



MARY ANOINTS JESUS

Part 21 of The Gospel of John

Pastor Mark Driscoll | John 12:1-12 | April 29, 2001

Tonight we're in the 12th chapter of John's Gospel. A few of the things that are beautiful about John's Gospel – there are many. One is that John has a great combination: a very high, very significant, and very strong theology and also a very personal and devotional tone to the Lord Jesus. What you see in John's Gospel is that Jesus is God. That is the central theme: that Jesus is God, and that by faith in him, we can receive the gift of eternal life.

But in addition to this high view of Christ and this great instruction about Jesus, John also – being, I believe, possibly the greatest lover of Christ of any man in all of human history, John gives us some beautiful portraits of how Jesus speaks with the woman at the well, how he speaks to Nicodemus, how he speaks to the man born blind, how he speaks to the man who had been crippled and invalid for a great number of years. And we see, in these sort of vignettes and portraits that John paints for us with his words, more of the love and the compassion and the grace and the mercy of Christ. And today we'll see what is one of my most endearing and favorite portraits in all of the Gospels regarding Jesus, and that is his interaction with a friend of his, a young woman named Mary. And if you're like me, if you're a fractal thinker, if you think in pictures and images, this particular scene is just loaded with rich imagery that is just gorgeous.

And so we'll just jump right in. In the 12th chapter of John's Gospel, we are told, six days before the Passover – I'll stop briefly right there. I know we haven't gotten very far, and already I am with my opinions on everything. But the reason I wanna stop there is because in the 2nd chapter of John's Gospel and in the 6th chapter of John's Gospel and now in the 12th chapter of John's Gospel, John has spoken to us about this Passover. Passover was this annual celebration of the Jewish people celebrating their deliverance from Egypt. And what that tells us is that Jesus' public ministry, according to John, went through three successive Passovers, and that's how we know that Jesus' ministry lasted three years, because of these three annual feasts that sort of mark each of the three years of his particular work.

And within that, what you find is that we are already in the final week of Jesus' life. At this point in John's Gospel, with Lazarus's resurrection, Jesus calling him from the grave as he did last week from life – from death to life, rather, that the intensity for Jesus' life and his murder is increased, and we are now in the final few days of Jesus' life before he is to be killed. And so we're coming up to the feast of Passover, and it says that Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus had lived, whom Jesus had risen from the dead. I told you last week, Lazarus was stinky dead, laying in his grave, and Jesus pulls him out, calls him back to life.

And so what happens is here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor, and Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him, and then we're told about Mary. What really is happening here is Lazarus had two sisters, Mary and Martha. They loved him so dearly and they loved the Lord Jesus so dearly that when Jesus does this wonderful thing for them, bringing their brother from death to life and ending their grief and bringing their joy, they throw a party in his honor to celebrate what he has done.

And what we see in this moment is that the ways that these two sisters and this brother worship Christ are sort of one in spirit but distinct in method. And it's beautiful for me that God gives us principles in our relationship with him, but in method he gives us a lot of freedom.

We see that Martha shows her love for and devotion to Christ by doing things. She is a woman who works with her hands. She's active. The portraits of Martha throughout the Gospels is she is usually in the kitchen playing Martha Stewart, cutting up vegetables, entertaining guests, setting the table. She is very hospitable. She loves to entertain and have lots of people over at her home. Martha likes to get things done with her hands.

Her sister Mary is almost the opposite. She likes to sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus. She likes to listen. She likes to contemplate. She likes to just spend time in serenity with Christ. Martha is the activist; Mary is the contemplative; and Lazarus is apparently the strong, silent type. Lazarus never says a word. We have no recording that Lazarus in John's Gospel says a word. Even though he's been risen from the dead, he still doesn't say anything that we're told. Lazarus is a regular guy. He doesn't have much to say. He's just sorta quiet and strong about the whole thing.

His raising of Lazarus, and the Scripture that he says for his testimony, tells the story of what God has done for him, bringing him out of the grave. And so each of them – Martha with her hands, Mary with her devotion, and Lazarus with his testimony – are showing their affection and their love for Christ and their gratitude for what he has done to their brother Lazarus, who was a good friend of Jesus.

As I've told you before, Jesus spent a considerable amount of time at their home. These are friends of his. And the thing that I love about Mary and Martha and Lazarus is that they are tremendously average. There's nothing extraordinary about them. They love Jesus, but they aren't elected political officials. They aren't religious leaders. They're just normal people, but they become extraordinary because of their love for Christ.

God does something wonderful in Lazarus's life, raises him from the dead, and so all of a sudden Lazarus becomes a tremendous part of our history as Christians. Martha is a woman who works in her kitchen a lot, and Mary is a woman who listens to Jesus. But by virtue of the fact that these common people were so devoted to Christ and loved him and opened up their home and invited him in as a friend to participate in their life and to feed him and to care for him, they have become for us legendary.

And what we're told then is that the meal is going on, and the men would sit at a couch, basically, and they would recline as they eat. It's every man's dream in every culture to just sort of sit on the couch and eat. That way when he is done, he could just fall over and slip into a coma. And so I'll just tell the ladies that this is biblical. We see it right here. It is biblical. It is not an issue that men are lazy or slothful; it is an issue that God has created them to eat on couches and then slip into a coma and sleep very soundly. And so men that are doing that are just like the Lord Jesus. They're just very godly men, and that's exactly what's happening. I should've gotten more amens than just the one I did, but I only got the one, but I'll take it.

And that's what's happening. They're sitting on the couch, reclining, eating. Martha's cooking dinner, and now Mary does something tremendous. "Then Mary" – verse 3 – "took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume, and she poured it on Jesus' feet, and she wiped his feet with her hair." Beautiful portrait. In all of Scripture, I cannot think of any picture that is, for me, more passionate and loving and gracious than this portrait.

We see Mary throughout the Gospel accounts, continually at the feet of the Lord Jesus. We see her in Luke's Gospel around the 10th chapter, where Jesus comes to her home and he begins to instruct and teach. She sits at his feet to listen. We see in John 11, when her brother Lazarus dies, she throws herself at Jesus' feet for mourning. We see now here that when Jesus comes for the party that they have thrown in his honor, and there is a large crowd surrounding him, that she gets down on her feet and she uses a perfume to anoint his feet.

We see that that is the position of Mary. Mary is continually to be found, whether it is in learning or grieving or serving in worship, that she is at the feet of the Lord Jesus. This beautiful picture of this humble, loving woman who cares so deeply for Christ.

And this perfume that she brings forth was imported from India. It was used for the anointing of kings. It was tremendously expensive, and she brings it forward to anoint the Lord Jesus, to bless him. In cleaning his feet, she's doing the work of the common and lowly household slave. Open-toed sandals, sometimes bare feet, men walking long distances in very dirty highways and byways, a man's feet get very dirty, and so usually the lowest servant in a home is to clean the visitor's feet. She gets down and she does that. Humble sacrifice and humility.

What we are told is, in addition, if this is the same account that is recorded in Mark and in Matthew, she may have begun with an anointing of this perfume upon his head, and it would've flowed down over his face and his beard and into his skin and also anointed his feet. Amazingly beautiful portrait.

And Mary doesn't care much about her reputation, because it was customary in that culture for a young girl to run around with her hair just sort of free-flowing, like my daughter's does. But once a woman became a young woman and she was making her transition into womanhood, she would bind up her hair on top of her head, and then she would carry it in that way whenever she was in public, and no man was to see her with her hair down. Her hair was considered her glory, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11, that a woman's hair is her glory. And so she would put her hair up on top of her head, and then upon her wedding night, in her bridal chamber, her husband would undo her hair and see her hair come down and cascade down her neck and down her shoulders and down her back, and he would see her in her complete glory in a way that no other man had seen her.

And so when Mary is cleaning Jesus' feet and she's anointing them with this perfume, she does what is culturally forbidden and she undoes her hair and lets it down so that she can use her hair to dry the feet of the Lord Jesus. I love Mary, because Mary is devoted to Christ, and she loves him. She's not broken any law of Scripture. She's not violated God's commands. But she has sort of overridden cultural norm and custom for the purpose of showing her love to Christ. The room is filled with people, and Mary is just fixated on Jesus and how she can be a blessing and a service to him.

~~The perfume didn't dilute at all, it didn't get broken and diluted because it was so intense, but~~
now that the seal has been broken and the perfume has been poured forth, the scent and the aroma just fills the home.

And then the Bible says something that you know trouble is coming: "But" – every time you see that, you know trouble is coming – "But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 'Why wasn't the perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.'"

Judas Iscariot is one of the disciples, and the first thing he does is he criticizes Mary. And if you think about it, it's amazing that he would do so, because Mary and Martha are throwing the party in Jesus' honor. They're paying for it. They are serving. They are hosting. Mary now does something out of her heartfelt devotion and love for Christ that is extraordinary, and all Judas Iscariot can do is criticize her publicly. In front of all the other men and all the attendants and all the guests, he rebukes her and he speaks negatively of her.

And if you have ever served Christ, you know that some people's spiritual gift is criticism. Some people just have the gift of discouragement, and they are so good at pointing out the fact that you are not doing what you should do. You spent too much; you spent too little; you did too much; you did too little. You didn't do it good enough; you did it too good. Whatever it is, they just criticize, and that is the spirit of Judas Iscariot. Mary loves Christ. She's doing something wonderful. Judas is doing nothing, but he will reserve his energy to criticize the one who is serving. Some people are like that.

And Judas is the one who tends to the money. What you'll see in a moment is, what we learned from Judas Iscariot is that each of us is likely to be most tempted to sin in our area of greatest strength. Solomon is a man gifted with wisdom; he becomes an utter fool. David is a man gifted with passion; he ends up committing adultery and murdering a married man so that he can take his wife. We see that Peter is a man who is gifted with boldness, and he goes so far as to rebuke the Lord Jesus.

And we see that Judas Iscariot is a man who is gifted in finances and money. There are other businessmen and men who had run their own companies, working as apostles, disciples of Jesus, but Judas Iscariot is appointed to be the bookkeeper to oversee the money. In so doing, that may indicate to us that he was good with money. He knew how to balance his checkbook. He knew how to pay the bills. He knew how to keep things in order. But his temptation comes in his area of strength, as we will see in a moment.

And Judas criticizes her, and he says, "You know, we shoulda sold that, 'cause we coulda fed a lot of poor people." Sounds very pious. Sounds very holy. Sounds very righteous. It's not. It's not. You'll see why in just a moment.

John tells us, "He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to keep – used to, rather, help himself to what was put in it." Oh, that's why. This is not a guy who wants Mary to put her money in the account so that it can be used to feed the poor. What Judas loves is lots of money to get deposited in the account because he takes it and puts it into his own pocket. He gives the impression that he loves God, but he does not. He says, "Oh, this is a year's wages."

In our current economy, the average worker income is just under \$50,000.00 in the Puget Sound. You can imagine, for those of you who work just a regular job and get a weekly or a biweekly paycheck, how long it would take you to save \$50,000.00. A whole year's wages. That's a tremendous sacrifice. If you were very thrifty and worked hard, you may be able to save up a year's wages, maybe. And Mary takes this and uses it for a moment of blessing the Lord Jesus.

And Judas criticizes her and says, "We coulda fed a lot of poor people." Judas doesn't care about poor people; Judas cares about himself. When Judas deals with the Lord Jesus, he is not in it for Christ's glory; he's in it for his own. He's not in it so that other people would be blessed; he's in it so that he could take what he wants, and he's a thief.

Some have speculated over time that, well, Judas was a Christian who lost his salvation. He was a godly man who lost his way. He loved the Lord, and he just tanked it at the end; don't be like Judas Iscariot.

Nothing could be further from the truth. John reveals his character here. Judas is like many in that they really have two distinct characters. One is their public character, and one is their private character. And in their public character they sort of project tremendous piety: "Oh, I love the Lord. I pray. I go to church. I go to Bible study." They use language and they hang out with people that would give you every indication that these are people who love God, but in private there is a darkness and there is a contrasted difference in their character. What they do on the weekends, what they do in the evenings, what they do at home in private when no one but God is looking is completely antithetical to that which they project in public. That's Judas Iscariot.

So the issue is not, well, how did this really good person just all of a sudden go bad? What you'll find is they've been bad for a really long time, and now they're just being consistent. That which they used to do under the cover of darkness, now they do in the light of day. What they used to do in the privacy of their home, now they do in public. What they used to do away from their friends in church, they now do in view of their friends at church. Judas Iscariot is that guy.

