

## **John 64 – A Meal in Bethany**

**10/12/2025**

### **Scripture 1: (Jn. 11:55-12:11 ESV)**

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?"

Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

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

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.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" 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.

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

When 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. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

### **Scripture 2: (Matt. 26:6-13 ESV)**

Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table.

And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor."

But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."

## Sermon:

We are finally approaching the end of Jesus' earthly life and ministry, as recorded in John's Gospel. At this moment, there are some significant points of difference between John's Gospel and the Synoptics that are worth remembering:

- The Synoptics are not meant to present an orderly narrative of Jesus's life and ministry, except as a beginning (His birth), middle (His ministry), end (His death and resurrection). Rather, those Gospels present a collection of stories from Jesus's ministry (many of which were similarly repeated), not a linear narrative.
- There are few specific “timestamps” recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. There are few evidences helping us to understand when certain things happened. Meanwhile, John often provides us with details about dates and locations. John uses these details to both present a timeline of Jesus' life and use this background context to explain and interpret the events and sayings that he recorded. John provides details about the different seasons throughout his narrative. Specifically, he references the recent Feast of Booths (John 7; late October), the Feast of Dedication (10:22; mid-December), and now this, Jesus' final Passover. The timing of events are important to John, so he has been diligently accurate in their recording.
- One significant difference between the Synoptics and John is the fact that the Synoptics describe only one Passover trip by Jesus to Jerusalem, His final trip, whereas John describes three. This is not a contradiction, but a product of their respective authorial intentions. The Synoptics do not say that Jesus only went to Jerusalem once or, that His ministry lasted for just one year. Jesus, as a devout and righteous Jew, was required to go to Jerusalem regularly by Torah. Instead they remain silent about those details because they do not advance the narrative purpose of the Synoptics.

Throughout this last half of John's Gospel, we will regularly consider the “when” of events. While different Church traditions hold to particular timelines, we will compare our tradition to Scripture and hopefully understand both tradition and Scripture better.

The evangelist tells us that, “*Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand...*”, telling us that time has advanced from mid-December, when Jesus gave the man born blind his sight, to early March. This is where the confusion about “when” events happened, and “when” events should be celebrated (if memorialized), begins.

Scripture established the Passover to be held “*In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight, is the LORD's Passover.*” (Lev. 23:5 ESV), on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (Abib). This date is fixed and unchangeable.

- But, because the Jews used a lunar calendar<sup>1</sup> with twelve, thirty day months (360 days/year), adding a “leap month” seven times over every nineteen year period. So, since their system has not changed in over three thousand years, things can be traced back accurately.
- Except, we do not use a lunar calendar today. We use the solar Gregorian calendar, imposed by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, as a replacement for the Roman Julian calendar instituted by Julius Caesar in 45 BC.
- Making matters worse, some of the ancient church fathers decided to celebrate Easter on the fourteenth of of Nisan, irrespective of the day; specifically memorializing the Passion and Death of our Lord because they believed that the regular, weekly Lord's Day observations satisfactorily memorialized

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.chabad.org/calendar/view/month\\_cdo/jewish/Jewish-Calendar.htm](https://www.chabad.org/calendar/view/month_cdo/jewish/Jewish-Calendar.htm)

Christ's resurrection. Meanwhile, the Council of Nicea (325 AD) established that Easter would always be observed on the next Sunday, fourteen days after the Spring (Vernal) Equinox<sup>2</sup>.

- Today, because the Eastern Orthodox church continues to use the Julian Calendar and the entire Western Church uses the Gregorian, these two halves of Christendom celebrate Easter on different Sundays and rarely do either of them correspond with the week of the Jewish Passover.

