

# Jesus is anointed

John 12 v1-8



Some similar passages:

Matt 26 v6-13 (possibly same occasion)

Mark 14 v3-9 (possibly same occasion)

Luke 7 v36-39 (a different occasion)

John:

6 days before

Passover unknown  
house

Mary named

Feet anointed  
Luke.

House of a pharisee

A sinful woman

Feet anointed

Link to parable about two people who owed  
money

“whoever has been forgiven little, loves little!”

Matt:

house of S the  
leper

A woman

head anointed

Mark:

2 days before

Passover house of S  
the leper

A woman

head anointed



## **Jesus' heavy heart:**

Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11)

The chief priests & Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin (the ruling Jewish council - a group of 70)

“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, & then the Romans will come & take away our temple & our nation.”

v48

“So from that day on they plotted to take his life.” v53

“Therefore, Jesus no longer moved about publicly . . .” v54a

Then we hear:

“Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany . . .” 12 v1

(Bethany was less than 2 miles from Jerusalem - 11 v18)

“Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.”

v2

## Mary's extravagant act:

“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard , an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of perfume.” v3

Nard was an oil like perfume extracted from the root & spike of the nard plant, grown in India. Judas tells us it was worth a year's wages (300 denarii)! v5

Cheaper now on Amazon:  
£13.20 for 12ml (£1100 per litre)



Mary loved Jesus  
deeply:  
often sat at the Lord's  
feet, listening.  
Luke 10 v38-42

After her brother  
Lazarus had died Mary  
fell at Jesus' feet  
weeping.

John 11 v32-33a

Jesus was deeply

She would know the Pharisees now wanted to arrest Jesus (11  
moved & wept. v33b-35  
v57).

She knew Jesus' heart was heavy!

& that this may be the last time she would see him!





Not at all usual for a woman to sit at Jesus' feet.

In those times a woman's hair was considered part of her glory & in public it was normally kept up or covered.

She lets down her hair & wipes the nard on Jesus' feet.  
A costly gift (possibly her dowry)

Mary uses her hair as a rag (no concern on how she looked to others)

The perfume smell filled the house!

An emotionally charged atmosphere!

& others looking on . . .



## **Some thought wasteful:**

Judas objected: “Why wasn’t this perfume sold & the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” John 12 v5

“He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.” v6

What a contrast between Mary & Judas! One fully devoted to Jesus, the other only really caring about the money!

Soon Judas would betray Jesus!  
(Matt 26 v14 . . .)





Matthew tells us “the disciples objected” (not just Judas)  
“Why wasn’t this perfume sold for a high price & the money  
given to the poor?” (same question but with genuine  
motive)

Jesus responds:

“ Leave her alone, . . .” John 12 v7a

“She has done a beautiful thing to me.”

(recorded in Matt & Mark)

“You will always have the poor among you, but you will not  
always have me.” 12 v8

An OT scripture probably in mind:

“There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I  
command you to be openhanded towards your fellow  
Israelites who are poor & needy in your land.” Deut 15 v11



## **Jesus is anointed for burial:**

John says the oil was 'intended for the day of his burial' v7b  
Mark & Matthew say the oil 'was preparing his body for burial'.  
In our culture dead bodies go in fridges until the funeral, then they are burned or buried underground.

In Jewish tradition, the body was laid in the tomb, wrapped in cloth and spices/oils (eg nard/myrrh)

A year later the family would return to the tomb, collect the bones and placed them in a small box. The box would be placed in the back of the tomb with other boxes of its kind.



The shadow of Jesus' death makes a deed like Mary's strangely appropriate.

It emanates from love and expresses understanding about Jesus and what he must do.

In less than a week Jesus will be mistreated, put on trial & crucified.

Very likely the smell of this nard would have lasted till the cross.

Jesus also tells us: (Matthew 26 v13 & in Mark)

“Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

“She has done a beautiful thing to me.” (Matt & Mark mention)



## **Jesus is the anointed one:**

In the OT Kings, priests, and prophets were anointed outwardly with oil to symbolize a more profound spiritual reality - that God's presence was with them and His favour was upon them.

In the NT, Jesus Christ reveals Himself as our anointed King, Priest, and Prophet. (*Messiah* literally means “anointed one”)

Jesus declared at the launch of His ministry, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor . . . to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free . . .”

Luke 4 v18

Through Jesus Christ, believers also receive “an anointing from the Holy One” 1 John 2 v20

Expressed in sharing in the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Humanly Jesus' popularity & his claim to be God was too much for the Jews & they sought his death.

Passover was soon to happen.

In God's sovereignty the death of Jesus was part of the plan.

“For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed . . so let us keep the festival . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity & truth.” 1 Cor 5 v7

Each Jewish family would have already chosen their lamb to sacrifice & soon they would smear the blood on their doorposts.

A reminder that when God's judgment came (on the firstborn in Egypt) the angel of death saw the blood & 'passed over' the Hebrews



God's judgment against all sinners is certain & coming.  
Only by trusting in the sacrifice of Jesus  
(who bore our sins in his sinless body)  
Will his judgment 'pass over' us!

Mary understood Jesus had to die.

Do you?

Not sure what most of the disciples thought?

They'd seen Jesus overcome all number of enormous  
challenges  
& probably thought he could avoid death if he wanted.

## **Aroma:**

“And the house was filled with the fragrance of perfume.” 12  
v3b

In the OT “You shall offer a burnt offering as a soothing aroma to the Lord: one bull, one ram, and seven male lambs one year old without defect;” Numbers 29 v2

In the NT

“For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life.”

2 Cor 2 v15-16

Have you thought of yourself as an aroma to God?  
Do you smell good?



## **Let's learn from Mary:**

To sit at the feet of Jesus, listen & learn.

- there are always many, many distractions

Not to worry what others think.

- she had not just blow dried her hair for dinner!

To love Jesus without limits.

- she gave everything,
- she loved deeply & frequently wept

To understand (with a broken heart) that Jesus had to die

- no other sacrifice can take away our sin.

**Let's learn from Paul:**

We are to God the aroma of Christ!

To some an aroma that brings death  
To others an aroma that brings life

Can people see in  
your life a deep,  
deep love for Jesus?





## Song of Songs 4 v12-16

He: “You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride . . . your plants are an orchard . . . with choice fruits, with henna & nard, nard & saffron, calamus & cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree . . . with all the finest spices . . .

She: “Awake, north wind, & come, south wind!  
Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread everywhere.

Let my beloved come into his garden & taste its choicest fruits.