

# Wallet Worship

## The Worshipping Church Part 6

### Revelation 4:10      2-5-2012

Summary: Giving has always been an essential part of worship, because it honors God – if it is motivated by faith and love, which will be evidenced by joyfully giving costly gifts and firstfruits.

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**Revelation 4:1-11** After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. 4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. 6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

# Introduction

If I had to summarize the Bible in two words, I think I would say this: “Worship God.” That is the eternal gospel.

**Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel ... and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth ...7 He said in a loud voice, "...Worship him who made the heavens, the earth"**

The angels worshipped at the creation (Job 38:7). And the Bible ends with eternal worship in the book of Revelation. From beginning to end – worship. Nothing is more important than worship, and so we have been doing a detailed study of what Scripture teaches, not just about worship in general, but specifically about the most focused and intentional time of worship – the praise portion of the corporate gathering on the Lord’s Day.

## *Review*

We are trying to model our worship after the worship in heaven in Revelation 4-5. And so far we have seen the verbal aspect of worship, then last week we saw the physical aspect of worship – where the twenty-four elders hit the deck before the throne – which happens a half dozen times in the book of Revelation. I hope you do not find physical expressions distracting in worship, because if you do you will be distracted for all eternity.

# Honoring God with Gifts

So we have seen the verbal component of worship, and the physical component, but at the end of verse 10 we find one more component of true worship.

**9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down ...They lay their crowns before the throne<sup>1</sup>**

Why do they do that? And why does God want us to know about it? What is that supposed to teach us?

## *Giving is an Essential Part of Worship*

It teaches us a principle that we see from beginning to end in Scripture about worship: namely, worship involves giving gifts to God. We honor God by giving Him things that are of value to us. And there are two ways to give to God: directly and indirectly.

## *Indirect*

We give to God indirectly when we give to those in need for His sake. In Matthew 25 Jesus said **“whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”** When you give to God’s people because they are God’s people, you are giving to God indirectly. That is worship. In 2 Corinthians 9:12 the Corinthians’ gift to the poor is called *leitourgia*, which comes from *letreuo* - the word for worship.<sup>2</sup> Remember what the angel told Cornelius in Acts 10:4? **Your prayers and gifts to**

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<sup>1</sup> Contrary to the hymn, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” it is not the saint who cast down their crowns, but the twenty-four elders.

<sup>2</sup> He also refers to that gift as a blessing (eulogia) in 2 Corinthians 9:5 – we get our word “eulogy” from that word. It is the same word for the blessing we say over the cup in communion. He calls it a koinonia (fellowship) in 2 Corinthians 8:4, a diakonia (ministry) in 2 Corinthians 8:4, and, of course, a charis (grace) several times. Those are not financial terms or accounting terms. They are all terms derived from the vocabulary of human relationships with God and sacred acts of

**the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.** This is why we have a benevolence fund. If you write “benevolence” on your check it does not go into the general fund. It goes into a fund that is only used for helping people in need, because giving to God indirectly by helping those in need is a crucial part of worship.

### ***Direct***

But just as important is the direct giving. Giving that does not go to feed the hungry or do anything in particular – but that is simply given just for the direct purpose of honoring God. In Matthew 26 a woman worshipped Jesus by pouring expensive perfume on His feet.

**Matthew 26:8 When the disciples saw this, they were angry. "Why this waste?" they asked. 9 "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."**

**10 Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me."**

So giving gifts to God – both directly and indirectly, is an essential aspect of worship.

### ***Throughout Scripture***

You see this everywhere in the Bible. We see it here in the book of Revelation, in the ultimate worship service in heaven where they give their crowns to God. We see it in the Epistles, where we are instructed about giving to the church. We see it in Jesus’ teaching, when He said “**Give to God what is God’s**” (Lk.20:25). Before that, when Jesus was born into this world, the first time the word “worship” appears in connection with Jesus is when the Magi came. And in that account there is no mention of any singing or shouting or praying or music – just bowing and the giving of gifts. And before that, in the Old Testament, in the Mosaic Law God commanded all kinds of offerings and gifts as part of their worship. And even before that, if we go way back – all the way back to the first two people born into this world, we see them giving gifts to God.

### ***Cain and Abel***

The entire account of Cain and Abel is all about the gifts they gave to God and God’s response.