Thus, between differences of interpretation regarding the Synoptics and John's Gospel, and our calendar changes, the “weekday distinctions” in the “Palm Sunday”, “Maundy Thursday”, “Good Friday”, and “Easter” (or “Resurrection Sunday”, as I prefer to use) traditions, are functionally arbitrary {and since they memorialization is not commanded by Scripture, their observation is not required according to the Regulative Principles of Worship although, as memorials, their remembrance remains commendable}. Our remembrance of these things matter, but the specific day and date on which we remember them do not. Christmas is similar. It is good and important to remember the birth of Jesus, the miracle of God's Incarnation, but when we celebrate it is far less important. The date of December 25<sup>th</sup> is functionally irrelevant.

“*Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?"*” Technically, all of the adult Jewish men were required to come up to Jerusalem for the Passover (Exodus 23:14-17), but many people went up to Jerusalem early. They may have been religious “over-achievers”, or their motive may have simply been to spiritually cleanse themselves so that they could rightly worship the LORD. Or, they might have come early (this time) because they were looking for Jesus; because they were attracted to His celebrity, His controversy, and His compassionate ministry.

Considering the public nature of the rivalry between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, it would not have been out of the ordinary for people to wonder whether or not Jesus would publicly appear. They also could have been wondering and watching since, “*...the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.*”. While the evangelist makes it seem as if the fact of the conspiracy against Jesus was widely known, he does not imply that the public considered the conspiracy favorably, or actively and knowingly participated in it.

“*Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there.*”; six days before Passover, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, Jesus returned to Bethany, the home town of His friends: Lazarus, Martha, and Mary; and some of the people in the town decided to host Jesus for a banquet. This is the important occasion involving Mary, which the evangelist had earlier alluded to in John 11:2. This same event is described in Matthew 26 and Mark 14, and perhaps the occasion described in Luke 7:36-50, albeit with some differences.

The first difference of note is John's statement that this was “*Six days before the Passover...*” versus immediately prior to the passage in Matthew, where Matthew records Jesus saying, “*You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.*” (Matt. 26:2 ESV), before he notes the beginning of the conspiracy against Jesus. This is not a contradiction, since things within Matthew's Gospel do not always follow a strict chronological order. Instead, harmonizing these parts of Matthew and John is rather simple. Matthew Chapters 21 through 25 clearly record the final teachings of Jesus in Jerusalem, between His “Triumphal Entry” on Palm Sunday and His Crucifixion making 26:2 the natural conclusion of that segment (since the Chapter and Verse divisions are neither original nor inspired). Then, connecting Matthew 26:3-5 to John 11:47-53, we see how the two narratives flow in parallel with both events (the conspiracy and the dinner) happening soon before Jesus' arrest, with John's narrative being more specific.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05228a.htm>

The second difference concerns our natural assumptions and biases, “*Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.*”. When John tells us that Jesus came to Bethany, referencing Lazarus' recent resurrection, we are immediately inclined to assume that the dinner was at Lazarus' home, but if we slow down and read more closely we notice that Lazarus is listed as a fellow guest along with Jesus, not the host. Matthew tells us that this banquet was served, “...*in the house of Simon the leper...*”, while John explains that Martha was serving the dinner. Now there are three reasonable, cultural explanations for this:

- Martha may have been helping the proper hostess, or;
- Martha might have been filling the role of hostess, because an unclean leper (whose home, purity-minded and health conscious people, ought not enter) might not have a wife present to fill the role, or;
- Martha was Simon's wife.

This third option seems most probable to me because the town's name of Bethany is commonly interpreted<sup>3</sup>, as “house of affliction”, but that more speculative since it is difficult to reconstruct the original Hebrew or Aramaic from Greek transliterations. Yet, that interpretation is more plausible considering the facts of Lazarus' illness and this leper's home in town, since lepers had to be kept separate because of their physical and spiritual uncleanness (Leviticus 13-14).

