

## **The Showing of True Colors**

(John 12:1-11)

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### **Introduction**

In the 4th century, a Chinese military officer is quoted as saying that all warfare is based on deception...

And if you study the wars of history, deception has played a part in some many battles..

One of the idlest examples of deception is the Trojan horse tale, where the Greek army built a large horse and hid soldiers inside of it...

When the people of Troy pulled the horse inside the gate as an apparent sign of their victory, the Greek soldiers spited out of the horse opened Troy's city gates and allowed their fellow Greek soldiers to win the city.

However, no area of military warfare probably sees more deception than naval battles..

At sea, deception is often seen in various ways, but one the most common way to deceive the enemy at sea is to appear to be someone you aren't..

Ships have long flown flags to identify their nationality..

However, this practice has allowed much deception over the years between navies at war..

One such example was during the Civil war where the CSS Sumter had flags of nearly every nation stored in her lockers.

As a result, the Sumter was able to enter ports held by Union forces simply because they flew the flag of someone friendly to the Union or most likely flew the US Flag..

The deception was so successful that the Sumter was able to destroy or capture 18 Union ships using this deceptive tactic.

Now, the gentlemanly rules of naval warfare say that a ship can fly a deceptive flag, but before the first shot is fired, a ship must host its true flag.

This is where the saying, “showing your true colors,” originates.

In other words, the true colors of a ship had to eventually be displayed before a battle could take place..

Most times, however, deceptive ships would only be raising the ship’s true colors just moments before the first cannon fired..

Sadly, in issue of faith and belief, deception is also standard practice..

People will often fly the flag of belief in Christ, but when the chips are down, their true colors become evident..

This is never more evident than in the case of Judas Iscariot, the greatest traitor in world history..

Here was a man who flew the flag of Christ for 3 years, yet when the pressure ramps up, Judas' true colors are displayed and we will see that today in John 12:1-11

On the flip side of that, we are also going to see the true colors of belief as well...

We are going to see the faith of Mary expressed in a most incredible way as well..

So, let's dig into these verses..

I will read the passage to get us going..

John 12:1-11..

*1 Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. 3 Mary then took a [a]pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to [b]betray Him, \*said, 5 “Why was this perfume not sold for [c]three hundred denarii and given to poor people?” 6 Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. 7 Therefore Jesus said, “Let her alone, so that she may keep [d]it for the day of My burial. 8 For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”*

*9 The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; 11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.*

Let’s begin in verse 3 with..

## **I. The Smell of Love (1-3)**

As we arrive at John 12, Jesus has been in the wilderness of eastern Israel for a week or so.

Some say that he also may have travelled into Samaria and all the way up to Galilee for a final time..

So it may have been a few weeks or a month since the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

We simply can't be sure.

I tend to think that it was shorter period of time between the end of John 11 and the start of John 12, but it doesn't matter.

All we know is that as John 12 begins, we are less than a week from Jesus hanging on the cross..

In fact, verse 1 of John 12 lets us know that it 6 days before Passover.

With passover beginning at sunset on Thursday, this is most likely Saturday..

And Jesus is back on the outskirts of Jerusalem in the little town of Bethany..

As we have seen before, it is small little village right over the hill from the temple mount in Jerusalem..

Here is modern day picture of it..

If you went west from Bethany, you would come to the top of the Mount of Olives and be able to see all of Jerusalem before you..

Jesus has been in this town on a number of occasions..

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived here..

And it was a natural way for Jesus to travel up to Jerusalem for Passover.

In fact, Jesus had been to Jerusalem many times over the course of his life and ministry.

As an adult Jewish male, he had to go at least three a year to Jerusalem for the spring festival of Passover, the early summer festival of Pentecost, and the autumn festival of booths.

But this would be his final trip to Jerusalem.

In six days, he would be dead, having been executed by the people in the city that HE loved..

Now Jesus is fully aware of this, so as he prepares for is coming, he simply begins the week by spending time with some people that love him..

A quick footnote here..

John doesn't tell us this, but this supper doesn't occur in the home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

WE have to go to Matthew's gospel to learn that this scene takes place in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper.

WE know nothing of Simon other than what Matthew tells us, but it apparent that he is someone that Jesus had healed at some point during his ministry in Bethany..

He clearly wasn't a leper anymore or else he wouldn't have hosted a meal for everyone...

But he was called that since that had probably been the reputation of his entire life..

And so we can safely assume that Simon knew Passover was coming which means that Jesus was coming, so he simply hosted a meal for Jesus..

Clearly, an act of love.

Clearly, an act of hospitality and gratitude for His Savior..

And this become the setting for the verses that follow..

So there is supper in Bethany for Jesus in Simon's house, and everything seems to be in order.

In fact, we find Martha where we would expect to find Martha.

She is serving everyone.

And as I said the last few weeks, we don't need to be on Martha's case.

God has given her a heart to others, and that is a good thing...

The Kingdom of God needs servants.

The church needs servants..

In fact, Jesus has already told his disciples that the greatest in the kingdom is the one who serves.

In the very next chapter, Jesus is going to serve his disciples by washing their feet.