If we were to look at Judas Iscariot and look at Mary in this circumstance, if we were just walking into the room, we would assume, wrongly, that Mary was a sinful woman and that Judas was a godly man, because Mary is breaking cultural norm. She is basically violating a cultural standard, and Judas is rebuking her and talking about how it is good to help poor people.

On the outward, we would anticipate Judas is the godly man, and Mary is the godless woman. Don't be so quick to judge. Sometimes things are not as they appear. God looks at the heart. Man judges the outward. All of us like to think that we know who loves God and who does not. It may surprise us why some people project a certain identity. It may not be about love for God at all. That's Judas Iscariot.

And I love the fact then that this woman does not need to speak up. Mary doesn't defend herself. She doesn't rebuke Judas Iscariot. She doesn't get into an argument. She allows Jesus to do that for her. See, Mary is so devoted to Christ, she is not paying attention to Judas's critique. She doesn't care. She loves Jesus. She's serving Jesus. What Judas thinks is of no tremendous concern to her, and so Jesus steps in and he defends her cause.

Judas criticizes her, and then Jesus says, "Leave her alone. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." What Jesus is alluding to here is, in Deuteronomy 15:11, he's echoing this same theme: that poor people will always be with us, and so God's people need to make a sincere attempt to help them, to take care of those that are in legitimate need.

But what Jesus is saying, the poor you will always have with you. What that means is, every time an election comes and an official that is running for an office stands up and says, "Well, I'm going to give everyone a bed and everyone a meal and everyone a job, and I'm going to end –" No, you won't, because Jesus promised, the poor we will always have with us. In a fallen, sinful world, it will never look like heaven no matter how much money we spend. It will never look like heaven. That doesn't mean we don't care about people. It doesn't mean we don't serve them. It doesn't mean we don't make an attempt to bring dignity to people that are in need, but it does mean that we cannot be naïve.

And what Jesus is stating here is very simply this: The poor you will always have with me, but not me. What he's saying is, "I've only got a few days left before I die, and once I am dead, there is no opportunity for this party and this feast and this anointing and this tremendous gift of Mary. The opportunity will pass us by. As far as feeding people, you'll have lots of opportunities to do that, but in a week I'll be lying in my grave, dead."

And it's an indication to all of us that opportunities come in life, and you have to avail yourself and take advantage of opportunities that God gives, because at certain points, as you miss opportunities, you may never have another opportunity to be in that same place again. Now God in his sovereignty may bring it around, but in this instance, this is the chance for Mary to anoint Jesus, and soon he will be dead, and then her chance is gone. And so if God affords you an opportunity to speak or to love or to serve or to give or to do something on his behalf, you need to avail yourself to that opportunity. You need to make the most of that moment that God has given you.

And so Jesus says, "She has taken advantage of this moment. She is preparing me for my burial," is exactly what she is doing. I don't know how Mary knew this. She may have been doing this unconsciously. She may have just loved him and not known that this was connected to his death. Or she may have seen the countenance upon his face, and her loving him so deeply, she may have sort of intuitively known that something was very tragic soon to occur.

Throughout Scripture, I believe that the author of this book, John, and the woman that is highlighted here, Mary, may be the man and woman in all of human history who loved Jesus Christ the most. I think you'd be hard pressed to find any man who loved him more than John, and it is a very convincing argument to me, at least, that Mary was as devoted to Christ as any woman has ever been. And so Jesus defends her cause.

The story goes on: "Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there, and they came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead." That'll get a crowd. Dead guy comes to back life; everybody wants to come around and hear the story.

~~Lazarus is the main character in the story.~~ That's it. He died, and now he's breathing, and now he's a legend. In our day he'd be on CNN and he'd be on the front page of the newspaper, and everybody'd wanna talk to him. All of a sudden a regular, average guy becomes some sort of superhero because he came back to life.

~~It's a story about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.~~ and I'm sure that those who came had, in all likelihood, struggled with the issue of death. Parents had died; friends had died; maybe they were sick, and their own death was impending.