The third important difference is that John names the woman who anointed Jesus, while Matthew (and Mark) does not, “*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.*”, if we choose to correlate this story with Luke 7, the woman is further identified as a “sinner” and implied to be a prostitute (v. 7:37). John states that she anointed Jesus' feet, while Matthew indicates that she anointed His head. Again, these are not contradictory because she likely anointed both. The fact of her anointing Jesus is the important detail, since remembrances differ based upon a person's perspective and the expensive value of the perfume is another important detail, because of the reaction her action caused.

A fourth difference between them is that Matthew records their general response to Mary, “*And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor."*”, while John is more specific, “*But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"*”. It is not surprising that the disciples were all indignant, since living according to the “Social Gospel” is far easier than living obedient to God. Then, as now, it is easy to confuse Christian social action and our good works of charity as being the purpose or goal of our faith. But also, then as now, they are evidences for our faith, responses to our faith. Good works have never been the purpose of our faith.

Thinking about Jesus's healing ministry, His feeding miracles, and all of His teachings about loving one's neighbor, it was reasonable for them to consider how much charitable good might have been done with the perfume's purchase price. A single denarius was a Roman soldier's daily wage, three hundred denarii was their approximate annual salary and Roman soldiers earned much more than the average person, far more than an agrarian peasant could hope to earn in one year.

John singled out Judas. John identifies him, in advance, as the betrayer of Jesus and named him a thief. But, this was not to deflect from the less than righteous reactions of the other disciples. Rather, John was beginning to demonstrate the quality of Judas' character, giving evidence to show that his betrayal would be according to His nature. John would not afford Judas any opportunity to claim, “The Devil made me do it.”. Judas' nature and character was wicked, Judas “...*said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and*

<sup>3</sup><https://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Bethany.html>

*having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.*” He liked being the “Banker” because he used the funds however he wanted, as if they were his own.

Sadly, even today, there are some people who get into the business of “charity work” because they know that they can spend their received, tax-free donations, with little to no oversight or accountability, to favor their own goals or selfish benefit. Some people practice this kind of fraud as a money-laundering scheme and to evade taxes. Although it may not seem like anyone is being hurt by it, it is lawlessness and theft. It exploits people's better nature, by fraudulently collecting donations. It becomes outright theft, by taking and using funds that do not rightfully belong to them, or by using the funds for a purpose different than instructed or intended. It becomes theft and rebellion against the lawful authorities by unlawfully withholding taxes from those who are legislatively entitled to receive them. That was Judas' nature and his character. He was wicked and reprobate, from beginning to end (John 6:70; 13:2).

But, which “Mary” should we conclude this was? We know that Mary was a very popular and common name. It surely was not Mary, Jesus's mother. Instead, the context of location, in Bethany with the inclusion Martha and Lazarus, strongly implies that it was their other sibling, Mary. With near certainty, we can conclude that it was not Mary Magdalene, even though Andrew Lloyd Webber strongly implied it. Mary, Martha and Lazarus's sister is the most reasonable conclusion, out of all the several different Mary's mentioned within the Gospels.

Fifth, both Gospel writers conclude with two statements by Jesus that could be considered fatalistic or sound depressing, *“Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.”* and *“For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”*. The first statement is prophetic, foreshadowing the imminence of His death while the second is an important reminder that the historic, present, and future Church needs to remember as we practice our responses of faith. Unlike the Synoptics, John does not record Jesus issuing multiple specific prophecies about His unjust death over the course of His ministry (Matt 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19), though, He does foreshadow/imply it three times (John 3:14-8, 8:28-29, 12:7). John simply does not emphasize or focus on these prophecies, preferring to focus on demonstrating Who Jesus is: the *Logos* who is *Theos* and *Andros*, the Son of God and God the Son. But, through this narrative, John allows Mary to demonstrate her *agape* love for Jesus (as a response of faith) and John shows us that all of the (socially and culturally required) forms and rituals related to a person's death and burial were followed for Jesus. Mark 16:1 explains that Mary and company had *“...bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him [Jesus].”* (Mk. 16:1 ESV), as the reason for their visit to the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection, which might suggest that the proper forms had either not been followed, or that they were ignorant of the fullness and extent of Joseph and Nicodemus' care (John 19:40). Since Jesus is the Righteous and Holy One, the Gospel writers made certain to show that everything required by God's Law and human convention, was done by or for Jesus. But the second statement, *“For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”*, is a stark admission which is very difficult for us, as Christians (especially as “wealthy” Western world Christians), to accept as true.

