

Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide
Overflowing Joy

April 6, 2025

Lent

John 12:1-8

KEY VERSES

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ² There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him. ³ Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped them^[a] with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶ (He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it^[b] so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

This week, we explore John's gospel for our lectionary choice. The setting is the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, with Jesus as their guest, about six months after Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead. John points out that it is six days before the Passover, which shrouds the experience with a feeling of doom as Jesus is heading to his ultimate fate in Jerusalem. Mary anoints Jesus' feet with a very costly perfume, only to be chastized by Judas for not selling the perfume and giving the money to the poor. **What is your initial reaction to this very sentimental gesture by Mary, given the circumstances and setting?**

The significance of anointing someone with oil was a practice used when preparing a body for burial, preparing someone for a certain role, or a gesture of thankfulness. **How could Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet be related to each of these three reasons?**

Judas is more focused on the cost of expensive perfume being used to anoint Jesus rather than the reasons behind Mary's intimate gesture. **Besides the known fact that Judas is a thief and that he will ultimately betray Jesus, how does his reaction to the gesture reveal his understanding of Christianity?**

Rather than following a set of rules, Christianity to us means following the person of Jesus and giving thanks for what God did through Jesus for us. **Just as Mary's gesture could be seen as overflowing gratitude to Jesus for raising her brother from the dead, what blessings are right in front of you that might have become a routine part of your life? How can you more uninhibitedly give thanks and praise to Jesus as we walk these last two weeks of Lent?**