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Tuesday, April 7, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vancouver

EBC Update



Showing True Devotion

Online Worship Update

Our first two online services are now available at this [link](#) on [Youtube](#), which can also be accessed through our [Facebook page](#) and our [church website](#).

God willing, we will also be posting services for 10:30 a.m. on Good Friday, April 10, and Easter Sunday, April 12.

Voice recordings of Pastor John's sermons will also be made available at [rockofhelp.com](#).

Please make a point of subscribing to our [Youtube channel](#). We can add features free of charge once we reach over 100 subscribers.

"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 the perfume. . . . 'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied [to Judas]. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.'" (John 12:3 & 7)

God's sense of value is not always the same as ours. We can set great store by things like money or possessions or social position that God views far less highly. We can also worry about issues that are not really very important to God at all.

We find a classic example in John 12:1–8. Jesus is having dinner with his friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus, whom we have just met in the amazing account of Lazarus' resurrection in the previous chapter. He is reclining at table, as was the custom in those days, when suddenly Mary does something very unexpected.

She takes about a pint of expensive perfume, which is a great deal, if you think about it. Then she pours it all over Jesus' feet and wipes it off with her hair.

This is obviously a very dramatic gesture, which plainly shows Mary's devotion to Jesus. But it would also have been a very expensive one, and that is the point which Judas Iscariot raises. Judas is the treasurer among the disciples, and we are told that he is actually a dishonest keeper of the purse-strings.

This is the same man who is eventually to betray Jesus to the authorities with a kiss. So we have a double reason to suspect what he has to say. Yet he also seems to have quite a strong argument, when we first hear it. "Why wasn't this perfume sold," he asks in verse 5, "and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."



Many of us might sympathize with these words. After all, why waste so many resources on one extravagant gesture, when they could be used to feed the poor or clothe the destitute.? In straight economic terms, the whole idea is crazy.

But it is precisely there surely, where our natural common sense begins to kick in, that Jesus shows us how very different God's priorities can be from ours. "Leave her alone," Jesus says. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

So what Jesus is telling Judas and the others is that Mary has done something very important and very beautiful for him. It may look like a waste, but the perfume which Mary has so generously poured over Jesus' feet was meant to anoint his body after his death, in accordance with Jewish tradition. Jesus is not dead yet, but he is about to enter Jerusalem for the final week before he dies and rises again at the first Easter.

What Mary has done then is a kind of prophetic gesture. She has ministered to Jesus in his life in a way that foreshadows his coming death. And she could not have done that, if she had been preoccupied with concerns about the economics or even the common sense of her actions.

And that can teach us something very important about the kind of values that God is also looking for in our lives. Of course, God does not want us to be irresponsible with the resources of time, talent and treasure that he gives us. But God does expect us to remember where they come from and who has first call on them.

I am reminded of David's words from 1 Chronicles 29:14 which I used to say often during an Anglican Offertory: "All things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee" (KJV).

"All things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee."



Whatever and however we give to the Lord, all we are ever doing is to return what God has already entrusted. And during this special week, when we celebrate the sacrifice that Jesus made to save us from our sins and his glorious resurrection, we are encouraged by the example of Mary that nothing is ever too good for Jesus.

So let's learn from her. Let's pour out ourselves and our resources freely and generously. Let's ask how we can show the same kind of devotion and let's open our hearts and our lives to make it happen.

Pastor John Oakes



Prayer Needs

- Our sick and shut-ins
- Government leaders
- Doctors, nurses and care workers, especially those from our own community
- Our online services
- All who are anxious, depressed or lonely
- The complete defeat of the COVID-19 virus

Staying in Touch

This newsletter is intended to be a source of community news and devotional materials. Please let Pastor John know of any updates, content ideas, or feedback. Meanwhile,

- We have organized another teleconference prayer meeting for Saturday, April 11 at 4:00 p.m. The phone number to call is xxxxxxxxxxx and the access code when it is answered is xxxxxxx.
- Offerings by cheque can be still mailed directly to the church office. Our Treasurer will be in touch about other giving methods.
- Our Prayer Chain remains fully functional. Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli or Freda Ross.
- If you have any suggestions to make for music broadcasts, Christian TV or movies which others may enjoy during this unusual time, please let us know so that we can share them.
- Pastor John can be reached in the event of an emergency at any time on 604-779-2356. His email is seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com.