It plainly reminds that we do not have the visible, physical presence of Jesus with us in the world, now, but that's not all that it reminds us of. Jesus told those around Him, and He tells us, *“For the poor you always have with you...”*, a concession that feels defeatist to us. Across church history, Christians have often believed that we can “win the world for Christ”. Christians want to make the world a better place for everyone in it. This Christian motivation to “do good” and to “constantly improve” our situations and circumstances has driven most of humanity's social progress over the past two thousand years, so much so, that even prominent atheists like Richard Dawkins, admit and agree that both the world and humanity would be much worse off without Christians and Christianity<sup>4</sup>. This is why Christians have always walked a thin line between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Social Gospel; a line between the good works that are done as a response of faith (Ephesians 2:8-10), versus good works that are done for their own sake, simply because we think that they are good and right to

<sup>4</sup><https://raisingjesus.com/blog/266-richard-dawkins-a-christian>

do. Gospel responsive good works bring honor and glory to Christ because doing them expresses our Christ-likeness, while Social Gospel good works bring honor and glory to one's own self because they draw the attention and praise of other people; so that others may see how good and nice, how loving and charitable, a person is.

The historic post-millennial and amillennial views of Eschatology both agree that humanity's circumstance in the world will continue to improve progressively, overall, with ups and downs over time. But, the present post-millennial view disagrees at the point where the historic and amill agree, that humanity can never achieve perfection before Christ's return and the consummation of His Kingdom. Instead they believe that Christ's return and consummation requires the prior, human achievement of such perfection. They suggest that if we are good enough Christians, if we can convert the world and impose Christian rule, then Christ will return. But that is a different rejection of God's grace. That is a different kind of works-based salvation, one that honestly believes that Christ merely made salvation possible and that we can (or must) complete His work. That attitude and perspective offers false hope in a false Gospel, promoting our human works over humble reliance on God's grace, alone.

Jesus tells us, through Matthew, Mark, and John, that *“For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”* As long as sin remains in the world, as long as there are unregenerate sinners in this world, we will always have the poor, the destitute, the suffering, and the unfortunate around us. But, when Christ returns and inaugurates His Kingdom: when the world is made new, and the redeemed of the LORD are brought in to dwell with God in the New Jerusalem as the wicked are cast into the Lake of Fire with the Devil, his angels, and Death; when Christ reigns upon the earth as He presently reigns in Heaven, then (and only then) will there no longer be any poor because, we will be all enjoying the fullness of Christ's riches (Romans 8:16-17; Galatians 3:29; Titus 3:4-7; James 2:5). Humanity has no hope of ever completely, totally, and finally abolishing poverty, of staving off starvation, of ending injustice, or prevent wickedness and sin. However, that does not mean the Church may not, should not, or cannot work towards those good purposes, for God's glory. We must do so, if we are obeying our Lord, Jesus Christ, who commanded us, *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”* (Jn. 15:12 ESV), because Jesus did all of these and He explained that, *“...whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do...”* (Jn. 14:12 ESV). We are commanded to work and improve the condition of the poor, even though we know that we can never achieve ultimate or absolute success, but God can, does, and will, in His perfect *kairos*.

