

Introduction

This is my 39th year of pastoring, and one observation that I have made about worship is that most people have different ideas about what it should be. Some would tell me the worship was too slow and had too much “worship” music. They wanted more lively praise songs. Some would tell me that there were too many praise songs, and not enough “worship” songs. Some would say the music was too loud. I have had others tell me that you have to fill the room, and to turn the music up. I have others that tell me that we need more hymns, because they are so rich in meaning. Some would say that periodically we need the whole service to be praise music, with no message at all. Others would tell me that we need less music, and to spend more time in the word. What I have gathered from all of this is that most people in the church have opinions, but very few have an understanding of worship. In our passage today, we are going to look at three different expressions of worship.

Our passage today is about Jesus’ return to Bethany. There are several different scenes, and I have focused on the people in each of the scenes. In the first scene, there are many Jews going up to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves, and they are seeking for Jesus. We are going to look at some characteristics of seekers. In the second scene, Jesus is at a supper at Simon’s house. Lazarus is reclining with Jesus at the table. Martha is busy serving, and Mary anoints Jesus’ feet with expensive perfume. They are all worshipping Jesus, but in different ways. We are going to explore how they worshiped God in their unique ways. Third, we are going to look at the dangerous. We have Judas Iscariot at the supper and he is getting ready to betray Jesus. There is another group of dangerous people, the chief priests and Pharisees, who are planning to put Jesus to death. We will look at all three of these groups of people and then make some applications for our lives.

The People Along the Way

1. The Seekers (Jn 11:55-57, 9-11)
2. The Worshipers (Jn 12:1-3)
3. The Dangerous (Jn 12:4-11)

(Jn 11:55–57) “Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. {56} So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?” {57} Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.”

(Jn 12:1-3) “Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. {2} So they made Him 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.”

(Jn 12:4-8) “But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, {5} “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?” {6} Now he 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. {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.”

(Jn 12:9-11) “The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. {10} But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; {11} because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

1. **The Seekers** (Jn 11:55-57)

The first group of people that we encounter in our text are the seekers. The Feast of the Passover was near. The ESV says that the Passover of the Jews was at hand. That is the biggest of the three required feasts that Jews went to. There would be Jews from all over Israel, and other countries that would make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Some say that as many as two million Jews would be in town for that Feast. We find that many of them went before the Passover to purify themselves. People that are seeking God do not drag in at the last minute; they usually show up early. They are excited and enthusiastic and keen on learning more about God.

(Jn 11:55) “Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves.”

These seekers went before the Passover to purify themselves. The Greek word is hagnizo (Strong’s G48), which means to purify. It comes from the word, hagnos (Strong’s G40), which means holy. They went to make themselves holy. For the Jews, this meant that they would give sin offerings if needed. They would cleanse themselves of any known sin, and consecrate themselves to the Lord. They would also wash their bodies and their clothes, which were two things mentioned in the Law about purifying themselves. (See Exodus 19:10-14 and Leviticus 14:8-9.) These seekers were willing to go the extra mile to learn more about following God.

(Jn 11:56) “So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?”

We also see that they were not just going to the Feast; they were seeking for Jesus. They had seen or heard Jesus, or heard from others about Jesus. They were wanting to know more about Jesus. They were hoping that He would be coming to the Feast. They said to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?” They knew that the Pharisees were seeking to put Him to death. The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him. With this in mind, they were wondering if Jesus was going to come, and they were hoping that He would, because they were seeking for Jesus.

(Jn 11:57) “Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.”

When our text ended last week, the Jews had planned together to kill Jesus. Therefore, He no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim. He stayed there in the time between the Feast of Dedication in December until the Feast of Passover which was now approaching. Some scholars believe He went to Galilee and made some other trips during that time.

(Jn 11:53–54) “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.”

