

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Marlin Rempfer

Lent 1  
Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 7:00 PM

# “Mary, the Sister of Lazarus and Martha”

John 12:1-11

Our Lenten Series this year is witnesses to Christ – People of the Passion. On Ash Wednesday we looked at John the Baptist. He made clear that the focus is not on the people but on Christ. He did so with His clear proclamation, “Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.”

That is true today as we look at Mary who points us to Christ.

It is clear that all three lessons focus on giving and getting. Proverbs says: One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.” (Prov. 11:24)

The epistle said “The point is that whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully”

There are numerous examples of people who spend bountifully but most often it is on themselves.

I’m curious what would you spend a whole year’s wages on? One story that was in the news on February 27th , Mike Cole insists that a few months ago

he would have taken \$500 for the unused ticket to Michael Jordan's 1984 NBA debut. But at an auction recently his unused ticket that cost \$8.50 sold for \$468,000.

The season of Lent is all about the price God was willing to pay for you but in our text we are introduced to a woman who gave generously to Jesus.

As we hear God's word we are forced to consider whether the focus in our lives is on getting or giving.

This Lent, we are meeting witnesses to Christ's Passion in John's Gospel. Today, John introduces us to Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Mary, helps us know the joy of loving and giving.

How does Mary do it? Mary replaces get with give. Get only clutters things. Get only confuses things. Get only makes us miserable! Get ahead. Get back. Get even. Get more. And whatever you do—get revenge. Mary replaces get with give. Mary gives freely. Mary gives extravagantly. Mary gives joyfully.

Here's the context. In John 11, Lazarus dies; after four days, he stinks. Jesus stands in front of the tomb and weeps. But then He shouts, "Lazarus, come out." Lazarus comes out.

For the Jewish leaders this was the last straw. By raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus moves from the category of "manageable nuisance" to the category of "serious threat." "So from that day on they made plans to put Him to death" (John 11:53).

As we come to John 12, Jesus has a price on His head. So does Lazarus. “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” (John 12:10–11). This anointing happens six days before the Passover.

That’s the context. In comes 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” (John 12:3). How much did the ointment cost? We’re told in John 12:5 that it’s worth a year’s income. Imagine dropping a year’s income. But remember what happened just before this, the raising of Lazarus. It is God’s action that replaces getting with giving.

To attend to someone’s feet was the task of the lowliest slave.. Further, in John 13:9–10, Jesus teaches that washing someone’s feet is the same as washing the entire body. Mary, then, embalms Christ’s entire body for burial. Her actions are prophetic, pointing to the embalming in John 19:39–40.

Mary is extravagant. Mary is excessive. Mary’s gone way over the top. And Judas? “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” (John 12:4–6). You see Judas was all about getting, not giving from all that God had already given him.

‘Leave her alone,’ Jesus replied, ‘so that she may keep it for the day of My burial’ ” (John 12:7). “ Jesus is making clear it is good to express our love for others before they die. Mary believes Jesus’ words John 2:13: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John 3:14: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” Mary gives Jesus everything she has. In doing so, she prepares Jesus to give everything He has

Both Matthew 26:13 and Mark 14:9 state, “Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” And why is that? Her actions point to Jesus’ His identity, His burial and ultimately His resurrection.

The truth is that what we spend reflects our love. In love Jesus gave Himself away to outcasts, the deaf, the blind, the lame, the lepers and to sinners. He never once counted the cost of giving Himself to and for others, even to the point of giving His life on the cross. Yes, God so loved He gave not gold and silver but His holy , precious blood.

Mary’s loving and giving points to Christ His love and His giving. Fixing our eyes on Jesus will strengthen our faith, our love and our giving so that it too points to Christ. Amen.