

45. Love and hate for Jesus

August 14, 2011

On many occasions contrast is good, especially in colors. If someone decorates one's home with black and white, it is so simple yet very elegant. Red and green are opposite colors, but they work together so well, especially for Christmas decoration. To bring class, richness, royalty, and elegance, people use purple and gold contrast. All these color contrasts compliment each other element.

But when it comes to the hearts of people, the contrast of emotion can bring quite a mess, or even tragedy. This morning, we are going to witness a contrast of emotion back to back – a woman who loved Jesus her Savior so much that she held nothing back; at the same time, there was the ultimate betrayer who was full of hatred against Jesus that he was willing to sell his own Master for thirty pieces of silver.

A. SIX DAYS BEFORE THE CRUCIFIXION

John 12:1-2 Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. 2 There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him.

Although there are chronological references in this Gospel of John, there are also general gaps introduced by such expressions as "after this," "after these things" as we have read before. While several of the events were introduced by these rather vague expressions, in this final period, however, the sequence is more definite.

Jesus was crucified on the Passover at the same time that all of the lambs were being slain on the Passover. Perfect timing. The true Lamb of God from the foundation of the universe was slain on the very day when lambs in the temple were slain in commemoration of Passover. It was literally six days before His crucifixion. The intensity is getting stronger and stronger.

This account was also recorded in Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9. Though I am running ahead of the texts, I must give you this that you would not get confused. The account that was given in Luke 7:36-50, where a former prostitute anointed Jesus in the home of Simon the Pharisee. Mary was a virtuous woman, and she anointed Him in the home of Simon the leper – obviously he was healed by the Lord Jesus.

Besides, the Luke 7 event took place in Galilee which is in Northern Israel, while this account with resuscitated Lazarus occurred in Bethany, Judea which is in Southern Israel. The fact that there are two "Simons" involved should not surprise us, because Simon was a common name in that day.

This dinner was given for Jesus as an expression of gratitude for the restoration of Lazarus. True to her nature, Martha was busy serving. Even though it was not her own house, Martha was busy serving. Do you know people like that? You invite them over for a dinner and all they want to do is cook, serve, and wash the dishes. Terrific people. We try to find them as often as we can and invite them over.

Serving the Lord and His people was Martha's way to love, adore, and worship Him. It was her language of love for Jesus.

Do you know that just about every church is supported and run by 10% of Christians who work in many different areas? There are 90% of born-again Christians who practically choose not to serve others as if it is not their requirements. Guess what? A news flash, according to the Word of God, all of us ought to serve one another.

Galatians 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Jesus Himself teaches us that He came to serve, not to be served. Being His followers, how much more should we follow His example? If you are not serving the Lord and His people, you need to start it today. You will be the one who will be blessed.

Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

B. THE LOVE OF MARY FOR JESUS

John 12:3 Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

When you combine all three accounts from these Gospels, we learn that Mary anointed both Jesus' head and His feet with the oil of spikenard. It was an act of pure love on her part. It was a totally boundless and unselfish love.

In a way, Mary was showing her devotion to Jesus before it was too late. She was "giving her fragrant bouquet of roses for the funeral of Jesus" while He was still alive, not bringing them to the funeral. It was act of worship in public, spontaneous, sacrificial, lavish, personal, and unembarrassed.

According to the comment of Judas in v5, this flask of oil would cost a year's income of a common laborer. In our terms, it is like writing a check of the total year's income and giving it to the Lord and His work. Like king David, Mary would not give to the Lord that which cost her nothing.

2 Samuel 24:24 Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

There are two most important things we should learn from what Mary did:

1) Mary knew about the upcoming death of Jesus while others including His own disciples didn't.

Jesus told His disciples and others who were close to Him about His eminent death on the cross time after time, but none of them understood with the exception of Mary.

How could she know it while others didn't? There are three occasions Mary was mentioned in the Gospels when she was with Jesus. Each time we find her at the feet of Jesus and listening to Him. There is no other way to learn about Jesus than through the Word of God, the Bible.

2) Mary's love for Jesus didn't hold anything back.

Mary didn't go down to WalMart in Bethany to buy some cheap perfume to pour it on Jesus, rather she used her own, the most valuable earthly possession she had.

The majority of us don't know how to do that. We calculate our love to God whether it is about the time – praying, reading the Bible; serving at the church; or giving money to the church. Mary's love for Jesus was not calculated love, but abandon-

ment to Jesus. Her love was the kind of love that gives everything, but regrets that it doesn't have more to give. The true definition of love is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13. This is not about the love between husband and wife only, but also between us and the Lord:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

It is funny or sometimes rather pathetic how we calculate our love for God. Somehow we think that we should balance the books with God. How can we ever match His love for us? We owe money to the mortgage company for our houses, we owe money to another finance company for the cars we drive, we owe fortune to all the credit companies, yet we think that we can balance with God.