**Genesis 4:3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.**

The very first thing that happens in human history after the Fall is that people come and give something of value to God as an offering. Worship is all about honoring God, and one of the most important ways to honor Him is by giving gifts to Him.

That is why we have offering boxes in the sanctuary. It is why we put one right up front in the center on the communion table. The offering is a very sacred, holy portion of our worship service. In fact, lately I have been thinking a lot about whether we should change the way we do things so that we make more of this part of our corporate worship time. Just dropping in your gifts on your way out at the end almost makes it seem like an afterthought. I wonder if we should make more of this since it is such a key part of worship in Scripture – even from the very beginning.

### ***God Does Not Accept All Worship***

But the shocking thing we see with Cain and Abel is the fact that God rejects one of the gifts! Imagine one of those twenty-four elders lays his crown at the feet of God in worship, and the Lord picks it up, hands it back to that elder and says, “Get out of here, take your gift with you, and don’t come back!” That does not happen to any of the twenty-four elders, but it did happen to Cain – and

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worship.

millions of other worshippers. God does not accept all offerings. And if God rejects your offering, that means He rejects you. Whatever God thinks of your offering, that is what He thinks of you personally.

**Genesis 4:4 ... The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.**

Cain is the prototype of lost humanity, and Abel is the prototype of saved humanity. Both make an offering, but only one is accepted. So there is a lot at stake in this matter – the honor of God is at stake, and our acceptance or rejection by God is at stake.

So what can we do to make sure our gifts are acceptable to God, and that God is honored and not dishonored by our gifts? What went wrong with Cain's gift? And what was so good about Abel's? There are two places in Scripture that give us the answer. One is Genesis 4 itself, and the other is Hebrews 11. Let's look at Hebrews first, then come back to Genesis 4.

## Must be an Expression of Faith

**Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings.**

You can sum up the difference between the two brothers' offerings in a single word: faith. Abel's gift came from a heart of faith; Cain's did not. And that is no surprise - everything in the Christian faith from beginning to end is by faith, including worship. It is faith that pleases God, and that is why Abel's offering was accepted. But how would we know that just from looking at the account in Genesis 4? Let's look back at Genesis 4 and see what it says about the difference between the two offerings.

## Must be First and Best

**Genesis 4:3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4 Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.**

Abel: **fat portions**, and **firstborn**

Cain: **some of the fruits of the soil**

**Fat portions** refers to the choicest parts. Abel gave the first and the best. But there was nothing special about Cain's offering. It was just "some" of his crop. The evidence that shows that Abel had faith and Cain did not was the fact that Abel gave the first and the best, and Cain did not. So when you put a gift in the offering box, what makes it acceptable to God? It must come from a heart of faith. It must be your first and best.

### *Firstfruits*

**Proverbs 3:9 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops**

**Firstfruits** simply means you give to God first – before paying any bills, or contributing to your retirement fund, or taking any for yourself, or anything else. When you do that, it is an expression of faith because you cannot give to God first unless you trust Him to take care of the rest of your needs. People without faith will make sure they can pay their bills first, then give God some leftovers. But faith gives to God first – even if money is tight, because the whole point is to trust God. We do not give to God because He needs anything. We do not give God things He needs; we give God things that we need. We give Him what we need as a statement that we trust Him to provide for us.

### ***Gross or Net?***

And also to honor Him as our highest and first priority. Sometimes people ask me if they should tithe on their income before taxes or after taxes. My answer is it depends on which is your first priority, God, or Uncle Sam. Wherever your first allegiance is, give first to that.

### ***The Best***

And not just your first, but also your best. Remember last week we found that the word “honor” has to do with value or worth. You honor God by showcasing His worth. And one way to do that is by giving Him expensive gifts as an expression of the fact that He is worth more to you than those treasures are. So we honor God by giving Him that which is costly.

### **2 Samuel 24:24 I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.**

When the Magi worshipped Jesus they gave Him expensive gifts – gifts fit for a king. The twenty-four elders give their crowns. And if that does not strike you as any big deal, just think about it. These are not the cardboard Burger King kids’ meal crowns. Where did they get these crowns? Where did the rulers of heaven get their crowns? Those crowns were placed on their heads by the King of heaven Himself when He made them rulers! Can you imagine what that means to them? When they surrender these crowns, it is not just that they are giving up a certain number of ounces of gold or some monetary value. The value of the crowns comes from what those crowns mean.

