

10.29.23 – Light in the Darkness – Anointed – John 12:1-11

Introduction:

How many of you want to be a millionaire? Can you imagine having that kind of money? The things you could do for fun, things you could buy for others? What if I told you that anyone can be a millionaire, would you believe me? I promise, I'm not trying to sell you something today. However, you should know, that if you started saving \$25 per week and investing in a mutual fund, every week, you could, in theory, retire at 70 years old with a million dollars in the bank.

Now, is that 100% true? Maybe. I'm not sure. I know my stock investment friends would tell me to invest that and more. The problem is, if I start at 25, it's going to take me 45 or more years, and... well... that is just not how I wanted to spend my money when I was \$25. I, and, maybe even you, lacked that kind of intentionality.

The problem we generally have is a... **Lack of intentionality.**

Explain:

I used money to show that, but the same is true with anything.

In his 2008 book "Outliers," Malcolm Gladwell wrote that

**"Ten thousand hours is the magic number of greatness."
Malcom Gladwell (*Outliers*)**

The meaning behind this, in theory, is simple. To achieve great things and truly experience greatness within a certain craft, you must practice it for ten thousand hours. Sounds like a lot doesn't it. 10,000 hours?

What if I told you, it would only take 15 min. per day for 14 months? 10k hours is not impossible, it just requires intentionality and discipline over the course of a long period of time.

In our time today, we will continue our teaching in the Gospel of John, and will look at how God wants us to be intentional with our lives, especially when it comes to worshipping Jesus.

Context:

The last chapter, John 11, had the amazing miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. An afterward we saw the plan of the Pharisees to kill Jesus.

John 11:54 ESV

⁵⁴ Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

Show photo: [Click here](#)

As a result, Jesus did not move as freely about Judea which was made up of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethany, and Jericho near the Jordan river.

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The reason for that was that Jesus following the plan of the father. That plan was meticulous. There was a certain time to enter, certain teachings to be done, and there was a certain day to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Bible Transition:

As we move from John 11, to John 12, we know that Jesus is This chapter does not have a miraculous sign, but something significant happens.

John 12:1-2 ESV

12 Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.

Point Transition:

In the midst of the plot to kill Jesus, in the middle of the potential for violence, Jesus goes out to dinner.

Gather with a Kingdom purpose. (vv. 1-2)

Explain:

There was a reason Jesus was here in Bethany, with his close friends, with Lazarus whom he raised from the dead, and Mary, and Martha.

Six days before the Passover feast would have been most likely been the Saturday the week before Passover which would have been on a Friday.

A deeper study here would show us this dinner would have been a symbolic one, as is Jesus way, because he gathers with a kingdom purpose.

The significance is that Jesus is at what is most likely a Sabbath dinner gathering, and there, he is with the man he raised from the dead, as he prepares to become the sacrificial lamb, the deliverer of his people.

They were gathered for a Kingdom purpose.

Illustrate:

Now, I have gathered lots of people in my life. I have thrown parties, dinner parties, football games, kids parties, and I have seen there are a variety of people that will attend those parties. Some care about the things I care about. Some do not.

What do they say to never talk about? Politics, and what? Religion. Only, people talk about politics all the time, so really, we are just not supposed to talk about our religion? I don't buy it anymore. I had to learn the hard way, that some of the people I was gathering, only wanted to laugh, joke, and never dig deep into things like why God put us on this planet.

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I know it sounds intense, but I don't have time for that. My time on this planet, just like yours, is short. Don't waste it. Jesus was intense, and Jesus had fun at the same time.

If we gather a group of people, as followers of Jesus, we need to be purposeful in our gathering.

Apply:

I recently started a couple of different life groups that I lead. One of them have been a group of friends I have known and done life with for the past 20 years. 20 years of friendship. 20 years of me saying all kinds of dumb things that made people mad. 20 years of them watching me mature, while still recognizing I have room to grow. The point is this, we have been gathering as friends, but we decided to add a Kingdom purpose to our gathering and formalize some of our hangout times toward intentional spiritual growth.

Bible Transition:

Jesus gathers people with a Kingdom intentionality. He party's on purpose. Something happens at the party.

John 12:3 ESV

³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Point Transition:

Verse three has become a bit of a misunderstood passage for a long time.

It is simple to understand, yes? What happens here? Mary takes a pound of expensive ointment, made from pure nard, and she anoints Jesus feet. She then wipes his feet with her hair, and the whole house is filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Anyone in here like perfume? I love perfume. I love cologne. Look, my dad is middle eastern, and my mom is Mexican and Italian. I fit all the profiles for loving good cologne and perfume. But this isn't about me.

Mary anoints Jesus feet with this amazing perfume, she then wipes Jesus feet with her hair. This part is straight forward.