Every believer of Jesus Christ should be Mary who worships the Lord and listens to the Lord through the Word of God and Martha who serves Him and others. Great examples to follow.

C. JUDAS' HATRED AGAINST JESUS

John 12:4-8 Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. 7 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. 8 For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

We call our daughters "Mary," but no parent would call their son "Judas." His very name associates with a synonym for treachery in dictionary.

V4 records the first comment by Judas in four Gospels. The first comment he made shows his cunning and deceitful mindset. Judas was the most tragic human who ever lived and the most despicable character in history. He was not concerned about the poor, but embezzling the funds for his own selfish desires.

A man like Judas could only bloom in a sphere of Christianity. He'd be lost in the world because there are a million Judases who would betray Christ for anything. Judas teaches us that outward appearances can be deceptive. Many people have a religious facade that hides secret sin.

Some people have written books and said how Judas was a misguided patriot and what Judas really wanted to do was good, he was trying to push Christ into a position of having to exert His power. There is a Spanish phrase for that: "Muy loco."

Judas lived three years of his life in proximity to the truth like no other except the eleven disciples. There are probably some people here this morning who have been living in the privilege of close proximity of the truth as well – by going to church, hanging around with believers of Jesus, and hearing about the Son of God, Jesus. But for the truth of the matter, you may have a facade that no one knows. You may have never invited Jesus into your heart. You need to receive Him into your heart today.

You may say, "Well, at least I am not Judas. I don't sell Jesus for profit." Listen, anyone who doesn't receive Jesus as Savior and the Lord, that person is selling Jesus for one's benefit whether it is money, career, sex, friends, ambition, or pride. They are selling Jesus for those things. That is why they refuse.

Matthew 26:14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

Matthew 26:14 gives the impression that immediately after this rebuke, Judas went to the priests and bargained to deliver Jesus into their hands. No doubt the Lord's rebuke of Judas at Bethany became the tipping point in his decision actually to betray Him. Also, the fact that Jesus once again openly announced His death would motivate Judas to escape while the opportunity was there.

Mary was preparing Jesus for His burial with her love while Judas was preparing in his mind to betray Jesus with his hatred. Two polar opposites!

Note what Jesus said in v8. This is something our federal government should remember. There is no cure for poverty. Redistributing wealth from rich people will not help, rather it will promote the poor to depend on the government more. But then again, that is exactly what the current federal government wants so that they can hold onto their power longer.

By the way, just in case you didn't know, those who are in the federal authority currently, they don't put themselves in the part of redistribution of the wealth so that they can keep their own wealth, but everyone else would be equally under them. What a concept! How do I know? Remember, I came from the country where they face the most hard line communist nation, North Korea. I know what communism and socialism do to a country – one massive disaster after another.

D. DEATH TO LAZARUS, AGAIN

John 12:9-11 Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, 11 because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

As I mentioned last Sunday, the chief priests were mostly Sadducees, and the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection. Lazarus was a living example of life after death, and having him around was an embarrassment to their theological system. For them, there was only one solution to this embarrassing problem – to put Lazarus to death also.

There are five characteristics of unbelievers universally:

- 1) They set their own false standards.
- 2) They always demand more evidence of God, but they don't take the evidence they already have into their hearts objectively.
- 3) They do bias researches that are purely subjective to meet their conclusion that they want.
- 4) They reject the facts.
- 5) They are egocentric, no one and nothing matters in their minds.

There are no recorded words of Lazarus in the Gospels, but his daily walk is enough to convince people that Jesus is the Son of God. And he became a literal "living wit-

ness" who was used by God to bring people to salvation. We should be like Lazarus, not dying and coming back to life physically, but spiritually.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Because of his effective witness, Lazarus was persecuted by the religious leaders who wanted to kill him and get rid of the evidence. A bummer for Lazarus, he had to die again.

As we look at this event, we see three "representatives" who are examples to us. Martha represents 'work' as she served the dinner she had prepared for the Lord. This was just as much a "fragrant offering" as was Mary's ointment. Mary represents 'worship,' and Lazarus represents 'witness.' People came to Bethany just to be able to see this man who had been raised from the dead. Actually, the Christian life ought to be a beautiful balance of worship, work, and witness.

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Don't try to calculate how much we give and what we do for God. We can NEVER outgive our God.
- 2) We can fool others with our religious facades, but not God. Let's be honest with God, others, and ourselves.
- 3) We should examine our own hearts and homes to ask whether we are bringing joy to His heart by our worship, work, and witness.