I remember one Sunday when a woman came to church in tears because she had lost her wedding ring, and another lady in the church agreed with her husband to give this woman her own wedding ring as a gift to replace the lost one. It would be one thing to just buy a ring for someone. But to give them your wedding ring – that is a greater gift because a wedding ring means something. And if a wedding ring means something, these crowns *really* mean something. These elders are surrendering what had to have been their most prized possession. Symbolically, they are surrendering their very royalty. Their position in heaven.

Worship involves giving to the Lord, and not just giving, but giving something precious – something that is of great worth to you. God does not profit from getting crowns or lambs or money or anything else. The issue is what the gift is worth *to you*. Suppose there is a poor man who works for minimum wage, and he works overtime, and sells his golf clubs, and scrimps and saves so he can give his fiancé a \$1000 engagement ring. And then there is a billionaire who gives his fiancé a \$2000 ring. Which woman will be more honored? The first one, because even though it was a cheaper ring it came at much greater cost to the man. God will not be dishonored by accepting gifts that cost us nothing. God will accept the \$1000 ring from a poor man, but not the \$2000 ring from a billionaire.

In the Old Testament, God commanded numerous different offerings. For example, the tithe. The word “tithe” means ten percent. The people were required to give the first ten percent of all their income to the Lord. But on top of all that, if they wanted to, they could also give a freewill offering. And there was no specified amount for the freewill offering. You just gave whatever was in your heart to give.

And so you might expect that any amount would be acceptable. It is above and beyond all your other giving, it is not required, it is whatever is in your heart to give, so you would think you could give any amount you wanted. But that is not the case.

### **Deuteronomy 16:10 celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you.**

A freewill offering could not be any amount – it had to be proportional to your income. The purpose of giving to God is to honor Him, and it does not honor Him if we give Him our scraps and leftovers.

**Leviticus 22:21 When anyone brings ... and offering to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable.**

God will not accept cheap, lame gifts.

### ***How Much? Commensurate with income***

**1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income**

The issue is never the amount – always the percentage. Jesus said the woman who put one coin into the treasury gave more than everyone else, because it was all she had.

### ***Tithe***

So the issue is percentage, but what percentage? Well, in the Mosaic Law God commanded ten percent.<sup>3</sup> And before the Mosaic Law, Abraham gave ten percent. And Jacob gave ten percent in Genesis 28. And Jesus seemed to affirm the ten percent figure in Matthew 23:23. So ten percent seems to stand out. It took ten percent of the people's income to support the priests in Old Testament times, so it stands to reason it would take about that amount to support the pastors in the New Testament time.

Ten percent is large enough to where it is costly, and yet small enough that it is not financially crippling. So everything seems to point to ten percent as a starting place. If the poorest ancient Israelite could honor God with ten percent it seems like we who live in one of the wealthiest cultures in the history of the world could honor God with at least that much.

There are people who are struggling so much financially that they say, "I can't give anything to the Lord because I can't afford it." They do not think they can trust God to take care of their needs if they honor Him with their first fruits, so they give nothing, and they struggle and struggle, no doubt in many cases the Lord allows them to always be struggling because of the very fact that they do not trust Him enough to give Him their firstfruits. They are not being faithful with a little, so God does not entrust them with much. Why would He? If God wants His gifts spread around, He is not going to put them into the hands of someone who will hoard it. Someone once said, "Raise your giving to match your income lest God reduce your income to match your giving."

There are others who will not tithe because they are so wealthy. I heard of one guy who told his pastor, "Do you have any idea how much money ten percent of my income would be? I can't give that much." And so the pastor said, "OK, I will pray for you that the Lord would help you earn a lot less money this year so you could afford to tithe."

