

TAKEAWAY:

Jesus shows us how to live with intentionality, devotion, and humility in the ordinary moments of life.

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

- What is one moment this past week where you felt like what you were doing really mattered?
- Have you encouraged anyone recently in their work to help them know that they matter? Please share.

UNDERSTANDING:

Have a group member read John 12:1-8

- How did this sermon help you better understand this passage of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- Mary anointed Jesus with expensive perfume in an act of worship. What do you think motivated her to do something so costly and countercultural?
- In what ways does Mary's sacrifice reflect the sacrificial love of Christ?
- Discuss the tension between worldly values (such as money and social approval) and spiritual priorities as demonstrated in this passage. How can Christians today ensure they prioritize eternal significance over temporary gains?
- Contrast Mary's actions with Judas's response. What do their actions reveal about genuine faith versus superficial belief? How can we guard against hypocrisy within our own lives and congregations?

APPLICATION:

- Identify one small act of devotion you can offer to God this week. Share what it is this week, and next week follow up on your commitment within this group.
- How can we guard against hypocrisy within our own lives and congregations?

GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material.

You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of our text from this week. Here are two "Going Deeper" discussion prompts that build upon the above provided questions without repeating them:

The Economics of Worship vs. The Idolatry of Utility: Modern Western culture, much like Judas, idolizes efficiency and utility. We are conditioned to ask, "Is this practical?" or "What is the return on investment?" Mary's act was economically inefficient but spiritually explosive. Tim Keller writes: *"To devalue Jesus as the indignant have done is eternally deadly. To devalue the nard as the woman has done is eternally saving... Use your money to serve the poor, but do not love money. If you love money, you will use the poor to serve yourself."*

- How have you seen true justice (i.e. caring for the poor) flow *from* the kind of extravagant grace that Mary exhibits in John 12? If you've never seen it personally, can you think of any historical examples?
- In our own lives and church culture, we often feel the pressure to make our faith 'useful' or 'pragmatic.' Where do you see the 'Spirit of Judas'—not necessarily in theft, but in the subtle demand that worship must be efficient or sensible—manifesting today?
- What would it look like for you to 'waste' a significant portion of your time, money, or reputation on Jesus this week in a way that yields no immediate practical return but simply expresses his worth?
- Read 2 Samuel 24:18-25. How does David's response to Araunah further illuminate the idea of "the economics of worshipping God"?

"The house was filled with the fragrance" (v. 3b): Paul later describes Christians as the "aroma of Christ" (2 Cor 2:14-17). True devotion is impossible to hide—it permeates the atmosphere. Righteousness is not just a legal status before God but also must resultantly involve right living, the "aroma of Christ" that one's life radiates to others.

- What "aroma" do your actions create before others? When you leave a room—your workplace, your home, this group—what "fragrance" lingers? Is it the stale odor of complaint and criticism (like Judas), or the distinct, lingering aroma of sacrificial love?
- How do we cultivate a life that fills "the house" with the "aroma of Christ"? When your actions create a "spiritual fragrance" that is rejected or mocked, how can John 12:1-8 inform your thoughts and settle your heart? In what ways can rejection of a godly action of yours by others validate your faithfulness to God? Discuss this question in terms of how different people might react to godly or ungodly actions of yours.
- If you were to leave your current role, job, family gathering, etc. what "lingering scent" would be left behind? Be missed after you leave? Would people remember a spirit of peace and gratitude, or an air of stress and demand?
- Have you ever held back from a generous act of service or worship because you feared others would judge it as "irrational" or "too much"? How do we distinguish between being "foolish" and being "fools for Christ"? How does shifting our focus from "How do I look to others?" to "How much do I love Jesus? and "How does this action look to God?" paradoxically improve the witness we

offer to the world? Are my outwardly godly actions, inward acts of self-righteousness (Matt 6)? If so, how do I avoid this trap?

Quotes:

- “The soul is never more lifted up with the love of God than when by the Spirit it is taken into communion with God.” John Owen
- “The odor filled the house, but it did not penetrate the heart of Judas. The same ointment that is a sweet smell of life to the faithful is a stumbling block to the covetous.” Thomas Aquinas
- “The house in Bethany is a microcosm of the world. Mary’s act is the prototype of the Christian life: We are to be the broken vessel, and the released life of Jesus is the scent that fills the house.” F. B. Meyer
- “The Lord has to break our outer man so that the inner man can be released ... As long as the alabaster box is not broken, the ointment cannot flow forth. If the outer man remains whole, the inner man remains imprisoned.” Watchman Nee in *Release of the Spirit*
- “In this moment, Mary anoints the Anointed One Himself – for His burial, His sacrifice, His mission to bring salvation.” Richard Foster

PRAYER:

Pray for rest for the weary, for permission to slow down, and for ears to hear God's gentle voice above all the noise.