And their religious leaders, the Pharisees and the Sadducees are fighting: Will there be a resurrection? Will there be life after death? So they wanna come to Lazarus and say, "What do you think? We heard you were dead; now you're alive. What do you say?" Lazarus then has an opportunity to tell his story: "I was dead, and Jesus called me out of my grave. He brought me from death to life, and he promises that he is the resurrection and the life, and you should love him, and you should follow him as I do." What that means is for each of us, God has been active in our lives, and as we tell the story of what God has done, there is power there, and people are attracted to that.

You know this just intuitively, but if I talk about God, it is not that convincing for some people, because I'm a paid religious professional. I could very likely have ulterior motives. "Well, you get paid for that. You're a pastor. That's your job." True enough, but a guy like Lazarus, he has nothing to gain. He just says it because he loves God and it's true. He has nothing coming out of this. I'm glad that Lazarus didn't sign a book deal. I'm glad he didn't give away the movie rights. I'm glad he just stood up and said, "I love Jesus, and I was dead, and now I'm alive. Be a Christian, and move on with your life."

Howard Hendricks, an old Bible teacher, he's got a funny line. He says, "Yeah, the people in my church, they are different than me. Me, I get paid to be good. They are just good for nothing." And that's really the way it works, if you think about it. For those of you that love God, you're just good for nothing. You just do it because you love God.

And so as you tell your story, "Well, this is what God has told me; this is how he has changed me; this is what he has forgiven me of; these are the ways that he has intervened and involved himself in my affairs; this is how his love has demonstrated itself, practically and powerfully," then others gather around to hear that story.

Not everyone loves the story, though. So the chief priests, the religious leaders, made plans to kill Lazarus as well. I don't know if you see the funny part here. Do you see the funny part? Maybe I just have a sick sense of humor. I think it's funny. "Well, we killed Lazarus, and he got up, and now everybody's coming to him. What should we do?" "Well, let's kill him." Well, he already died once. I mean, this is gonna be like one of those B-grade horror movies where he just keeps coming back. We put him in the grave, and next thing you know, he's back at it.

And I think it's funny because if they did kill him, I could see Jesus bringing him back and then the crowds get bigger, and I could see Lazarus like, "I hope this isn't habitual. I mean, this is getting very old. That whole stinketh part, it takes weeks to get that off." I, at least, think that's funny.

So they intend to put Lazarus to death, "for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him." Lots of people are coming to hear Lazarus's story. Lazarus just boasts about Jesus, so they all love Jesus, and that's what Paul and Jeremiah tell us: If you're gonna boast, brag all you want, but brag in the Lord. Boast in the Lord. Talk about how great he is and how everything that has happened in your life that is good is Jesus, and everything that's bad, well, that was you. That's the simplest way to keep your life straight. Bad things, that was you; good things, that was God. Just boast in the things that he does. Tell people about how kind and compassionate and present God is.

~~But what they must do is to tell the truth.~~ ~~And if you tell the truth, you will be persecuted.~~

This is a problem. Paul tells us in Romans 1:18 that certain men who are wicked suppress the truth. If I can give you a word picture that always comes to me with that word, it is – if you've ever been a kid that went swimming in a lake or in a pool and you bring with you a beach ball, or if you grew up in the ghetto like me, you bring your basketball so you have something to swim with so you don't drown. And as a kid, it's always an attempt that you have to try and suppress the ball and keep it under the water line, and what happens? It comes up and hits you in the mouth is what it does. That's not the point of the story; it's just a painful memory that I have from childhood. But you try and suppress that, you try and hold that down, but what

happens is it always fights you and comes back up.

~~They try and that person is the by that with the truth~~ They try and force it to be unseen. That's exactly what is happening. It is not that the people whom are present don't have enough information or they don't understand. It couldn't be plainer. Jesus has said repeatedly that he is the one true God, that salvation is in him alone, and he has demonstrated it. He has demonstrated it by healing people, by feeding people, by calling Lazarus from death to life.

