

Preamble

Prayer

Sermon introduction:

Jane and Joe have been married for nine years. For their tenth anniversary Joe wants Jane to feel really loved. There was one problem, they don't have much money. This means that Joe must get creative while making lots of large sacrifices.

So, Joe sold his golf clubs, his power tools, his guns, and his fishing boat. Then he sold his Seahawks season tickets that had been passed down through the family. All his guy friends thought he was crazy—totally nuts. But this was not enough to buy the diamond earrings for Jane.

So, Joe dug even deeper. He sacrificed even more. He decided to sell his motorcycle, but this was still not enough. He needed a little more money, so he committed to donating plasma every week for a year, all to purchase the diamond ear rings for Jane.

Jane melted when she opened the box on their anniversary.

Why did Joe give so much? Why was he willing to make such great sacrifices? The answer is simple—extravagant love for Jane!

This brings us to another story of extravagant love, a true story. This brings us to John 12:1-11. This is a story of extravagant love for Jesus Christ. When we learn about Mary's extravagant love for the savior, we are meant to ask ourselves the question—do we love the savior with extravagance?

Do we??? Let's find out.

This story unfolds in three scenes-

Extravagance displayed
Extravagance denounced
Extravagance defended

First, extravagance displayed (v. 1-3)

John 12:1 (ESV) — 1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

John 12:2 (ESV) — 2 So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table.

A few weeks before this story, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Now a dinner is being held in Christ's honor, no doubt to thank him for bringing Lazarus back from the dead.

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.

At some point during the feast, Mary got up from her seat and pulled out a jar of very expensive perfume. Then she carefully made her way to Jesus. Stopping right above him, she opened the perfume and poured nearly the entire bottle of perfume all over his body—starting with his head.

Where does it say she poured the perfume on his head? In the parallel accounts (Mark 26:7; Mark 14:3) Jesus was soaked in perfume. A pound of perfume is a lot of perfume. There was so much perfume that the whole house smelled like perfume.

While she performed this act of devotion, I'm sure that everyone was shocked, surprised, and even horrified. They probably whispered, "what is she doing?" or "what a massive waste?" or "that is so much perfume."

This was very expensive perfume imported from India and used by the Romans to anoint one's head. Later in this story we learn that this perfume was worth one year's wages. Most people were manual laborers so that means that the perfume was worth \$30-50K in today's currency. Thirty to fifty thousand dollars!!! That is the cost of a brand-new car. Imagine giving your brand-new Tesla, Toyota Sequoia, or Ford 150 to Jesus?

Then she wiped his feet with her hair, a remarkable act, since Jewish women rarely unbound their hair in public. This was an intense act of personal devotion to Christ, but most scholars agree that no hint of immoral conduct should be read into her actions.

Summary, Mary brings out the best, most extravagant, most expensive ointment of the day, and she pours it all over Jesus. Her gift is her way of yelling from the top of a mountain, "Jesus is the most valuable thing in the world to me."

She gave extravagantly, not sparingly, or halfheartedly.

Illustration:

Robert Gilmore LeTourneau was a prolific inventor in the earthmoving industry. His machines represented nearly 70 percent of the earthmoving equipment and Engineering vehicles used during World War II, and he was responsible for nearly 300 patents. He made billions in today's dollars.

Early on, He thought about being a pastor. However, a pastor friend told him that God needed businessmen as well as pastors. Business was rough at first. LeTourneau's first business went bankrupt, sending him into debt by \$5,000, a large sum in his day. At one point he told God, if you help me, I will give away 90 percent of my money. Eventually he found incredible successful.

Amidst his success, LeTourneau remembered God's faithfulness and gave 90 percent of his earnings to Christian endeavors. He believed in a reverse tithe. Most people keep ninety percent and give ten. He gave ninety percent and kept ten. He gave sacrificially.

LeTourneau lived by the statement, "If you're not serving the Lord, it proves you don't love him; if you don't love him, it proves you don't know him."

LeTourneau made billions in today's dollars, and he could have easily hoarded the money for himself, but he gave it to God because of his extravagant love for the savior.

Many people thought he was a fool for giving away so much money. But he knew that you can't outgive God and he knew that God was worth it.

