

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 27TH-28TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

VALUES (JOHN 12:1-11)

After the events of chapter 11, Jesus stayed with His disciples in a small town called Ephraim (11:54) as they hid from the Pharisees.

- Six days before the Passover, Jesus returned to Bethany to spend time and have dinner with His friends—Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (vs. 1-2).
- The horror of the cross is less than a week away, but on this night Jesus no doubt was comforted by the presence of His friends.

Lazarus is at the table with Jesus, Martha is serving, and at some point during the meal, Mary appears with an alabaster jar (Mt. 26:7; Mk. 14:3).

- The jar contained nard—a rosy-colored, very expensive, sweet-smelling perfume which grows in the foothills of the Himalayas.
- We're told it was worth 300 denarii: probably around \$30,000–\$35,000.

Mary takes this jar full of priceless perfume and pours it out on the feet of Jesus, wiping His feet with her hair (vs. 3) as the entire house is filled with the scent of the perfume.

- This is an act of worship for Mary: an expression of her complete love, devotion, and dedication to Jesus, who will soon be crucified for her.
- Mary is giving Jesus the most valuable gift she can possibly imagine.

When someone gives their very best to the Lord, often what happens is that they're misunderstood or criticized (vs. 4-5).

- Judas Iscariot (the one who would betray Jesus) objects to Mary's gift and calls it wasteful.
- Judas wasn't actually concerned about taking the value of the perfume and giving it to the poor, he was the treasurer for Jesus' ministry and apparently a thief (vs. 6).

Jesus sees Mary's heart and knows her motives.

- He tells Judas to leave her alone and reminds him that there will always be opportunities to care for the poor, but this was an exceptional time.
- It was inappropriate for Judas to put a price on Mary's love and devotion for Jesus while He was still alive but about to die (vs. 7-8).
- Mary's act of devotion was a blessing to Jesus and to others in the house.

As this intimate dinner is happening between Jesus and His friends, a large crowd of curiosity seekers gathered who had heard that Jesus and Lazarus (the dead man who had been made alive) were in Bethany (vs. 9).

- Not only was Jesus on the hit list for the religious leaders, but now Lazarus was too (vs. 10-11).

PRIORITIES AND VALUES

What are you willing to sacrifice in order to give your love and devotion to Jesus?

- Your time? Money? Energy? Rights? Reputation?
- If your relationship with Jesus costs you nothing, it probably is worth very little in your life.
- When we understand the sacrifice Christ made for us, the only appropriate response is a life of service and sacrifice to Him.

THE KING'S ARRIVAL (JOHN 12:12-19)

Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus has been alluding to the time when He would suffer and die for the sins of His people.

- Now the week of His passion is here, and He enters the city of Jerusalem along with the Passover crowd (vs. 12).
- As Jesus rode into the city, the crowds threw out cloaks and waved palm branches (vs. 13; Mk. 11:8) to welcome and greet Him as King.

The crowd began praising Jesus as their King, quoting Psalm 118:26, crying out, "Hosanna" (vs. 13; Mt. 21), which literally means, "save us."

- Jesus was entering into God's holy city toward God's Temple as God's chosen King.
- Part of the Messianic symbolism of Jesus coming into the city of Jerusalem involved Jesus riding a donkey that had never been ridden (vs. 14).

This was a fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, which described the savior king of Israel (the Messiah) riding on a donkey to bring salvation.

- Most Kings rode neither colts nor donkeys, but full-grown, strong, impressive horses.
- Jesus came as a different kind of king—the kind who comes in peace to die and serve.
- His disciples didn't understand the significance of these things until much later (vs. 16).

Meanwhile, the crowd is still talking about Lazarus and the miracle of his resurrection of the dead (vs. 17).

- This is one of the reasons why the crowd was there to welcome Jesus as He entered the city of Jerusalem (vs. 18).
- To the Pharisees, this has all gotten completely out of hand: they complain that "the world has gone after Him" (vs. 19).

BANDWAGON FANS

It seems like this crowd is loyal to Jesus, but the same crowd will cry out in just a few days, "crucify Him!" (Jn. 19:15).

- Many people have and will verbally profess Jesus as Lord, but in reality, many are only admirers when it's easy—not true followers.
- It's easy to SAY that we follow Christ, but to let Him lead us in our everyday lives is what matters.

THE HOUR HAS COME (JOHN 12:20-36)

In other gospel accounts, Jesus is shown driving out the merchants from the Court of the Gentiles as He comes into Jerusalem (Mt. 21:12-17; Mk. 11:15-19; Lk. 19:45-48).

- The Court of the Gentiles was to be the place of prayer for all nations (Isa. 56:7), but since the Jewish religious leaders had turned it into a marketplace, God-fearing Gentiles had no place to come and pray.

