

Kneeling Power

John 12:1-18

3/29/26

Have you ever thought about investing \$40K-\$50K to proclaim Jesus? That's what Mary does in this story. Mary gets it. Mary gets it even before the power of Jesus' cross is revealed. Mary demonstrates what true leadership in God's Kingdom looks like. She offers all she had at the feet of Jesus. In today's money, that perfume would have been between \$40K-\$50K. She is immediately criticized because that money could have been used to help people. A question with which Christians always struggle. However, Jesus celebrates her extravagant generosity because it points to true discipleship, true leadership. When we offer all we have at Jesus' feet, we will be helping the poor. When we build God's Kingdom, we will be helping the poor.

In a world where leadership often looks like power, control, and winning—Jesus shows us something radically different: leadership that kneels, listens, and serves. This is why Mary's story of kneeling before Jesus is remembered. The world needs us to demonstrate leadership.

Recently I read a remarkable story about Anh Nguyen who not only donated her kidney on Valentine's Day in 2019, but 6 years later donated part of her liver. Can you imagine the fear associated with donating an organ? However, Anh Nguyen not only donated her kidney to a colleague, 6 years later she volunteered to give part of her liver to save a young boy's life. "What has struck me most about Anh's willingness to donate both a kidney and later a portion of her liver was the clarity of her intention," said Dr. Schnickel (chief of the division of transplants at UC San Diego Health). Dr. Schnickel continued, "She wasn't motivated by recognition or obligation, but by a deeply grounded sense that she could help another human being in a profound way."¹ True leadership in God's Kingdom looks like service. Any of us can be great in Jesus' eye, because any of us can serve. Any of us can be like Mary, because any of us can lay all that we are at Jesus' feet to proclaim the true leader. Are you leading Jesus' Way?

Mary models what true leadership looks like foreshadowing Jesus washing the disciples' feet in

John 13:1-17

The clearest picture of power in God's kingdom is not a throne—but a towel. In Mary's case she doesn't use a towel but her hair. In Jesus' day, a woman's hair was her crown and glory. By using her hair, Mary risked her reputation. By using her hair, not only did she give Jesus' her material possessions: she becomes the model disciple of profound service. For those keeping score, there are 4 Mary's mentioned in John: 1. Mary, mother of Jesus mentioned at the wedding of Cana 2. Mary of Bethany mentioned today 3. Mary of Clopas mentioned at the tomb in John 19:4. Along with Mary Magdalen mentioned at the tomb in John 20.

¹ <https://health.ucsd.edu/news/features/a-heart-big-enough-to-save-two-lives-through-living-organ-donation/>

Our culture promotes leadership as power, control, dominance, winning. We Christians must remind our nation, our community, each other what being Christian is by pointing to Mary. She risks her crown and glory to serve Jesus Christ! Jesus defines greatest by willingness to kneel.

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Gary Ridge, former CEO of WD-40 for 25 years, was recently celebrated for guiding the company not once but twice through economic crisis. First during the Great Recession of 2008 and then again through COVID. For many companies the biggest expense and easiest cost saving measure is payroll. But Gary was dedicated to serve his employees. Instead of kneeling to his shareholders, Gary led demonstrating humility and sacrifice kneeling to his employees. He famously said, "Its better we all suffer a little instead of some suffering a lot." No one got pay raises or bonuses. They cut the travel budget. Everyone made small sacrifices for the greater good. Gary chose kneeling power over protecting himself.²

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When have you acted like Mary? Giving it all to proclaim Jesus' Way. When have you risked your reputation, your glory to proclaim Jesus' Way? Our community needs us. Our nation needs us. Our world needs us to demonstrate leadership. Not a throne, but a towel. Not might is right, but kneeling power.

In a culture obsessed with being served, the church is called to serve. Jesus commands to wash each other's feet. How He has served us, we are to serve each other. This service is rooted in Christ's deep love for us. Mary washes Jesus' feet with her hair giving \$40K-\$50K for her deep love for Him proclaiming who is the Truth, the Way, the Life. Deep loving friendship is at the crux of our faith!

You are loved deeply by Jesus Christ: do you want to love deeply? Kneel at the feet of Jesus. Join Jesus' Kneeling Power.

What might it look like for you to take a posture of service toward those you're tempted to dismiss or overlook?

Love,
Pastor Curtis

² <https://www.investors.com/news/management/leaders-and-success/garry-ridge-humility-drove-his-leadership-as-w-d-40-ceo/>

Sermon Notes:

1. True leadership in God's kingdom looks like service.
2. Jesus redefines greatness as willingness to kneel.
3. In a culture obsessed with being served, the church is called to serve.
4. What might it look like for me to take a posture of service toward those I'm tempted to dismiss or overlook?