Application:

The example of Mary (and Robert LeTourneau) forces us to ask the question—what does extravagant love for the savior look like in our lives?

Some of us should consider giving more money to the church.

We give to Jesus primarily by giving to his church. The church is his body!!! We believe that the Bible teaches that ten percent of our income is a good starting place for extravagant giving.

People often ask me if one should tithe on the net or their gross? Which one is more extravagant???

I recently heard a story about a pastor who chose to give his entire salary to the church for four months...

Over the years a handful of families have given very generously to the church. I can think of several times when we have received \$100k checks. I mention this amount to inspire you.

We are going to need more money in the coming years not less (expand the building, plant churches, etc...).

Keep in mind, we don't give to earn.

And we don't give to get.

We give money because we love Jesus.

Others should consider giving more time.

Others should consider serving more.

Others should consider giving your children away. What do I mean?

I recently heard a story about a mom who refused to let her daughter serve on the mission field. After hearing a sermon on this text, she firmly believed that God was telling her to give her daughter to Jesus. In other words, she needed to release her daughter to serve on the mission field.

What is your most valued possession? For some it is your bank account. For others it is your position or title. For others it is a relationship. The question we must ask is this, are we willing to give our most treasured possession to Jesus?

When was the last time you showed extravagant love for the savior???

One scholar writes,

"Mary gave her most valued possession. Your most valued possession will be different. It may be a comfortable home, a successful self-image, a bank account, a pension, a family, or a dozen other things. But whatever it is, the question holds. Could you (would you) give it for Jesus? Is there a way that you could employ it to serve him, or just to show your love for him? Would you let your children leave the standard of life that you have created for them, and of which you are so proud, to go into Christian work, perhaps in a distant unrewarding place?"

Would you leave everything to go yourself, if God should so lead you? Would you be able to use your substance to send others? "But I would be throwing away all that I have worked for," you say. Yes, in a sense you would. At least, that is the way the world will look at it." (Boice)

No gift is too extravagant. Why? Because Christ is so valuable.

Jesus Christ is king of kings and lord of lords.

He is the alpha and the omega.

He is the lion and the lamb.

He holds the universe together by the power of his word.

He knows everything about everything, and he is everywhere present inside and outside of the universe.

He is one with the father and the spirit!

Most importantly he is love personified. He loved you so much that he suffered and died on the cross for your sins.

In light of this, Mary's paltry gift seems like an insult! Although it wasn't because God knew Mary's heart.

I'm going to be honest. So far, this has been the most challenging text in the gospel of John for me personally. Hopefully, God's word is challenging you as well.

Sadly, not everyone was pleased with Mary's extravagance, which brings us to the next point...

First, extravagance displayed.

Second, extravagance denounced (v. 4-6).

John 12:4-5 (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?"

Since one denarius was a day's wage given to common laborers, 300 was equivalent to a year's wages (keep in mind that no money was earned on the Sabbath or other holy days).

Again, Mary's gift was an extravagant gift!

John 12:6 (ESV) — 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.

Judas did not care about the poor. He cared about himself. He was going to steal this money.

As a result, he denounced Mary's act of extravagant generosity!

Illustration:

BTW...

Prosperity preachers do something similar. They steal from God's people to reward themselves.

Costi Hinn, nephew of Benny Hinn, recently wrote a book exposing the prosperity gospel. It is called "God, Greed, and the prosperity gospel."

He describes

Traveling on Benny's 36-million-dollar Gulf Stream 4 jet.

Staying at the Burj Al Arab hotel in Dubai for \$25k a night.

Staying in ultra-luxurious Villas on Lake Como in Italy

Staying at the Ritz Carlton in Paris and LA.

Shopping sprees at Harrod's in London

Shopping sprees in Monte Carlo

Being chauffeured around in Bentley's, Rolls-Royces, and Maserati's.

And this is just the tip of the iceberg.

At one point it dawned on Costi, as he was working for his famous uncle, that all this wealth and privilege was being paid for by donors to the ministry—many of whom were very poor.

They were taking money from donors and spending it on themselves. Isn't this what Judas was doing?

Application:

Clearly Judas loved money more than he loved Jesus. Eventually he sold Jesus out for 30 pieces of silver.

How do we know if we love money (or the things money can buy) more than Jesus?

