

THE GRATITUDE/RESENTMENT TEST

NOVEMBER 20, 2022 | WALKING WITH JESUS | JOHN 12:1-11 | PASTOR SCOTT TURANSKY

[PRAYER] Lord, I pray that you would comfort those this morning who are coming here with some heavy burden in their hearts. I pray that you convict those who are coming who need to get something right in their lives or deal with a relationship challenge. I pray that you would use your word today to inspire us and encourage us. We want to be thankful people and we're grateful for this passage of scripture you provide for us today. Use it in our lives as we look at it. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do you know the difference between gratitude and gratefulness? Gratitude is something inside of your heart. Gratefulness is something you do. Or thankfulness is something you do. When you have gratefulness or you have thankfulness, those are really exercises that build gratitude inside of hearts. We all need gratitude because gratitude is one of those things that God has designed to keep us centered in our lives. We start to get off track and gratitude is one of those tools that God has given us to get us back to where we need to be many times in certain areas of our lives.

Today we're going to see a contrast between two people, Mary (her gift of gratitude) and Judas Iscariot (his resentment). It's an interesting contrast that we'll see in the passage as we look at it today.

I'm concerned in my own life that I have a little bit of Judas, as I think maybe many of us do, that I need to deal with. I'm sure that the lessons I learn from Mary can help me address that in my own life today. So this is a very practical passage of scripture. As we enter into the story and we find ourselves looking at the picture of what's happening here, I think God's going to provide some deeper insight into our spiritual lives that isn't just for Thanksgiving week, but it's for the rest of our lives.

So I want to ask you to stand with me, if you would, please. I'm going to read this passage of scripture from John 12:1-11. Feel free to open your own Bibles and follow along. Or you can listen as I read this in John 12.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary 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. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. Jesus said,

“Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

You may be seated.

Isn't that interesting? They were coming to see Lazarus. I think I'd want to see Lazarus too. Here's a guy who was raised from the dead. I googled that this week, "dead and come back to life." There's a lot of people who've been dead and come back to life. The longest person was dead for 17 hours and then came back to life. We like those stories. YouTube has videos of people telling their story about coming back to life. So I can imagine this preoccupation we have about death draws us to a story like this one with Lazarus that has some questions.

I think that they want to ask him questions like, "What was the last thought you had before you died? What was it like when you first kind of came to consciousness and you heard Jesus calling you out of the tomb? What was your first thoughts at that point? What was it like between those two times? Did you experience anything in the midst of that?" I think we have a preoccupation with that. It's interesting to us. So we're intrigued. We're intrigued by that whole idea.

It reminds me of the leader of young people who had the young people around, and he wanted to impress on them the importance of life itself. So he asked the question, "I want you to think about your funeral for a moment. And I want you to think about what would you wish someone would say at your funeral?" That's a good question for us to think about. The young people pondered that for a moment. One young man said, "I know what I wish people would say at my funeral. 'Look! He's moving!'" Oh yes.

We studied this whole passage last week. If you didn't get to join with us in the study last week as we talked about Lazarus being raised from the dead, you can go to our website at gracewaybc.org and you can read it, you can watch it, you can listen to it. There's all kinds of ways that you can learn about it on the website.

But today, I want to look at part of the chapter, verse by verse. So let's go back to the first verse. Do you see how it says – *Six days before Passover*. What this tells us is that we are in the last week of Jesus' life. And we're only in John 12. The rest of the book is going to be this last section. And then of course, the resurrection of Jesus talked about there. But we're six days before the Passover.

Jesus therefore came to Bethany, which was about two miles from Jerusalem. This is probably where He slept when He was in Jerusalem. They would go out to Bethany in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

So He went to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there.

