

AN ACT OF SACRIFICIAL LOVE  
Jesus Anointed at Bethany

John 12:1-11  
Key Verse: 12:7,8

Lesson #32

Jesus had revealed the glory of God by raising Lazarus from death (11:40). He planted resurrection faith in his close friends in Bethany. The sisters in Bethany had been so full of human sorrow that they had even doubted Jesus' love. Now, they were full of joy and gratitude, and they were truly sorry for their doubts. They gave a dinner party to celebrate their new joy and faith. Healthy Lazarus was there. Martha, as usual, cooked and cleaned and served. Then Mary did an unexpected thing. She took a pint of very expensive perfume, poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. A woman's hair is personal and precious. It was a foolish, extravagant and wasteful act. But Jesus understood her heart. He accepted her love and drew her into gospel history. Judas, the man who was in love with the world, objected. He only saw the extravagance—the expensive perfume needlessly wasted. Mary's act of love was not wasted. Jesus accepted it and blessed it.

Jesus poured out his youth for poor, despised, sick sinners. It was not a waste. His life blood poured on the cross out for the sins of the world was an extravagant act of love—but his life was not wasted. By his blood he purchased eternal salvation for all who put their trust in him.

Read verses 25. "The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." Judas loved his life in this world and tried to save himself by his betrayal of Jesus. He lost everything. Mary loved Jesus more than her most precious possession, more than her own life. She knew what it meant to be a kernel of wheat. She gained eternal life and kingdom of heaven.

I know a shepherd who poured out his heart for one fatherless sheep. He served him like his father, giving him rides and helping him with school work. He used his own meager funds to buy for him things that he really needed. But this sheep had a girlfriend. He decided to leave the Fellowship and go his own way. No one objected or stopped him or criticized him, for every person must make his own decision. But in order to justify his decision—which he knew was wrong, he spoke many critical words against God's ministry. His shepherd cried with a broken heart. I pray that he may know that the pouring out of his love for one person for Jesus' sake is accepted and blessed by Jesus. This shepherd's influence is like a fragrance that fills the room. The fragrance of Jesus' life poured out for sinners fills the whole world.