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<sup>3</sup> We never see a tithe or offering commanded until the Mosaic Law. There are three major passages in the Law about the tithe – Leviticus 27, Numbers 18 and Deuteronomy 14. By the time you get to the period just prior to the birth of Christ (they call that the intertestamental period, because it is the 400 year period - in-between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament), the Jews had interpreted these as three separate tithes. So they said you had to give thirty percent. They came to that conclusion because of what they perceived as differences in the tithe laws in those passages. For example in Leviticus tithe is to support the Levites and Priests, and in Deuteronomy it is to be eaten by the worshipper. But most likely there was just one tithe, and those apparent differences are not really differences. When Deuteronomy 14 tells the people to eat the tithe on their crops, it does not mean eat it all. That was just a single meal – but in the very next verse it says, "and do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own" (v.27). When God gave the Promised Land to the Jews, He divided it up among all the tribes but one – the tribe of Levi. They did not get anything. And they could not do anything to earn a living, because they spent their full time in ministry. So God instituted the tithe to support them (and every third year to support the poor as well). That was the purpose of the tithe that was commanded in the Law.

If ten percent of your income seems like a lot of money to give to the Lord, then praise God that your income is so massive that just 1/10 of it is still a large sum!

“But my income is tiny!”

Ok, then 1/10 of it is really tiny and should not be a problem.

Now, I should hasten to add that ten percent is never explicitly commanded in the New Testament, but giving according to your income is. And I think it is safe to say if you are giving two percent or one percent or zero, you are not giving according to your means.

I am not saying any of this for the purpose of increasing the offerings. I do not preach for the purpose of fundraising. My concern in this sermon is not fundraising – it is worship raising. My goal is not for our giving to increase; it is for our worship to increase. I just want the Lord Jesus Christ to be honored in this church – not dishonored. And that is God’s concern too, which is why instead of giving us a dollar figure, He just says,

**2 Corinthians 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

It is a frightening commentary on our worship if God says, “Give whatever is in your heart to give” and we end up giving next to nothing. God says, “Express whatever love for Me you have in your heart” and we say, “OK, here’s a dollar.” Or, “Here’s two percent of my income.”

One symptom of a heart that does not really love God is when your worship stops short of anything that would cost you financially. When we say, “I’ll sing and pray and fellowship and listen to the sermon and take communion – just as long as it costs me no money,” it is questionable whether that is coming from a worshipping heart. In Luke 3 when John the Baptist gave the people some examples of how to prove their repentance was genuine, all his examples had to do with money, because he knew that phony repentance is exposed as soon as it involves the checkbook. Remember when Jesus saw Zacchaeus and said, “Truly salvation has come to this house” (Lk.19:9)? What was it that made Jesus say that? It was when Jesus saw Zacchaeus return all the money he had stolen and four times more. Luke wants you to know that the new believers on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 were for real, so he talks about their generous giving to one another (2:45, 4:32-35). He wants you to know that the magicians in Ephesus were truly saved, so he gives you a dollar figure when telling about the occultist paraphernalia they burned (Acts 19:19).

I realize this is hard for some of you because you were not raised this way. For those of us who were taught from childhood to give to God first, it is not very hard. Which is one reason why it is important to teach this to our kids. One regret I have in raising my kids is I wish I would have given them an allowance so this would have been easier to teach them. We never gave them an allowance, and so it was so seldom that they ever had any income that it was hard to make this a habit. I think it is wise to give your kids a weekly income so they can understand this.

Even if it is only a dollar, if you give them ten dimes and they immediately put one in the envelope to give to Jesus, and each week at church they drop that in the offering – this would be a lot easier to teach them.

### ***God is Honored by a Willing Heart***

This is such a wonderful truth because it gives us all equal ability to honor God. If God were in need of money, the dollar amount would be the issue. But since He cares nothing about money but only about honor, the issue is not the dollar total, but the value of your gift to you – which is a function of the percentage of your income. And that is a great thing, because it does not matter how much you make – we all have the same ability to honor God with our firstfruits. The Macedonian churches gave a gift to the Church in Jerusalem out of their extreme poverty. They were in desperate poverty and yet they could not wait to give. When you understand what a privilege it is to be able to honor God, and when you understand the rewards involved with doing so, and you understand the great, eternal works

that God does through that kind of giving, the opportunity to participate in all that will seem too good to be true.

When the people of Israel all donated their freewill offerings for the building of the Temple, and the final dollar figure of all the giving was announced, they were blown away and they said, “**Who are we that we should be allowed to give this much?**” (1 Ch. 29:14). They felt unworthy to have such a big role in what God was doing. And that project – the building of the Temple in the Old Testament – was *nothing* compared to what God is doing in our day through the Church.

