

DCF 050720 John 12:1-11 The Anointing at Bethany

John 12:1 *Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. ² There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him.*

Martha was a doer. The church needs doers. She showed her love for Jesus by serving him. Many believers show their love for God by often unnoticed cleaning, working in the kitchen, on bulletins, visiting the lonely, or helping out in many invisible and often unappreciated ways.

John 12:3 ³ *Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.*

But we also need to worship Jesus with every cell in our body. I sometimes feel challenged to kneel before God in worship at DCF and alone at home in my study. At home is fine, but at DCF I have to overcome the thought – what will people think. The answer is obvious – who cares what people think, I am here to worship God. One day we will all stand in glory and worship Jesus, unfettered from the embarrassment of the flesh.

Worship is not restricted by cost. Mary's heart obliterates any financial constraints. **Love is not love if it calculates the cost.** God anoints David's head with oil, because God has the authority to bestow honor on His servant. **Psalm 23:5** *You anoint my head with oil.* Mary knows she has no authority to honour Jesus in that way – so she anoints His feet with oil. Neither is worship restricted by embarrassment. She wipes His feet with her hair. This is the worship we must seek to attain in our lives at home and here at DCF. Worship is not just the singing of songs, nor just bonding with the words and the tune and the beat. Those things can be a pathway to worship. But the end of that path must be seeing and appreciating and being overawed by the worth of God. The old Saxon word 'worship' comes from the word "worthy", and means "condition of being worthy, having dignity, glory, distinction, honor, renown,"

Now because of the overpowering nature of the flesh, and the constant battle we are in with the world, the flesh and the devil, we MUST vocalize these words of praise. Even if they are under our breath, or whilst the church is singing a song of praise, we must speak it out.

Angels and demons are limited in their knowledge. **1 Peter 1:12** ¹² *To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.* They do not know when Christ will return. **Mark 12:32** ³² *But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, ...* If demons could have read the mind of King Nebuchadnezzar, and known his dream, they would have prevented Daniel rising to a position of great power and influence. Only God knows these secrets. **Dan 2:27** *The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. ²⁸ But there is a*

God in heaven who reveals secrets. So, our worship, is part of our warfare to terrorize demons. Your worship MUST be visible and audible.

Tell God you are sorry. Thank God for His patience and love to You. Praise God for the evidence of His Spirit in your life. Come and place your burdens in the lap of the Father with 'Can you fix this please'.

Now the result of this worship is that it overflows to others. **The house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.** Have we got this? Mary's one simple act of unfettered love for Jesus, filled the whole house. Our sense of smell is undervalued. We have words for people who cannot see or hear or speak – but what about people who cannot smell? They have anosmia and are called anosmic. Your unfettered, unpretentious, totally surrendered worship of Jesus, will fill this church with the fragrance of God.

John 12:4 ⁴ *But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said,* ⁵ *"Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"*

A denarius was about a day's wage for an unskilled laborer. So, this was a year's wages. What do we do with our money? Compared to many people in the world we are very, very rich.

Table 1: Top 10 major economies with the highest median and average wealth per adult in mid 2018

Ranking	Country	Median wealth per adult (USD)	Country	Average wealth per adult (USD)
1	Australia	191,453	Switzerland	530,240
2	Switzerland	183,339	Australia	411,060
3	Belgium	163,429	United States	403,970
4	Netherlands	114,935	Belgium	313,050
5	Canada	106,342	Norway	291,100
6	France	106,327	New Zealand	289,807
7	Japan	103,861	Canada	288,260
8	UK	97,169	Denmark	286,710
9	Singapore	91,656	Singapore	283,120
10	Spain	87,188	France	280,580

We are given finances to stay alive and serve God in our community. We use our money to provide food, shelter, healthy habits, opportunities to witness to the community and family, children's needs like education and bonding with good friends. Our aim is to build the kingdom of God. Our first priority is ministry in the family. **1 Tim 5:8** ⁸ *But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

Our second priority is the local church. **Gal 6:10** ¹⁰ *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.* Every community needs a church to witness.

The third priority is believers who need help throughout the world. **Matt 25:40** ⁴⁰ *And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'* There are millions of believers who need financial help in this world. Our generosity should not surrender that priority to unbelievers. Jesus exemplifies that in His prayer in **John 17:9** ⁹ *"I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.* If unbelievers see Christians getting help from people they do not even know, they may question their own lack of faith. In addition to this we need to actively support every overtly Christian business institution that unashamedly honors the name of Jesus, and boycott businesses that are promoting anti-Christian values. We must not be a part of providing finance that generates and promotes evil. E.g. Asics, Qantas.

John 12:6 ⁶ *This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.*

If we ask 'what is the problem with stealing?', it is too easy to answer that it upsets other people to lose property. But it goes deeper. One root cause of theft is covetousness. It is the 10th commandment in **Ex 20:17** *You shall not covet...* So, covetousness stems from ingratitude for the things and life that God has given you. Thankfulness, gratitude and praise can close the door to stealing and grumpiness.

But notice something here that is vital to our warfare. In our daily walk, while continuously putting to death the deeds of the flesh with thankfulness, gratitude and praise, we are also actively doing warfare. Any move you humbly make towards God is an active attack on satan.

