

Mary comforted by Jesus after being criticized by Judas

sermonaudio.com

Passion

By Pastor Pieter Van Ruitenburg

Bible Text: John 12:1-8
Preached on: Sunday, February 23, 2020

Bethel Netherlands Reformed Congregation
8920 Broadway Street
Chilliwack, BC V2P 5W1

Website: www.nrcchilliwack.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/bnrcchilliwack

Congregation, the text for this first Passion Sunday sermon is from John 12:1-8. John 12:1-8. Let us first read them again slowly.

1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. 2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. 3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. 4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, 5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. 7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. 8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

So far.

Mary comforted by Jesus after being criticized by Judas. Mary comforted by Jesus after being criticized by Judas, three thoughts. Mary's love. You can see that, right, the love for Jesus. Secondly, Judas' critical comments. This waste of money, it should have been sold and given to the poor. And in the third place, Jesus' comfort. "Let her alone." So Mary comforted by Jesus after being criticized by Judas: Mary's love, Judas' critical comments, and Jesus' comfort.

"Lazarus, come out." Remember the Lord Jesus standing before the grave? He said, "Roll that stone away." And they said, "We cannot do that. He has already for four days, the smell, we cannot do that." But they obeyed him and they rolled the stone away and Lazarus walked out. Brother Lazarus, Mary and Martha, they were stunned. "Alive? Our brother alive we loved so much?" And they really appreciated that. They were amazed by God's grace and the Pharisees and the scribes were very upset because so many more

people now believed in Jesus because of this. And the Lord Jesus continued yet with his labors in this last week of his life. 50% of the book of John is about the last 6-7 days. 50%. The Lord Jesus prepared himself and prepared the people for his burial, for his death, for his crucifixion. Before that the Lord Jesus invited.

"Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany." Then Jesus. You know, this Bible story is not about Mary. It's not about Lazarus. It's not about people's experiences. In the first place, this Bible story is about Jesus, just keep that in mind. Then Jesus. Do you love that name? Do you appreciate it? Do you see him in his name? He reveals himself in the name Jesus. Is that name sweet to your palate?

"Then Jesus six days before the passover." Six days? But the other gospels like Matthew says two days, this six days, so how do you reconcile that? There are two options, that people have counted in a different way, six days or two days, this depends how you count, where you start, where you end. As some say, there were two anointments, two Bible stories, one six days and one two days before his burial which I think is impossible but I don't think it is a big deal. I think in all the gospels the same Bible story.

Nevertheless, "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany." Remember close to Jerusalem, close to the Mount of Olivet. There was the house of Lazarus and Martha and Mary and Simon, the leper. So the Lord Jesus came to the house of Simon the leper we understand from other gospels. Simon the leper, he used to be leprous. He must have been healed by the Lord Jesus also, one of the neighbors of at least people close to Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Bethany, and the Lord Jesus invited.

"Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany." He had something to do there. He knew what was up. There was a purpose. He came himself. He was not forced or invited. No, he came "where Lazarus was which had been dead." So proof, again proof that he was alive, it was not a dream, "whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper." There they made him a supper, specifically for him to celebrate the life of Lazarus. The Lord had raised him from the dead and in a special supper for him, for the Lord Jesus Christ, they made him a supper and he accepted the invitation although he knew he would die within a week. There was still work for him, still something he had to do and he had to be there. It was all planned.

"There they made him a supper; and Martha served." Remember, that's Martha serving in the house of Simon the leper? Martha serving that was not in their house? No, it was in the house of Simon the leper and she was serving there. Was that family or was she married to Simon the leper? We don't know but Martha was serving and we need also women to serve, right, and there was religion as well.

"And Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him." So I see a table. I see the 12 disciples at the table. I see the Lord Jesus at the table and Lazarus and Martha is serving, and Mary and Simon the leper, there would be some more people, most of them God's people, most of them dear ones of the Lord, known from eternity, chosen to salvation. God's people at the table. It's not the Lord's Supper, I know it's not

the Lord's Supper but there are almost all God's people at the table. It reminds me, though, of some other tables in the house of Levi and other places where the Lord Jesus sat at meat with publicans and sinners. Don't forget that. The Lord Jesus also sat at meat at the table with other people that are not knowing him, enemies of God, and he was looking after enemies but he was sitting with his disciples, although Judas was there as well.

Martha serving and I just imagine that she's placing some food on the table here and some more over there and Mary did not participate in serving apparently again. She was the type of lady to sit and to listen at his feet because I've seen in the Bible three texts about that. In Luke 10 we read that she was sitting at his feet to listen. And I read in John 11 that she was falling at his feet when she met him after Lazarus had died and now that same Mary is coming at his feet again.

So somewhere, sometime when he's sitting at this table, Mary comes in and she has an alabaster box of ointment or a jar. Very costly. I don't know how she acquired that, how she could even afford that. That was a huge amount of money. It was a year's salary of a working man. It was \$50,000. Just a little bottle, \$50,000 worth of perfume and she came to the Lord Jesus and she did not just drip a few drops on his head or feet, she broke it. She used it all. Other gospels say on his head first. Other texts say on his body and also at his feet. John is asking attention for the fact that she is anointing his feet.

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly." I have tried to study what type of ointment it was. It's hard. It says pisteka, it might be related to pistachio nuts. We don't know. We just don't know but very costly, maybe an heirloom, maybe something as an investment that they kept for a long time because it would not spoil. We don't know exactly what it was but it was a special sweet fragrance and the house was filled.

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair." So that is kind of strange, isn't it? In the first place, she uses everything. On his head. On his body. On his feet. It's dripping. She used it all and I tell you, if you would have asked her, "Don't you put too much on his body?" she would have said, "Absolutely not. He's worthy of it. He's worthy of all the ointment, of the last drop. I would like to give it all to him." If they would have said it was too much money, she would have said, "Absolutely not. It's worth it."

But she wiped his feet with her hair. She used her hair as a towel. I think of 1 Corinthians 11:14-15, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." So women, the long hair of a woman is a crown of glory. It's beautiful. It's a token of glory. It's a glory to her, it says in 1 Corinthians 11, a glory to her.

Now she unties her hair, lets it down and she is using it at the feet of Jesus. I try to understand that, what it meant. Think of the opposite, if she were to put her feet in his

face. She does the opposite, right? She would not do that. It's the opposite of that. So it's the deepest humiliation. She really honors him, using her hair, making a rag of her hair and wiping his feet off. She doesn't think about anyone else, what people see, what people think, who cares. There's only one thing she knows, one thing she does, she loves this Jesus and she gives him all the honor, all the glory spontaneously. But she has found peace in him. He's her salvation. He is the only one who counts for her. What a love in her heart. She has chosen the good part, it said, and, yes, she did.

So again we don't know who paid for this but at least she was involved in that and she was willing to do anything and to give everything to her Savior. So this Mary was not only a child of God like the disciples and like Martha and like Simon the leper, there was something extra there. She was special, a special child of God, very close to the Lord Jesus, a deeper understanding and more love than anyone I know. You see, there are differences and sometimes women have more of that love than the minister, and than the elders, and than others. Deeply overwhelmed with God's love, she had to do this whatever people think.

I came across the word "unself-conscious, unself-conscious." She's not self-conscious. It feels as if she was alone with Jesus and nobody looked and nobody said anything. There was only one person in the room, the Lord Jesus, and yet I told you it's not about her. It's about Jesus, right? So let me just quote another text close to this and also kind of pointing away from Mary. John 10:10 is about the good shepherd. "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy," Judas, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." So talk about abundance, did she give so much of that ointment, so expensive to the Lord Jesus but what did the Lord Jesus give to her and to the church? He's not a thief. Judas there sitting at the table there is a thief but the Lord Jesus, he is the good shepherd. He has given his life, not ointment, given his life for his sheep to save people from their sins and, "I have come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

So she gives an abundance but she receives so incredibly and infinitely more herself. So when you think of all the nard, all the spikenard, all the ointment dripping over his body, don't think of her generosity but think of his generosity, of his willingness to save a people from their sins because when you look at this table, you see Judas sitting there but all the other disciples and visitors, they're all sinners, all sinners, this Mary included. There's only one holy one, one who did not sin sitting at the table, the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

So Christ loved first and that's why, that's why she came to him in her unworthiness. So let us not make too much of her. He loved her, he loved Lazarus and she enjoyed it. But let's continue to the second thought, "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment," that's again the abundance, "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him." Nobody noticed him. Nothing bad was said about him at all so far. We know that he was going to betray him but I don't read anything else negative about him except this. He had a facade. He had a mask on and nobody knew but

Jesus who he really was. He was an office-bearer and he was saying, "You know, I care for the poor. This should not have been done." What a pious man.

