

GOSPEL OF JOHN
WITNESS, WORK, AND WORSHIP
JOHN 12:1-11 (also Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9)

Introduction

Chapter 12 begins *Jesus' final journey in the days leading up to the cross*. In *chapter 11*, we saw Jesus depart from *Bethany* with His disciples to a city called *Ephraim* just as the *Pharisees* took counsel to put Him to death!

The *Pharisees* said **it was time for Jesus to die**, but as we saw last time *Jesus is the One Who was in control here, NOT the Pharisees!*

Chapter 12 picks up **six days before Passover** and we see that *Jesus and His disciples returned to Bethany where he had raised Lazarus from the dead!* (*Verse 1*)

Now later in this passage we'll see that the buzz over *Jesus* having raised *Lazarus* from the dead had not died down while he was in *Ephraim*. And *Jesus* being back in *Bethany* and being with *Lazarus* was the talk of the town!

(Can you imagine if it were today how the media would have been camped out on the lawn of the house where they were? Well, there was no media, just word of mouth, but that was enough to keep the pot stirred as we will see.)

Now notice *verse 2*, "*There they made Him [Jesus] a supper...*"

The particular "*there*" where they made *Jesus* a supper was in *the house of Simon the Leper* according to the accounts in *Matthew 26:6; Mark 14:3*.

So, this supper was for Jesus! Just imagine being able to **sit, eat, and converse** with *Jesus* and *His Disciples*, but especially with *Jesus*! Wouldn't that be great! No doubt this supper was made to express gratitude for what Jesus had done when He was there previously! (*i.e. Raising Lazarus from the dead!*) But possibly it was also for having healed *Simon the Leper*!

So let's do a role call of who is in attendance here:

- 1) *Jesus*, the honored guest!
- 2) *Lazarus* is seated at the table with *Jesus*!
- 3) The house is said to be that of *Simon the Leper*!

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- 4) No doubt all *12 Disciples* are also in attendance!
- 5) *Verse 2* tells us that *Martha* (One of *Lazarus' sisters*) is serving!
- 6) And *Martha* and *Lazarus' sister, Mary*, is mentioned in *verse 3*!
- 7) No one else is mentioned, so that makes **17 people** in the house that we know of. There could have been others, but we are not told. (*Vs 9*)

Now let's read about what Mary did and what followed... verses 3-11

Let's note several important things here in these 11 verses today:

I. WE SEE AN ACTIVE WITNESS FOR JESUS—LAZARUS!

In fact, *Lazarus being resurrected from the dead was not only an active witness to Jesus, but was also an active threat to the Pharisees* so much so that they not only wanted *Jesus* dead, but they also wanted *Lazarus* dead again!

As I said, there was still a buzz going around about *Lazarus' resurrection!* (*Vs 9*) People were wanting to see *Lazarus* with their own eyes! I get that! Amen! I would have been right there with them!

Don't you know that *Lazarus* could draw a crowd! Now the *Pharisees* treated *Lazarus* and *Jesus* as some kind of freak show...A circus!

But, Lazarus was a walking witness to the Power and Person of Jesus!

(*Don't you know that folks must've had a lot of questions!:* "*Did it hurt?;*" "*Did it Tingle?;*" "*Did you see a Bright Light?;*" "*Did time pass?;*" "*Did you go to paradise?;*" "*What was it like there?;*" "*What was it like when you woke up?;*" and many other questions I'm sure!

Again, Lazarus was a walking witness to both the Power and Person of Jesus!

So, Lazarus' witness was important! Folks were getting saved from seeing and hearing the evidence of the LORD's GREAT RESURRECTION POWER in Lazarus' life!

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But listen to me—What happened to Lazarus physically has happened to us Spiritually! Those of US who are SAVED have also been RAISED FROM OUR SPIRITUAL DEATH and should also be walking witnesses to the Power and Person of Jesus as well! (Ephesians 2:1—“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”)

We are to walk in the newness of the resurrection life that we have so graciously received from Jesus!

Romans 6:4—“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

*Ephesians 2:4–6—“4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, **hath quickened us together with Christ**, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And **hath raised us up together**, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:”*

*2 Corinthians 5:17–18—“17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.** 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;”*

Oh how WE need to be WITNESSES to the GREAT RESURRECTION POWER of our LORD!

It should be evident to all those around us that we are living proof of what **God’s** mighty power can do!

