



Week of April 7, 2019

John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

² There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him.

³ Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said,

⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?"

⁶ (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial.

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

Notes:

1. This story appears in all four gospels and is significantly different in each. The differences are:

- a. Whether Jesus is anointed on the head or the feet.
- b. Whose house it is: Martha, Simon the Leper, or a Pharisee.
- c. The identity of the woman: Mary of Bethany, a sinner, or simply unidentified.
- d. Who complains about the act: Judas, the disciples, or just "some" who were present.

For purposes of discussion, the suggestion is to respect the integrity of the story and stay within its telling, rather than conflate the various accounts.

2. Three hundred denarii is almost a year's pay. (One denarius is about a day's wage for a laborer.)



Group Leader

Remember: you don't need to use all of the questions. Go with what works. Give people a chance to think before answering, but if a question falls flat, move on. Let the discussion go where it needs to go, as long as it remains centered around the lesson. Give the participants page 1. Use this page for yourself.

Gathering questions:

- A. Discuss a time when you did something anonymously with absolutely pure motives.
- B. Was there a time when you were criticized for doing the right thing? Discuss.

Bible Study Questions:

1. In verse 2, why do you think the author felt it was important to mention that Lazarus was at the table with Jesus?
2. What do you think Jesus means by saying: "you always have the poor with you"?
3. In verse 6, why do you think the narrator tells us this negative information about Judas?
4. How do you think Martha feels about Mary's act?
5. What do you think would happen if Mary had proposed selling the perfume to give to the poor?
6. Christians often speak of having an attitude of abundance. What is the contrast between "abundance" and "extravagance" to you?
7. What should the Christian attitude be toward extravagance?
8. Be brutally honest about yourself: do you more often act like Mary or like Judas in this story? Where could you improve?

Closing prayer: particularly invite prayers about areas where your motives could be more Christ-centered.