Then he said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Smart way of saying it. He didn't say, "This should not have happened." But he said, "I would have known a better thing to do with that." He's quite cunning but apparently he has no understanding.

"Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor," he didn't, he couldn't care less, it was about himself, selfishness, he had the bag. Because several ladies served the Lord Jesus with their money, the Lord Jesus didn't have to work. Those ladies served him and he had the bag with the money and he provided. He put something in the bag and out of the bag and he loved it. He also stole from it. How is that possible, he was so close to Jesus? Having heard so many most beautiful sermons himself, he was there, how is it possible he saw so many miracles being performed, he knew it was true, how is it possible that he was so close to Jesus, had personal conversations with him and doing this? How is it possible?

And now he was questioning the motive of Mary although he was a thief. He didn't like what he saw and it is also remarkable is that we read in Matthew 26 something else about this. In Matthew 26, the same story, I believe. I read in verse 7 and 8, "There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it," when his disciples saw it? Not only Judas, when his disciples saw it, "they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?" It was not only Judas. All the disciples said it. All the disciples had indignation. They all said, "This is a waste." God's people, would they not say to Judas, "Judas, don't say that. You can't say that, it's not true. He's worthy of it." No, they all agreed. All the disciples agreed with Judas, with indignation they were angry. They were angry with this woman. So I see those people sitting at that table, they're all frowning. "What is that? She shouldn't have done that. We should have sold it."

Spurgeon writes a nice piece on this. "It was very costly but it had not cost a penny too much now that it could be used upon him. There was a pound of it but there was none too much for him. It was very sweet but none too sweet for him." But they didn't see that. The disciples didn't see that. You see, that's God's people and I've seen it more often, the disciples are kind of foolish. The disciples are asking for fire to come down from heaven and to destroy the Samaritans, remember? And the disciples kept those children away from the Lord Jesus.

But Christ is faithful and he knows the weaknesses of all those men and people around the table. He knows them. He doesn't walk away. He says, "You know, it's enough. I'm not going to die for you, I am not pleased with you at all so I quit." No, the Lord Jesus continued sitting at the table, all those men frowning, all those men disagreeing with her, and the Lord Jesus understanding her, and she loving him. The Lord Jesus must have felt alone in this sense, right? He would have loved it if all the disciples would have taken sides with him and said to Judas, "Judas!" But no, they sided with Judas.

"This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." I'm not saying that the other disciples were thieves. They're not. They loved the Lord Jesus. They were God's people. They really were but they were not in the right frame here.

So Judas was critical and so there can still be Judases in the congregation, right? And nobody knows. They don't. And the Lord knows. It looks like a beautiful ship, there's a leak in there, and one leak can just bring a whole ship down because it will sink. Judas, and yet this had to happen and Judas was even an instrument in the hands of God because the Lord Jesus was going to be betrayed by him, and the Lord Jesus did not agree with that, of course. How can he agree with sin? It had to happen and yet played all a role in God's providence.

So Jesus' comfort of Mary after the critical comments by Judas brings us to the third thought. Jesus' comfort. Verse 7, "Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this." That's a hard verse, many different explanations. Had she kept this? Had she kept it for a long time? Had she just been thinking about the death of the Lord Jesus and how this before he died, she used it already? At least there is a link with what was going to happen.

"Then said Jesus, Let her alone," don't be critical of her, "against the day of my burying hath she kept this." She has done something wonderful. "For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always." Let her alone. The Lord Jesus defended her, loving her because the Lord is at her side.

"For the poor always ye have with you." How true that is, but the Lord Jesus allowed for this one exception, this is an extreme situation. It's not so that we can gather from this that we can spend a lot of money on the church building, to make all gold and silver here in church and say it's the Lord's house so let's make the best of it. No, we cannot interpret it that way, but we have the poor always with us and that's right. We have those poor and we should also take care of the poor.