Previously, when the evangelist had used it as a reference point to identify this family, I said that Mary's action here would be *“more impactful and memorable than Lazarus' resurrection”* (The Death of Lazarus, 09-14-2025). It certainly sounds strange to think that anointing Jesus with perfume would have greater importance than raising a man from the dead, but while the resurrection of Lazarus had great personal importance for Martha, Mary, and Lazarus himself and was also an important Sign proving Jesus as God the Son, its significance declines because eventually, Lazarus died again. I believe that the greater importance of Mary's response, was as a demonstration of her faith in Christ, her *agape* love for Jesus, and as a symbol of her thanksgiving and gratitude towards Jesus for all that He had (and will have) done for her. Her singular action was an act of love for God {with her whole heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37)} and an act of love for her neighbor {as herself (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39)}. It was an act of compassion and care that no one else could have thought to do; an act of preparation for the unimaginable, yet inevitable, passion of Christ, for us. Mary demonstrated her love for Jesus, sacrificially. That is why John used this act to uniquely identify Lazarus through his sister, and why Matthew records Jesus saying, *“Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”*

Mary's love for Christ, its depth and sacrificial character, is an example that we should emulate. As we proclaim the Gospel of what Jesus has done for us, we may and we should use Mary as an example of how to love Jesus

Christ, through our expressions of love to others, to “*the least of these*” (Matthew 25:31-46), as expressions of our love for God. That is not the “Social Gospel”; that is a faithful Christian response to God's mercy and grace.

Soon after, but around the occasion of this meal, “*When 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. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*”, people began to gather to see the evidence of Jesus' resurrection miracle. They wanted to see and hear this final proof of Jesus' divine power and deity. They wanted to experience the religious experience that their friends had. We can look at this response and easily see it as a foreshadowing of modern “post-resurrection” stories from people who survived (allegedly) near-death experiences. *90 Minutes in Heaven* is one such popular story, that I cannot recommend and would warn against. There are too many problems implicit within the fact of such tales that I cannot name them all, but I will list some:

- First, the things that they describe are unverifiable and their experience is unreproducible, so we cannot apply logic or the Scientific Method to them. Their usual response is a vague encouragement to just accept their word “on faith”, but this is faith misplaced into fantasy.
- Second, the things that they describe are not found within Scripture or do not accurately reflect the limited things that Scripture teaches us to expect after our life on this earth has passed. This is another example of why John warns us, “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God...*” (1 Jn. 4:1 ESV). Just because a person “felt” like they had a holy and spiritual experience, does not mean that it was from the LORD or true. Paul warns us that the Devil is known to pose as “*an angel of light*” (2 Cor. 11:14 ESV) and it is his nature to deceive and try to corrupt God's Elect.
- Third, although some people who make such experiential claims do exhibit changed lives, repentant lives, afterwards, most of those who seek to publish, publicize, and monetize their “spiritual experience” demonstrate their reprobate carnality rather than their regenerate spirituality.
- Fourth, and most importantly, such stories are entirely unnecessary for our faith. Rather, such stories actually become unhelpful and detrimental to our faith, rather than encouraging, because they distract us from our faith in Christ alone to a faith or hope in experience. We believe that Scripture contains “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life...” (WCF 1.6). Therefore, we do not need such fantasies when we have the Scriptures and the illumination of Christ's Holy Spirit within us.

So, while the Jewish leaders opposed everything positive concerning Jesus, their parallel plot against Lazarus just condemns them further, even as their motivation may have been for the preservation of their religion and the faith of the Jewish people. But, our opposition to, our lack of support for, and our unwillingness to endorse such contemporary alleged miraculous occurrences does not make us like the Pharisees, but faithful shepherds working to protect Christ's flock from the false prophets and bad shepherds who try to lead's God's children astray into destruction (Matthew 24:24).

Ultimately, what do these events from a fellowship meal in Bethany two thousand years ago have to with us today? This story demonstrates and proclaims three things:

- First, the consideration and compassion Jesus showed towards people, especially the marginalized and unfortunate. He was willing to not only eat with, but also, eat in the home of a man known for a leprous affliction. The historical and biblical context has us expect that “*Simon the leper*”, was someone living on the outside of society, alone and reviled; unable to participate in the Jewish religion and forbidden

from even approaching the LORD for worship (Leviticus 13:45-46; 2 Chronicles 26:21), {although if harmonized with Luke 7, Simon was still a member of the Pharisees}.

