

Jesus' worth to you? Are you like Mary or Judas?

As you consider that, think about this: Mary anointed Jesus' head and feet with this powerful perfume on the Saturday before Palm Sunday. So six days before Good Friday. How long do you think the smell of that perfume lasted? If a lady here were to pour a whole pint of perfume on her head and then not wash her hair, how long would that perfume stay there? Remember Jesus' words? *"She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare me for my burial."* When the Roman soldiers pounded the crown of thorns onto Jesus' head, do you think they could smell the perfume in his hair? When Jesus hung there alone on the cross, do you think he could smell the perfume in his hair? When Joseph of Arimathea laid Jesus in the tomb, could he smell the perfume? Mary got it. She knew what was coming. No matter what you give to Jesus, Jesus already gave more.

It's true that you are worth as much as someone was willing to pay for you. So how much is that? Jesus' life. How much is Jesus' life worth? As the great theologian Buzz Lightyear would say: "To infinity and beyond!" You're worth it! To Jesus, you're worth everything! I don't care how you compare to other people at work. Jesus says you're worth it! I don't care what you think about yourself when you look in the mirror. Jesus says you're worth it! I don't care what people say about you behind your back, or what that insecure little voice keeps saying inside your head. Jesus says you're worth it! You are worth as much as someone was willing to pay for you. Which in your case was everything! So how much is Jesus worth to you?

The famous painter Leonardo da Vinci painted a picture of Jesus in the 1500s. The painting was bought and sold and lost and forgotten many times over the years. How much was it worth? In 1958, it sold for \$100 at an auction. No one knew it was by Leonardo da Vinci. Then, in 2011, an art collector bought the painting for \$10,000, thinking it was a copy of a da Vinci painting. He soon realized it wasn't a copy. It was the real thing! That painting just sold this past Wednesday at an auction. Did you hear the selling price? \$450 million! How much is it worth? It's worth as much as someone is willing to pay for it.

We're about to enter a special time of year. Advent. Christmas. Lent. Easter. We're entering the time of year where we will see again and again what Jesus did for us. How much Jesus paid for us. I hope you see again and again that you are worth as much as Jesus was willing to pay for you—everything! Mary got it. And my prayer for you is that, like Mary, you realize how much Jesus is worth to you. He's the real thing. Jesus is worth your time. Jesus is worth your sacrifice. Jesus is worth your love. Jesus is worth your generous offerings. *"Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire beside you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever"* (Psalm 73:25-26). Jesus is worth it!

**Luke 14:1-11**  
**Pastor Nathan Nass**

**Joyful Generosity #3**  
**November 19, 2017**

**Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. <sup>2</sup> "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot." <sup>3</sup> While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. <sup>4</sup> Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? <sup>5</sup> It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. <sup>6</sup> "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>7</sup> The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup> She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. <sup>9</sup> I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." <sup>10</sup> Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. <sup>11</sup> They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.**

#### **How Much Is Jesus Worth?**

We now have more cars than drivers in our household. I'm a little ashamed to admit it. We recently got a minivan for our growing family, so now we have three cars. If we decide to sell one, how much would it be worth? How much is your car worth? It's worth as much as someone is willing to pay for it, right? I could try to sell my car for \$100,000. That'd be nice! I could put a nice "For Sale" sign on it. Put an ad on Craigslist. But nobody's going to buy it for that price! A car is worth as much as someone is willing to pay for it. That's true for just about everything, right? Money talks! Just about anything in life is worth as much as someone is willing to pay for it. So how much is Jesus worth? I want you to think about that today. How much is Jesus worth?

Sadly, to some people, Jesus isn't worth anything at all. Here's how our lesson starts: *"Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him."* The Jewish leaders had had enough. It was time for Jesus to go. For too long Jesus had told them that they weren't good enough on their own to get to heaven. They hated it. For too long he had said that sinners would be saved by believing in him. They hated it. It was time for Jesus to die! How much was Jesus worth? To them, nothing!

In contrast, Mark flashes back to an event a few days earlier. The day before Palm Sunday, Jesus went to eat at the home of Simon the Leper. It's always great to see whom

Jesus hung out with! Simon the Leper—do you know what a “leper” is? Someone who has leprosy—a terrible skin disease. Simon the Leper must have been someone whom Jesus healed of leprosy. In addition, the Gospel of John tells us that Lazarus, Martha, and Mary were there too. Remember those siblings? Lazarus is the one Jesus raised from the dead! So Jesus and the once almost dead guy Simon and the once really dead guy Lazarus were eating together. How much do you think Jesus was worth to them? Everything!