"But to me ye have not always." Think about that. But to me ye have not always. Is that true? Is the Lord Jesus right? Did he say to his disciples, "You don't have me always"? What does he mean? The Lord Jesus could have said, "I'm always with you even to the end of the world." No, he says, "I'm not always with you." Well, in his human nature, right? He's going to take his human nature to heaven and his human nature will not be on earth anymore. It will be taken away from his life. And it's not in the bread for the Lord's Supper. It's not on earth. You're wrong when you say that. "This is my body broken for you," does not mean that the body of the Lord Jesus is in there because he said himself, "me ye have not always."

And I also read in Matthew 26:13, "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." So the Lord Jesus praises her. She will be remembered over the

whole world, in all the languages the Bible is translated in. The whole world will know about her, this special Mary who broke that bottle and poured out so much of that ointment over him.

But the Lord Jesus saw those people frowning, those angry faces, that indignation, but he stuck up for her as we see more often in the Bible. Think of that lady who was approaching him from behind and touching the hem of his garment, remember? The Lord Jesus said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee as thou wilt." And the Lord praised her. Also the Canaanitish woman, he praised her. And we read about Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he, as was the mother of him. Or think of that widow. She was not affluent at all, but put something small in the box, and he said, "Of a truth I say unto you that this poor widow has cast in more than they all."

So the Lord knows and in the Bible you see lots of those women close to God's kingdom, special ladies in church, God-fearing ladies, and we need them. We need them also today. We don't only need office-bearers, pastors and deacons and elders and missionaries, we also need mothers and single women to serve the Lord. Those too, Martha, Mary and Lazarus were single. There is such a special place in the kingdom of God.

"For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always." What stays, of course, is the Lord Jesus is there in his divine nature. In his divine nature he did not leave his disciples, he is still with the church. He's always with them to the end of the world.

So Judas and the disciples in indignation critical of her, but she experienced the favor of God. So it is possible that you experience the anger of people, maybe the anger of your husband, the anger of your wife, the anger of whoever, your colleagues, but if you may only have that love of Christ yourself, that makes it all good. It compensates for everything. God's favor, the smile of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all the people may frown upon you, you don't have to fear them because if he is for you, who can be against you?

And as you see, don't have too high of an expectation of the disciples, of God's people. Sometimes you're disappointed as we see in Matthew 26 as well again, right? The disciples were filled with indignation themselves, all of them. That's God's people yet the Lord uses that type of people in his kingdom. It's a comfort also for me.

So Jesus' comfort after the critical comments of Judas. Let's go to the application. The first thing. Congregation, Judas was a smooth talker, "We should have sold this and given the money to the poor." He wanted to impress people for himself. Smooth talker. Good preacher. But I read in 1 Corinthians 13, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," even if it would be the most gifted speaker, "and have not charity," have not love, "I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Just a metal sound, not melodious, not beautiful, not sweet. "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and although I have all the faith," all faith, "so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity," not love, "I am nothing." And

the next verse, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor," if you give away lots of money to the poor, "and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

So let me ask you a question: do you love him? Do you love Jesus? Can you understand Mary? Have you had those times that you are so overwhelmed with the love of God in Christ that you want to give everything away and say, "Lord, here I am, whatever it takes"? With a deep appreciation? You know who would have that? Only those that know their sins. Only those that know their fall. Only for them who for whom it became a wonder, a great wonder, the greatest of wonders that there is salvation in him, that he can raise from the dead, all that good part will not be taken away from her. She understood that. She understood how much forgiveness there was in God and Christ and that's why she was so overwhelmed with the love of God. It came out from his side. Do you know that? Or did you only receive a text that felt good for you, so you felt good, and you felt valued, and you felt seen, and you felt cared for? Instead of looking away from self and seeing him and coming at his feet and has been focused on that Savior, where the Son has life, eternal life, or does not the Son have no life?

