

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #47

John 12:1-11

I have a pastor friend, whose church was being blessed by God, who went to a congregational meeting and most of the people were thrilled about it. Because God had so blessed, the church decided to do something very nice financially for my pastor friend. Everyone was united and happy, except for one person. He started questioning and complaining and even though in the end he didn't prevent the nice things from being done, he did quench the Holy Spirit and brought the entire spirit of the meeting down. The real reason why he did this is because he was jealous. Satan used this envious man to destroy a wonderful night at church.

I think we all have been to congregational meetings at church in which everyone is rejoicing over what God is doing and one person shoots off his or her mouth and brings the whole thing down. This type of person knocks the joy of God right out of the air. That is exactly what happened to Jesus Christ one night when He went to dinner.

ON HIS WAY TO THE CROSS, JESUS TAKES TIME TO HAVE A WONDERFUL MEAL WITH HIS CLOSE FRIENDS AND THE TRAITOR JUDAS VERBALLY FINDS A WAY TO STIR UP TROUBLE AND RUIN THE EVENING.

Judas had been tagging along with Jesus Christ for about three years, but he did not really have a relationship with Jesus Christ (John 6:64, 70). He was a spiritual phony and it was about to come out.

What would you say is the most important week in world history? No matter what you think, the truth is, this begins it right here. We are now nearing the time when Christ's work on the cross is drawing near. These are the closing hours of Christ's life on earth. We are coming to what Dr. Boice called "the most momentous week in world history" (*Gospel of John*, Vol. 3, p. 915).

I don't know what all the possible negative things we may experience in life in one week are, but I can most assuredly say - they won't even come close to what Jesus Christ experienced when He was here on earth. He was degraded and demeaned and when someone did something nice for Him, He was challenged and criticized by one of His own disciples, who was nothing more than literally a satanic traitor.

Now we may recall that the Jewish leaders were out to arrest Christ and kill Him. That is their plan and that is their plot. In fact, they were about to succeed because God was about to let them succeed. But about two miles out of the city of Jerusalem, Christ took the time, while on His way to Calvary, to spend a quiet evening with some friends. It was supposed to be a private dinner party, but it ends up being a negative satanic attack against Him.

OBSERVATION #1 – We learn when this meal took place. **12:1a**

This event occurs six days before the Passover; this is when Jesus went to Bethany and if we compare this information with what we read in **verse 12**, what we learn is that four days had gone by when this supper even occurred. Four days after arriving in Bethany, his friends planned a special meal for Jesus.

OBSERVATION #2 – We learn where this meal took place. **12:1b**

This event occurs in Bethany. Jesus had left Ephraim (John 11:54) and had come to Bethany. According to Matthew 26:6, Jesus was at the home of Simon, who had been a leper. We may logically conclude that Simon had been one whom Jesus had healed and he had opened up his home for Christ to have this wonderful dinner.

Most retirement dinners are tender and touching scenes. Typically all who come have positive things to say about the one leaving. But it wasn't true about Jesus Christ. Jesus is now moving toward Jerusalem for the final time and He knows full well what lies ahead. He is not going into retirement, He is going to the cross. This should have been a very special and wonderful night for Him, one in which He could just spend a great evening with friends. But Satan was right there in this home and his goal is to humiliate Jesus Christ and rob Him of His glory.

OBSERVATION #3 – We learn who was at this meal. **12:1c**

We will suggest that there are a total of at least 17 people (probably more) at this meal: Jesus, Twelve Disciples, Simon (his home), Martha (**12:2**), Mary (**12:3**), and of course Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead (**12:1**). This would have been a sizeable dinner for someone to make.

OBSERVATION #4 – We learn what His friends were doing at this meal. **12:2-3**

Since Lazarus, Mary and Martha are specifically named, this probably was a very special supper they wanted to specifically make for Jesus Christ, because of all He had done for them, especially in raising Lazarus from the dead.

I am not sure what the relationship was between Simon and Lazarus, Martha and Mary, but it is quite evident that they must have had a good relationship because they took over his kitchen and cooked this meal. They all are involved in making Jesus supper. As we said, this was no simple meal for there are at least 17 people at it. So there would have been considerable expense and work involved in this.

This point about them making Jesus this meal is not alluded to by Matthew and Mark, for they zero in on the anointing aspect (Matthew 26:6ff; Mark 14:1-11), but John adds this point to the eternal Word of God. **God, through the eyewitness of the Apostle John, wanted us to realize that this was a special meal prepared by special friends of Jesus Christ. Do not overlook this.** I do not want to gloss over this because making a meal for someone may actually be a form of special worship for God. It is possible to actually make a meal for someone and have it have eternal ramifications. Such is the case here.

