

“Of Love and Hate”

July 26, 2026

John 12:1-11

I. Introduction

In the beginning of his Gospel, John wrote in [John 1:11](#), “He, i.e., Jesus, came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.” Beginning with chapter one and continuing through chapter 12 John presented one witness after another, and one proof after another, to convince the reader that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. All this evidence was seen firsthand by the religious leaders of Israel, and yet they rejected Jesus’ claims. This undisputable evidence included Jesus’ raising Lazarus from the dead. [John 11:53](#) says, “So from that day on they, i.e., the Jewish leadership, plotted to take his, i.e., Jesus’, life.” Knowing that the threat to His own life was serious, Jesus had left Bethany and went to a region north of Jerusalem near Bethel. Or as [John 11:54](#) says, “Therefore, Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead, he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.” During that time, Luke 11 says that He made a brief visit to Samaria and Galilee.

The last verse of [John 11](#), i.e., [verse 57](#) says, “But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.” Then “six days before the Passover,” Jesus returned to Bethany, only two miles from Jerusalem and the Jewish leadership, “where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.” But rather than turning Jesus in, the Lord’s friends in Bethany gave a supper in His honor.

The account of Mary’s anointing of Jesus is found in Matthew and Mark as well as in John. Turn to Matthew’s account—[turn to Matt. 26:6-13](#). Luke recorded a different anointing—[turn to Luke 7:36-50](#). In Luke’s account, a former harlot anointed Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee. In the accounts in Matthew, Mark, and John, Mary, who was a virtuous woman, anointed Jesus in the house of Simon, the former leper. Luke’s event took place in Galilee, while the anointing in Matthew, Mark, and John took place in Judea. In the account of Jesus’ anointing in Bethany, Jesus’ followers

and friends expressed their love for Him and especially their gratitude for His raising Lazarus. In today's Scripture we see examples of love and examples of hate.

II. Examples of Love

A. Martha The first example of love is Martha. The number of people present at the dinner isn't known, but at least Jesus, the Twelve, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and probably Simon the Leper were there. Luke wrote of a visit of Jesus to the home of Martha and Mary several months earlier—**turn to Luke 10:38-42**. Now, even though she wasn't at home, Martha, once again, was involved in serving a meal. This time Martha was motivated by a loving gratitude to Jesus and by a desire to honor Him in the way she knew best by using her gifts, including the gift of service. There is no rebuke, as there had been at the previous meal—it was all about her heart. In **Matthew 20:28** Jesus said, **"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."** This is what Martha was doing--serving. Although her work gets overshadowed by Mary's dramatic act of worship, Martha's humble service on this occasion was no less commendable and pleasing to the Lord. In **John 12:26** Jesus said, **"Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."**

B. Mary Then there was Mary. Mary's anointing of Jesus was a startling outpouring of her love for Him. Because she had often sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him teach, Mary knew what He was going to do—she knew He was about to die. She had heard Jesus say things like He told Nicodemus in **John 3:14-5**, **"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."**

Matthew and Mark both note that Mary poured the perfume on Jesus' head, while John wrote that she **"poured it on Jesus' feet."** Since Jesus was reclining at a low table, with His feet extended away from it, Mary could have easily poured the perfume first on His head, then his body, and finally on His feet. But Mary's next act shocked everyone there even more than the pouring out of expensive perfume; she **"wiped His feet with her hair!"**

The Jews considered washing the feet of another person to be degrading, a necessary task to be done only by the most lowly of slaves. *(Remember at the Last Supper in [John 13:1-15](#), none of the Twelve at that last Passover meal in the upper room were willing to serve the others by washing their feet, so in a supreme act and example of lowliness, Jesus did it.)* But even more shocking than her using costly perfume and the lowly washing of Jesus' feet was the fact that Mary let down her hair. For a respectable Jewish woman to do that in public would have been considered indecent; even immoral. But Mary was not concerned with the shame she might face as a result of her actions. She wasn't deterred by what others thought. Instead, she was focused on pouring out her love and in honoring Christ, with no thought of any perceived shame that it might bring to her.

The perfume was worth 300 denarii—a year's wages—over \$40,000 in modern terms. To prove her love and complete surrender to the Lord, [Mark 14:3](#) added that **"She broke the jar and poured the perfume."** Without hesitation and no chance to turn back, Mary began at Jesus' head and finished at His feet. Perhaps if we, like Mary, would sit at Jesus' feet more often we would give more of ourselves to Him, too. Nard was a fragrant oil extracted from the root and spike of a plant native to the mountains of northern India. Perfume made from nard was very costly because of the great distance from which it had to be imported. Mary had saved this precious ointment in an alabaster box—expensive in its own right. Perhaps Mary had initially collected this perfume so that when she died it could be used on her body. But that plan was forgotten, anointing Jesus was more important.

The perfume most likely made up a sizeable portion of Mary's net worth. In [2 Samuel 24:24](#) David had said, **"I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."** Mary, too, refused to offer the Lord something that cost her nothing. She acted in absolute love and adoration of her Lord and Savior. The measure of her love was her total abandonment to Jesus Christ.