If you like to deep into Bible research, this is for you...

The misunderstanding happens when people merge Mary in this passage, and Mary Magdalene, and then the sinful women, all together. They put them all together in their minds.

Here is the verse of Mary, the sister or Martha and Lazarus who anoints Jesus feet and wipes it with her hair.

John 12:3 ESV

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³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Here is the verse of the sinful woman, who wipes Jesus feet with her tears, not oil.

Luke 7:36-38 ESV

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. ³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

Here are the verses that show us that Mary was introduced along with others, Jesus exorcised the demons out of Mary, seven demons, and she was amongst those who paid for Jesus ministry.

Luke 8:1-3 ESV

⁸ Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

There you go. Three women, three different woman. Two of those woman wiped the feet of Jesus with their hair. Back to John 12...

John 12:3 ESV

³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

The point I want to highlight about Mary of Bethany, is that in this moment when she poured out expensive perfume to anoint Jesus feet, it teaches us, that in our relationship with Jesus, we should...

Hold nothing back. (v. 3)

Explain:

The type and quantity of perfume poured out here is a really big deal. Nard is an oil extracted from the root and spike of the nard plant, which is why it is called spikenard. It's purity, quantity, and origin, account for this perfume to be incredibly expensive.

The picture here is that all of the people at the table are reclining, and their feet would be extended in front of them, which would make it easy for Jesus feet to be anointed. They were

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amongst very close personal friends, family, and disciples, and you have to remember that Jesus just raised Mary's brother from the dead.

In this moment.... Mary holds nothing back, she brings out her most valuable possession, and anoints Jesus with it.

This is a display of love regardless of earthly cost.

We also see a deeper symbolism in this anointing...

The anointing is another proof of Jesus' Kingship on the path toward the cross. Just like David was anointed with oil, Jesus is anointed with oil.

The anointing is also a Messianic symbol. This anointing substantiates, proves, qualifies their (Mary, Martha, Lazarus) conviction Jesus is the Messiah.

Gospel Relevance:

What is the gospel relevance? What are you holding back? The gospel of Jesus is that he has given his life to forgive your sin, and my sin. The question for us on gospel relevance, is, what are you holding back? Jesus redeems what is offered to him. You give Jesus your sin, he redeems it, you give God your life, he transforms it... The gospel is that the God that raised Lazarus from the dead has proven he can transform anything.

So what are you holding back from him? What sin do you not want to give him? What dream in this life are you unwilling to sacrifice? What lifestyle are you choosing over giving it all to Jesus?

Bible Transition:

I promise you, hold nothing back from the Lord, and watch him do exponentially more with the little things you have on this earth, than you could possibly imagine. This is the God who makes the universe. He deserves all we have to offer.

However, not everyone believed that. Some people think Jesus should not get all that attention and offerings of expensive things. See with me in verse 4...

John 12:4-6 ESV

⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" ⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.

Point Transition:

This is a really interesting turn in the story. Quick recap, Lazarus was raised from the dead, Jesus stopped moving around in Judea, he comes back for a gathering, at the gathering Mary anoints his feet with oil, and the oil is so expensive, that it cost a years wage.

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Can you believe that? That is really expensive. I have very nice colognes. I buy my wife nice perfume. I am very particular with the scents we wear and am very cautious of which scent I wear in different occasions and in different seasons of the year.

But a years wage? This tells us a couple of things. The first and easy overlooked is that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were probably not poor. People like to think that all of Jesus' followers were poor. Not so. If Mary had this kind of perfume, it meant that either someone in her family would have given it to her, or she was wealthy, that family was wealthy. Also, it was not common for people to have tombs. Lazarus was buried in a tomb, and if they had tombs, only the very wealthy were able to wrap their dead and lay them down, in most cases the dead were shoved into small mini caves inside the caves, and then after one year their bones would be collected. That isn't the case here. Lazarus was laid down in the cave fully wrapped and laid flat.

Some people think this perfume would have cost \$45k or in some cases \$50k, and if it was in San Diego with SDG&E it would be \$70k. In Escondido, the current average household income is just over \$70k, median home price is about \$770k.

Can you imagine, knowing those numbers, if someone poured out a bottle of perfume on Jesus feet, and that bottle of perfume was \$70k? What would you say?

Would you say "Hey wait a minute?" or "That is a waste of money?" or maybe you would be nice like Judas and say "We should use that money for the poor!".

It is an interesting thought experiment to consider what we might say in the event that someone poured out a bottle of \$70k perfume.

What is happening to Judas, is interesting to notice. He has followed Jesus seemingly with faith and sacrifice up to this point. But here, if you are paying attention, you see a major turn.

I think the Lord would have us understand today that...

