



John 12:1-11
 So That You May Believe: John
 “Generosity Poured Out”

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This morning we pick back up in our series in the Gospel of John after taking a break for 6 weeks. When we last were looking at John’s gospel, Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead, calling him out of the tomb several days after he had died. Jesus says that all of this has happened so that God would be glorified. The last 13 verses of John 11 we have skipped over, but we will come back to them next Sunday. So, today’s passage is out of order by just a bit, but it is actually still connected to the earlier verses in chapter 11 that we covered previously, as Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha are helping to host a party in honor of Jesus. Remember how last week we talked about the importance of hospitality and how our hospitality can be a window into our heavenly home? Well, today we see hospitality lived out, and it’s undergirded by love and service as it should be. So, with that little intro to get us back into the John series, let’s dive in to today’s message.

As probably many of you know, money is the source of a lot of problems in our society. Most people think that not having enough money is the main problem, and for sure there are people on the margins, and in real financial difficulty, struggling to make ends meet. Even here on the Eastside, a place we generally think of as financially well-off, and even in our church, there are people who genuinely struggle to make ends meet. However, probably the biggest problem with the sense of “not having enough money” revolves more around *managing* the money we do have, being wise with it, not coveting what others have who happen to have more money, and finding our satisfaction in the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s easy to feel poor, and lack satisfaction, when your aim is to keep up with everyone around you. Because, unless you’re Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos, we can each can point to someone else, who has more money. No matter how much you have, there’s always someone else to try and keep up with. It’s a never-ending cycle.

So, actually, **The more prevalent problem is not so much that we don’t have enough money: it’s that we *think* we don’t have enough, because our attitude toward our money is off-kilter.** It’s out of whack with Jesus’ priorities. In fact, we’re seeking satisfaction in our money, rather than in

Jesus. That is the source of most of our money problems...*and it's the source of a lot of other problems we face.* For example: the subject of money – how much to spend, what to spend it on, how to save it, how much to save it, and so forth...this topic of money is consistently named as one of the top points of disagreement in a marriage, and one of the top reasons for divorce. Billy Graham once said, **“If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life” (Billy Graham).** So, getting control of our money and our attitude toward it is important. Otherwise, our money will control us. How can we stay out of that trap? Today’s passage gives us some insight. Let’s turn to John 12:1-11. We’ll read **the first 6 verses** first, and then continue on after that.

(Sermon Title Side) So, right here we have a contrast in viewpoints about money. Now, it is true that there is no silver or gold or any other kind of coin actually present in the reporting of this event. But the perfume is valuable: Mary spent a lot to get it, or it was perhaps given to her – some believe it may have been her inheritance or her dowry – and Judas obviously thinks of it as a source of money.

Now, I don’t know about you, but when I read or hear the word, “nard” I think of lard, and having that poured on my feet just doesn’t sound very enjoyable. But that’s not what this is. It is a kind of perfume; More like an oil. One Bible website compared it to “essential oils” and when I read that I wondered if I had clicked on the wrong link online, and gone to some home-based essential oils shopping service. In fact, here’s what the Greek word (nardos) means: **“Nardos: the head or spike of a fragrant East Indian plant belonging to the genus Valerianna, which yields a juice of delicious odour which the ancients used (either pure or mixed) in the preparation of a most precious ointment.”** I looked it up in several dictionaries, and they all say the same thing – including the East Indian locale of this plant. So, this is an imported fragrance. We all know that “imported: means “extra fancy” and “extra special” and definitely expensive. And we aren’t the first ones to think that all the fancy, expensive stuff comes from somewhere else – like luxury sports cars that come from Germany or Italy, or watches from Switzerland. The point is: this nard is valuable. It’s expensive. It may very well be a cherished inheritance item for her, or a dowry for her future

husband's family. **Regardless, it was of significant value. And she gave it all to Jesus.**

Now, as we just read, you see that not everyone at the table thinks this is such a great idea. Judas criticizes her for it. John lets us know that Judas' motives weren't really as pure as he made them out to be. It wasn't really about the poor, it was about his own selfishness...his own financial gain. That kind of selfishness oftentimes leads to criticism of other people's generosity. In fact, let's put ourselves in her shoes for a minute. Close your eyes for a moment and picture yourself at this dinner. You've just offered Jesus this gift or some other gift that's valuable and that you cherish; it's really the only thing you have to offer. You've given what you're able, you've done it as a way of blessing him and as an act of faith, and you've done it in front of a small crowd of people. And immediately someone starts criticizing you. And not just anyone, but another follower of Jesus criticizes you for your generous offering. As you picture yourself in that situation: How would their critical response make you feel? How likely would you be to bring another gift to Jesus and offer what you're able? (Open eyes.)

Unfortunately, some of us have experienced this in church or in other settings. In fact, his response reminds me of the response that some people give at the dinner table at our house. Gwen will cook a great dinner for the family, working hard in the kitchen, and set out a beautiful meal such as chicken and rice, some broccoli, some fruit, and so forth. And what is the response? "Chicken? I HATE Chicken... Why do we ALWAYS have to have Chicken?" It's just a horrible, childish response, full of criticism, and I've been trying to stop responding that way. 😊 Just kidding...I don't do that...But when I cook - Gwen responds that way! 😊 Kidding again...it's the kids, of course. Now, I actually plagiarized myself there because I shared that story 10 years ago almost to the day...but to be honest, *we still get that response!* Some of the kids have matured and grown out of it, but not all of our kids have. It's kind of mind-blowing that a decade later we are still verbally accosted for cooking chicken for dinner. It literally happened last night. So, our family is imperfect...and the Church is imperfect, too. We're sinners saved by grace, following Jesus as best we can, but imperfectly so.