So that's the difference, right? In experiences, some experiences are selfish experiences but this is unselfish, this is about him. He loved first and therefore she loves him. You know, you see her using her hair, that's so humbling. No woman ever did in public, in public undo your hair and use it as a towel. Unself-consciousness. Being so humble. Do you know of that being humbled to the dust? Do you know of that joy that the Lord gives there that you have nothing left but sin and guilt yourself? You may look away from self upon that dear Savior, the Lord Jesus and being humble? Or suppose it will be the Lord's Supper. You know, this is not a preparatory sermon, that's next week, the Lord willing. Think of the Lord's Supper, getting out of your pew and walking up the aisle and sitting at the table and hopefully you don't see anyone, and hopefully you don't care about other people looking at you, or hopefully the fear of many is taken away from God's people. Like she had no fear of men right now, right? No fear of men at all, of being so humble. Who am I? What is my house that has brought our Savior to them?

You know, nobody sees value in the Lord Jesus Christ but those that are anointed themselves by the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to make us alive. This woman was so alive. It was all the work of God. He quickened her from the dead. He was first and he's last and he's on in his own work. So nobody will see God except if Christ pours out this grace in us, and then we come to the conclusion that we cannot make any salvation for ourselves.

A few more points. The Lord Jesus received here a gift of \$50,000. The nardin was worth it, worth of. Don't misinterpret this as if the Lord Jesus is in need of your payment. You don't need to pay. You say, "I don't have so much of this. I don't have some of that. I even don't have enough love. I don't have enough this and that and such and so I don't have that." "O everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters and he who has no money," do you see that, no money? "Come ye, buy and eat. Yeah, come buy wine and milk without money, without price."

So she did not pay, the Lord Jesus paid. He paid the price. So there is enough bread. There's enough salvation. And the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ is abundantly sufficient for the expiation of the sins of the whole world. Our Father said in the Canons of Dort, abundantly sufficient for the expiation, for the forgiveness of the erasing of the sins of the whole world. So you don't need the nardin to bring, not as a payment. In thanksgiving he is worth it, not to pay in your justification but in a sanctification. Oh yes, he's worth it of all honor, all glory, and all time, and sometimes don't be afraid if sometimes things are going over the top and people say, "You pray so much, you read so much your Bible? Don't overdo it. You have to work too. You have to do this as well." But sometimes in the life of God's people only one thing counts and it's their priority. Can you relate to that?

Or think of Matthew 6, talking about giving things away and not being so materialistic. She was generous, wasn't she? "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," don't keep them yourself, "where moth and rust doth corrupt them or thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal, but where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Well, where was the treasure? Where was the treasure of Mary? In Jesus, right?

I remember the time there was one dream about my love for Christ, and I searched deep in my heart for some love for Christ and I couldn't find it. Couldn't find it. Nothing. I felt so humble and so ungodly. No love for God. No love for Jesus. No love for the Bible. No love left. Nothing. And the Lord showed me that he loves a loveless people, and that love came back right away, that he loves from his side. And so many have no expectation of self and of being like Mary but have expectation of that Savior the Lord Jesus Christ who saves without money and without price.

Oh, that Judas, I can't stop thinking about him. You see in Judas how deep he felt. There are people maybe so close to Jesus, so close to the truth, such examples of outwardly good life, maybe called apostles, but as one of the forefathers said, but rotten at heart. Think about that. Is that you, friend? It looks fantastic. Nobody knows what you're doing behind a computer, on your cellphone. Maybe you're sitting at the Lord's Supper table, maybe people think the world of you, but you love sin and you're a Judas. Repent ye, repent ye, why would ye die? Seek that salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and be honest. Judas was a hypocrite and he knew it. Be honest. Confess your sins. Turn ye, turn ye, why would you die?

I see Mary overwhelmed with love pouring the ointment over his head, body, feet, and washing, drying his feet with her hair. That's heaven. That's heaven, giving glory to the Lamb. And to be with Christ, to always be with him, to give him the glory that he has done it, that he was first, that he was last, that he's worthy of all glory and honor forever.

You know, this week we got a message that one of the minsters in Holland's mom died. She was 80 years old but so suddenly. She was walking next to the waterfront and a gust

of wind blew her into the water, the cold water and she died. She could not reanimate anymore. Just this feeding the seagulls and suddenly it came and so suddenly it can come for you and for me then stand before God and seeing the Lord Jesus and he's the judge or your Savior. One or the other. Would you mind going to heaven? Would you mind or would you rather stay here? To give all glory and honor to the Lamb. "Thou art worthy to receive all honor and glory." That's life. Seek it. Amen.