

Title: THE ANOINTING, JOHN 12:1-8
(Chatham, NJ; 03/21/10, AM) [Ps – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: Mary demonstrates extravagant love by anointing Jesus with expensive oil.

Purpose: To inspire extravagant acts of love toward God and to remind us of the evil that resists such deeds.

Introduction:

1. Today we fulfill a prophecy. We re-tell Mary's story, Mark 14:9.
2. A young woman, Mary, demonstrates extravagant love for Jesus. She anoints him with very expensive oil.
3. This was a very costly gift.
4. Jesus says that people will tell this story in memory of her, Mark 14:9.
5. Ultimately this has implications for the life of Jesus, but other people in the story are directly or indirectly involved in the anointing.

I. The Brother – Lazarus.

- A. He was the object of her affection.
 1. Mary's motives are implied.
 2. Her brother is one of them: Jesus restored him to life.
 3. Mary had lost him but received him back.
 4. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus hosted a dinner party for Jesus.
 5. Mary anoints Jesus feet with expensive perfume that permeates the house.
 6. The extravagance of the act fills the entire atmosphere, 3.
 7. Those who have lost a loved one can understand the depth of her gratitude, and perhaps that explains the extravagance of her gift.
 8. Those who were there would forever associate the lingering scent with joy.
- B. Lazarus was also the object of scorn as well.
 1. Many came to see him, 9.
 2. Some wanted him dead again, 10-11.
 3. This joyous occasion became a table in the presence of enemies, Psalm 23:5.
 4. The heinousness of this evil is matched only by its inherent blindness.
 5. They cannot fathom the miracle; they can only perceive the threat.

II. The Sister – Martha.

- A. She served the food.
 1. This is her ministry, consistent with Luke 10:38-42.
 2. In this situation she has fulfilled her role in the drama that unfolds.
 3. More importantly she has taken a more lenient attitude to Mary's ways.
 4. She does not rebuke her for the extravagance.
- B. Martha gets it now, but in some ways she always has.
 1. It was she who professed her faith in 11:27, and so we see a woman who sees the transcendent reality though the eyes of faith.
 2. She was concerned about the odor from the tomb, and so we see the earth-bound realist in her.
 3. Yet she also has received her brother back.

4. Her service of hospitality has now become a ministry prompted by gratitude; rather than a drudgery it is a joy.

III. A Disciple – Judas.

A. AKA the treasurer.

1. John identifies Judas' motives.
2. He does not care for the poor; the poor were the righteous cause used to mask his true intentions.
3. Judas was a thief; by definition one who takes what belongs to others.
4. Greed by itself doesn't justify the impulse to steal; there must be more to it since greed can be satisfied in other ways.
5. Covetousness comes a little closer to the real motivation; what someone else has the thief wants.
6. Karl Marx and the share the wealth philosophy has devised a sly rationale for disobeying the 10th commandment; they demand that all people should have the same amount no matter who earned it. In effect the poor have the right to demand that you give them what is yours.
7. Covetousness under the guise of justice is still the true motive.

B. AKA the betrayer.

1. He was about to betray Jesus, 4.
2. In Mark's account the pact of betrayal comes after this incident, Mark 14:10-11.
3. The actual betrayal happens immediately after the Last Supper.
4. Was he angry at Jesus' rebuke?
5. In his mind this was always about himself, not others.
6. This is always the case with greed, jealousy, and covetousness.
7. Since he couldn't get what he wanted, he resorted to destruction.
8. Never underestimate the power that covetousness and jealousy maintain over your heart.

Conclusions:

1. Only Jesus uncovers the true meaning of the event: preparation for his burial.
2. What Mark 14:8 makes explicit can be seen in John's entire narrative.
3. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem where he will be betrayed by Judas, arrested by his enemies, crucified on a cross, and raised on the third day.
4. What is your role in this drama of life and death? A brother like Lazarus? A sister like Martha? An extravagant lover like Mary? A betrayer like Judas? A rank denier of the miraculous like the Sanhedrin?
5. In reflecting on Jesus' anointing by Mary we are called to see the extravagance of love and to imagine how we can express it.
6. It begins with belief, steps through baptism, and finds that the extravagant love of God inspires the same love as we live the resurrected life.
7. If Scripture were still being written would people be telling such a story about you 2,000 years from now?