

81. Adoration and abhorrence for Jesus

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Two professional sports teams, the Dallas Cowboys and the New York Yankees bring out a rather unique response from people: Either you love them or hate them. There are not a whole lot of people who are in between.

When it comes to Jesus, the dividing line does not remain a thin line. It becomes adoration by His followers or abhorrence by the haters. It was that way when He walked on earth, it is still the same. Actually, it is going to become more distinctive as time passes.

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.

The true Lamb of God was slain on the very day when lambs in the temple were slain in commemoration of Passover. Perfect timing. This incident happened 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 so that you will 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 to Jesus as an expression of gratitude for the resuscitation 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.

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 requirement. 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.

B. THE ADORATION 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 the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John, we learn that Mary anointed both Jesus' head and His feet with the oil of spikenard. It was an act of pure love and adoration 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, instead of bringing them to the funeral. It was an act of worship in public, spontaneous, sacrificial, lavish, personal, and unembarrassed.

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 imminent 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 'El Cheapo' perfume to pour it on Jesus, rather she used her own, the most valuable earthly possession she had.

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.

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 abandonment 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 a 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.

Just to see which one is the most expensive perfume in the world today, I got on the internet. I found that this "Clive Christian's No 1 Imperial Majesty" from Sax Fifth Avenue is selling at mere \$435,000. Ladies, tell your husbands that you want one of these for your birthday. Some people have more money than brains.

C. THE ABHORRENCE OF JUDAS FOR 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 the 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'd 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 their 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 Swedish phrase for that: "Muy poopoo."

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 the 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 his or her own 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 adoration while Judas was preparing in his mind to betray Jesus with his abhorrence. Two polar opposites!

As she broke the alabaster jar and poured the ointment upon Jesus, Mary showed us about true worship:

1) True worship comes from brokenness.

When we're finally at our wits' end and broken, we humble ourselves before the Lord and worship Him.

Psalm 34:18 The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

2) True worship is often costly.

It cost Mary a lot. What does our worship cost you and me? Our image? "There's no way I'm going to sing those songs. I'm too cool for that," some say. Or "I don't care if Scripture declares lifting hands is a sign of submission and adoration, but I'll never lift mine. People will think I'm weird." Well, people already know that you are weird, so don't worry about that. But ask yourself, "Whom do I worship really?" If it is God, it really doesn't matter what the others think and what you think. If it is the people or things, your object of worship is wrong. You must remove your pride to worship the Lord.

3) True worship is often misunderstood.

There will always be those in Judas' corner who say, "Quit trying to be so holy. Do something more practical." They will scrutinize your sincere motive of worship. Let'em. But God loves your worship. However, if you are causing a lot of commotion and bringing attention to yourself instead of God, that's wrong.

4) True worship is always beneficial.

After Mary wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair, her hair took on the same fragrance as Jesus' feet. That's what worship does. When we're worshipping the Lord, we get to take on the fragrance of the Lord.

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.

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 witness" 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 to follow. 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.