Jesus was also coming to the Feast of Passover. All through the Gospel of John we have been reading that His hour or time had not come, but now is the time. Jesus is the Passover Lamb, and He has been telling His disciples that He will be arrested and put to death, and will rise again from the dead. He knows that He is going to give up His life at the Feast, and He is also coming. To go from Ephraim to Jerusalem, Jesus would have passed along the city of Jericho. John does not mention it, but Luke records Jesus’ trip through Jericho on His way to the Passover. As He entered and was passing through, He saw a seeker by the name of Zaccheus. He was a chief tax collector and he was rich, but he was also a seeker. He heard that Jesus was passing through, and he was trying to see who Jesus was. He was unable to see because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus. That is what a seeker does. A seeker comes early to the feast and is seeking to find Jesus. A seeker climbs a tree so that he can see Jesus. Seekers ask questions to find out more. They have open minds and are genuinely interested in finding God.

(Lk 19:1–4) “He entered Jericho and was passing through. {2} And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. {3} Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. {4} So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.”

When Jesus came by, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” Zaccheus came down and received Jesus gladly. Zaccheus became a believer and Jesus said, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Jesus had come to seek and to save that which was lost. Jesus is still seeking the lost, and He is still reaching out to those who are seeking to find Him. We are God’s servants and ambassadors now. We are His representatives, and we are to reach out to those who are seeking to find Jesus.

(Lk 19:5-10) “When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” {6} And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. {7} When they saw it, they all *began* to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” {8} Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” {9} And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. {10} For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Our passage today ends with some additional seekers. The large crowd of the Jews that had come to Jerusalem for the Feast learned that Jesus was in Bethany, which is two miles from Jerusalem. They went to Bethany for two reasons. First, they were seeking to find Jesus. Second, they came not just for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also seek Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. The news about Lazarus had spread everywhere, and people wanted to see this man that had died, been buried for four days, and then raised from the dead. Nothing like this had ever been done, and these seekers were curious. They wanted to see for themselves the man who did this, and the man to whom it was done.

(Jn 12:9–11) “The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. {10} But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; {11} because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.”

Sharing testimonies is a wonderful way to reach people. Many of these people may not have been seekers until they heard about Lazarus. Once they heard this testimony, their appetite was wetted for the things of God. They wanted to hear more. They wanted to see for themselves.

In John 4, when the Samaritan woman at the well came back to Sychar and gave a testimony, many believed. They also went out to seek Jesus. They asked Jesus to stay with them, and He stayed there two days. Many more believed because of His word, and they said to the Samaritan woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.” We should give our testimonies, and then we should bring those seekers to Jesus. That is what the woman at the well did. She testified to them, and some of them believed, and others became seekers, and she brought them to Jesus, and they became believers.

(Jn 4:39–42) “From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that I *have* done.” {40} So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they were asking Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. {41} Many more believed because of His word; {42} and they were saying to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.”

2. The Worshipers (Jn 12:1-3)

The second group of people that Jesus encounters on the way to the Feast are the true worshipers. These are believers. These are those who already have a relationship with Jesus. Each of these worshipers are unique, have unique personalities, and worship the Lord in their own unique way.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. John could have said that this is where Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were from, but he spotlights Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Even though Lazarus is mentioned, the next verse says, “So they made Him a supper there...” They are going to include Lazarus, Martha, Mary, Simon the former leper, and Jesus’ disciples. We know that Simon is there because Matthew and Mark state that this supper is being held in his home. The only problem that I have with their accounts is that they call him Simon the leper, and he was actually the Simon that had been healed from leprosy. He was no longer a leper, or they would not have been eating at his house. We don’t know the exact number of people at that supper, but it was a large group.

(Jn 12:1-3) “Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. {2} So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.”

(Mt 26:6) “Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper,”

(Mk 14:3) “While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table...”