But if you are that kind of **WITNESS**, just know that is not going to go over well with those in this world that have their own ideas about **Jesus!** Jesus told **His Disciples** in *John 15:18, 20—“18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you!... 20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you”*

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And that was the case with **Lazarus** and the **Pharisees!** The **Pharisees** had it in for **Lazarus** almost as much as they had it in for **Jesus** because what happened to him was turning folks into Believers in **Christ!**

WE SEE AN ACTIVE WITNESS FOR JESUS—LAZARUS...

II. WE SEE AN ACTIVE WORKER FOR JESUS—MARTHA!

Understand that on a previous occasion recorded in **Luke 10:38-42**, **Martha** got a little “*bent out of shape*” so to speak because she was doing all the serving and her sister **Mary** was sitting at **Jesus’** feet listening to what Jesus had to say.

In fact, in her frustration with her sister, she complained to **Jesus**. **Luke 10:40—“But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.”**

Jesus responded to her with these words:

Luke 10:41–42— “And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: 42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Now we don’t see that same frustration here! **Martha is still working, still serving. That is a good thing! Martha** could have taken the rebuke from **Jesus** the wrong way and said, “*Well, if Jesus isn’t going to make her serve, then I’m just not going to serve anymore either!*” But she didn’t do that!

Let me ask, **how well do you take rebuke from God’s Word?** There are many folks that have heard some **true preaching or teaching from God’s Holy Word** and then got a **nasty attitude toward the man of God and the things of God because they didn’t like what was said and so they just quit on God! Don’t do that!** Instead, **learn from the rebuke the things the LORD wants you to learn and then keep on going for Him!** That is what we see in **Martha!**

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This time *Martha* is still serving and we see *Mary* is still at the feet of *Jesus*. But what has changed? *Martha's ATTITUDE* changed after *Jesus* spoke to her last time! **This time she was CONTENT to just serve the Lord (and others) and let Mary do what Mary needed to do!** Martha's **WORK** was important, as was Mary's **WORSHIP** that we will see here in a minute! Both our **WORK** for the **LORD** and our **WORSHIP** of the **LORD** are essential!

As we **WORSHIP** the **LORD** we draw spiritual energy from Him that we need to then go out and use it to **WORK** for or **SERVE** the **LORD**! *Ephesians 2:10—"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."*

If you don't have a place of service for the LORD, why not? It's not just for the preacher you know! As we approach the **LORD's** coming we ought to be busy for Him, but sadly it is harder than ever to get folks to be faithful and to be involved in the work of the ministry!

It has to begin with being united with a local group of Believers! Every Believer in Christ needs to join up with a local fellowship of other Believers (a local Church) and then **find a place to plug in where you can be blessed yourself and be a blessing to others!**

WE SEE AN ACTIVE WITNESS FOR JESUS—LAZARUS...

WE SEE AN ACTIVE WORKER FOR JESUS—MARTHA...

III. WE SEE AN ACTIVE WORSHIPER OF JESUS—MARY!

Now there are several *Marys* mentioned in Scripture! And two of them are noted in Scripture as having anointed the feet of *Jesus*! The first *Mary* to do that was *Mary Magdalene*, who did so because the **Lord** cast seven devils out of her! (*See Luke 7:36-50 for that story!*)

The *Mary* in our text is *Mary of Bethany*, the sister of *Martha* and *Lazarus*! We are not told, but no doubt she heaped this act of love and kindness on our *Savior* because of His having raised her brother from the dead!

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So, we see from *Mary of Bethany* this very loving act! **The act of giving something that was very precious and costly for the LORD!** The french poet Victor Hugo once said something that rings true, "*You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.*"

When you truly LOVE someone, you give to them because you WANT to give to them out of your LOVE for them!

It was a custom in those days to provide for the guests' feet to be washed by a servant or at least provide water for it to be done by the guest and then to **anoint the guest with just a few drops of ointment or perfume on their head and feet. It was considered an act of common courtesy and kindness.**

However, this was not *Mary's* house, it belonged to *Simon the Leper*! We are not told if *Simon the Leper* had done any of the **customary acts of common courtesy and kindness**. He very well may have!

What *Mary* used (*i.e. a pound of spikenard*) was **both a precious and costly ointment!** (In *Vs. 5, Judas Iscariot* said that it should have been sold for "*three hundred pence*" which amounted to about the average annual wages for a person living in those days.)

But we see that *Mary DIDN'T* use just a **few drops** on *Jesus*, but rather she poured out the entire amount lavishly on the **LORD** and **the odor of it filled the house (Vs 3)!** Understand that **this sort of ointment was also used for anointing the dead!** And consider that she had **NOT** poured it out on her brother *Lazarus* when he had died just a short while before this!

