

## John 12:1-26

### *The Beginning of the End*

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Chapter 12 records Jesus' last teaching before the general public.

Mary anointed Jesus with a *litre* of ointment. The Greek *litre* equals about 11 ounces and is a lavish amount to pour out on someone. Its quantity indicates Mary's great love and high regard for Jesus. For illustrative purposes (in today's values), this substance would be worth around \$40,000.

Only John noted that Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her hair, a true act of humility. Normally Jewish women never unbound their hair in public since loose hair was a sign of loose morals. Evidently Mary's love for Jesus overrides her sense of propriety.

**What is Mary's motivation in pouring the perfume on Jesus?** Devotion, humility, festivity. This woman pours out her love on the Savior, by sacrificing the most precious thing she owns. The perfume has been saved for the most special of moments.

Every one of the Gospels has an "anointing" account, but it does not seem as though all of the Gospel accounts refer to the same event. Luke's account of the "sinful woman" who anoints Jesus at the home of Simon the Pharisee does not seem to be the same as the anointing of which we are reading in John chapter 12.

In verse 7 Jesus views Mary's act as a pre-anointing for His death, though Mary may not have viewed it as such.

**Application:** Mary displays her love for Jesus in a striking and obvious way. What are some of the ways we can display our love for the Savior? Give freely like Mary. We love Jesus/God by our actions and attitudes. Spend time with Him. Get to know Him. Love one another. Conduct ourselves in a way that is different from the world in which we live.

**Verses 4-8 What is behind Judas' response?** Selfish materialism and greed. Judas presents his case (as a noble cause) in a way that appeals to the higher motivations of his peers, and which masks his own greed.

**What is Judas' job?** Judas has become the "treasurer" and "bookkeeper" for our Lord. The CFO. Out of this common purse the poor are helped and the disciples purchase food and supplies. Judas keeps this purse. He alone knows exactly what is given, and what is spent.

**How would you describe Judas' character?** He's nothing more than a common thief. Judas lines his pockets with the Lord's money. It is similar to business embezzlement—an issue of integrity.

**How does Jesus respond to Judas' comment?** Jesus does not hesitate to come to Mary's defense and to rebuke him. It's as if Jesus is saying, "Leave Mary alone! She has done nothing wrong, and everything right. She's kept this precious ointment for this very hour, to prepare my body for burial. You will have no end of opportunities to minister to the poor in the future, but this is her one and only chance to minister to me in this way, since the time of my death is at hand."

**Does Jesus care about the poor?** Absolutely! But in this circumstance He was comparing the unique opportunity that His impending death presented with the continual need that poverty will always bring.

**Application:**

1. **Jesus argues that what Mary does is because there is little time left.** Indeed we may not have much time left either, until He comes again. We should make good use of our time, even as Mary does in our text, and employ ourselves in doing that which pleases and honors Jesus. And do it today!
2. We would do well to use Mary as a model in the extravagance of her worship and adoration of our Lord. She gives away 40K. **How do I do when it comes to giving to the Lord?** Stewardship is one aspect of worship. He expects us to be good stewards of what He has given us. On the other hand, He given us everything we have. And occasionally giving back to Him—extravagantly—is called for. He is worthy of—and desires—the best we can offer. Not the leftovers.

**Verses 9-11 Why do the Jews want to kill Lazarus?** To cover up the evidence of Jesus' miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Jealousy. Lazarus is to blame for the fact that many are turning away from them to follow Jesus. They care about their own positions and power.

**What must Lazarus have been doing for them to want to kill him?** Telling everyone.

**Application:** Imagine the reaction if we were telling everyone about the miracle Jesus has done in our hearts!

The scene now shifts from a quiet dinner with a few close friends in the small town of Bethany to a noisy public parade through the streets of Jerusalem. This was the only public demonstration that Jesus allowed during His earthly ministry. It is often referred as the Triumphal Entry.

**What are the people shouting? Hosanna. Which means? Save now.** “Hosanna” is the transliteration of a Hebrew phrase that means “give salvation now.”

**Why is it important that Jesus come riding in on a young donkey?** To fulfill prophecy. “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9).

**Do the people understand what was going on?** Only our Lord really understands what is happening at this time.

**In verse 16, how does John explain why they don’t understand?** John makes a point of telling us that the disciples do not understand the meaning of this event until after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. Then the Holy Spirit made these things clear to them (see John 14:25-31), and through them to us. Then they remembered that these things were written about Jesus and they had done these things to Him.

Obviously they and the crowd realized that Jesus was the Messiah, as they conceived of the Messiah. However they did not understand the nature of His messiahship, the necessity of His death, or the plan for His kingdom.

**Who are the Greeks?** The New Testament writers frequently referred to any Gentiles who came from the Greek-speaking world as Greeks. These were God-fearing Gentiles who worshipped Yahweh along with the Jews. They were God fearers but not converts to Judaism.

**Why won’t Jesus give the Greeks an audience at this time?** The Greeks have requested to meet with Jesus. Jesus has declined because it is not yet time for the gospel to embrace the Gentiles as Gentiles. That can come about only after Jesus is rejected by Israel and is glorified by His sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection.

**Why does Jesus speak of the necessity of His death in response to the Greeks’ request to meet with Him?** First, whether Jews or Greeks, the death of Jesus Christ in the sinner’s place is the only way of salvation. Were the Greeks seeking Jesus as the Savior? His answer is that to be their Savior, He must die. Second, in order for the Greeks to be saved as Greeks, Israel must first of all reject Jesus as the Messiah, so that the gospel can be widely proclaimed to the Gentiles. This is in keeping with the principle, “To the Jew first, and also to the Greeks.” (See Matthew 10:5-6 and Romans 1:16.)

**What’s the message of the agricultural image in verses 23-25?** One can preserve a grain of wheat, protecting it from the elements and from corruption, but doing so will never produce a crop of wheat. On the other hand, one can place this same grain of wheat in the ground, causing it to die. The “death” of this seed will produce much fruit. Jesus sets down an important principle: fruit bearing does not result from one’s efforts to save his life, but from one’s willing sacrifice of his life. Death is the way to life.

In saying what He has, Jesus speaks primarily of Himself and of His imminent death. Jesus means that He will soon die, and that by means of His death, He will produce much life. He cannot be the Savior of the world without first dying.

**According to verse 26, the disciple who wants to serve Jesus must do what?** Follow Him. He or she must go where Jesus goes and do what He does. True servants stay close to their masters.

**And where did Jesus go?** To the cross.

**Application: Are you ready to take up your cross and follow Him? What does that mean to you?**

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**MEMORIZE: John 12:13**