Now the text is very specific to point out what the three friends of Jesus were doing at the time of the meal. **All three friends are doing something different and all three are very important to Jesus Christ.** When I read these verses I cannot help but think of Proverbs 10:7 which says “the memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.”

(Friend #1) - Martha was servicing the meal. **12:2a**

Now Martha was a true servant of God. She was a hard active worker. At one time, she was upset that others didn't have her same focus and the Lord had to rebuke her (Luke 10:38-42). **Now Martha came to understand that different people serve God in different ways.** In this context, she is praised for her work and she was happy to do it. She isn't upset by what Lazarus or Mary are doing, she is serving the Lord with her abilities and she is honored for it.

Obviously Martha was in charge of the kitchen. This woman could organize and prepare a big meal. I can tell you this about Martha, her meals would always be good and well prepared. She was the kind of woman who would literally stay up all night, if that is what it would take to prepare a meal for the Lord.

Martha types are workers. They serve God by doing physical things. They love the Lord and they love to serve and they actually perform worship by their serving. In fact, it is Martha's wonderful spirit of serving that enables the others to do what they are doing at the same meal.

(Friend #2) - Lazarus was reclining and learning at the meal. **12:2b**

Lazarus was sitting and listening to Jesus Christ. He was spending as much time with Him as he could. **This must have been a powerful and almost surreal moment for Lazarus because not too long before this he was literally dead. Now he is alive, sitting at a meal with other living people and the Living God/Savior.** What wonderful fellowship and communion this must have been. Lazarus was trying to soak in as much as he could. He was their listening and learning. **Just as Martha was worshipping God by her service, Lazarus was worshipping God as a student.** I can hardly wait for the moment we get to eat a meal with Jesus Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb. It will be a glorious moment for us all because every one of us are a Lazarus type to whom Jesus Christ gave life.

One time a famous preacher was traveling by train en route to one of his Bible conferences. Sitting by him was a young man who was traveling with him. The preacher was reading his Bible and the young man was reading the newspaper. The young man looked up and said to the Bible teacher, very admiringly, "I wish I knew the Bible like you do." The teacher looked over at the student, smiled and kindly said, "You'll never get to know it by reading the newspaper." The young man put the paper down and began reading the Bible and that young man was Donald Grey Barnhouse. If you want to know Jesus, sit at His feet, get serious about the Bible. Come, listen, learn. That was Lazarus.

(Friend #3) - Mary was sitting and anointing Jesus' feet. **12:3**

Now Mary took a pound of "pure nard" and started anointing the feet of Jesus Christ, wiping His feet with her hair. Pure nard was imported from northern India and it was a fragrant oil which came from roots and stems. A pound of this perfume was very expensive. Three hundred Denarii represented an entire year's wage. If you use an hourly wage of \$8.00 per hour, this perfume cost about \$19,000. This was a very, very expensive perfume.

Now Mary apparently knew of the sacrificial ramifications of Christ's heading toward Jerusalem. She knew that He was heading to the cross, so this was a tremendous act of worship; it was lavish; it was personal. She did this because she loved Jesus Christ and nothing was too good for Him. She wanted to do something special for Him while He was alive, not after He was dead.

What she did was not only a blessing to God, but to her entire home because it filled the entire house with wonderful fragrant perfume. When you get one person in the home truly worshipping God, it brings great blessing to the entire home.

Martha was serving, Lazarus was reclining and listening and learning and Mary was wiping His feet with expensive perfume with her hair.

There are three special friends of Jesus Christ specifically named in this passage who loved the Lord, which represent three different types of people and different types of ministries. Martha represents the worker. Mary represents the worshipper. Lazarus represents the witness. Martha represents the one who runs, Mary the one who reverences and Lazarus the one who reflects. All three were special to Jesus Christ. All three will be honored in eternity.

OBSERVATION #5 – We learn what Judas was doing at this meal. **12:4-8**

(Fact #1) - Judas Iscariot was there and was one of Christ's disciples. **12:4a**

It has often been observed that based on the discipleship mathematics, that it is possible that one out of twelve people at church are frauds.

What a contrast in names. Martha is a worshipful worker, Lazarus is a worshipful student and Mary is the reverential worshipper and then there is Judas who is a godless, cheap traitor.

It is pathetic that he was even allowed at this meal, and the only reason he was is because Jesus Christ must go to the cross and he is the satanic agent God will use to accomplish it.

(Fact #2) - Judas real intent is to betray Jesus Christ. **12:4b**

Whenever you have the true work of God, you may be certain that you'll have some satanic agent present who is a backbiting traitor. Judas was not traveling with Jesus Christ because he wanted to be close to God, he is there because he wants to kill God.