Another door to theft is laziness and the cure is generosity. **Eph 4:28** ²⁸ *Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.* So, believers have to assume responsibility for their own financial situation, by working hard and resisting worldly goals.

Why did Judas steal from the money box? He obviously, saw possessions rather than Jesus as the key to happiness and success. Perhaps he saw the balance in his bank account as more important than the ministry of the apostles. We cannot love the world and stay true to God. **1 John 2:15** ¹⁵ *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ¹⁶ *For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.* ¹⁷ *And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.* Judas was blind to what was right in front of his eyes. He saw Mary worship Jesus, and he missed the beauty and fragrance of that worship. Our heart has to be right with God to see what He wants to show us.

Our walk with God is a delicate balance. We do need to work and provide for our family and the church, but we must also trust God to provide for all our needs. **Phil 4:19** ¹⁹ *And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Again, there is a need for spiritual insight to walk a balanced life. Judas may have seen his role as a disciple opened up the opportunity for financial gain. There are some businesses who may take the opportunity to label themselves “Christian”, as a chance to make money. Paul warns Timothy of such people. **1 Tim 6:3 ³ *If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵ useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.***

Temptation often comes through positions in which our skills have placed us. So, people in positions of power, are tempted to abuse their power and take advantage of those under them. People with talents and gifts may become proud of their skills. Judas, obviously had skills with money – but it was a door to stealing. You see this trap countered by Jesus when He washes the disciple’s feet.

In our battle with the flesh, this can seem like an ongoing struggle, because on the one hand we want to use our gifts from God for His glory, and on the other hand, satan uses those very same skills to tempt us. In 2 Cor 12:7 Paul talks of a messenger from satan, as a thorn in the flesh. **⁷ *And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. ⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”***

Sometimes these battles are not quickly removed, because it is in the constant battle that we learn to turn to God for help. So, as we battle with pride, idolatry, lust, hurts, unforgiveness, unthankfulness, grumpiness, covetousness, sloth, disobedience, loneliness, sickness or whatever, it is often in the constant and repeated awareness of our failure and weakness that we understand the patience and forgiveness and mercy of our heavenly Father.

John 12:7 ⁷ But Jesus said, “Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. ⁸ For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.”

The priority in our life is Jesus. Too many charities have surrendered to political correctness and edited out the name ‘Jesus’ from their handouts. ‘Jesus’ is commonly used as a swear word in our community, but treat it with reverence and some people can become quite defensive. Our focus is summed up in the line ‘Thy kingdom come’. Not my kingdom – but God’s kingdom.

In Luke 10:39 Luke points out that Mary was a listener. ... ***she had a sister Mary, who sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.*** We must listen to God. Just as a friendship between two people is stunted if one person talks 99% of the time, so too, our relationship with God demands that we listen. ***John 10:27 My sheep hear My voice , and I know them, and they follow Me.*** Our exercise in listening to God is critical in being known and following His example.

You would think that the one who does the talking is the one who is 'known'. But it is the one who does the listening who is known. Why? Because the eyes of the listener show the movement of the heart when they take in the heart of the one who speaks. It is worth repeating that when I began reading through the Bible, one of my huge discoveries was that Isaiah through to Malachi, expose the heart of God. When you see the heart of God, **He knows you.**

Shortly after this Judas betrays Jesus. He did not take the rebuke well. His pride said – 'I have a good point – a year's salary CAN help the poor. Judas missed the heart of Jesus completely. Mark 14:8 suggests that Mary anticipated the anointing of Jesus for burial. ***8 She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial.*** She had heard the heart of Jesus.

The Plot to Kill Lazarus

John 12:9⁹ Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

Bethany was only 4 km away from Jerusalem. The witness of Lazarus turned many hearts to believe in Jesus. But it also revealed the utter wickedness of the chief priests. Pride had blocked repentance from their heart, so much that they wanted to kill Lazarus. No thought or compassion was given to his family and friends who had already suffered days of grief, and then great joy. Lazarus was completely innocent – but evil takes no account of that.

All of this happens on the Saturday, before the crucifixion of Jesus. John 12:12 starts on the Sunday. The crowds are poring into the city and people are being swayed by satan working through the crowds. He has often used madness and rage in crowds to produce evil.

In the face of such evil we read ***many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.*** Where there is evil, we must have no part in it. If we are with children or those who are weak in the faith, we need to remove them from such influences.

So, we pray to be doers and listeners. We pray for wisdom and generosity to spend our money for God's kingdom. We pray for an alertness to warfare and a boldness to bind the enemy. We pray for a perseverance in our warfare and a wisdom to see the grace of God in the midst of our trials. And we pray for those under our covering, that we will know how to shield them from the evil in this world.

Final Hymn: Such Love

Homework

1. What should a Christian (who can't afford to lose his job) do if his boss asks him to fudge an account statement in favor of the company?
2. How can a lazy person recognize this sin in himself and then overcome it? What steps should he take?
3. What are some jobs that a Christian should never take? What are some jobs that may be morally difficult for Christians?
4. Is it wrong for Christians to gamble? Is this a form of stealing? Why/why not?