

ONE THING MORE...

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
John 12.1-8 | November 17, 2019
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series on gratitude, inspired by the season of Thanksgiving! This week, we look in on a dinner given in Jesus' honor at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus to see the power of gratitude.

II. Connecting with One Another

Have you ever attended a dinner in someone's honor?

Who was it for? What was the occasion? What gifts did they receive?

III. Study the Text

a. Read John 12.1-2.

Why do you think this dinner was given in Jesus' honor, at the home of his closest friends? (Turn back to John 11, if you can't think of anything)

How do you think Jesus felt being honored?

What influences your perception on Jesus' state of mind?

How do you feel when you're honored? Why?

b. Read John 12.3.

Try to imagine the scene. What do you think it was like?

What did this symbolic action mean? How do you think people responded?

How would you respond? Why?

c. Anointing was a common ancient ritual. For instance, when one became a prophet, priest, or king, their head was commonly anointed with oil. Or, to symbolically prepare a dead body for transitioning from being a family member to an ancestor, their whole body would be anointed.

In this setting, however, only Jesus' feet are anointed. Why do you think this is?

What could that signify?

d. In traditional Middle Eastern society, a woman's hair was to be covered in public and let down for her husband for the first time on their wedding night. One first century text includes one woman's boasting, "Throughout the days of my life the beams of my house have not seen the plaits of my hair"!

Of course, Jesus remained unmarried throughout his life – this wasn't a romantic gesture! – but by untying her hair, Mary is making a kind of pledge of loyalty to Jesus. Again, imagine you were there: How would this change your response to this action?



- e. Read John 12.4-5.

So there's not only the intimacy within this symbolic action, there's a monetary value associated with this anointing – one which Judas believed to be too high.

How would you feel if you were there? Would you feel different if you knew that Peter asked this question instead of Judas?

As you reflect and discuss, remember Judas' objection: "That was worth a year's wages!" How would you feel if a pastor was given a year-end bonus the amount of their salary!?

- f. Read John's explanation of Judas' intentions in John 12.6.

The "money bag" or "common purse" was important for pilgrims to the Jerusalem temple as they transported money for temple taxes and alms. It is made clear here that Judas didn't care about the poor at all. On the contrary, he wanted money for himself.

How do you think the disciples should respond to him? How should Jesus?

- g. Read John 12.7-8.

In verse 7, Jesus declares, "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial."

What do you think Jesus means by this?

- h. What do you think Jesus' statement in verse 8 means?

After first thinking through the above question, turn to and carefully read Deuteronomy 15.1-11. Notice that in John 12.8 Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 15.11.

How does this reframe your understanding of what Jesus is saying?

How do you think the disciples understood the second half of verse 8, "you will not always have me"?

How do you think Mary heard this? How do you think Judas heard it?

- i. "Thank offerings" were often given, but not to particular rabbis – they were given at the temple, where first century Jews were made right with God.

Read between the lines a bit: What does this extravagant gift given to Jesus (rather than the temple) symbolize? Who does Mary believe Jesus to be?

IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to open your eyes to all you have to be grateful for this Thanksgiving season,
- b. Pray that the Holy Spirit would empower your gratitude to overflow, causing you to point family and friends to the source of all good gifts this holiday season.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. Read Luke 10.38-42 for a remarkable, counter-cultural scene where Mary becomes a disciple of Jesus, sitting at his feet.

