Utter Devotion

Scripture: John 12:1–11

I think the point of this story is this: it is a beautiful thing when the worth of Jesus and the love of His followers match — when the value of His perfections and the intensity of our affections correspond. And it is not beautiful, but suicidal, when they don’t.

Verse 1: “Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.”

Then verse 2 says, “So they gave a dinner for Him there.” In other words, this is a celebration of the resurrection of Lazarus.

Verse 2b: “Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with Him at table.” Martha is in her usual place organizing the meal and making sure it’s well served. Mary is about to express her heart to Jesus in a lavish way. And Lazarus is quietly watching the One who gave Him life.

Verse 3: “Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

So Martha’s role was to thank Jesus by seeing to the details of the dinner, and Mary’s role was to thank Jesus by pouring this expensive ointment out on Jesus.

Verse 4: “But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray Him), said, ‘Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’” John tells us in verse 6 what is in Judas’s heart: “Judas said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.”

Mary loved Jesus. Judas loved money. Mary’s heart corresponded to the treasure that Jesus is. Judas’s heart contradicted the treasure that Jesus is.

Jesus gives three reasons why Judas should leave Mary alone. And these three reasons sum up the point of the whole story.

Verse 8b: Leave her alone, because you do not always have Me with you.

Verse 8a: Leave her alone, because the poor you always have with you.

Verse 7: Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. That is, leave her alone and don’t hinder her from keeping her love and wonder and joy in the face of My death.

The first reason relates to the value of Jesus.. So leave her alone, Judas. Her heart is right. She feels my worth.

The second reason relates to Judas’s sense of the value of money. His heart is the opposite of Mary’s. Your heart is wrong, Judas. So leave her alone.

The third reason relates to whether Mary will be able keep on treasuring Jesus even when He is being buried.

Three applications:

“If any voice tells you to moderate our love for Jesus, do not listen.” Let your affections for Jesus be lavish.

If any voice tempts you to want to be rich in money, do not listen. Jesus is your riches, and all that money can buy cannot compare to Him.

If any voice tells you that His death is anything less than the triumph over death, do not listen. He is the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Him, though he die, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Him shall never die.

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