Some scholars believe that this was at the house of Lazarus, and that this is a separate anointing of Jesus than the account in Matthew 26 and Mark 14. Those two accounts mention that Jesus' head was anointed, and in this account, we read that His feet were anointed. However, most scholars believe this is the same account, and that this anointing was also on His head, and ran down His shoulders and body to His feet, and that Mary wiped the anointing that had run on His feet with her hair. After studying the passages, I have to agree with the majority of scholars that say that this is a parallel account, not a separate one.

Some believe that Simon was somehow related to Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Some suggest that Martha was married to Simon, and that is why she is serving the meal. Others suggest that Lazarus lives at Simon's house, and is perhaps married to one of his sisters. All of that is speculation. What we do know is that this special dinner is being held at Simon, the ex-leper's house. He is practicing hospitality, and hosting the large group of disciples.

a. Worshiping with thanksgiving

Lazarus is at the table reclining with Jesus. This celebration supper is in honor of Jesus for bringing Lazarus back from the dead. This dinner is a way of showing thanksgiving to Jesus. They did not wait until the end of November for a Thanksgiving meal; they had a thanksgiving meal right then. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus are full of gratitude for what Jesus did, and they have this dinner to honor Jesus.

There are many ways of worshiping God. We worship God with our tithes and offerings. We honor Him with our first fruits. Solomon wrote that we are to honor the Lord with our wealth and from the first of all our produce. That is just one of many ways to honor God.

(Pr 3:9) "Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce;"

I want to turn to Psalm 50 for a minute to highlight worshiping God with thanksgiving. God reproved Israel for their worship of Him. They were worshiping God with their sacrifices and burnt offerings, but they were living unholy and ungrateful lives. Therefore, He said, "I do not reprove you for your sacrifices, and your burnt offerings are continually before Me." Then He said that all the animals belong to Him, and if He was hungry, He would not tell them. Then He told Him how He would like them to worship Him. He said, "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High... He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; and to him who orders his way aright I shall show the salvation of God." We honor God by living holy lives and offering up sacrifices of thanksgiving. God wants us to worship with our whole heart and our entire lives. He wants our worship to be sincere and from a heart of gratitude.

(Ps 50:8–23) "I do not reprove you for your sacrifices, and your burnt offerings are continually before Me. {9} "I shall take no young bull out of your house nor male goats out of your folds. {10} "For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. {11} "I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine. {12} "If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all it contains. {13} "Shall I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of male goats? {14} "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High... {23} He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders *his* way *aright* I shall show the salvation of God."

That is what Martha, Mary, Lazarus, and Simon had. Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, and He had healed Simon of his leprosy. They were full of gratitude for what God had done for them. Martha and Mary were also full of gratitude for what Jesus had done for their brother and for Simon.

When David brought the ark back to Israel, “he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, even to celebrate and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel.” There were priests who were there to offer burnt offerings, but he chose Heman and Jeduthun to specifically give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness. That was their full-time job, to worship God with thanksgivings. Sacrifices of thanksgiving are especially pleasing to the Lord.

(1 Ch 16:4) “He appointed some of the Levites *as* ministers before the ark of the Lord, even to celebrate and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel:”

(1 Ch 16:41) “With them *were* Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the Lord, because His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

Thanksgiving and praise go hand in hand. In Psalm 100:4, we learn that we are to enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Both are important, and taking time to bless the Lord for all His many benefits and blessings in our lives is a great way to begin our worship, and to live our lives.

(Ps 100:4) “Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.”

(Ps 103:2) “Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits;”

In 1 Thessalonians, we are taught to give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will for our lives. It does not matter what our spiritual gift is; we are called to worship God with our thanksgiving.

(1 Th 5:18) “in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

It does not matter what our economic or social status is; we are called to worship God with our thanksgiving. Like Lazarus, we all have reason to give thanks to God for our new life. We were dead in our sins, and now we have life in Jesus. Like Simon, we had an incurable disease called sin, and Jesus has healed us from our sins. In Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter, we have been healed of our sins by His stripes. We have so much to give thanks to the Lord about.

(Is 53:4–5) “Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. {5} But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.”