Maybe the reason why John includes Greeks coming to Jesus at this part of the narrative is because they're coming to Jesus to show their appreciation (vs. 20).

- The Gentile world has heard of Jesus and seen His works, and they've come knocking (vs. 21-22).
 - This is the sign that Jesus' hour has come and soon He'll go to the cross (vs. 23).
- Jesus uses the image of a seed to illustrate that there can be no glory without suffering and no fruit without death, like a seed buried in the ground (vs. 24-25).
- Victory comes about through surrender, and spiritual life comes through the death of our own will (vs. 25).
 - Jesus modeled this for us, and He intends for us as His servants to live this way also (vs. 26).

This was not going to be an easy task!

- Jesus knew the horrible suffering and pain that awaited Him on the cross, and His soul was troubled because of it.
- But Jesus also knew that it was going to be worth it: He didn't ask God to save Him from this hour of suffering, but for God to glorify His name through Jesus' suffering (vs. 27-28a).

All at once, another voice interrupts Jesus' sorrow.

- Some said it sounded like thunder, and others said it was an angel (vs. 29).
- The voice said, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (vs. 28b).
- This voice was a final sign and confirmation of God the Father's approval of Jesus; it was for the sake of those present so they might believe (vs. 30).

ON THE CROSS, JESUS WILL ACCOMPLISH THREE THINGS:

1. The world will be judged: the world's sin will be poured out on Jesus and judged (vs. 31a).
2. The ruler of the world will be cast out: Satan would be cast out of any rightful authority over God's people (vs. 31b)
3. Jesus will be lifted up and all people will be drawn to Him: the symbol for execution would now become a worldwide symbol for Jesus and His love (vs. 32).

The crowd is enthusiastically admiring Jesus until He starts talking about His death (vs. 33).

- If Jesus is the Messiah, isn't the Messiah supposed to live forever and usher in the Kingdom? (vs. 34).
- The light that has come into the world is going away; while you have the chance, put your trust in the light so that you may be children of light and darkness doesn't overtake you (vs. 35-36).

FAITH (JOHN 12:37-50)

In John's Gospel, Jesus has opened blind eyes, fed thousands, walked on water, and even raised the dead to life—and yet, there were those who witnessed these things and still didn't believe (vs. 37).

- How do you explain this? This is nothing new. It's been going on since ancient times, and John quotes the prophet Isaiah to help us understand how this works (vs. 38-41).

This is the principle of something called "judicial blindness" (Romans 1:18-32).

- After people continually refuse to believe in spite of God reaching out to them again and again, God gives them over to blindness and hardened hearts.
- Isaiah saw it in His day, and this is what happened to many who were present during the life and ministry of Jesus (vs. 41).

There were rulers and religious leaders who did believe in Jesus privately, but they didn't confess Him openly because they were afraid of getting blacklisted (vs. 42).

- At the end of the day, these people cared more about the praise and acceptance of other people than they did the praise that comes from God (vs. 43). This is what keeps many people today from following!

Jesus now makes one last public pronouncement of His identity: His mission (vs. 44-50).

- God the Father sent Jesus the Son, and whoever believes in Jesus believes in the Father.
- Jesus is the light of the world, and His words are the words of God.
- Jesus came to bring salvation, but anyone who rejects Him will be judged on the last day.

Jesus didn't come to judge but to save, and if we won't trust in Him as savior, we must face Him as our judge.

- There will be inescapable consequences for rejecting Jesus.
- Jesus' last public statement to the crowds is simply this: I am the one sent from God, believe on me as Lord, receive my salvation, and live eternally!

"THE LIGHT HAS COME INTO THE WORLD..."

- We have the testimony of the light of creation that points to the reality of God.
- We have the light of the law of God written our conscience and inner person.
- We've just read the eyewitness testimony of those who walked with Christ—how will you respond to who Jesus is and what He's done for you?

RESPONSE #1: UNBELIEF AND REJECTION.

- You've been given the light of creation, the light of your conscience, and the light of Christ to point to the reality of the gospel.
- But if you won't believe despite those things, you probably won't believe no matter what you're shown.
- If your heart is hardened and your eyes are blind: seek the Lord before it's too late.

RESPONSE #2: APATHY AND/OR FANDOM.

- Jesus has always had a lot of fair-weathered/bandwagon fans.
- Some verbally profess Him as Lord when it's easy to do so, but when it gets difficult or when they get ridiculed—they're out.
- For others, Jesus is near the bottom of their list of priorities: no sacrifice of time, money, comfort, or energy has ever been made for Him.

RESPONSE #3: SERVICE AND SACRIFICE.

- The response of faith to Jesus' radical love toward us on the cross is to pour out our entire lives as a love offering for Him.
- We sacrifice and give our time, energy, reputation, and even our lives to the one who gave us everything on the cross.
- What are you not willing to sacrifice in order to give your love and devotion to Jesus?