(Fact #3) - Judas objected to the fact that Mary was treating Jesus in such an expensive way. **12:4c**

We ask a simple question here - is there anything that would have been too plush that anyone could have done for Jesus Christ? He is God on this earth in Divine Person. He should have been given the best of everything. But instead, when one person gave Him the best of something, the animosity surfaced.

Those who are not right with God are often very critical against those who are right with God. Here are the first words we have from the diabolical mouth of Judas. The first words out of his devilish mouth are a criticism because God is being treated in such a wonderful way. He hates the fact that someone wants God to have the best. The last words Judas will say, before he hangs himself, are found in Matthew 27:4 - "I have sinned and betrayed innocent blood."

Judas-types what the best for themselves but not for God. They want the bank account, they want the mansion, they want the limousine, but don't ever want nice things for God. They cannot stand it when someone does something nice for the Lord.

(Fact #4) - Judas makes himself look good in front of the others by seeming to have a heart for the poor. **12:5**

Satanic religious hypocrites know how to say just the right kind of things to sway people. Christ's other disciples did not know that Judas was a devil (6:70; 13:26-30) and according to Mark's account, they thought his argument seemed reasonable and they too started criticizing Mary's action (Mark 14:4-5). Think of this, Jesus is about to die for their sins and they are criticizing a stupid bottle of perfume.

(Fact #5) - Judas' motive was not a concern for the poor, but he was a thief who took money from the discipleship fund. **12:6**

Judas does not care for the poor; all he cares about is himself. He is a thief. He does not want to give the money to the poor; he wants to steal it for himself.

(Fact #6) - Jesus said to let Mary keep the perfume for His burial day because they would always have the poor, but they would not always have Him. **12:7-8**

The one person who really understands why Christ is moving to Jerusalem is Mary and that is what prompted her to do all of this for Jesus, and she is being criticized for doing something wonderful for God.

Jesus is not minimizing the poor or our responsibility to try to help the poor, He is simply making a point - "look, I am about to leave, via death, resurrection and ascension" and Mary is the only one who has figured this out - now leave her alone.

Notice Jesus connects what Mary is doing to His burial (**v. 7**). It is very probable that Mary knew exactly what was about to happen. This burial was still six days away, yet this form of worship was in full honor of the cross work of Jesus Christ as the God/Savior.

If these disciples actually realized - this is God here with us, they should have done everything they could to make His final hours as comfortable and glorious as they could. But they don't get it and Judas is trying to stop it.

OBSERVATION #6 – A great number of the Jews learned that Jesus was at this home and they came not just for Jesus sake, but to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. **12:9**

The truth is they should have been flocking to get one glimpse of Jesus, the One who could give life to the dead. This is the only God/Savior/Messiah to ever walk on this earth. The Creator, Designer and Sustainer of the universe is here in Person and the people are just as much interested in Lazarus as they are Jesus. There is no doubt that Lazarus was the star witness for the amazing grace and power of God. Jesus chose him from all dead people and brought him to life and his existence was an irrefutable testimony for the power of Jesus Christ.

Truth is, our lives should be irrefutable evidence that Jesus Christ has given us life. People should be able to look at us and say - that person has dined in fellowship with Jesus Christ and is alive to the things of God. This type of testimony will be hated by the Pharisaical religious world.

But the truth is, the one they should have really wanted to see was Jesus Christ, not Lazarus.

OBSERVATION #7 – The chief priest took counsel as to how to kill Lazarus because many were believing on Jesus Christ because of him. **12:10-11**

Now we may recall that the initial conclusion of this lovely, hypocritical religious group is that “one” man should die (**11:50**). They make up things as they go and now say - “let’s make it two.”

The concept of people wanting to destroy evidence is not new to Watergate, O.J. or Scott Peterson; it dates back to Biblical times. The hypocrisy of this is that it is the religious leaders who want to destroy true, tangible evidence in that they want to destroy Lazarus. Not only do they want to kill Jesus Christ, they want to kill Lazarus because his existence is a powerful statement for Jesus Christ.

The reason why they want him dead is so people won’t believe in Jesus Christ. Imagine this, these religious leaders would rather have people believe in them and their dead works religious system than to believe in the grace of God found in Jesus Christ.

The same is true today. Present pure grace against a world of dead religious works and you will be hated by the religious world.

All Jesus wanted to do was have a nice quiet meal with some friends. But this world and its religion is not at peace with God and anytime God is honored, Satan and his forces are there to try and stop it.

But there will come a day when Jesus Christ will turn this all around and if you will believe on Him, He will give life to you and one day eat a wonderful meal with you in heaven.