(1 Pe 2:24) “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

b. Worshiping with service

The second way that we see this group worshiping Jesus is with service. John records that they made Him a supper there. Someone paid for the meal. Someone brought in all the things required. We do not know who they includes, but Martha was probably involved in the preparation, not just the serving. Martha was known for her serving, and she is worshiping the Lord through her service.

(Jn 12:2) “So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.”

In Luke 10, we have an account of Jesus being welcomed by Martha into her home. Martha was doing all the preparations, while Mary was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. Martha was distracted with all her preparations and complained to the Lord that Mary had left her to do all the serving alone. She asked Jesus to tell her to help her. The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” Martha gets a bad rap because of this account. Yes, she was bothered that Mary was not helping her, but Jesus’ main point was Mary was fellowshiping and listening to Jesus. Our relationship is more important than our service or our giving, or anything else. God is looking foremost for our worship of Him, and our relationship with Him. We should serve Him, and our service to Him should be unto Him as an act of worship.

(Lk 10:38–42) “Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. {39} She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. {40} But 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 all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” {41} But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; {42} but *only* one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

In Romans 12:1, Paul urges us to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, as our spiritual service of worship. The Greek word for worship here is *latreia* (Strong’s G2999), which means to serve. It is different than *prokuneo* (Strong’s G4352), the normal word for worship. Our service is a form of worship. The rest of Romans 12 is about spiritual gifts, and how each one of us is a different part of the same body. We all have different gifts, and we are to offer our lives, our service to Him, as living and holy sacrifice, which is our spiritual service of worship. Martha is a servant, and her serving is an expression of worship to the Lord. The meal is hosted by Simon, who is practicing hospitality, which is also mentioned in Romans 12.

(Ro 12:1) “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.”

(Ro 12:6–12) “Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; {7} if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; {8} or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.... {12} rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.”

c. Worshipping with extravagant giving

The third expression of worship in this passage is through Mary. She worshiped Jesus with an extravagant offering. She took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. As a result, the whole house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. The perfume she anointed Jesus with was made of pure nard. Nard is a rare herb, grown in the high pasture lands of the Himalayan mountains in India, Tibet, and China. Because it is so rare, it is very expensive. It was shipped in an alabaster jar or container for safe travel and keeping. Typically, this type of perfume, which was very strong, was used for burials to compensate for the smell of a deteriorating body.

(Jn 12:3) “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.”

We get an idea of how costly this perfume was by the statement that Judas Iscariot made. He said that the perfume could have been sold for three hundred denarii. A denarii was equivalent to a day’s wages, so three hundred denarii was about a year’s wages. “According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data, the average American income in 2024 is \$72,400.00, reflecting national income trends.”¹

(Jn 12:4-5) “But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, {5} “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?”

Mary gave an extravagant offering in her worship of Jesus. Not everyone can give an expensive alabaster container of pure nard, costing seventy-thousand dollars. However, let me give you God’s perspective on extravagant offerings. In Luke 21, Jesus was at the treasury in the temple and was watching everyone put in gifts into the trumpet offering boxes. He saw the rich putting in their gifts, and then He saw a poor widow put in two leptas, which are small copper coins. These two small coins were not worth much, maybe a few cents, but notice what Jesus said about her offering. “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on. This was an extravagant offering coming from a very poor widow. God looks at more than just the numerical size of the offering.

(Lk 21:1-4) “And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. {2} And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. {3} And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all *of them*; {4} for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”

A number of years ago, when I was pastoring another church, we were raising money to remodel the auto parts store into a functional church facility. I noticed that one family put in an offering of \$5.00, and I was overwhelmed with joy. This family did not have much money. The man did not earn much money, and they were living in poverty. For them, this five-dollar offering was like the widow’s mite; it was a huge offering in God’s eyes.