Those in the dark will be exposed. (vv. 4-6)

Explain:

Being frugal is not the issue. It is good to be a good steward of money. And if that is the case, what is the darkness that is exposed in Judas here? Maybe it's because he challenged the use of the perfume? No... no, he's right, it could've been used differently. That isn't wrong.

The darkness that is exposed in Judas here is greed. The greed exposed in Judas showed up dressed up as "doing good for the poor".

Judas was the "keeper of the money" for the disciples, he most likely wanted to fill the money bags, and then help himself to that money. His greed is put on display in a very public way, and in the middle of an anointing of the Messiah. It is terrible and ugly, and the darkness in his heart was exposed.

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Bible Transition:

The darkness is exposed by the light. Jesus says right back to him...

John 12:7-8 ESV

⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

Point Transition:

There is an interesting point being made here. I believe there have been some bad interpretations and teaching on these two verses over the course of many years. This verse is not about the poor at all. The context is Jesus. Jesus is at the center of this entire passage. Jesus is at the center of all the Scriptures. Jesus is at the center of the universe, and the Bible tells us he holds it all together.

Jesus is at the center of it all.

In fact that is the point. Jesus confronts the greed in Judas. The point I think the Lord would have you consider today is this...

Be intentional with the presence of God. (vv.7-8)

Explain:

Jesus says to Judas, the poor will always be with you, but you do not always have me. And the point he makes surrounds the theme of intentionality that I shared with you earlier when I said, "gather with a Kingdom purpose".

There is an intentionality to this party. There is an intentionality to Mary's anointing Jesus. There is an intentionality to all that is happening here six days before Passover, where Jesus would be the sacrificial lamb.

There is all kinds of intentionality happening around Judas. It is happening, around him. But he doesn't get it.

Apply:

I wonder if you will get it today. Do you live your life with intention? Here, Jesus is saying, be intentional with me, and the time you have with me. That was for Judas and those in the room. For us, we need to consider how we are intentional with presence of God. Are we seeking it? Do we want it? Be intentional to seek the presence of God. When you find it, be ready to talk to him.

Gospel Relevance:

The gospel is good news because it puts us in right relationship with God. Jesus creates a path for us to have a relationship with God where we can talk to God. If you can talk to God, what are you talking about?

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I hear a lot of people out there in the world saying things like “I worship God in my own way” and “I don’t need to be discipled” or “I can read the bible for myself”. That is fine. The question I have for them is this, what are you talking to God about? How are you being intentional with your time with the God of the universe?

Bible Transition:

I encourage you today, learn how to be a Christian, and then learn how to be intentional with the time you have with the God of the universe, and watch him take you further in your relationship with him than you have ever been in your life.

Jesus invites Judas into this amazing closeness, and he missed it.

This is all happening at that dinner, and people started learning that Jesus was there. It says in verse 9...

John 12:9-11 ESV

⁹When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

Point Transition:

Okay, so people hear that Jesus is in town, and then the Chief priests hear that Jesus is in town, with Lazarus who was brought back from the dead, and a bunch of the Jews went there and left believing in Jesus.... So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well.

The point I want to highlight with you is that...

Discipleship comes with a cost. (vv. 9-11)

Explain:

People heard Jesus was in town and they hadn’t seen him for a while after the resurrection of Lazarus. That being said, this passage tells us in verse 9...

John 12:9-11 ESV

⁹When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

A large crowd learned that Jesus was over in Bethany, so they came to see him, and to see Lazarus, and then in verse 11 we see that many of them leave believing in Jesus.

Lazarus believed in Jesus, and for Lazarus it meant he was put on the list for the chief priests to put to death. He was put on the kill list because his life, proved the power of Jesus.

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Something to strongly consider today is...

Discipleship comes with a cost. (vv. 9-11)

Gospel Relevance:

When you say you put your faith in Jesus, when you trust in the gospel, the good news of Jesus, you need to consider the cost of following him. For you and me, this means not shying away from the name of Jesus on our lives. With family, friends, coworkers, and everyone we associate with.

That cost will be financial, it will be temporal, meaning, it will cost you time, but more than anything else, the cost of following Jesus is your very life. Jesus offers you life, and your contribution, is your life. You must lay your life down, so that you can experience the power of God in your life.

Inspire:

Our God wants to work in your life in fantastic ways. God, the God of the universe wants to use your life to show the world that there is a God in heaven who still cares about the people of this world. God wants to use your life to show the world there is hope in the midst of dark despair. When it all looks bad. When you are surrounded by evil on all sides. When the darkness is creeping in, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. God wants to use your life to be a light in the darkness. Give him your life, all of it, hold nothing back, and be intentional to worship him. Amen.

Pray