One interesting thing I found when I was studying the freewill offering was that they were connected with building projects in Scripture. That is how they funded the building of the Tabernacle (Ex.35:5-29). In fact, that was the only money that was allowed to be used on the Tabernacle. Eight times in that chapter it is repeated that only the willing are to give. God wanted a magnificent Tabernacle, and He wanted it to be especially holy, and evidently it would be more holy if it were built out of the sincere desires of the people’s hearts, rather than out of mere compliance with a command. And so it was built on one hundred percent freewill offerings.

And the same thing happened 1000 years later in Ezra 1 with the building of the Temple. At least a half dozen times in the book of Ezra it is emphasized that it was through freewill offerings that the Temple was built. I find it fascinating that the willingness of the people contributed to the holiness of the building. That makes me excited about this building. We are currently in the process of purchasing this building. Which means this will be a holy building because it was purchased one hundred percent with money that was freely, willingly offered without any coercion. Which means this place will stand here on this lot as a constant testimony to the love God’s people have for Him and His worthiness to be honored. That is why God loves a cheerful giver.

## Must be Joyful

And that brings us to our final point this morning. In order for a gift to honor God, it must come from a heart of faith, it must be firstfruits, it must be costly, and finally, it must be joyful.

**2 Corinthians 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

God does not love reluctant givers, or givers who see their giving as burdensome, or givers who give to glorify themselves; but He does love a cheerful giver. Joy causes lavishness in giving.

**2 Corinthians 8:2 their overflowing joy ... welled up in rich generosity.**

Lack of joy causes stinginess. When the priests in Malachi one offered their service to God but in their hearts they were thinking, “What a burden this is” – the result was they ended up offering animals that were lame and blind and crippled. Where joy is lacking, worship will not be what it should be.

Feeling burdened in serving God is a sure sign that something is way off in your understanding of reality. Remember, God is honored when He is shown to be the generous giver and we are the needy receivers. If we give with a “what a burden” attitude, it shows that we think we are the givers and God is the receiver, and so our giving to Him is a loss. When you put money into the offering, does that feel like a loss to you? If it feels like a loss, that means you feel like there is a value transfer coming out of your account, going to God. So you are the generous benefactor and He is the needy beneficiary. As long as that is your perspective you will never be a cheerful giver. You cannot be cheerful about constant loss. You will be a cheerful giver only when giving to God feels like gain to you. When you are so confident of His kindness and generosity and lavishness in reward, and you are so excited about what this gift is going to do in His kingdom – that is what makes you a joyful giver. And that is what honors Him as a generous benefactor. If someone in the world sees us putting money in the offering, and we cannot wait to put it in there – large sums of money – when they see us being eager to do that, and happy and excited about it – it will show them what a kind and generous God we are worshipping.



If we are so sure that the outcome is going to be so fantastic that we cannot wait to give, that shows God to be the generous giver.

## Conclusion: A Beautiful Thing

Earlier I mentioned the event where a woman worshipped Jesus by anointing Him with expensive perfume and the Disciples said, “Why this waste?” And Jesus responded by saying, “This is a beautiful thing.” I would like to close this morning by showing you that same beautiful thing when it happened on another occasion. In Luke 7 we read of a woman who was known as a vile sinner. But she had evidently heard Jesus preach, and had repented. And now she is seeking Him out to express her gratitude and love. And she finds Him, of all places, at a banquet in the house of a Pharisee.

That is the last place on the planet a woman like this would want to be. She shows her face in the house of a Pharisee and she is the object of nothing but disdain and disgust. But her desire to express her love for Jesus is so urgent, it cannot wait until after the meal. She has to see Him *right now*. So she goes in.

### **Luke 7:37... she brought an alabaster jar of perfume**

Women then carried these jars around the necks. They were white or delicately tinted fine-grained gypsum, and very expensive. These were such prized possessions, they were the one thing women were allowed to carry around on the Sabbath day, when even jewelry was forbidden.

So she takes this expensive treasure and, when we piece the story together we see that her plan was evidently to use that perfume to anoint Jesus’ head in an act of love and gratitude and worship. There is no evidence that there was any custom of anointing a person’s feet. When you anoint someone, you anoint their head.

So she enters the house. She is deaf to the gasps and the haughty, disapproving, condescending, condemning looks and whispers. All she sees is the One who made her heart pure. She approaches Him with this perfume.

