?

Why did Mary use such expensive oil to anoint Jesus’ feet?

Is there a particular insight that you would like to share from the sermon, from the scripture, or from the small group curriculum?

Connect Heart:

Share a time when you received an extravagant gift. What did you learn about God? Yourself? Others?

Share a time when you gave an extravagant gift. What did you learn about God? Yourself? Others?

Who you most identify with in the scripture: Jesus, Mary, Martha, Lazarus or Judas? Why?

Connect Hands:

Did you cause harm in word or deed to someone this week? (self-examination). If so, confess your sin to God, then seek to reconcile with your brother or sister.

Share your prayer concerns and celebrations.

Ask a member of the group to pray for the concerns and give thanks for the celebrations.

Notes Sections

Prayer Concerns:

Celebrations:

Daily Reflection Questions

Where have I seen God at work in my life today?

What is one thing that I am thankful for?

What is one thing that broke my heart today?

What is one good thing did I do for someone else today?