

MARY ANOINTED JESUS WITH PERFUME

Matthew 26:6-16; Mark 14:3-11; Luke 22:3-6; John 12:1-7

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Mary, Judas, and Jesus

Key-location: Bethany

Key-repetitions:

- Jesus honored: Dinner given in Jesus' honor (Jn 12:2); Martha served (Jn 12:2); Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus' feet (Jn 12:3).
- Mary criticized: Judas criticized the expense of perfume poured on Jesus' feet (Jn 12:5); other disciples became angry and criticized Mary (Mat 26:8; Mk 14:4-5); Jesus told those criticizing Mary to leave her alone (Mat 26:10; Mk 14:9; Jn 12:7).
- Poor: Judas asked why the perfume wasn't sold and the money given to the poor (Jn 12:5); Judas didn't care about the poor (Jn 12:6); Jesus declared that there would always be the poor (Jn 12:8).
- Judas Iscariot: criticized Mary (Jn 12:4-5); pretended to care for the poor (Jn 12:5); was an embezzling thief (Jn 12:6).

Key-attitudes:

- Martha's preoccupation with serving the table.
- Mary's expression of gratitude and love for Jesus.
- Judas' egotism and selfishness.
- Judas' and other disciples' condemnation of Mary.
- Jesus' protectiveness of Mary's expression of love.

Initial-situation:

At the end of Jesus' third year of public ministry, Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. He stayed in Bethany where he had raised Lazarus from the dead. On Sunday, Jesus made his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. On Monday, he cleansed the temple by expelling those who were buying and selling. On Tuesday, Jesus and the religious leaders argued in Jerusalem. On Tuesday evening, Jesus went to the town of Bethany where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived.

Initial-problem:

On Tuesday evening, a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, Mary took about a pint of expensive perfume, poured it on Jesus' feet, and wiped his feet with her hair.

Final-situation:

After the banquet on Tuesday evening, Judas went to the chief priests and received thirty silver coins as payment for promising to hand Jesus over to them.

BIBLE STORY

Tuesday evening of the week when Passover Feast was celebrated would have been considered Wednesday by the Jews. The Jewish custom considered that the new day began at sundown.

On Tuesday evening, a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served. Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Jesus. Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume, and poured it on Jesus' feet. Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of perfume.

Judas Iscariot, the disciple who was going to betray Jesus, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." Judas didn't care about the poor. Judas said this because he was a thief. Judas was keeper of the money bag, and he embezzled money for himself (Jn 12:1-6).

Other disciples became angry and criticized Mary harshly (Mat 26:8; Mk 14:4-5).

Jesus defended Mary, "Leave her alone. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. It was a fine and beautiful thing that she's done for me. You'll always have the poor among you. But you'll not always have me. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what Mary has done will also be told in memory of her" (Mk 14:9; Mat 26:10-13; Jn 12:7-8).

The disciple Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand Jesus over to you?" They counted out for Judas thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them (Mat 26:14-16).

Meanwhile, a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was in Bethany. The crowd went there, not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. So the chief priests plotted to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus. Many Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in Jesus as a result of the miracle done for Lazarus (Jn 12:9-11).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 5. How did the characters face their problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did Mary and Martha prepare a dinner to honor Jesus?

2. Who were some of the people reclining at the table with Jesus?
3. How did Mary and Martha express their service for Jesus in different ways?
4. What are some different ways people can serve Jesus today?
5. Why did Judas and others criticize Mary?
6. What were Judas' public and private objections?
7. When are people tempted to hide the reason for their words and actions?
8. How did Jesus defend Mary?
9. How can we show our love and appreciation to Jesus for special blessings received?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Expressions of love are valuable and have everlasting results.** Mary expressed her love by pouring perfume on Jesus and the whole house was filled with the fragrance. The story of Mary's deed is told wherever the gospel is preached (Mat 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:1-8).
2. **God knows the sinner's wrongdoings, but God may not immediately punish the sin nor put a stop to the sinners' harmful actions.** Jesus knows what is in a person, so he knew that Judas was a thief (Jn 2:24-25). Jesus knew that Judas would betray him (Jn 6:64), yet he allowed Judas to deceive his fellow disciples as the keeper of the money bag (Jn 12:6).
3. **The person who is criticizing another may be hiding worst faults than the one being criticized.** Judas criticized Mary for wasting money, yet Judas was guilty of stealing money (Jn 12:5-6). See Matthew 7:3.
4. **A person whose priority is getting rich cannot follow Jesus.** Judas pretended to be a follower of Jesus; however, his desire for money turned him into a hypocrite who pretended to care for the poor, an embezzling thief (Jn 12:6), and the one who betrayed Jesus for silver (Mat 26:14-16). See Matthew 6:24 and 1 Timothy 6:10.
5. **Sin leads to a downward spiral of more sin.** Judas was an embezzling thief (Jn 12:6) who went down the downward spiral until he betrayed Jesus for thirty silver coins (Mat 26:14-16). The religious leaders went down the downward spiral: they said Jesus could not be from God because he did not keep the Sabbath (Jn 9:16); next they accused Jesus of blasphemy because he claimed equality to God (Jn 10:33); next they planned to kill Jesus because he threatened their power and privileges (Jn 11:48-53); next they wanted Lazarus dead because his life was a witness to Jesus' power (Jn 12:10).
6. **Leaders who desire to protect personal privileges that accompany leadership positions, see a manifestation of God as a threat to their power.** After the resurrection of Lazarus, the Jewish leaders felt that Jesus was a threat to their

power (Jn 11:46-57). Previously, they felt that Jesus was a threat when he healed the man who was born blind (Jn 9:41).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. **Pantomime Retelling of Story:**

The storyteller tells the story one time. Then the storyteller chooses volunteer listeners who pantomime different characters while the storyteller retells the story. Have volunteers to pantomime actions for:

- Jesus.
- Martha.
- Mary.
- Judas.

2. **Role-playing Drama:**

Judas was an embezzler, but conned the disciples into trusting him as the keeper of their money bag. A con only tricks people because he looks trustworthy. Have two people talking about Judas as an outstanding man of character.