Now get this...*Mary* sacrificed here to such a degree that she was **criticized for it!** Our text here indicates that *Judas Iscariot* had a problem with it because he feigned that it could be sold for money to be distributed to the poor! The reality was that *Judas* knew that if the money hit the treasurer's bag that he carried, he could steal some of it!

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Anyone who is determined to live a sacrificial Christian life as a Believer can expect to be criticized by those who just don't understand *Jesus* and what he has done for us!

If you strive to be **faithful** to **ALL** the services of a local *Church* because it is important to you not to miss out on what *God* has in store for you and you take seriously the admonition of Scripture to not forsake the assembly, then you can expect to be laughed at and criticized by those who don't see the need! (Even by some Believers!)

If you are **faithful to give** to the *LORD* **a tithe on the increase** that the *LORD* blesses you with, expect that some folks are going to think that you have gone crazy!

And if you up your **sacrifice** in order to give over and above to support the **worldwide missions program** of your *Church*, expect folks to think you must surely have a screw loose somewhere!

In fact, if you are a **faithful steward** of **ALL** that *God* has given you by **using the time, talent, and treasure He has given you to actually do something for the LORD** because of your love for Him, well in many folks eyes, you qualify to be tucked away in an insane asylum!

And too often it's the very people in your life who are supposed to encourage you who will tear you down about your sacrifice!

Mary was simply living out loud how she felt in her heart, and her extreme devotion is seen here... and that's a good thing! But she wasn't doing it for show! She was doing it out of her love for her *LORD*! Look at what Jesus says in *vs. 7* again!

In the two other accounts of this story, it is recorded that Jesus said that what *Mary* did would be spoken as a memorial of her!
(*Cf. Mark 14:9; Matthew 26:13*)

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Whether she understood or not, God led her to '*pre-anoint*' Jesus for His burial which would soon come when He would give His life for the whole world!

But **what she did here for Jesus had a spill-over effect on everyone in the house!** *Vs. 3* says that "*the house was filled with the odour of the ointment!*" No matter where you went in the house, you could smell it, and **it benefitted everyone. That was the spill-over effect!** She did not do what she did for everyone! **She did it for Jesus and others benefitted!**

Now, **when we do whatever we do for Jesus, there is a spill-over effect that benefits others. A true man of God does what he does primarily for God, not just for people.** Because there are some times when people aren't lovable and don't appreciate what is being done on their behalf, but **a true man of God just keeps doing it anyway!**

Believers are to do whatever they do for God, Who will always see it and reward it. And inevitably, **the blessings will spill over to other people as well, even to those who aren't appreciative of it!**

I have found that sometimes it's those we do the most for and who we show the most grace who stab us in the back. That hurts, but not so much as when we are doing it for **God**, who still sees and is **pleased with our sacrifice for Him and even our suffering on His behalf!**

It's all about the heart. Matters of the heart are the heart of the matter. It doesn't matter what anyone says about us if our heart is right! **God** knows our heart!

Now, **how does our sacrifice smell to God?** If the degree of our **love for Him and sacrifice to Him** was manifested today by way of a scent, what would this room smell like?

I find this deeply convicting, because I tend to stray off the path into distractions of life that aren't focused upon the LORD sometimes.

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And **most of us don't love God the way we think we do!** Our lives testify as to what we truly love! Jesus said what we spend our money on speaks as to where our heart is! (*Matthew 6:19-21*)

Consecration is sacrifice! It is taking what is precious to us, and laying it at the feet of Jesus!

Conclusion

Now, if you put all three of these things together that we have seen ...**WITNESS, WORK, WORSHIP**, then you have a balanced Christian life!

And really, **all three of these things were manifested in each of these individuals!**

MARTHA'S WORK FOR THE LORD WAS A WITNESS OF HER LOVE FOR CHRIST AND PART OF HER WORSHIP OF HIM!

LAZARUS WITNESS FOR THE LORD WAS ALSO A WORK FOR THE LORD AND HIS THANKSGIVING TO THE LORD FOR HAVING RAISED HIM WAS PART OF HIS WORSHIP OF HIM!

What is manifested in your life toward the LORD?

Are you saved? Have you received the new life in Christ that He made the ultimate sacrifice for? (If not, why not? Come to Him today! A failure to come to Him for His salvation is the height of ingratitude!)

And if you are saved, what can others see of **your WITNESS, your WORK, and your WORSHIP of the LORD?**