It is a banquet, so Jesus is reclining - laying on His elbow talking, His feet back behind Him. And instead of going over and sitting by the wall with the other observers, this woman walks up toward Jesus from behind. Everyone gasps, and the room falls dead silent.

She is going to anoint Jesus’ head with the perfume. But as she gets closer to Him, something happens to her. At this point it is a little awkward in the Greek text:

### **38 and...having begun to stand behind...alongside the feet of Him, weeping...**

Luke gives us this halting, disjointed description of her approaching, then stopping, then crying. As she moves toward Jesus, she gets up to where His feet are, Jesus is facing the other way, and she hesitates. As soon as she gets close, and sees Him, and hears His voice again – all that had gone on in her heart wells up in her, and it all comes rushing to the front of her thinking. She is overwhelmed with emotion and that stopped her in her tracks, and here come the tears. She sees Him and just feels the reality of complete forgiveness and cleansing all over again. And it stops her in her tracks.

You know how once you have an awkward moment in a social situation, that can cause an even more awkward moment, and the whole thing can tumble down hill? Look what happens next.

### **38 ...she began to wet his feet with her tears.**

The word **wet** is the normal word for rain. She began to rain down tears, and they landed on Jesus’ feet! They drop from her face, and land not on the floor, but right on Jesus! So now she is dripping down tears onto the feet of this great miracle worker – the one whose sandals John was not fit to carry.

You can imagine the embarrassment of that. Earlier we read that no one had washed Jesus' feet when He entered. So with sandals on dirt roads, Jesus' feet would have been very dusty. Now you drip a bunch of tears on there and you have spots of mud..

This was *not* part of her plan. First of all, you cannot plan tears like this. And secondly, she had no towel – she had no intention of doing anything to His feet.

She has just interrupted the meal, she was going to anoint Jesus head, she may have told herself before coming in, “OK, I’m not going to cry.” But now she burst into uncontrolled sobbing, everybody is looking at her, and the tears have now dripped on Jesus... She immediately wants to wipe them off, and she drops down to do that, but she doesn’t have a towel, and so she does something absolutely unheard of. She does something Jewish women in that culture never did. She lets her hair down in public – an extreme disgrace in that culture. Letting your hair down in the presence of a man you were not married to was on par with appearing in public without clothes. It was actually grounds for divorce. This would have been a shock to everyone and an extreme humiliation. But she has to wipe away these tears.

To do that you would have to get your face awfully close to the feet. 1 Corinthians 11:15 says the glory of a woman is her hair. She took the crowning glory of her life and used it as a rag to wipe dirt of the Master’s feet.

In that culture there was nothing more menial than attending to someone’s feet. It was the task of the lowest slave in the house – and even he would use a towel. This woman could not have possibly descended to any lower level of humility. But she is glad to do it, because even the most menial service to the King of kings is the greatest honor.

### **38 ...Then she wiped them with her hair, *kissed* them**

That was not a custom in that day - it was as bizarre then as it would be today. Now that she is down at His feet she realizes that is where she belongs. She has no business going any farther than that. It is a high enough honor to attend to His feet, and so now she is just going to anoint them. But first she starts kissing them. The normal word for “kiss” is *philema* (φίλημα, ). The word here is *kataphilema* (καταφιλημα) - repeated, fervent kissing.

She is so overcome with love, she forgets all the people and forgets about how this looks,

### **38...and poured perfume on them.**

Against the backdrop of all the people dishonoring Jesus in the Gospels, what a beautiful reprieve from that we see with this woman. Finally someone honors Jesus.

Have any of us ever worshipped God with such, effusive, lavish worship that is just... over the top like this? Where does that kind of worshipping heart come from? Jesus tells us. She loves much because she has been forgiven much. That is one reason the Law of God is precious to us – it shows us how severe our sin is so we can understand more how much we have been forgiven, resulting in greater love for the One who forgives us.

When this happened in Matthew 26 and the Disciples said, “Why this waste?” Jesus said, “She has done a beautiful thing.” May the Lord say that of us every Sunday morning when He sees our worship. May our faith and our joy and the costliness of our gifts cause Jesus to say of our offerings – “They have done a beautiful thing.”

**Benediction: 1 Peter 2:4-5 4 As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-- 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**