But it wasn't Simon or Lazarus who showed that. Right in the middle of the meal “*a woman*”—we know it's Mary—“*came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.*” As Jesus was reclining at the table, Mary unexpectedly came in with a beautiful stone jar—alabaster was a fancy stone. In it was a pint of pure nard, which doesn't sound good. But nard was an expensive perfume—imported all the way from the Himalayan Mountains in India. That one jar was worth a year's wages. The Bible actually says “300 days' wages.” How much would that be? Maybe \$50,000? Mary broke the jar—that was the only way to get the perfume out—and poured the perfume on his head and on his feet and wiped them with her hair.

Isn't this a beautiful story? What do you have that's worth \$50,000? I can imagine this perfume was a gift that someone gave Mary on a very special occasion. I bet that beautiful alabaster jar must have been her most prized possession. When would she use it? On what special occasion would she break open that jar and pour out the perfume? Her wedding? Her first child? Suddenly, she had an idea. For Jesus! She could use it on her Savior Jesus! How could she do that? This was the same Mary who had sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his Word while her sister Martha busied herself in the kitchen. She was going to give her perfume—her prized possession to Jesus. I bet her hand shook with joy and excitement as she poured it out for him. For Jesus. How much was Jesus worth? A lot!

But then the disciples had to ruin it. “*Some of those present*”—Jesus' disciples and especially Judas—“*were saying indignantly to one another, 'Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor. And they rebuked her harshly.'*” This faithful woman pours out her love on Jesus, and what was she told? “What a waste! Think of how much money that's worth! \$50,000? You could have given to the poor! Why did you pour it on Jesus? What a waste!” How do you think Mary herself felt? Ashamed. Foolish. The message was loud and clear: Jesus is not worth this much!

So would Jesus say? You'd almost expect him to say kindly, “Mary, they're right. You shouldn't do all this for me. It's a waste. It's not worth it!” But, surprisingly, that's not what he said. “*Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me.... I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.*” What tender words! Was it worth it to pour out \$50,000 of extravagant perfume on Jesus' head? Yes! In Jesus' eyes, yes! In fact, everyone in the world would know what this woman did! Now 2000 years later, you know too. Jesus is worth that much!

Here's the best part: Mary got it. Jesus added, “*She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.*” In a beautiful way, Mary got it! For months, Jesus had been predicting his suffering and death. For months, Jesus had said that he was going up to Jerusalem to suffer and die. But nobody got it. Nobody understood. Nobody except Mary. Mary lived in Bethany. Bethany was a little town on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. Now Jesus was there. He was about to die for her. Mary knew it. She believed it. And she didn't care what other people thought, she was going to do what she could for her Savior before he died for her. To Mary, Jesus was worth it!

But not to Judas. “*Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money.*” What was the final straw for Judas? Money. Money was worth more to him than Jesus. If people were going to waste so much money on Jesus, this had to stop. So he went to those enemies of Jesus and asked how much money they would give him to betray him. Do you remember how much? 30 pieces of silver. Remember how much Mary's perfume was worth? 300 days' wages. It's scary what the love of money can do to you. To Mary, Jesus was worth everything. Even 300 days' wages! To Judas? 30 silver coins.

So how much is Jesus worth to you? That's what our lives are about. That's what our offerings are about. When we give our offerings, we're saying, “How much is Jesus worth?” Unfortunately, that's often not the question we ask. We ask, “How much do you need?” How much perfume did Jesus need? Did he smell bad? Maybe... But it wasn't about need. The numbers on the back of the Evangel are not the reason to give. Or we ask, “How much do I *have* to give?” Did Mary have to give? No! Or we say, “I'll see what's leftover.” That alabaster jar was not the leftovers. It was the firstovers. What motivated Mary's gift to Jesus? Jesus did! Jesus is worth it! “I want to show Jesus how much he's worth to me!”

How much is Jesus worth to you? I want you to think about the offerings in the Old Testament. Back then, you didn't bring a check to church. You brought a lamb or a bull to the temple. And what did they do? They burned it up. They lit it on fire! What would we say? “What a waste! At least make some hamburgers out of it!” But were those offerings a waste? No! They showed God how much he was worth. I once heard of a pastor who tried to make that point by lighting a \$20 bill on fire in front of church. “It's God's! I'm willing to give up even my money to God. He's worth it!” On the way out, a member told him, “It's a federal offense to deface U.S. currency.” So he stopped. But do you get the point?

Jesus said, “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Matthew 6:21). The way you use your money shows you where your heart is. “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” Your money doesn't follow your heart. Your heart follows your money. You will love and treasure whatever you spend your money on. Things are worth as much as people are willing to pay for them. What do your offerings tell Jesus that he's worth? Mary and Judas both claimed to follow Jesus. But only one of them really believed in him. How could you tell the difference? By the way they used their money. How much is