

MONDAY, MARCH 26

JESUS IS ANOINTED (JOHN 12:1-11)

After the events in John 11 where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Jesus did not move around publically with ease. Crowds would gather, and opposition sought to arrest and kill Jesus. As the Passover time approached, Jesus came to Bethany to visit friends, Lazarus, Martha and Mary. They celebrated their time together with a dinner in Jesus's honor where the usual happened. Martha served while Mary spent time with Jesus. Then, the unusual happened. Mary had a half liter of expensive perfume that cost approximately a year's wage for a laborer, and she used it to anoint the feet of Jesus. If you decided to spend \$30,000 on expensive perfume, would you pour it on someone else's feet?

Mary anointed the Anointed One, Jesus, and she shows us what worship is. She gives from her belongings with the expensive perfume, and she gives from herself with her hair. Jewish women in that time did not let down their hair in front of people except for their husbands. Yet, Mary let down her hair in front of the group, and used it to wipe Jesus's feet. Mary's actions showed her humble devotion and service to Jesus who was her teacher and Lord. This was worship for all to see and smell as the fragrance from her actions filled the house.

During this beautiful moment of worship, there was a naysayer. Judas wanted the money from the perfume to give to the poor or possibly to fill his personal pockets. Jesus knew that this was a special time of preparation before his burial, and recognized Mary's devotion in her act of worship.

The evening continued and the discussion progressed. However, Jesus's statement about the poor might seem troubling. Jesus said that it was alright to use the perfume as Mary did, because Jesus would not always be there and the poor would be. Was Jesus saying to ignore the poor? Wouldn't this contradict other times when Jesus taught about giving to others including the poor? Jesus's statement does not instruct people against helping the poor, but the statement does establish a priority. We are not to neglect worshipping Jesus who is God. These days, many people try to do good things with the desire of seeing a positive impact on the world. The good things are done from a human intention with a human perspectives of the progress that can be accomplished. Holiness brings a desire to serve and do good things, but with a foundation based on our relationship with God. If we want to do good things with our lives, that does not supersede the priority that we should place on worshipping God.

As we care for others, we share God's love in alignment with the instructions of Jesus. Our choice is not to focus on either God or people. We are called to both love God and love people.

How has worship become a priority in your life?

Do your good works have a foundation based on worshipping God?