

20250323 Living Worship – Ps David

As we go through the worship series, I would like to share a message from John 12, the woman with the alabaster Jar. I know pastor Bijoy has preached on this before from another passage, but I would like to elaborate something more from this, because this passage is one of the verses that talk about one of the aspect of living worship. We need to have the right concept of worship before we talk about the outward part of worship.

John 12:1-7 ¹Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³Then Mary took about a pint (500ml) 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 the perfume. ⁴But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." ⁶He 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. ⁷"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸You will always have the poor among you,^[a] but you will not always have me."

1. Worship through honouring God.

John 12:1-2 ¹Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.

The Bible records that Jesus had a meal at Martha, Mary and Lazarus's home a number of times but this time was different to the other occasions. The date given, 6 days before Passover, is significant because this dinner event was 6 days before Jesus was to be betrayed and handed over to the priests and the Jewish leaders. So, this was the last time he would have a meal with them.

This dinner was given in Jesus' honour. The family wanted to honour Jesus.

What does honour mean? In the Webster's Bible Dictionary:

1. The esteem due or paid to worth; high estimation.

In a Biblical context, "" signifies esteem, respect, reverence, and the high value given to God.

The Bible doesn't tell us why this dinner was given. Maybe they wanted to give thanks for their brother Lazarus, had been raised from the dead or because of what Jesus had been doing for the people. Those who followed Jesus' teachings had their lives totally transformed. Jesus forgave those who were accused

of adultery, like the woman who was brought before Jesus by the Jewish leaders to be condemned to death.

How do we honour God? By showing our appreciation what God has done. Martha's family responded with some action.

When we come to worship Him, we are to honour Him. We need to focus on who he is and what he has done. When we sing worship songs, they are not just words in the music, they are supposed to make us think of who He is and His goodness towards us. Those words are supposed to reflect on what is in our hearts.

For Example, when we sing lyrics like "All my life you have been faithful." That phrase is supposed to make you think all the faithfulness of God has been to you. Or even the old hymn like "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound." We start to thank God for saving us, and how our lives have been changed.

2. Worship through offering

³Then Mary took about a pint (500ml) 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 the perfume.

The perfume mentioned here is an oil called **nard** kept in an alabaster box or jar. This box or jar is stone that resembles marble, but is softer in its texture, and hence very easily shaped into boxes. This was an expensive perfume oil made from plants grown in northern India. In the time long before trains or planes, this was an incredibly expensive substance. The Greek term here is a litra, a bit less than half of litre today. This was valued at some 300 denarii, nearly an entire year's wages for a common labourer.

As a woman of the ancient Middle East, Mary probably owned no property or land. So, this was a substantial part of her life savings. Once the alabaster box was broken, it was broken, so we see Mary gave it all. She could have sold the perfume oil for her personal use, but she didn't. Often the perfume was taken into her marriage as dowry. It was her dream, her happiness. The perfume was her security. Her life depended on it but Mary gave it all.

Mary could have used the perfume for other things, just like you could have used your time for something else, for your pleasure, or you could have used your offering for something else. But she broke her dream for Christ because she felt Jesus was more important, he deserved her love.

Why? We see a clear relationship between Mary and Jesus. She sat at His feet many times as she listened and learned from Him as her teacher and her friend (Luke 10). She experienced great loss and Jesus came to comfort her during the death of her brother Lazarus, whom Jesus eventually rose from the

dead (John 11). The deeper her relationship, the more this moment meant. It was not impulsive or without thought; it was from trust and an action of surrender of Jesus as the Savior.

What are you bringing before the Lord when we come to worship God? Doesn't Jesus deserve our love, doesn't Jesus deserve our life our all?

3. Don't let others judge your worship

⁴But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵“Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.” ⁶He 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.

Do you think it was easy for Mary to go out among all those people and wash Jesus' feet with this very expensive perfume? Of course not.

Mary's offering was not received well by the other disciples of Jesus. This reminds us that we are not in the business of awaiting man's approval for our spiritual acts of worship, but only God alone. Yes, we can be respectful of others; however, we answer to Jesus first. The disciples who thought this act of sacrifice was a waste, missed the beauty of the worship to the Savior. I love how Jesus welcomes her offering and shares its value. Maybe you feel like you are under attack for your obedience to the Lord by fellow believers. It can be a very difficult place to be, but ultimately, we do not serve man, we serve the one true Living God.

So, don't be concerned with what people may think of the way you worship (of course, with respect to others). Do you feel uncomfortable raising your hand to show your praise and exaltation before God or kneeling before Him to express your surrender and awe to the almighty God because of fear of what others may think? Don't be. Since angels do that, why not us? So, do what God has laid on your heart, there is freedom in God's presence. There is liberty and joy in doing the things that please the Lord. Just like the way people judged Mary, people may not understand your heart of worship, but He knows your expression of love, honour and adoration.

People may wonder why you give offerings or donations, why do you give so much to church or people? But Jesus is pleased with you, he sees your heart for his church, Jesus' body, he sees your heart for the lost, those broken people who need the gospel. He sees your heart for God's kingdom, where God's goodness, love and justice is lived out because of our giving.

People may not understand why you give up your precious time to come to Sunday service, especially your family members, but Jesus remembers them all.

That night Jesus did not just defend Mary's action but revealed the purpose for washing his feet.

⁷“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

Frankly speaking, Jesus is saying it is not your business, you are not to judge,

Please don't judge others on how they worship, just do your part of worship.

Secondly, we see the hidden purpose of Mary's action.

Jesus said, “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.”

Why does Jesus say this? When someone died in those times, people would embalm the body with myrrh and nard oil. Mary thought her action was only showing her adoration for Jesus, but it had a greater purpose. It became a prophetic action of what is going to happen to Jesus. It was to be used for Jesus's burial, it was fulfilling the scripture, and it became part of the greatest plan of God, the salvation plan for all mankind, she didn't know that. She just did it out of love for Jesus, but this was meant to be. Her giving was supposed to happen.

Could it be that when we give, it is meant to be? It is meant to help God's church grow so the lost can be saved, people's lives changed, and marriages restored. It is meant to help those who are in desperate financial situations, it is meant to see the expansion of God's kingdom, justice mercy and love.

4. Your worship is accepted by Jesus.

It is not recorded here in the passage but, some bible scholars say, this scripture is parallel with Matthew 26:13; and Mark 14:3-9. Yes, there are some differences between them but there are reasons for that, I will not talk about them here.

In Matthew 26:13

¹³ Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

Mary's giving had greater results than she could imagine. Wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will be known by the people.

I believe our worship and our offerings could bring greater purpose than what we think.

Through our worship the atmosphere in our environment is shifted. Heaven's presence would fill where we are, things will start to happen in the spiritual realm. Through our offering, God can use what we have to touch many people's lives, more than we could imagine.

What you have given to God in worship, he will remember them too.

Matthew 6:4

4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Psalm 20:3-5 NIV

³May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings.

What Lessons Can We Learn from the Story of the Alabaster Box?**We, like Mary can give Jesus our all as worship, even if others do not understand**

"When we give what we can, there may be plenty who don't understand. There may be plenty who ask, "Why are you 'wasting" your gift or your time?" Friends, don't let anyone stop you from sharing your gift the way God has called you to. Do what you can!"

The alabaster was her security for a blessed marriage life. The woman had to let go and gave it to Jesus.

You feel you can't let go, it is your security? Let go of your hand and let God take it and bring much greater blessing in your life.