The issue is, though, is that people don't love the truth. They hate it. And so it should not surprise you, if you graciously tell people the story of what God has done in your life, and some people love Jesus and some people despise him and hate the truth, because the truth for some people is a declaration of war. If you tell people, "Well, the truth is you're not a good person," Well, I don't like that. "Well, the truth is you can't save yourself." Well, I don't like that. "Well, the truth is that Jesus is the only way to salvation." Well, I don't like that. "Well, the truth is you can't do what you want; you're supposed to do what God says." But I don't like that. "Well, the truth is you can't dictate your own life; you should belong to God." Well, I don't like that.

The problem with our faith is oftentimes not a lack of information or evidence; it is lack of love for the truth. It is ultimately a lack of love for Christ, and that's exactly what is going on here. Well, Jesus is God, because he says he is, and there's Lazarus. He was dead, and now he's alive. But we don't like the truth. We don't like who Jesus is. We don't like what Jesus says. We don't like where Jesus is taking people. Therefore we should kill Lazarus, and ultimately we should kill Jesus, and that's where they go, which they should've learned from Lazarus how this works. I mean, you can kill him, but a couple days later, back he comes. And so like Lazarus, Jesus dies, but he comes back to life to prove his point beyond a shadow of a doubt, and people still don't love him, and they still don't like the truth about him.

I wanna return and revisit one little sentence that John gives us. Jesus says that this perfume that Mary gives him "was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial." Now this perfume was intensely pure, very, very strong. If you can even imagine taking a full bottle of perfume, and actually a perfume that was likely to be diluted with water, and you went with a pure form, and you poured that over your head into your hair – if you're a man, into your beard – down through your skin, and you allowed that to sit and to steep into your flesh, and then if it was a culture unlike ours where you didn't bathe every day but you bathed less frequently, a few days later as you were breathing, what do you smell? Well, you obviously smell the scent of that fragrance, because it lingers about you. It is still present even in your own skin.

And I love the portrait of Mary, that at her time of instruction, Mary is at the feet of Jesus. At her time of mourning, she is at the feet of Jesus. At her time of worship and service, she is at the feet of Jesus. The last place that she was at the feet of Jesus was at his crucifixion. We know that ultimately they did seek to kill Christ. They trumped him up on false charges, ran him through a series of false trials under the cover of darkness at night. They beat him mercilessly, and then they crucified him.

And that is the final place that Mary was at the feet of Jesus. The Scriptures does not declare to us really exclusively that Mary was there, but I would infer very clearly from Mark's Gospel that she was there. Mark tells us that at the crucifixion of Jesus, there was a large crowd of women. My guess is Mary is there. I can't see anyone who loves Jesus more than Mary, and I can't see Jesus being killed without Mary being present. My assumption is, is that Mary finds herself, for the last time, at the feet of Jesus, this time as he is hanging above her, nailed to a Roman cross and crucified, that she finds herself beneath his feet.

~~An R this~~ issue of the feet is very interesting because in the Roman crucifixion the feet were used for mockery and for pain and for suffering. crucifixion they would nail your hands to a crossbeam. They would nail your feet to the cross. The reason they would nail your feet is because, in your crucifixion, the way you would die is usually by suffocation. Your lungs would collapse on you as you hung, and you couldn't fill your lungs up with air, and so very slowly you would asphyxiate. You would suffocate to death. You would cease breathing in a very slow, tedious, and painful way.

And so what they would do, they would drive stakes – they would drive spikes, rather, through your feet so that upon occasion you could just push yourself up just enough to get a miniscule amount of air back into your lungs so that you could just continue in your suffering. They wanted you to be able to breathe for a couple more hours, just a little bit at a time.

What would happen, you'd get a little air in your lungs, and then you would collapse from the pain and from the torment, and then slowly your breath would exhale. You would start to find yourself blacking out and going unconscious and nearing death, and then you would be traumatized by your impending death, and so you would push yourself from the spikes through your feet back up to get a little more air into your lungs so you could just prolong your agony. Oftentimes if this went for too long, perhaps a whole day, they would grow weary and tired of watching you die, and so then they would just break your legs so that you could no longer raise yourself up and gather any air in your lungs. For Jesus, as the promise was given in the Old Testament, none of his bones were broken. He was beaten so badly that, the Scripture says, he gave up his spirit, that he stopped breathing, that he died, without them needing to bust his knees.