We worry all the time about money. Are we going to have enough.

We constantly scheme of ways to make more.

We are very reluctant to give it away.

We rarely spend money (Dave N. stories about wealthy folks who would not spend their money at the end of their lives).

We work, work, work all the time to earn more (neglecting other responsibilities).

My mom's challenge to me in college.

Money is not bad, making lots of money is not bad, it can be good. (Tell the story of Sproul and the young businessman).

Yet, it is very easy to love money more than Jesus. And when you stop and think about this, it makes no sense at all.

One author writes,

"Judas loved money more than Jesus, but money is not God. Money is not alive. Money cannot raise the dead. Money cannot love you back... Money will not shepherd us. Money will not teach us truth. Money will not give itself in our place. Money is not at the right hand of God interceding for us. Money will not give us its righteousness so that we are justified before God. Mary understood this. Judas did not. Money is a means to an end. Jesus is an end in himself." (Hamilton)

There are two main characters in this story (Mary and Judas). Mary worshipped Jesus and Judas worshipped money. Which one best represents you?

Mary's extravagance caused Judas to denounce her. Who will defend her? This brings us to the third point.

*First, extravagance demonstrated
Second, extravagance denounced*

Third, extravagance defended

Jesus boldly defends Mary.

John 12:7-11 (ESV) – 7 Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.

Verse seven is hard to translate into English. Jesus could be saying that Mary unknowingly anointed him for his future burial. Or he could be saying that the small amount of perfume left in the jar could be used to anoint him for his future burial. Scholars are divided.

8 For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me." **9** 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. **10** So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, **11** because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

The religious leaders are so jealous of Jesus, that they plot to kill his star witness. The witness that Jesus raised from the dead. In other words, they are suppressing the truth about Jesus. A very dangerous thing to do.

I want us to go back to verse 8 for a moment.

8 For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

Verse 8 is a subtle exhortation to care for the poor when Jesus leaves. But even more importantly, verse 8 is a subtle allusion to the cross. Jesus says, "you will not always have me with you." Why does he say this? Because he knows he is about to die. He knows he is about to leave them for the cross. He knows that he is about to offer up his life for sinners.

Therefore, Mary (knowingly or unknowingly) anointed him for his death, burial, and resurrection.

Application:

His death, burial and resurrection are exactly what make him so valuable to us.

The cross is why he is so worthy of our extravagant love.

Why should we love him extravagantly? Because he first loved us extravagantly.

He gave up everything on the cross.

He gave up his wealth, honor, privilege, position, dignity, relationship with God, and innocence!

The son of God suffered and died for you on the cross.

Why? He loves you.

As a result, you get all the benefits of the gospel.

These benefits can't be earned.
They can't be bought.
They are given freely.
They cost Jesus everything.

When you have Jesus and all his benefits, you don't need wealth to make you happy—you have relationship with the triune God. Therefore, it is much easier to give your wealth away freely, sacrificially, and extravagantly.

Stinginess is a gospel issue. It is the result of the gospel of Jesus Christ not penetrating to every square inch of our lives.

Conclusion:

In this story we saw...

Extravagance displayed
Extravagance denounced
Extravagance defended

Over the years people have given away their money extravagantly.

One website listed the top nine most generous people in world history.

J.K. Rowling (author of the Harry Potter books) has given away \$160 million. That is magical!!!

Oprah has given away \$240 million.

Andrew Carnegie gave away 350 million over his lifetime (worth much more today).

Marck Zuckerberg (founder of Facebook) has given away 2.7 billion.

George Soros has given away 12 billion.

Azim Hashim Premji has given away 21 billion.

Bill and Melinda Gates have given away 28 billion.

Warren Buffett has given away 48 billion.

The most extravagant giver of all time is someone whom you have probably never heard of. His name was Jamsetji Tata.

Jamsetji Tata was an Indian pioneer industrialist who died in 1904. Since then, his charitable trust has given away 102.4 billion dollars.

All these gifts are incredibly extravagant!!!

It is hard for most of us to even imagine having access to that much wealth.

But here is the thing, if you owned all the wealth in the history of the world and then gave it all to Christ and his kingdom, that gift would not be too extravagant. Why? Jesus Christ is the most valuable thing in the universe.

Let's pray...