Here's the thing: **Her gift, and the gifts that you and I bring to Jesus, are not given to please other people; rather, they're given to please Him.** When we offer something to Jesus, we're offering it to him, and him alone. Yes, the ministries of the church are directly impacted, and when you give here, Rose Hill Church is able to do ministry in part because of your financial giving. But if the church really is the body of Christ as Scripture tells us it is, then when you give to the church you are giving to Jesus. And Jesus loves it when we give generously to him, just as he has generously given to us. And his response is the only one that matters. In fact, let's continue reading **John 12:7-11** and see how Jesus responds to this expensive oil being poured out. **(Proclaim Operator: Leave last scripture slide up until next point.)**

Clearly, Jesus receives the gift with gratitude and is blessed by it, as he defends Mary. He knows he has a date with the cross just a few days away, and this is a blessing to him as he approaches crucifixion. Now, in both Matthew's and Mark's gospel accounts, we get a little longer response from Jesus. Here's what Mark records about Jesus' response: **"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her"** (Mark 14:6-9). So, we see even more praise for her here, and he tells Judas that what she's done is going to be lifted up and highlighted and shared wherever the gospel is preached. That's happening here, today.

So, Jesus is pleased with what she gave him. **It was a gift that came from her heart, and meant something to him, because it meant something to her.** Duty or responsibility are not her motives. It's a gift that comes from deep inside, as an expression of gratitude that cost her something, that she valued, and that's why Jesus calls it beautiful. It boils down to giving out of love and gratitude for what Jesus has done. That's why financially giving really is an act of worship. It's not paying a bill that we owe. It's not buying our way to heaven. It's not bribing God. **Giving to God comes from a place**

of love and gratitude, as an act of worship, because of what God has done in Jesus Christ.

And that right there is the key to getting your relationship with money squared away. If you've got problems with money, you're probably trying to be satisfied by it, to find your purpose in it, and root your thankfulness in it, rather than God. Too often, even Christians focus on financial and material stuff in their thankfulness to God, thanking him for the roof over our heads, the clothes on our backs, the pay raise we got, or whatever. And that's fine – there's nothing wrong with thanking God for that. But gratitude toward Jesus for what he's done on the cross, for the promises of God that are fulfilled in Jesus and assured in him for us, for the way God works through his church to bless and encourage us and help shepherd each of us along as disciples of Jesus: *These* are the things to be *satisfied* by and also thankful for. And when we stay focused on that spiritual gratitude, and remember the goodness of God that has sustained us in the past and present and will surely sustain us in the future...in a nutshell: when we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, then the financial “problems” that many of us face will fade away, because our money and stuff won't mean so much to us. What our neighbors have won't mean so much. They get a new car? Great. Doesn't need to impact us.

Now, I should let you know, and this may sound contradictory to everything I've just said...but recently Gwen and I got a new vehicle. Actually, we got two – one for her and one for me. And since we've never previously owned an electric vehicle, we decided to go that route. And so, we ended up buying two electric scooters. ☺ We bought them this past June and since then your pastor has been commuting to church by scooter – I think I've driven to work in a car like three times. Even this morning I rode my scooter...it is in my office right now. So, no need to keep up with the neighbors' fancy vehicles, vacations, clothes, etc. When we stay centered on Jesus: He will mean more. Do you think Mary cared about what Judas or anyone else had financially/materially as she offered this gift to Jesus? Absolutely not. She is literally on her knees, pouring out her generosity on Jesus from her heart, because he is all that matters.

So, what we see is that: **Giving generously to Jesus – giving from the heart and not out of duty or obligation – reflects our deep gratitude for, and satisfaction in, Jesus.** It's a demonstration of our trust in Him. When we give generously, we glorify him; we worship him; we exalt him; we bless him; We support the ministries of the church and help to spread the gospel and make disciples of Jesus.

You know, Laird spoke earlier about the needs of the church. And it's true that there are financial needs. Your giving supports the ministry of the church, and I hope you find some motivation in what he said to give generously. But maybe the motivation for a lot of us is a spiritual one, inside of us: to get our attitude right about our finances; to get our relationship with our money in line behind our relationship with God. Maybe the financial need we have is not to *have* more, but to *give* more, to demonstrate to ourselves and to God, that we *care* more about Jesus than we do our finances and material wealth. Maybe we need to let go of keeping up with the Joneses, because it's causing financial strain, and instead we need to give more generously to Jesus as a way of living out our faith, blessing him, and helping to grow the Kingdom of God. Like Billy Graham said, I have no doubt that as we do that, many other challenges in life will become less problematic.

So, like Mary, let's give generously – in our finances, as well as with our time and our talent. All of who God has made us, all that he has blessed us with, all that we have and are...may all of that be solely for the purpose of bringing Jesus glory. Let's pour out what we can, and give generously to Jesus, because it will bless him and further his kingdom, and help you to grow in your journey of faith with Jesus. Let's pray...Amen.