¹ <https://www.consumersshield.com/articles/average-american-income>

3. **The Dangerous** (Jn 12:4-9)

When Jesus sent out the twelve apostles, He gave them authority to heal, instructions of what to do, and a warning to beware of men who will be against them. (See Matthew 10:1-23.) He said, “I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues. There are going to be some people that we encounter on the way that are seeking God, but there are also going to be those that come against us.

(Mt 10:16–17) “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. {17} But beware of men, for they will hand you over to *the* courts and scourge you in their synagogues;”

Jesus has two groups of dangerous men to deal with at the Feast. The first is Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples. The other group is made up of the chief priests, Sadducees, and Pharisees.

a. **The Betrayers** (Jn 12:4-8)

The betrayer is represented by Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus’ disciples. He was intending to betray Jesus, and the anointing of Jesus with the expensive perfume was the last straw for him. When Mary anointed Jesus with it, he said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?” Then, John gives an important note about Judas. He said that Judas was not concerned about the poor people; he was a thief, and would steal the money out of the money box. Being a disciple of Jesus was an opportunity for him to profit. Mary’s offering was something that he could not steal; it was a lost opportunity, and he was upset about it. We find out later that he betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces (shekels) of silver, which was worth about 120 denarii. Mary’s offering was two and a half times more valuable than the silver he received for betraying Jesus.

(Jn 12:4-6) “But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, {5} “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?” {6} Now he 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.”

After Lazarus made that remark, Jesus said, “Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.” Jesus knew that He was going to be betrayed by Judas. He knew that His hour had come. He knew that He was the Passover Lamb. He knew that He would die on the cross, and be buried. He knew that He would be raised from the dead on the third day. And He knew the purpose of the perfume that He had been anointed with.

(Jn 12:7-8) “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.”

In Mark’s account, we find that Jesus made a couple of other remarks. He said, “She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. 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.”

(Mk 14:8-9) “She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. {9} 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.”

Betrayal is considered one of the hardest emotional hardships. The closer that you let someone into your life, the more pain there is from betrayal. There is a loss of trust, and oftentimes that is very difficult to trust others again. Betrayal is a violation of our safety. Betrayal can often bring about feelings of anger and grief. We do not sense any of this in Jesus’ remarks. He simply told Judas to leave Mary alone. There was no animosity towards Judas, and no bitterness. Jesus knew everything that was going to take place, and how it was going to take place, and yet He did not take offense. Jesus came as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, including the sin of betrayal.

b. The Persecutors (Jn 12:9-11)

We are introduced to the persecutors in John 11:57. The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.” Jesus had been dealing with these religious rulers for over three years. They had tried to cause Him to stumble with their questions and tests. They tried to seize Him. They had sent officers to seize Him. They teamed up with the Herodians for the sake of destroying Jesus. They did everything they could to destroy Him, so this was nothing new.

(Jn 11:57) “Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.”

When the large crowd of Jews learned that Jesus was in Bethany, they came to see both Him and Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. On account of Lazarus, many of the Jews were believing in Jesus. Therefore, the chief priests planned on putting Lazarus to death also. Jesus had told His disciples that if they persecuted Him, they will persecute them also. This was to be expected.

(Jn 12:9-11) “The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. {10} But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; {11} because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.”

(Jn 15:20) “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

Jesus had reached out to these religious leaders, even though they were trying to kill Him. He was patient with them, and took no personal offense. When Jesus was on the cross, He said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” It was the Roman soldiers who were putting Him to death, so it certainly applies to them. But we know that Jesus did not just die for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world, which included the sins of these religious leaders who had put Him to death.

(Lk 23:34) “But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.”

Conclusion and Applications

Jesus came across all kinds of people in this short account. He came across those who were seekers, and were curious. They wanted to see Jesus. They wanted to learn more about Him. They also wanted to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had brought back to life after being buried for four days. Like Jesus, we will come across seekers, and we need recognize that they are seekers. They ask questions, and they are interested in spiritual things. They are enthusiastic and are willing to come to church, or to other church activities. Second, we also need to be ready to lead them to Jesus. We need to share testimonies with them. We need to share the gospel message with them.

