

Open, Extravagant, Sacrificial Love

John 12:1-8

Pastor Guy Gray

Extravagant Love

You have to wonder why this story is told at all. In the Gospel of John every word is carefully chosen. There are so many things to say about Jesus that even the whole world could not contain the books that could be written about Him (John 21:25). John has included each and every detail recorded in His Gospel for a specific reason. So, why is this story chosen?

Mary's dramatic act is her faith response to the love and power of Jesus Christ. This is a picture we desperately need to see. It shows us what it means to truly respond in faith and love to the wonder of Jesus Christ and the power of the gospel. John 12:1-8 is a picture of open, extravagant, sacrificial love for Jesus. The cost of the perfume Mary poured out on Jesus was a year's wages. Pause. How much would that be for you? Extravagant and sacrificial are both words that fit this picture! But not only that, this was also an open act of love and devotion. Everyone saw it. The whole room was filled with the fragrance.

There is nothing more powerful to impact our world than a Christian who openly, extravagantly, and sacrificially loves Jesus Christ. That is why this story is told. The story is here for you and me. Will you and I respond to Jesus like this? Why or why not? What would it look like in your life?

More Than a Feeling

Amidst the controversy, Jesus said "it was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial" (12:7). The context of the story is crucial. The Jewish leaders are now bent on arresting Jesus and putting Him to death. The Cross of Christ is looming. In John 12 we have actually reached the final week in the life and ministry of Jesus, leading to his death and resurrection. Did Mary somehow know this? Mary is depicted in the Gospels as the one person who focused above all on listening carefully to Jesus, just soaking in all His words and teaching (Luke 10:48-32). Mary's act of extravagant love for Jesus is pointedly tied to Christ's act of sacrificial love on the Cross. This is important. It ties together heart and mind. It connects the fact of Christ's saving work on our behalf with our feelings of devotion and love for Christ. These two must always be connected! A feeling of love for Jesus without a clear connection to the truth of Christ's sacrificial act on the Cross is empty emotionalism. But on the other hand, knowing the doctrinal truth of the Cross without an emotional response is nothing but dead intellectualism. Mary gets it right; and it's powerful!

Serving From the Depths of Your Heart

Judas has a problem with this. Judas wants to use the resources for other purposes. He wants to fund programs to serve the poor (and he wants to skim some off the top as well!). So in this story, Mary becomes the great comparison and contrast to Judas. Mary shows us where true and powerful service for Jesus comes from. It comes from the heart and it requires real sacrifice. If we love Jesus we will pour out our hearts to Him in love AND we will pour out our lives to Him in sacrificial service. When we serve others, we must see ourselves as loving Jesus Himself in that service. When we give of our time or money or talents, we should see ourselves as pouring the best of what we have onto the feet of Jesus Himself in humble, grateful response for His extravagant love for us on the Cross. When this happens, the "whole room is filled with the fragrance"...people can't help but notice!

How will you respond to Jesus?

The story of Mary in John 12 is your invitation to respond to Jesus with your heart, mind, resources, and your whole life. Take some time to think and pray about this. How will you respond? How do you express your love for Jesus? Is there a connection between your head and heart concerning Christ's sacrificial love for you? Have you loved Jesus openly...extravagantly...sacrificially? Do you serve Jesus—from the depths of your heart? How? When? Why? These are the questions raised by the magnificent act of Mary. I'm so glad that her act of love made it into the gospel! It's there for a reason. Take some time with it this week and let the Spirit of Christ move in your heart and mind!

For Further Reflection

This week spend time in John 12. Allow the questions above to guide your time of prayer and reflection.