

PASSION WEEK

Take some time to pray and read through the Gospel accounts in **Matthew 21-27**, **Mark 11-15**; **Luke 19:28-23:56** and **John 13-19**. Pick one to focus on or read through all of them! It's the story of your Savior's last moments, His final teachings and His unjust suffering, agony and death, all for our benefit!

Extravagant Worship!

³Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. (**John 12:3**)

Extravagant worship. Those are the best words to describe what took place when Jesus was at Simon the Leper's house. Three of the four Gospels record this unique act of sacrifice, devotion and love that brought a strong reaction from those who were at the meal with Jesus (**Matthew 26:6-13**; **Mark 14:3-9**; **John 12:2-8**). Just prior to this, we read in **Mark 14:1-2**, "And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, ²for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people." **Matthew 26:3-5** gives similar insight into the intense hatred of the Jewish people for Jesus - " ³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. ⁵But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people." Jesus' popularity was great as seen when He entered Jerusalem with people shouting and proclaiming Him as the chosen King and heir to David's throne! But as the Jewish leaders plotted, we read about a very different response to Jesus - one of extravagant worship.

John identifies this woman as none other than Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (**John 12:3**). In a prior story about Mary, Martha is complaining to Jesus that Mary is doing nothing to help her get things done but instead is "sitting at Jesus feet." Could you imagine Martha's frustration? Why would Mary be sitting at Jesus' feet when there was stuff to get done! But Mary was a true worshiper who loved Jesus and loved learning from Him. At her brother Lazarus' death, Mary was so deeply grieved that she wept at Jesus feet when He finally came to the grave. We read Jesus' reaction to Mary in **John 11:32-35** - ³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴ And he said, "**Where have you laid him?**" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus wept." Why is all of this important to know about Mary? It's no surprise that in Jesus' last week of ministry as He prepared to die on the cross that Mary would be the one who does something out of the ordinary, in fact, radical, as an extravagant act of pure worship! She seems to do things that were counter-culture, that appeared wasteful - wasteful of her time by sitting at Jesus' feet, wasteful of her resources by breaking an alabaster flask of expensive ointment and pouring it over Jesus' head and feet. This alabaster flask would have the equivalent value of almost one year's wage. Think about that. In breaking the flask, she sacrificed a whole year's worth of income. Who does that? Do you know anyone like that? Think about what is happening right now. People have lost jobs, have lost loved ones, have seen their investments lose great value because of the stock market crashing. Do you now anyone, including yourself, who would even consider giving up a year's worth of income as an act of extravagant worship for Jesus? And think about how people would respond if you did that! This is why the disciples, and specifically Judas Iscariot reacted so intensely. They saw it as pure waste, although Judas had hidden motives since he had been dipping into the funds! We read Jesus' response to all of this in **Matthew 26:6-13**, "**Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. ¹²In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. ¹³Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.**" Not only did Jesus commend Mary for her extravagant worship and radical, sacrificial generosity, but He make it clear that her story will be told in the whole world wherever the gospel is proclaimed. And it has! We are talking about her story right now!!!

So what does all this mean? How do we apply it to our lives today in the 21st century? Think about it. Jesus gave His life just a short time after this event as a fragrant offering to His Father in heaven, out of pure love for the world. What are we willing to give in response to Him? How far will we go to demonstrate extravagant worship - worship that has no limits or boundaries, worship that may appear to cost us everything but in reality is only giving back to God what He has already provided for us. This isn't about giving money. It's about our hearts. Mary's heart was focused on Jesus. She loved sitting at His feet. She anointed Him as an act of honor in preparation for His death. She wept knowing that He was the answer to her brother's sickness and death. She held back nothing when it came to Jesus. What will your act of extravagant worship be this week as you focus on Jesus' death and resurrection? May God be glorified as you live sacrificially and worship Him extravagantly!