But as Mary looks up upon Jesus, who is dying for her sin, because, see, Mary is a woman who loves God, but she is also a sinner. She's imperfect, and she is separated from God. And so God is come. Her God is come. There is Jesus dying for her sins, his perfect life being punished in her place, and in mine, and being punished for all of his children.

And my question to you is this: As Jesus is hanging there and he is pushing himself up through the stakes driven through his feet, the place where Mary had anointed him and sat and called for comfort and for instruction and for worship – as Jesus breathes, what do you suppose that Christ breathed in his nostrils as he hung there in his final breath? He smelled the gift of Mary. That's what he smelled. That's what he has just said: "She has anointed me for my burial."

"I'm going to die, and this is my preparation for my death." As Jesus hangs on the cross, likely in his hair and in his beard and in his skin the lingering

gift of Mary is his encouragement. He smells Mary's love. I would suspect that as he breathes, that gives him comfort; that gives him encouragement; that gives him peace because he knows why he's dying. He is dying because he has loved Mary, and she has loved him back, and she will become a mother to a great multitude whom are like her and love the Lord.

And so Jesus remembers Mary's love. Jesus remembers Mary's sacrifice. Jesus remembers Mary's gift of devotion, and that's what he smells. The final air that goes through his lungs, the final words that he speaks, Mary is participating in that because it is her scent that lingers upon him.

Very simply, I will tell you that everything God has in our life is a sermon. Everything is to preach. Our senses are given to us to bear witness to our God, that all of creation testifies that God is real and alive and powerful and loving and very active and very present.

And my assignment to you is this: to recognize how God is preaching to you by your sense of smell. Ask yourself, are there not certain smells that bring your memory back to a wonderful event, that certain smells capture whole memories that words can't even express? Mary gave that kind of gift to Jesus.

If you're Mary, you know what this is like. Every spouse knows what their mate smells like. Every husband knows what his wife's scent is, and if he's been gone for a few days or he has not been with her for a while and he embraces her, he smells his wife, and it just floods his mind with memories. For those of you whom are parents, do you remember the first time you held your baby? Nothing smells like a newborn baby. As spring is upon us, you will smell flowers in bloom. As you cook a meal in your home, you will smell God's gift of joy and creation. As you brew a pot of tea, you will smell.

All of these scents, what I want them to be for you: I want them to be for you sermons that preach about Mary. Every time you smell something that is beautiful, every time you have a sweet, fragrant aroma, I want you to remember Mary: "That's about Mary. That's God reminding me of Mary, who sat at the feet of Christ and worshipped him and gave him a sweet fragrance that brought his memory back in his moment of greatest need and struggle to that time a few days prior, where she loved him, she anointed him, she cared for him, she sacrificed for him, she poured out her life savings, just because his final breaths on the cross were of such endearing value that she was willing to give up all of her money so that Jesus could have a sweet scent in his nostrils as he took his final breath."

I wanted to close with Paul's words from 2 Corinthians 2. I want you to hear what Paul says, and what Paul says is that we can in a sense become spiritual children of Mary, that we can carry forth her legacy. We can continue to do as she has done. He tells us, "But thanks be to God" – in verse 14 – "who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of God. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life."

What Paul is simply stating is that you and I do as Mary has done, that as she cracked the seal and poured out the contents of her gift, we take our life and we crack it open, and we pour out our life to Christ. And our sincere attempts is to be a fragrant and pleasing aroma to the Lord, that as we love him and we serve him and we care for him, that what goes with the children of God is a certain fragrance.

In John we were told that this fragrance filled the entire room of the home. Here we are told that the children of God will take this aroma into all the earth, that this sweet, beautiful scent, this scent that sort of brings us back to revisitation of Christ, and his love for us and his death and his resurrection is done by the children of God by how we conduct ourselves, that we should be a sweet fragrance to all who come in contact with us.

And God, in his kindness, has permitted us to be children of Mary, to sit at his feet so we could learn, to sit at his feet so we could mourn, to sit at his feet so we can worship, to sit at his feet so that we can know that he has died for us and he loves us. And then to take that scent of our lives poured out and then to spread that, so that other people might have that same sweet fragrance that we have, given us by Christ.