So Martha often get a bad rap, but she is simply modeling Christ-like service..

We also see that Lazarus is there..

We read that at the end of verse 2, but we don't capture the incredible truth of those words...

Here we have a dead man at the table, sitting beside a man healed of leprosy.

This is who's who of Jesus' ministry..

I can't begin to imagine the things they were discussing with one another...

Lazarus tells Simon, "Look you may have a dreadful disease, but hey I actually died. So don't tell me who loves Jesus more.."

But this is glorious scene...

Simon helped. Martha working. Lazarus raised, and then to make the supper more extraordinary, we see Mary worshipping.

*Verse 3..*

***3 Mary then took a [a]pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.***

The greek word for pound here represents a weight closer to 12 oz, but picture a 12 oz can of Coke..

And then picture it being a gorgeous alabaster flask of perfume..

Alabaster is translucent and very valuable in itself..

And inside that alabaster container is perfume that cost a year's salary.

300 Denarii was roughly a year's wage for a Jew, this wouldn't work on the Sabbath or holy days..

In today's economy, the median US salary is slightly over \$60,000..

So we talking about perfume that was worth \$5,000 an ounce.

This is not cheap and the reason for that is that nard came from a specific plant in Asia.

So it was bottled there and carried to Israel to be sold.

Why did Mary have such an expensive perfume?

Two possible answers..

One is that they were an affluent family who could afford perfume like this for their own personal use.

Most perfumes were used at death to cover the stench of bodies.

They could also be used by women in the same way perfumes are used today..

The second possibility is that God had directed that expensive perfume to fall into Mary's hands for this exact moment..

We simply don't know why she had it or how she got it, but we know how she used..

She simply broke the valuable flask open and began pouring it all over Jesus.

John doesn't tell us but Mary anointed Jesus head and all as his feet with this scent..

And the question becomes why did she do it?

Was she preparing Jesus for his coming death?

Well, Jesus has predicted his coming death, but it doesn't seem like any of his followers really believed that would happen..

So it is likely that Mary was doing that here.

The best explanation seems to be that she wanted to demonstrate here incredible love and devotion to Christ..

He had saved her.

He had raised her brother from the dead.

He had taught her.

And now he was in home enjoying meal with her..

This act is simply the smell of love for Christ..

Notice at the end of verse 3 that the whole house was filled with fragrance of perfume.

That is the smell of love and devotion to Christ.

It is irrational love.

It knows now limits.

It is not concerned with financial costs...

It is simply willing to sacrifice it all for the sake of Christ..

What an act of love for Jesus!

Would you give up your most prized material possession to express your love and devotion to Christ?

This is the picture of Mary's true colors.

This is who she is.

She is devoted to Christ.

But now we turn from that sweet expression of belief to this sickening picture of unbelief..

We will call this..

## **II. The Sight of Greed (4-6)**

Look back at verse 4..

***4 But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to [b]betray Him, \*said, 5 “Why was this perfume not sold for [c]three hundred denarii and given to poor people?” 6 Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.***

For 3 + years now, Judas has been flying the flag of Christ, but it was all a deception..

And now as the end of Jesus’ life approaches, Judas’ true colors are hoisted up in his life.

He can no longer pull off his deception..

His greed is overwhelming his heart, and now it is overwhelming his tongue..

So he sees Mary’s act of love and he speaks up, and these are his first words in the entire NT...

***“Why was this perfume not sold for [c]three hundred denarii and given to poor people?”***

I could say a lot here, but none of it would be good.

Let me simply say this.

Don't be deceived by people who want to use the Bible to support their sin.

Does the Bible speak of helping the poor? YES!

Does God encourage us to reach out to the needy?  
ABSOLUTELY!

But should we honor the poor over Christ? NEVER!

I remind you of this.

If we wiped our poverty, we would still have the problem of sin.

You can go to heaven poor, but you can't go without Christ.

Judas wanted to appear righteous in his words, but the reality is that he wanted the money for himself.

He had no intention of selling the perfume and giving the proceeds to the poor.

HE intended to sell the perfume and give the proceeds to himself.

John lets us know here that he had already had his hand in the cookie jar of the disciples money box.

My grandad often told me to follow the money to find the problem.

But better yet, the Bible says that the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil.

Judas is the best example of that in all of human history..

Greed is a silent killer.

And we just a glimpse of that in Judas the betrayer.

Let's move from the sight of greed to the sound of truth...

### **III. The Sound of Truth (7-8)**

Verse 7...

***7 Therefore Jesus said, “Let her alone, so that she may keep [d]it for the day of My burial. 8 For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”***

In verse 7 and 8, Jesus runs to Mary’s defense.

Clearly, Mary’s heart was filled with belief, while Judas’ heart was filled with unbelief.

And then Jesus makes a very clear statement.

The poor will always be around to help, but He would not always be around.

This is not an arrogant statement considering that Jesus is God in the flesh.

This is simply a reminder that our worship of an eternal God is far superior to fixing temporary problems.

There will always be poor people because this world will always be filled with injustice and sin.

And yes, the perfume could have been sold and give not them, but guess what, it wouldn't have solved the problem of poverty.