Jesus also came across friends and other believers. He had a meal with Simon, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. These were people He knew well, and had ministered to. He had healed Simon of his leprosy. He had raised Lazarus from the dead. He had developed relationships with these believers.

We are those believers who are part of His family. Like Simon and Lazarus, we need to honor Jesus and show gratitude for giving us life. We need to give thanks for healing us of our sins. We need to render thanks for all the benefits that He has given to us. We also need to worship the Lord with our acts of service. It may be the gift of helps, but when it is done unto the Lord, it is an act of worship, and it honors God. It may be the gift of service, like Martha had, and if it is unto the Lord, it is an act of worship. It may be the gift of hospitality, and when you bring people into your home and do it as unto the Lord, it is an act of worship. We are to present our bodies as living and holy sacrifices, which is our spiritual service of worship.

We are also to worship the Lord with our gifts and offerings. Mary gave an extravagant gift, a precious perfume from nard that was worth about a year's wages. She was not concerned with the cost; it was given out of love for Jesus. It was an act of worship. Like Mary, we need to give our best to Jesus. We need to honor Him with our tithes and offerings.

Jesus also came across those who would betray Him, and those who would ultimately put Him to death. He showed no animosity towards them. He remained calm and focused on His mission, which was to lay His life down to take away the sins of the world. He came to bring forgiveness to us for our sins, and His attitude towards Judas and those that persecuted Him was forgiveness. As He died on the cross, He said, "Father forgive them." Just as Jesus forgave those that betrayed and those that persecuted Him, we also need to forgive those that try to harm us. We need to be aware of them, and pray for them. We need to forgive them. We need to continue to point them to Jesus, but we need to keep and maintain pure hearts.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for this passage about Your trip to Bethany. Thank You for the examples that Simon, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary gave us. Help us to be worshipers. Help us to worship You with our thanksgivings. Help us to worship You with our gifts and our services. May all that we do be done as unto You, as acts of worship. May You be honored through our lives and our worship. And when we encounter those who persecute us, or do us harm, help us to be quick to forgive. Help us to shine brightly when things are dark around us. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- Simon, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary all worshiped Jesus in different ways. Which form of worship do you most identify with?
- What are some things that you are thankful for? How do you show your gratitude to the Lord for these things?
- Are you aware of some seekers in your relational network? What are some ways that tipped you off that they are seeking to know God?
- How are you reaching out to these seekers? What are you doing to bring them to Jesus?
- Have you ever been betrayed by someone close to you? Was it a difficult time for you? How did you move on and get healed from that experience?
- Jesus said that if they persecute Him, they will persecute us also. (Jn 15:20) Paul wrote that all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted. (2 Ti 3:12) Have you ever been persecuted, and how did you respond to it?

The People Along the Way

Introduction (Jn 11:55–12:11)

1. **The Seekers** (Jn 11:55-57, Lk 19:1–10, Jn 12:9–11, Jn 4:39–42)
2. **The Worshipers** (Jn 12:1-3, Mt 26:6, Mk 14:3)
 - a. Worshiping with thanksgiving (Pr 3:9, Ps 50:8-23, 1 Ch 16:4, 16:41, Ps 100:4, 103:2, 1 Th 5:18, Is 53:4–5 1 Pe 2:24)
 - b. Worshiping with service (Jn 12:2, Lk 10:38–42, Ro 12:1, 12:6–12)
 - c. Worshiping with extravagant giving (Jn 12:3-5, Lk 21:1–4)
3. **The Dangerous** (Jn 12:4-9, Mt 10:16–17)
 - a. The Betrayers (Jn 12:4-8, Mk 14:8-9)
 - b. The Persecutors (Jn 11:57, 12:9-11, 15:20, Lk 23:34)

Conclusion and Applications