What Mary did was a blessing to Jesus and a blessing to her own life. She was also a blessing to the home, filling it with fragrance; and today, she is a blessing to the church around the world. Her one act of devotion in the little village of Bethany is still repeated today as Christians give themselves

completely and joyfully to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “What she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

III. Examples of Hate

A. Judas Martha’s service, Mary’s anointing and worship, and even the supper at Simon the Leper’s house were examples of love for Jesus. But this story also demonstrates examples of hate. The first example of hate is Judas. The stunned silence that must have followed Mary’s startling and unexpected acts was suddenly broken by a voice raised in protest. Wanting to appear pious, Judas acted outraged over such an extravagant waste of money when he said, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold, and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages—over \$40,000!” Although John doesn’t say it, [Matthew 26:8](#) says, “When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. ‘Why this waste?’ they asked.” Judas wasn’t the only one to complain.

[John 12:4](#) records Judas’ first words found anywhere in the Gospels. Unknown until later, Judas was a thief and was in the habit of stealing money from the money box he carried. No doubt, by this time, after following the Prophet from Nazareth for 3 years, Judas had already decided to abandon Jesus and wanted to get what he could out of what he considered a bad situation—to get some financial compensation for the three years he had wasted on Jesus. Judas’ disapproval of Mary’s action wasn’t related to the loss of opportunity to do more for the poor but to his own loss of opportunity to steal from the common purse. Judas heart was for himself.

Jesus immediately defended Mary. Sternly rebuking Judas and the others, Jesus said, “Leave her alone. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.” Mary’s spontaneous outpouring of her love and devotion to Christ was like Caiaphas’s unsuspecting prophesy in [John 11:49-52](#) where he said, “It is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.” Mary’s act had a deeper significance, too. In Matthew’s record in [Matthew 26:12](#), Jesus said, “When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.” In the anointing she had done, Jesus saw a symbol of His soon coming death and burial. Her anointing

represented the one Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus would later perform on Jesus' body after His death.

If Judas had really wanted to help the poor, Jesus reminded him that he would not lack the opportunity to do so, **“You will always have the poor among you.”** The Lord was not criticizing the giving of charity to the poor, but rather He was challenging the disciples to keep their priorities straight. The opportunity to do good to Him, as Mary had done, would not last long. All of Jesus' disciples—we as well—need to keep our priorities straight. Sometimes there's “good” and sometimes there's “better.”

Judas stood at a crossroads. Unmasked as a hypocrite, pretending to care for the poor while in reality embezzling from the common purse, he faced the ultimate decision. He could fall at Jesus' feet in humble repentance, confess his sin, and seek forgiveness. Or he could pridefully harden his heart, refuse to repent, surrender to Satan's influence, and betray the Lord. Sadly, he chose the second choice. Turn to Mark's account of Jesus' anointing—**turn to Mark 14:3-11**. **Joshua 24:15** says, **“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.”** Judas chose----sadly, he chose the dark side. In **Matthew 26:24** Jesus said, **“The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”**

B. The Chief Priests Not surprisingly, a second example of hatred is seen in the chief priests. **Meanwhile, a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.”** The crowds flocking to Bethany to see Jesus and Lazarus didn't escape the attention of the Jewish leaders. They had already decided to kill Jesus and now they expanded their plot—their hatred—John wrote that they **“made plans to kill Lazarus as well.”** Lazarus was an undeniable testimony to the power of Jesus Christ. Not only that, but a resurrected man was also an embarrassment to the Sadducees in another way, they denied the resurrection of the dead and Lazarus was an undeniable proof of their error. So, since **“many of the**

Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him,” the chief priests had to act to save their power and prestige---their reputation. Lazarus as well as Jesus had to go.

IV. Conclusion

A. There are several things we can learn from this event. First, like Mary, we **need to spend time at Jesus’ feet so that we make right choices; so that we can keep our priorities straight.** Heb. 12:2 says, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” But notice that although Mary gave her best to the Lord, she was misunderstood and criticized for what she did. The same thing can and does happen to Christians today. But if, like Mary, we spend time at Jesus’ feet, we can make the right choices and not be conformed by the world. Turn to Romans 12:1-2.

B. Second, we see three things that need to be in a Christian’s life: **work, worship, witness.** In this story, we see several people who are examples of just that. Martha represents *work* as she served the dinner that had been prepared for the Lord. This was just as much a “**fragrant offering**” as Mary’s perfume. Hebrews 13:16 says, “**And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.**” Mary’s giving of herself and her best to Jesus represents *worship*. And, by being visible, Lazarus represents *witness*. People went to Bethany to *see* this man—this witness—who had been raised from the dead. These 3 things should be seen in every Christian’s life: work, worship, and witness.

C. Finally, **no one is neutral regarding Jesus.** Jesus warned in Luke 11:23, “**He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.**” Whether loving and serving Him like Mary and Martha, whether coming to Him like the crowd, or hating and opposing Him, like Judas and the chief priest, everyone takes a stand somewhere. What that stand is determines each person’s eternal destiny, Jesus said in John 3:18, “**Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.**”