Now we're going to miss this. Unless we get the cultural understanding of the word *dinner*, we're going to miss what's actually happening here. Because in our own culture, we think of dinner like we're going to have a meal, so we pull it out of the refrigerator or order it on GrubHub or something. But there weren't any of those things available there. So you have to imagine what that's like to eat in that kind of an environment where you don't have a lot of convenience. So most meals are rather simple. They might make some chapatis or some unleavened bread or leavened bread and just enjoy that, along with some vegetables and so on. But if you wanted to have a chicken, you couldn't do that by yourself.

We lived in Kenya for some time. Of course we had a refrigerator, but when we went out to the rural areas, those people didn't have refrigerators. The rule basically is this when you're eating food and cooking food out in the jungle. The idea is that if you cook something for today's meal and you eat it for today and there's leftovers, you can allow that to sit out overnight in the cupboard so the flies don't get all in there. It's allowed to sit out overnight, but you must eat it before the next day's lunch. If you don't eat it for lunch, then you have to throw it away for sanitary purposes.

So you can imagine living in that environment that if you're making a meal, you're not going to typically have a chicken to eat unless you have several people. You have to have four or five people, otherwise it's going to go to waste. So if you have four or five people, you can have a chicken. You wouldn't normally eat a goat or a sheep unless you had 20-30 people. As you can imagine, that doesn't happen very often. And you don't have a cow unless you're going to have to 200 or more people eat with you. So that's a big feast, unless you're sharing the food around or something like that.

The word *dinner* here is that word 'feast.' In other words, it's a special meal. It's not an ordinary meal. This is a special meal that they're eating together. This is the same word 'feast' that's used in Revelation to describe the Supper of the Lamb, the Wedding Supper of the Lamb that we're all going to enjoy together. This is why the New International Version when it comes to this word, translates this sentence that there was a dinner in Jesus' honor. Why was there a dinner in Jesus' honor? Why did they use those words? Because this is a special meal. And they're honoring Jesus.

I looked at this and I thought probably the first application here is that we all want to honor Jesus in our own homes. We want to invite Him in and enjoy Him and just honor Him in the course of our own homes.

But what's interesting in the passage is that the three different people mentioned are going to each honor Jesus in different ways. I think we do that because of our personalities. Or maybe we use all three of these at different times that are taking place in this passage. So let's look at them one at a time.

The first one, it says that *Martha served*. Now we know that Martha was a servant. We have the other story where Martha was busy in the kitchen serving and getting everything ready, and she was perturbed that Mary was just sitting there, apparently looking lazy, according to Martha's eyes. And so she confronted Jesus and said, "Jesus, would you please tell her to come in and help me?" You can imagine in that culture all the work that has to be done to create a meal and get it out on the table so that people could eat it. Jesus says, "Martha, Martha, you are busy about many things (or nervous about many things). She is doing one thing that's important, and it is better." So we know that Martha probably learned her lesson by the time we come to this story. But she's serving. That's her way of honoring.

It's one of the ways that we can honor the Lord is by serving Him. Sometimes we serve Him directly. Somebody we serve other people in His name. There's plenty of opportunities to serve the Lord here at GraceWay Bible Church. Some of you are just servants and jump in and do that. It is just a way for you to honor the Lord.

I think Martha is doing a great thing here. That's her way of honoring Jesus. She's serving.

Let's see who is next. *Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table*. Now Lazarus uses a different way of honoring the Lord in this passage. He uses his presence. Just being present with Jesus. I can imagine that he's either telling stories and interacting with Jesus and those others at the table, or he's asking questions and follow-up questions. That's what we teach young children when they're learning their social skills, that you ask questions and follow-up questions. I'm sure that Lazarus is doing that. But don't you like it when someone comes along and they just sit with you and listen? You feel special. You feel honored. You feel like someone loves you or cares about you to just sit there and listen. There's this gift of presence that Lazarus is demonstrating here in this passage that is a second way that we can honor the Lord and honor other people.

