

Lesson 149: Mary anoints Jesus

Scripture: MATTHEW 26:6-13; MARK 14:3-9; JOHN 12:1-8

Memory verse: your faith is far more precious than mere gold. I Peter 1:7

Six days before the Passover, Jesus returned to Bethany, the village where Lazarus lived—the man Jesus had raised from the dead. A dinner was prepared in Jesus' honor at the house of Simon, who had suffered from a harmful skin disease. The room was full of life: Martha served the meal, Lazarus reclined at the table with Jesus, and the air buzzed with quiet awe.

While they were eating, Mary came in carrying an alabaster jar filled with very expensive perfume made of pure nard—worth nearly a year's wages. Without speaking, she opened the jar.

She poured the perfume over Jesus—first on his head, and then she knelt and poured it on his feet, wiping them with her hair. The fragrance spread until the whole house was filled with its sweetness.

Some of the disciples were upset. One of them, Judas Iscariot, spoke sharply.

"Why waste this perfume?" he said. "It could have been sold and the money given to the poor."

Others agreed and criticized her.

But Judas did not say this because he cared about the poor. He was a thief. He kept the money bag—and often stole from it.

Jesus saw what was happening. He stepped in immediately.

"Leave her alone," he said. "Why are you troubling her? She has done a beautiful thing for me. You will always have the poor with you, and you can help them whenever you want. But you will not always have me.

"She did what she could. She poured this perfume on my body to prepare me for burial."

Then Jesus spoke. He lifted their eyes beyond the room, beyond the moment, beyond the coming cross.

"I tell you the truth," he said, "wherever the Good News is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told—and people will remember her."

He was helping the disciples see:

Mary didn't just pour perfume, she poured out love, because she understood something the others had not yet grasped:

Jesus was going to give His life for many. While others measured value in money, Mary measured it in being with Jesus.

While others protested waste, Mary embodied worship. Jesus receives costly love because he is about to give everything. The One whose body was honored with perfume would soon have it broken. The One anointed for burial would rise again. The One who defended the woman would become her Defender—and ours.

Mary's act doesn't compete with the gospel. It responds to it.

And Jesus says: This response belongs in the story forever.