- Second, the respect that many “ordinary” people had for Jesus. This was demonstrated by some residents of Bethany holding a gathering and meal in His honor, as a sign of their respect and as a gesture of thanksgiving for His raising of Lazarus.
- Third, the *agape* love of Mary for Jesus, as an individual and as a believer in the LORD. Her love for Jesus: as her Rabbi, as the savior of her brother, as her personal savior, and as her friend; was demonstrated through her sacrificial and expensive gift of the ointment, through the humility expressed by her anointing of Jesus, and through her self-abasement in using her hair to spread and dry the ointment.
  - She freely gave Jesus her best, giving Him more than she could justly afford.
  - She served Him out of an attitude of love and gladness, rather than from fear or forced compulsion.
  - Her service for Jesus showed that she understood who she was in relation to Him, while His verbal affirmation brought her up to a favored status where God declares His beloved children to be.

These three things remind us that Jesus comes to us where we are. He comes to us in the midst of our misery and pain; that is one meaning from His Incarnation: of the *Theos* who is *Andros*. However, as demonstrated by many other stories across the four Gospels, although Jesus comes to us where we are, He never leaves us there unchanged; He never leaves us as we were. We must respond whenever we are confronted by Christ's presence.

- His sovereignty demands it, because He is our Lord.
- His holiness demands it, because He is Holy and we are not.
- Justice demands it, since justice is what we deserve. The promised threat of justice causes one of two possible responses within us:
  - Recalcitrance and greater intransigence, a hardening of heart and obstinate rebellion against the universal Sovereign; or
  - Repentance and contrition, a softening of heart and pleas for Divine mercy and forgiveness.

Whichever response we give, our knee will bow and our tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The only question is whether we do so out of obedient love and fidelity, or in forced submission to absolute and incontrovertible truth.

They also teach us is to remember that, not everyone who appears to honor and respect Christ does so in earnest truth. Some people will claim affinity with Jesus because of what they believe it can profit them. Sadly, we can each probably name a half dozen or more persons who have exploited the label of “Christian” to steal money through fraud, to abuse the trust and confidence of women or children, or who merely “claim the name” for social appearances and cultural conformity, but abandon the faith when it becomes inconvenient, challenging, or dis-advantageous. Just because a person says that they are a Christian, it does not mean that they are. Being a Christian requires that we produce “good fruit” (Matthew 7:20); of repentance and trust, of good works of charity done in true love, of obedience and holy living, of growth in grace and the assurance of God's love. If there is no sign of any of these, then we rightly question their claim as a matter of wisdom, but not in judgment.

Finally, we may each better emulate the loving response of Mary. While we cannot all anoint Jesus with oil, nor can we all wash His feet, we can, however, love and serve those around us in need, as we desire to serve Jesus because they, like we, are made in the Image of God. Lastly, since Christians are being transformed and

conformed to Christ's perfect image (Romans 8:29), we must also remember that Jesus served and cared for everyone, not only those who shared His image; not just those who are His brothers and sisters. We forget, to the detriment of our own discipleship, that when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples in the “upper room”, He also washed the feet of Judas; knowing that he was a thief and that he would soon betray Him to a horrible death.

So, I urge you to always respond to Christ with love and in faith. Always be repenting of your sins and mortifying them in your flesh. Trust Jesus and obey His commandments. Be a disciple, make disciples, and work for His Kingdom and His glory, alone.

**AMEN**

**John: (12:1-8)**

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

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.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" 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.

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

It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. **(Jn. 11:2 ESV)**

**Matthew: (26:6-13)**

Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,

a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table.

And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor."

But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial.

Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."