And then we come to Mary. The spotlight in the story now comes on to Mary and to Mary's gift. Actually we're going to see a contrast when we get to Judas. But now the spotlight comes to Mary. Let's look at what it says about Mary. *Mary 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 spotlight is on the expense of the gift. That's what's going to connect Mary in contrast to Judas in our story today. It says it was expensive. *Expensive ointment made from pure nard*.

I don't know anything really about making perfume. But I did google it this week to find out what are the expensive perfumes, and why in the world would anybody buy some of it? There are a number of perfumes that seem to go between \$2,000-3,000 an ounce. An ounce! I'm thinking why would anybody buy such perfume? I read about it. It said the reason people want to buy this perfume that there's only 500 ounces made a year of this, is because they don't want anybody to smell like they do. You go into a room and you smell a particular way, you don't want anybody sharing your perfume. So if you buy this particular expensive perfume, likely you're not going to have anybody share it with you. I don't know. There's these expensive perfumes that are made today. An ounce. Wow. \$2,000 or \$3,000 an ounce?

Notice it says it was expensive and it was made from pure nard. So it's just drawing attention to the quality of the gift. You have to think, why is Mary offering such an extravagant gift? Well, in the last chapter, her brother was raised from the dead. She just loves the Lord so much that she's giving an expensive gift to Jesus.

God established giving as one of our disciplines that we use in our lives. I hope you're participating in the discipline of giving. It's not just so the church can get a new roof or the church can be blessed with the money that you provide. But the reason we give is because God has designed it to do something in our own hearts.

That's why I encourage parents to teach their children to give at a young age. Why are the children giving? Because every time you give, especially if you give your own money, you give some of your money away, you are giving a little of your selfishness away. There's something about giving that does something in our own hearts, that prevents us from over emphasizing our own money or the belongings and so on. In the Old Testament, you would give a tenth. The tenth represented the whole. One-tenth would be like saying, "I'm giving a tenth, but it really is representative of the whole of my life that I'm giving to you." And so there was this offering or this tithe that was given to the Lord's work.

Giving is an important part of what we do that demonstrates gratitude. That's what's taking place in this passage with Mary. She's giving a gift.

Now all three of these people are giving in different ways. It just illustrates to me that sometimes there are times in our lives where we look at someone else and we might say about the other person, "Well, I wouldn't do it that way." But because of our uniqueness and because of who we are, sometimes we live out our spiritual lives in different ways than other people do. We don't look at someone else and say, "Well, I wouldn't do that, or that's beneath me" or something. There's this sense of respect for the way someone else is worshipping Jesus. Unfortunately, Judas didn't share that opinion or that understanding. He has his own ideas.

So we're going to see that the next word in the passage is the word *but*, which illustrates a contrast. So John is drawing out this contrast that exists between either all three of them and the way they're honoring the Lord and the house, or maybe just Mary and her gift. Mary was giving this extravagant gift and then we have the word *but*.

One of the things I want to point out, if we look back at the previous verse, notice it says – *The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume*. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

I just want to say if you have a heart of gratitude, and you're thanking people, and you're showing gratefulness regularly, you make your house smell better. I think you bring this beautiful fragrance into the office or wherever you are. It just livens up that place because of the fragrant gift of thanksgiving that you give to other people. In contrast, I would say that if you have the negative attitude that Judas has, you bring a stinky smell into the house or the environment where you are. We all know that. We don't like it when we see someone

complaining, and whining, and having an attitude about life. It just creates this damper on the whole environment. And that's what Judas is going to do.

Now Judas had some challenges in his life. Judas probably started out well, I would suspect. But he developed some resentment, it appears, in the course of things. When a person develops resentment in their lives, they turn into a rather negative person. They complain, or they whine, or they judge, or they're critical, or they argue with people. So it's so important for us to be able to address the negativity that we can develop in our lives from resentment.