And so for each of us, that is my commission to you. Mary has preached without a word. She has said volumes in her conduct. And her fragrant aroma of her life poured out continues, even among us tonight. We get a smell for what she's like. We get a scent of her essence, and it's beautiful, and it's lovely, and her scent is carried forth through all of God's people and all of God's places as the children of God mimic her example and carry the fragrance of Christ with them.

And so my invitation to you tonight is that the smells that come into your nose are given to you under the sovereignty of God. And as things smell sweet, you are to remember Mary and remember Christ, and as things carry with them the stench, you remember sin and death. You remember Lazarus in his condition before Christ called his name.

And now we are called to respond, as Mary did. Christ came to Mary, and Mary responded. That was her worship. That is what I am calling all of you tonight. You can respond, as some did, with faith and belief. Some of you should respond with contemplation and consideration. Some of you need to be like Martha, and you need to take your hands and you need to do something constructive to show your love for Christ. Some of you need to be like Lazarus and simply tell your story of Jesus' love and what he's done for you, and some of you do too much and say too much, and you need to learn the lesson of Mary, and you need to just sit still and be with the Lord and receive from him what he has for you and just to be quiet in his love.

And so we give you opportunity to respond. We respond through singing, because that is the language of loving covenant. We respond through partaking of Communion, because it reminds us of Jesus' body and blood shed for our sins so that we could be forgiven and brought into relationship with Christ and with each other. We also respond through giving so that we do not carry on the legacy of Judas Iscariot, stealing God's money and taking what was intended for Christ's glory and using it for our own pleasures.

And then our worship culminates as we leave and we go out into the world and we take with us the sweet, fragrant aroma of Christ because, like Lazarus, your testimony and the scent of your life will be the thing that gathers crowds around to hear the good news of Christ and to love him as you do.

~~The final basket is for you tonight. The general offering goes to special offering.~~

continued ministry of the church. The baskets go to the extension of our ministry. We have been so blessed by God. A few years ago this church was in my living room, and now on a good Sunday it's upwards of 700 people. It has grown steadily because of the fragrant aroma of Christ that God's people take with them through the city of Seattle. And we've been privileged to start a church in Mount Vernon and one in Kirkland and one in Portland. They're all doing fine and moving right along.

We're starting another 50 in six nations this year: Brazil, Mexico, Haiti, Canada, the U.S., and India. The monies you give tonight will go to help plant 13 churches in India, brothers and sisters in Christ taking the fragrant aroma to people who have never smelled it, people who've never heard about Christ. These guys get on bikes, and they go from village to village, and they start churches, and they'll pastor two, three churches at a time. We support them for three years, and then they become self-supporting and they're on their own.

And so far, 83 churches have been planted through the man that we work with there, and so any money you give, 100 percent of it goes there. And that is because we as a church feel that it is our duty to take the fragrant scent of Christ with us into the city, but it also our invitation to not carry on the legacy of Judas Iscariot and to make sure that that fragrant scent also goes forward, as Paul told us it would, to all nations of the earth. And so I invite you to all of that tonight, but most importantly I invite you to Christ. This is a night like Mary to sit as his feet for a bit and to enjoy his company.

And so, Lord Jesus, we thank you so much. We thank you that you are God come for us. Lord God, we thank you for the legacy of Mary. Lord Jesus, I wonder if not at this very moment Mary is not sitting at your feet in your kingdom, just loving you as she always has. Lord Jesus, we long for the day when we, like Lazarus, have our names called and we're brought from death to life, that we see you face to face, that you usher us into your kingdom, and that we, like Mary, get to sit at your feet and we, like Martha, get to serve with our hands and we, like Lazarus, get to tell our story of the love of our great God.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the life you have given us, because it is a place for us to begin to taste and to smell these things. So we ask, Lord Jesus, that in your grace you would enable us to serve like Mary, to speak like Lazarus, and to simply just love like Mary, to just sit and be quiet in your love. Lord Jesus, I am so thankful that we even receive that invitation and that opportunity.

I pray, Lord God, that through the members of this church, that a sweet fragrance of Christ would go out into the city and to the ends of the earth and that others would love his scent and would find it beautiful and pleasing. And Lord God, would your Holy Spirit please do us a kind favor, and every time we smell something that is beautiful and memorable, bring us back to the story of Mary and the story of Jesus. Amen.