

Open: Are you Mary or Judas?

Introduction

Jesus is making his way to his death.

He is invited to a party that was given in his honor. Sitting with him was Lazarus who he had raised from the dead. Mary will anoint Jesus with a very expensive nard and our story begins.

The great Jesus stories usually begin with an invitation. He was invited to a wedding in Cana and changed the water into wine. Jesus will enter into what has been prepared for him, even his death prepared by the Father.

It is important that we invite him in to our lives on a continuous basis.

Dallas Willard reminded us that Jesus has all the power, but never pushes his way in.

Text

John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the moneybag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷ "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

⁹ Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

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At the end of the life of Jesus we see that Judas is a trusted disciple. He has walked 3 years with Jesus has seen the miracles, heard the teaching, even saw Lazarus come out of the tomb after 4 days.

But for a little money he will sell Jesus out.

Mary on the other hand was absolutely sold out for Jesus. She anoints Jesus with an expensive nard worth a year's wages.

Judas confronts her on the basis that the money could have been used to feed the poor.

The wrong reading on this passage would be that Jesus didn't care for the poor or that he doesn't want us to care for the poor. Ironically Jesus was the picture of poverty in this story, not even having a place to lay his head at night.

In fact Jesus said in *Matthew 25:40* 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Jesus refuses to make caring for the poor, social justice or anything else the focus of worship. Many cities in different locations at diverse time periods worship something. We may be more familiar with the fact that a geographical area is known or characterized by something. For instance Portland does good and worships their goodness. Many in this geographical area worship the "god" of being good. The average Portlander would probably respond the same as Judas. "Our god is not doing good...its worshipping Jesus". It is possible to speak and do good things and have the heart of Judas.

Lazarus (No time to develop)

Identifying with Jesus can cause you problems.

Mary

Mary worships Jesus and gives her all in a very extravagant fashion. The Alabaster jar that the expensive nard was in could not be opened then secured again. It had to be broken and poured out Mary didn't hold anything back.

Christians will always be prone to being judgmental of other peoples worship. A person's act of worship can look silly to us, but they are worshipping Jesus. "It's not a story of nard, it's about the heart of worship"

Isaiah 29:13 "The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught".

The question is when we come to worship will it be as Judas or Mary? Bring the best nard you have and worship Jesus. It doesn't matter if it is quiet and reserved or vocal and expressive worship him with your heart.

Life Group Sermon Application Curriculum Leader's Guide

Week of **03/22/15**

"Open: Are you Mary or Judas"?

Erika Parks had recently committed her life to Jesus and she tells the story of her worship. "When I was in high school, I attended a teen conference at Notre Dame University with seven other teens from my parish. I wasn't extremely knowledgeable about the Church and thought everyone else was some sort of master theologian compared to me. I wasn't sure if I knew how to pray as intensely as everyone around me and I was still focused on how I looked and sounded during praise and worship".

"On the last night of the conference, my group was late, there were over five hundred teens that were singing and praying. We didn't want to sit all the way in the back row, so we decided to sit at the very front . . . in the aisle. Everyone around me was praying aloud and I wanted so badly to have the courage to shout out my love for God too, but I was so consumed by the idea that I would do it wrong or that people would think I was weird.

After a while, I reached a point where I just felt so *joyful*, so courageous, and so in love with what God was doing in my heart, that I couldn't help but let it out. The music got really loud and everyone in the hall was singing and praying aloud. This was it; I was going to do it! With all my heart, I yelled (not said or whispered), '**TAKE ME GOD!!!**' It was the most beautiful moment I had ever experienced in my prayer life; I fully let go and begged God to take control of my life. However, half a second into proclaiming this wonderful prayer, I realized the music had abruptly quieted to a low hum, as did everyone else in the hall . . . except for **ME**. I didn't know the song, I didn't know it was ending. I instantly dropped to the floor in a moment of utter embarrassment and began to regret ever attempting to pray out loud. However, through the embarrassment, through my self-doubt and intense insecurity, the feeling and presence of God in my heart was outstanding. I realized there was nothing to be embarrassed about in front of the Lord. I had given my life over to Him, how could that ever be embarrassing?

Main Sermon text: (John 12:1-11)

There are some **consistent themes**, and key points, that emerge from these passages:

- The great Jesus stories usually begin with an invitation. Whether an invitation to a wedding, dinner or like in our story a party thrown in his honor. We need to live a lifestyle that invites Jesus into every area of our life on a continuous, ongoing basis.
- When Mary worships Jesus by anointing him with a very expensive nard. Judas protest. His objection was based on the fact that the

- When Mary worships Jesus by anointing him with a very expensive nard, Judas protest. His objection was based on the fact that the money could have been used to feed the poor. Although a legitimate concern, Judas missed that this was worship from Mary's heart and would be an example for all of us until the end of time.
- The major thing that Judas missed was that Jesus has to be the focus of our worship. People worship many things; some of them are good things, like feeding the poor. But none of these things can replace Jesus, who is the focus of our worship.
- Mary worshiped Jesus and gave her all, in a very extravagant fashion. We even learn a lesson from the Alabaster jar that the expensive nard was in. It could not be opened and then secured again, it had to be broken and poured out showing that Mary didn't hold anything back in her worship.
- Christians will always be prone to being judgmental of other peoples worship. At times a person's acts of worship can look silly to us, but they are worshipping Jesus. It is not about style or nard it's about the heart of worship

Discussion questions/prompts for your group: (These questions are designed to help your group go deeper, understanding and applying the Bible passage(s) and the sermon)

- 1) We were reminded that several of the great Jesus stories began with an invitation. First how do you respond to the truth that Jesus never pushes his way where he not invited? Also we need to ask ourselves if we are living a lifestyle of invitation to Jesus in our lives or is this something God is working in us?
- 2) As you read the story of Mary's extravagant worship and Judas protest, have you found yourself in either role? If so what did you do with the criticism of your worship and/or what did you learn when you were critical toward a person or group?
- 3) If AJ is correct that everyone will worship something, what have been those things in your life that have taken the focus of your worship from Jesus?
- 4) We learn an insightful lesson from the Alabaster jar that Mary poured the nard from. We learned that it could not be opened and then secured again; it had to be broken and poured out. What do we learn about Mary and her worship? How do you apply this to your worship and life?

For those who might like to use visual aids in their Bible storying, or study preparation, especially for groups with children, here are some helpful links:

<http://missionbibleclass.org/1b0-new-testament/new-testament-part-1/life-of-christ-middle/mary-and-martha/>

<http://ministry-to-children.com/many-silent-years/>

<http://ministry-to-children.com/many-silent-years/>

<http://www.raisingourkids.com/coloring-pages/printable/bible/index-02.html>

Log on and check “Right now Media” there are several good resources that will relate to this study for the kids. Some are for pre-school and older, so go surfing and see if you can find something for your group.