We're going to see that Judas actually develops a construct inside of his heart that gets him thinking in the wrong direction. Here's an example of his poor thinking, what he's saying to himself, and what he's saying to others. But he develops this construct inside. We could know more about him if we study him. We know more about this guy. The construct inside he starts to develop this attitude about Jesus somehow of resentment. When he starts thinking negatively to the place where he even talks himself into betraying Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Thirty pieces of silver. And he says, "I'm going to take the money."

But you see, here's what happens. When you develop a negative construct, you can talk yourself into all kinds of things. "I am right, the other person is wrong," and justify. You can have a victim mentality or an entitlement mentality, and say, "That's not fair." So you end up in this negative pool of stuff.

Judas developed this construct. But he realized that it was wrong at a point. Because at one point after he betrayed Jesus, he came and threw the thirty pieces of silver back. "I don't want this. I realized I made a mistake. I did the wrong thing. This is bad what I've done." But he still couldn't manage that well, and he ended up taking his own life. All kinds of bad things can happen to a person when they develop this negative construct inside of their lives, this resentment that takes place in some people. And that's what's happening with Judas.

Judas, one of the disciples (he was about to betray him) said... And he was about to betray Him in the next day or two. Remember, we're six days before Passover when Jesus will be crucified. So in the next day or two (and maybe it's partly because of this incident), he's going to deny or he's going to betray Jesus Christ.

But Judas says – "*Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?*" Now, it's typically recognized that one denarii represented one day's wages. One day's wages. This is almost a year's worth of wages. This ointment was an investment that she was keeping, maybe for marriage, maybe for some other thing. And she pulled it out at this time. That's how expensive this is that she brings out. Wow. It's just a huge expense.

This is where I'm a frugal kind of a person. Where I think I could be like Judas and I could say, "You know what, maybe she should have just said thank you, and we could use this money to build a new roof or some other thing that we could use this money for."

But it says there's something else going on in Judas' heart. It says – *He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to*

help himself to what was put into it. Somehow his construct that he had developed inside of his heart led him to do bad things. Somehow his thinking gets so messed up that he starts doing things that are wrong. Oh, we have to guard ourselves because we can set up this construct that are these paths inside of our hearts that allows us to make bad decisions.

I think the contrast is made here, in part because gratitude is so important. The gratitude of Mary is a significant piece of this story, because she just is giving so much. Her gratitude is significant here. And I think God has created gratitude in our hearts to keep us on track, centered so that we don't get off track in these ways. It's just one of those tools that we can experience.

You know, in Psalm 100:4, it says – *Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and enter his courts with praise!* You know what that means? What that means is that when you come in to Jerusalem's gates and into the courts of the temple, then you come in with your cup full already. Enter with thanksgiving, don't come in with an empty cup.

Now some of us come to church with an empty cup, because we just need it. We're just depleted. I'm glad you come when things aren't going well and when you just are depleted yourself. So we come to be cared for. But generally speaking, what we're doing is we're being cared for and we're allowing the Lord to work in our lives so much that we're full of Thanksgiving when we enter into His courts and enter into His gates. So when we come to church, our cup is full. So that when we exchange our interactions together, it overflows. We leave with an overflowing cup. We come with our cup full and then it's overflowing.

There's this gratitude that takes place. There's a contrast being made between gratitude on the one hand, and resentment on the other. Did you know those are on a continuum? Did you know that if you have a lot of resentment, you can't really have a lot of gratitude. And if you have a lot of gratitude, your resentment is going to drop off. You can find yourself on a continuum.

One time I was teaching about gratitude and a lady came to me. She was a physician. She said, “I thought you were going to talk about the principle of three.”

I said, “What's the principle of three?”

She said, “In medicine, we encourage people to think of three things they're grateful for. Because we know that gratitude, when it grows in a person's heart, is really powerful. In fact, they've done studies that show that if a person will be grateful for three things every day, that the effect on their lives has a similar effect to some of the mind or the mood-altering drugs that people take.” Gratitude is a powerful force in a person's life.

And here we have gratitude and resentment.

In the world of medicine or in psychology, there is a test you can take called the GRAT scale. It stands for these letters: Gratitude Resentment Appreciation Test. When you answer these questions, you can find yourself on the continuum somewhere. It'll plot you on the continuum and you'll know where you are between gratitude and resentment. I think it's remarkable when the world comes up with ideas that we see in the Bible already.

I tell people you can go and take the GRAT test and find out where you are. It's free. You can google it, find it, take the test, figure out where you are on the on the line or on the scale. But I would suggest you do a different thing because you're a Christian. I would suggest that what you do is you just pray. Open God's word, pray, let Him speak to you. The Holy Spirit will tell you where you are in the scale. And more importantly, He'll empower you to have more gratitude in your life. That's one of the beautiful things about being a Christian. That we have the power of the Holy Spirit that doesn't just point out something about where we are, but empowers us to move in the direction toward more godliness or wholeness in our lives. The power of the Holy Spirit.

Judas is making a mistake here. He's judging these people, especially Mary, for her worship and what she's doing. He had his own selfishness that he was wrestling with. This construct inside of his mind was taking him in a bad place. I just think it's a very important warning for us as Christians. If we find ourselves going in the wrong direction, we need to change the construct. We need to have our minds healed by God's word so that we have what God wants us to do in the right place.

Sometimes I hear Christians talking so negatively, it's like they've been baptized in pickle juice or something. There is this sense of sometimes where we just have to wrestle with this in our own hearts and allow the Lord to change us. So if you find yourself spending a lot of time in that negativity, maybe it's time to work on the gratitude side, as Mary did in this passage.

Now Jesus is going to enter this dialogue. Notice His advice that He gives us, the master counselor in this picture. He says in verse 7 – *Jesus said, "Leave her alone."* In other words, stop it. Those are good words. I think that if we, if I start thinking in this kind of negative pool of criticism, I just need to stop. It's not the direction I need to go.

Now Jesus is going to amplify what you do instead, which I think is great. Why do we not spend our time in the negativity? What's He going to say to do instead? Notice He says – *"Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."* Now Jesus isn't saying that the poor people aren't important. But what He's saying is you can always find negativity in our world. He's saying focus in on Jesus. I love that. Because the most grateful people are the ones who can see the power of God working in their lives.

You know, if you're going to do this exercise where you think of three great things you're grateful for every day, I think that's great. But we're going to quickly come to the things that our children said. "I'm thankful for my health. I'm thankful for my family. I'm thankful for my church." And we have all that list, right? But I was challenged to do something like this one time. Every day when you get up, think of a new thing that you're thankful for that you didn't mention yet. So what that's going to do is take you into things that are happening in the present. "Lord, I thank you for that beautiful sunrise I saw this morning. Lord, I thank you for allowing me to get to my place on time, even though I had traffic." Do you see how that moves us into an attitude that's much different? An attitude of gratitude that we want to have inside of our lives.

I think that as we look at this story, we see some important lessons. I just want to draw three of them out for you that I think we want to consider in our own lives.

One lesson is to recognize the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can help us to develop what we need inside of our lives. Let's realize that that's the case and ask the Lord to give us that spirit of gratitude in our life.

Secondly, let's focus in on the things that we're grateful for. Think about ways we can amplify gratitude in our lives. Because gratitude becomes this great centering principle that God has designed to keep us in the right place.

Thirdly, let's be careful of the critical spirit that sometimes can develop, the resentment that starts to grow in our lives. Because when it does, it can do some great damage to our lives and to our hearts.

Would you stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Father, as we think about our own hearts, we ask that you would do a work in our lives. We're likely going to spend some time feasting this week. We'll enjoy that. Lord, I pray that you would use that as a cue for us. Just to remember who you are, what you've done for us, and all the blessings that we have in our lives because of you. We're so grateful for all that you've done. Today, Lord, we come to you and we say thank you. In Jesus' name, amen.