On the other hand, Jesus is only going to be on earth for one time.

He is only going to be buried one time.

Mary simply acted in love of Him.

And the love of Christ is far superior to any love you can ever have in this world.

I hope you all understand that we will never run out of opportunities to help people, but guess what?

Pine Grove has been helping people for decades and so have every other church in this county and state and country and world..

Has poverty been eliminated after all that help?

Nope, there are many poor people today as ever, and we will continue to help.

But let me assure of this.

The worship you offer to Christ will last into eternity and beyond.

Temporary relief is great but eternal Christ-centered worship is better.

Mary loved the poor.

Mary had probably helped the poor many times.

But her best was going to be given Jesus.

Now after Jesus rebukes Judas here, Matthew and Mark let us know that Judas leaves Simon's house and heads to meet with the chief priests to lay out a plan to betray Jesus.

Judas had enough of this worship of Jesus.

His greed was now directing him.

And he agreed to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, which would be about 4 months wages.

Jesus had just prevented him from getting his hands on a year's salary, so he settled for a 1/3 of a year's salary to become the worst traitor.

One other that John doesn't tell us that Matthew and Mark do is something extraordinary that Jesus tells the group..

Matthew 26:13...

***13 Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."***

In case you have any doubt that Mary did the right thing, Jesus says that her act of generosity and love and worship would be an example forever...

So, we have the smell of love, the sight of greed, the sound of truth...

Let's end with...

#### **IV. The Shock of Unbelief (9-11)**

Veres 9 & 10...

***9 The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; 11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.***

In verses 9 and 10, John takes us outside of Simon's house for a minute to see what is happening around Jesus..

And all we see are people like Judas who simply don't get it..

The first group is the crowd of people coming to Bethany for the sideshow..

The news of Lazarus being raised from the dead spread quickly and people came to his hometown.

And verse 9 lets us know that their focus wasn't on the One who did the raising but on the one who was raised..

This is shocking.

How could they not be coming and falling at Christ's feet?

Why are they coming to see a man instead of the God-man?

And we know the answer to this.

We have seen the crowds before.

They aren't interested in Jesus.

They are only interested in the side show.

The miracles don't fill them with belief, they simply give them something to talk with their neighbor about.

For them, the healings aren't a sign that Jesus is God, they are simply an opportunity to get some free healthcare.

And look as I have said before, churches are filled today with people who only come out of curiosity or hoping to have their needs met..

The shocking reality is that the only need that matters is their need of forgiveness, but they never seek that from Jesus.

They simply hang out with His people to be entertained.

Though we know these people exist, it still shocks us to see them.

And then there is one final group that always shocks us as well.

We aren't shocked by their indifference to Jesus; we are shocked by their hatred..

This time the chief priests are so ready to destroy Jesus, that they are set on destroying any evidence that He may be the Messiah.

So they plot to kill Lazarus..

WE have seen the hatred of the Jews toward Jesus.

We know they are hatching a plan to kill Him.

But now they plot to kill those around Him.

This is the shocking nature of unbelief.

You cannot reason with it.

You cannot convince it despise evidence.

Unbelief simply grows to a point where it reacts violently to the truth.

This is the shocking nature of those who reject Christ.

They are not satisfied until Jesus and his followers are silenced.

And if take two murders to accomplish that, so be it.

Men who supposedly knew the law of God were eager to break it in order to keep their power and wealth..

And guess what?

In 2019, unbelief is still seeking to silence belief.

It never stops, so we must never stop preaching truth...

## **Conclusion**

So what do we see here to take with us into our heart and into the world?

### ***#1 - Believers are known for the extreme love of Christ.***

A jar of perfume worth an entire year's salary is nothing compared to the price that Christ paid for His people.

To truly understand yourself is to truly appreciate all the sin has Christ has forgiven in your life alone.

And such extreme forgiveness is seen in our extreme love of Him.

To truly know Christ is to truly love Him.

May we all be willing to show our love of Christ in sacrificial ways.

### ***#2 - Unbelievers are known by their extreme hatred of Christ.***

For every Mary, there is a Judas.

For every believer offering true worship, there is a Judas offering false worship.

For every believer giving freely to Christ, there is a Judas greedy for money.

For every Lazarus and Simon the Leper and Martha who love to eat with Jesus, there is a crowd of people simply hanging around Jesus for the sideshow.

For every one healed who went on to believe in Jesus are masses of people who want to be healed but refuse to believe..

Ultimately, all unbelief reveals their hatred of Christ by simply refusing to repent and believe in Him.

### ***#3 - The world is known by its division over Jesus Christ.***

As we have said before, Christ is the dividing line in all of human history..

Everything in these first 11 verses of John 12 point to the great division of Christ.

You either love him or hate him.

You either give to him or take from him.

You either want him with you forever or you want Him and his followers killed.

You either agree with his words or you wish He would hush.

This is Christ.

And as you leave here this morning, you will either grow in your love of Him or grow in your hardness to Him.

You will either grow in your commitment to obey Christ or grow in your disobedience to Him.

You will either wish to be with him forever or wish him dead.

Let us pray.