

## The Gratitude/Resentment Test John 12:1-11

By Dave Urbanski

Pastor Scott led us Sunday through Scripture directly related to the central idea of Thanksgiving — and the passage is all about gratitude.

Continuing our deep dive into the Gospel of John, we looked at the beginning of chapter 12 — specifically the first 11 verses. Turns out it's a little slice of life that stands between two monumental happenings in Jesus' earthly ministry: Raising Lazarus from the dead — and then Passover week, the final days of Jesus' life.

So here we found ourselves in these unique verses opening chapter 12. Jesus had just performed his amazing miracle, and everybody was looking for him. It's not clear how much time elapsed since he raised Lazarus, but the end of chapter 11 indicates the Passover was "at hand" (v. 55) which means near in time.

We do know that verses 1 through 11 in chapter 12 represent what happened the day before Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He had gone back to Bethany where he raised his friend from the dead — and, lo and behold, Lazarus himself is there with his sisters Mary and Martha, and they hold a huge dinner in Jesus' honor. Pastor Scott shared that the word for "dinner" here is the same word used for "feast" in Revelation to describe the heavenly Supper of the Lamb. In other words, it's a big deal and full of meaning.

Everything is going great until Judas criticizes Mary for pouring expensive ointment on Jesus' feet and drying his feet with her hair until the aroma filled the whole house — an act of gratitude and adoration not only for what Jesus has done but for who he is in her life. As Pastor Scott noted, the cost of the ointment is equal to a YEAR's wages! But it doesn't matter: Mary only wants one thing — to be present with Jesus in this moment.

Unfortunately that goes right over Judas' head. He says in verse 5, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" Another unfortunate fact is that Judas is no more concerned about the poor than he is about his relationship with the Son of God, as the next verse tells us Judas actually is a thief and would take what he wanted from the moneybag set aside for Jesus and his disciples' daily needs.

Jesus, of course, has the perfect response to Judas' criticism: "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."

The remaining verses note that a large crowd discovered Jesus was in the house with his disciples along with Lazarus, Mary, Martha, and perhaps others. Naturally folks wanted to see

Jesus and the newly raised Lazarus! With that, 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."

What are the lessons we should take away from this passage? First off, Pastor Scott pointed to Mary's selfless giving to Jesus as an example of gratitude we can emulate. He noted, quite significantly, that when we give — whether it's our time, our money, our physical efforts, our emotional selves — we give a little bit more of our selfishness away. It's a discipline of giving, he said, that we all can take part in to boost our Christian growth.

Pastor Scott also point to Judas' resentment and negativity as a warning to us all. We see it plain as day that Judas is thinking incorrectly, and his attitude reflects a heart that's sadly far away from Jesus. So far away, in fact, that within days he would betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, leading to his Master's crucifixion. We know Judas was hit hard with regret after Jesus was arrested, as he ended up taking his own life.

When we harbor resentment and negativity and attitudes that are far from the heart of Jesus, all kinds of bad things can happen to us, Pastor Scott told us. But if we practice the discipline not only of giving but of gratitude — daily gratitude, in fact — Pastor Scott said we can't harbor very much resentment. And isn't that where we all, deep in our hearts, want to be?

In other words, no matter what's happened to us, no matter how bad we've had it or think we've had it, we can control our attitudes by purposely focusing on things we're grateful for. And that can go a long way toward bringing us closer to Jesus, closer to his heart, and closer to his will for our lives.

So during this Thanksgiving week, let us heed Pastor Scott's advice and make it a habit to name each morning something new for which we're grateful. Along the way, let us allow God to heal our hearts and change them as we work diligently on our abilities to regularly practice gratitude.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone.