

**Title:** **-S-** Jesus Deserves Our Best

**Object:** Wedding Ring

**Scripture:** “Mary then took 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.” (John 12:3)

**-S-** This ring is one of my most prized possessions. It is precious not because of how much it cost, but because it was given to me by my wife, Joyce and is a symbol of our promise before God to love one another until death do us part. I would never sell this ring – it truly is most precious to me.

If I asked you to name your most prized possession, what would it be? If a friend came to visit your home would you give your most prized possession to them to show your love? This is what a woman named Mary did in our story this morning.

One day Jesus went to the village of Bethany. This is where His good friend Lazarus lived with his two sisters, Mary and Martha. Lazarus gave a dinner party in the honor of Jesus and as they were sitting and eating Martha was serving them food and Mary was sitting at Jesus’ feet listening to Him teach.

As Mary sat at Jesus’ feet she did a very unusual thing. **-S-** “Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus.”

**PICTURE** **-S-** Then she “wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.” **PICTURE** (John 12:3)

One of Jesus’ disciples, by the name of Judas, was very upset by what Mary had done. Judas said that the bottle of expensive perfume could have been sold and

the money used to buy food for the poor. The perfume was worth a whole year's wages. Can you imagine if your dad gave away all the money he earned in an entire year! But, Judas was not thinking of the poor, for he had been stealing money and he wanted the money that the perfume could have been sold for.

Jesus told Judas to leave Mary alone because what Mary had done both honored Jesus and foreshadowed that He would be again be anointed when He was crucified and laid in the tomb. Mary loved Jesus so much she wanted to honor Him and give Him her most precious possession.

Mary also received the most precious gift that anyone can be given. You can receive this gift too! Do you know what this most precious gift was that Jesus gave to Mary and you can have also? It is the gift of salvation and everlasting life to life with God. It is precious because it cost Jesus everything – it cost Him His life.

What can you give Jesus?  He wants what is most precious – He wants you to give Him your life and soul.

Heavenly Father, we are so thankful that Jesus gave His life that we might have the most precious gift there is – salvation and to be a child of God. May we, in return, give your hearts to Jesus and be faithful to live for Him all the days of our lives. Amen

**READING – 2 Corinthians 4:1-15**

**-S- For The Glory of God**

September 7, 2014

John 11:1-16

Sermon #62

**PRAYER**

**-S-** The most important theme seen throughout the entire history of the universe and in our lives is the glory of God. It is the reason for everything that God does, for the creation of the universe, the redemption of mankind and even the judgment of unbelievers. The glory of God is why He created each of us. **-S-**

<sup>5</sup> “Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it, **-S-** <sup>6</sup> I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness, I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You, and I will appoint You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations ... <sup>8</sup> I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images.” (Isaiah 42:5-6 & 8) The scriptures extol the greatness of God’s glory from Genesis to Revelation. **-S-** King David said, “Be exalted above the heavens, O God; *Let Your glory be above all the earth.*” (Psalm 57:11) God’s glory is revealed in countless ways, one of these ways is in His creation, **-S-** “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.” (Psalm 19:1) God’s glory is also seen in redemption, God saved sinners, like you and me, **-S-** “... to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy (*those who God has called to be His children*), which He prepared beforehand for glory.” (Romans 9:23) The Apostle Paul called the message of salvation **-S-** “the gospel of the glory of Christ and all things *are for your sakes (the redeemed)* ... so that the grace which is

spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:4 & 15)

Jesus, the Son of God, the living Word of God **-S-** “became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) It is Jesus that shows the glory of God. **-S-** The Apostle John explaining the significance of Jesus’ first miracle of the water made into wine at Cana said this was done to “manifest His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.” (John 2:11) God’s glory is seen through the ministry of Jesus.

**-S-** Focusing on the Gospel according to John we saw that chapter ten closed Jesus’ public ministry. Jesus’ ministry was designed to show God’s glory through Christ to the people. **-S-** Chapters 11 and 12 form a bridge between the first 10 chapters focused on Christ’s public ministry and His passion recorded in chapters 13 to 21.

**-S-** In chapter 11 we read of the greatest miracle of the seven that have been recorded in the Book of John - the raising of Lazarus four days after he had died. Jesus had withdrawn to the region of Perea (*puh-ree’uh*), which means “beyond the Jordan.”\* Jesus returns briefly to Bethany, what we would call a suburb of Jerusalem, in spite of the danger to come to the aid of Martha, Mary and Lazarus and then He would leave the Jerusalem area until the last week of His life with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, days later His crucifixion and ending with His resurrection. **-S-** Jesus’ resurrection of Lazarus gave evidence of Jesus Christ’s glory in three ways: **-S-** First, it pointed, without doubt, to His deity. **-S-** Second, this miracle would strengthen the faith of His disciples. **-S-** Third, it foreshadowed Jesus’ own crucifixion and resurrection. John wrote **-S-** chapter 11 in a way that it can be broken down into four sections: **-S-** the preparation for the miracle in verses

1 to 16, **-S-** the arrival of Jesus in verses 17 to 36, **-S-** the miracle in verses 37 to 44 and **-S-** the aftermath in verses 45 to 57.

**-S-** Today we will study the preparation for the miracle in verses 1 to 16, seeking to understand more of God's glory and more about those involved in this miracle - three persons and one group - **-S-** Lazarus, **-S-** Mary and Martha and **-S-** the disciples.

### **-S-** The Setting and Lazarus

John's introduction is straightforward, **-S-**<sup>1</sup> "Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick." John's writing that there was "a certain man" shows that even though Lazarus would be the instrument used by Jesus for this miracle - the focus will be the glory of Christ and His Father. **-S-** Even Lazarus' name, which is the shortened form of the Hebrew name Eleazar means "God has helped" or "Helped by God." This too shows all is for the glory of God.

John further lets us know that Lazarus is from the **-P-** village of Bethany located about 1.5 miles to the east of Jerusalem on the south-eastern slope of the Mount of Olives and it is the village of Mary and Martha and their home had been a place of refuge and planning during the ministry of Jesus. Then John further says, **-S-** "Mary anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair." John does not write of this event in detail until chapter 12, however, from the **-S-** Synoptic Gospels (*Matt. 26, Mark 14 and Luke 7*) we know this happened before Lazarus sickness and death. John's readers are already aware of Mary's act of love and devotion.

## **-S-** Sisterly Concern and Delay

Reading at verse 3, **-S-** “So the sisters sent *word* to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’<sup>4</sup> But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, ‘This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.’ **-S-**<sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.<sup>6</sup> So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days *longer* in the place where He was.” Mary and Martha sent a messenger north beyond the Jordan to inform Jesus of Lazarus’ illness and fully believed that Jesus both could and would heal their brother, for Jesus loved him. Now the area **-P-** beyond the Jordan River was about 60 to 70 miles north of Bethany. It would have taken a messenger the better part of two days to reach Jesus. Jesus, being “all knowing” was already aware of Lazarus’ condition. **-S-** The messenger’s round trip would have taken at least 4 days. By the time he returned Lazarus was dead and Jesus was coming. Since we know that Lazarus had been dead four days upon Jesus’ arrival, Lazarus died shortly after the messenger left Bethany to find Jesus. **-S-** Both Mary and Martha would have known of Jesus’ healing the nobleman’s son from a distance, as recorded in chapter four of John. They must have believed Jesus would do the same for their brother.

When the messenger arrives and informs Jesus of Lazarus’s condition Jesus responds, **-S-** “This sickness is not to end in death.” Jesus was not saying Lazarus would not die, but that dead would not be the ultimate outcome. Jesus continues, He says that Lazarus’ death would be, **-S-** “for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.” God would receive glory through the Son by this miracle of Lazarus’ resurrection and people would know Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. This was the purpose of Lazarus’s death as it is with the suffering or

death of believers today – the purpose is for God’s glory. This may be hard for us to see while we suffer, but often for those observing from a distance, they see more clearly. **-B-** I remember when my daughter, Jennifer and her husband Lester gave birth to Christopher and knew that without the Lord intervening he would die. Christopher did in fact die several months later – it was an emotionally painful process. Lester asked me why God would have allowed this. Because I was one-step removed I was able to see that because of the way Lester and Jennifer dealt with Christopher’s birth, short life and death that people all around them saw not only their love and heartbreak for Christopher, but also their love for Christ. Lester had even told me how two families in his army unit had come to believe in the Lord as they observed this heartbreaking time. Christopher entered heaven quickly and at least two families will also. **-S-** There is always a reason for what God does or allows in our lives. To see and understand requires faith and the willingness to seek the Lord. You see I was able to know that God has a purpose in all things because while we had lived in Papua New Guinea - God had saved me from three murder attempts to strengthen my faith, for me to know He had a purpose for my life, **-S-** I learned that I belong to God alone and that the only reason I live is by His grace. Joyce and I were able to come back to the USA and strengthen Lester and Jennifer and continue to strengthen others today.

Returning to John we read what appears to be strange words, **-S-** “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when He heard that he was sick, He then stayed two days *longer* in the place where He was.” As we came to understand just a little while ago, Lazarus died shortly after the messenger left Bethany and had died by the time the messenger reached Jesus. Jesus’ delay did not result in Lazarus death, but instead would result in many people seeing the power of God

and Jesus performing a miracle that brought God the Father glory. **-S-** Jesus' delay then served several purposes: **-S-** It strengthen the sisters faith in Jesus by forcing them to trust Him. **-S-** It made clear beyond doubt that Lazarus was truly dead when Jesus arrived. **-S-** It demonstrated that his resurrection was truly a miracle of God.

## **-S-** Jesus' Disciples

We continue with reading the Word of God beginning at verse 7, **-S-** "Then after this He said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to Him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?' <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. **-S-** <sup>10</sup> But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.' <sup>11</sup> This He said, and after that He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.' <sup>12</sup> The disciples then said to Him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.' <sup>13</sup> Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. **-S-** <sup>14</sup> So Jesus then said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead, <sup>15</sup> and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.' <sup>16</sup> Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to *his* fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.'"

Jesus simply tells His disciples, **-S-** "Let us go to Judea again" and the disciples are amazed and thinking why should we leave the Jordan where people are coming to Jesus and believing in Him as the Messiah. The disciples know that **-S-** "the Jews (meaning the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem) were just now seeking to stone You." They do not understand why Jesus would walk willing back into this pit of vipers

seeking to kill Him. These disciples remembered what Jesus had said to the Pharisees earlier, **-S-** “You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.” (Matthew 12:34) They were keenly aware of the evil in the hearts of the Pharisees and their desire to kill Jesus. So they are thinking why would the Lord want to risk returning to the Jerusalem area when He had just told them, **-S-** “This sickness is not to end in death.” (v. 4) Furthermore, **-S-** if Lazarus needed healing, why not do it from a safe distance as He had with the nobleman’s son recorded in chapter 4.

Jesus gently responds to calm His disciples’ fears saying, **-S-** “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” Here Jesus is using the Jewish tradition day and night to symbolize the twelve hours of day as His ministry on earth as allotted by God the Father and the twelve hours of night when His light will no longer be observed except by those He calls to live in His light by the power of the Holy Spirit. **-S-** Jesus is safe even when He treads on the heads of vipers or walks among the Jewish leaders for His time, given by God the Father, is not spent. **-S-** When God’s appointed time for Jesus’ earthly ministry is completed, then God will allow history to “stumble” and kill the Light of the World so that God would receive glory when Jesus Christ is resurrected.

Now verse 11 begins in a way to show that Jesus paused after He made His symbolic statement about day and night to allow the truth to sink into the minds and hearts of His disciples and then He continues. Verse 11, **-S-** “This He said, and after that *(the pause)* He said to them, ‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.’” Writers throughout the scriptures

used the word “sleep” as a euphemism for “death”, especially when referring in the New Testament to believers. The disciples, a little slow to understand, respond to Jesus, **-S-** “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” As far as the disciples understand there is no serious problem - Lazarus “will recover”, why risk going to Bethany? With patience Jesus clears up any misunderstanding **-S-** “Now Jesus had spoken of his (*Lazarus*) death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. <sup>14</sup> So Jesus then said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead.’” Jesus statement makes two things clear: **-S-** First, (for the disciples) that Lazarus was not just sick, but dead. **-S-** Secondly, that Jesus was “all knowing” because even though the messenger said Lazarus was sick, Jesus knew he was, in fact, dead.

Jesus continues to clarify things for the disciples by saying, **-S-** “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe.” (v. 15) Jesus is certainly not glad because Lazarus has died, but since Jesus was not present when Lazarus died and by the time Jesus arrives Lazarus will have been dead for four days this will enabled two things: **-S-** First, no one will be able to accuse Jesus of having some involvement in Lazarus death or being able to falsely manipulate his resurrection. **-S-** Secondly, this miracle will strengthen the disciples faith and help prepare them for ministry when Jesus is no longer with them. Jesus’ time on earth is nearing its end and the disciples will need all that will strengthen their faith.

We close with verse 16, **-S-** “Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, ‘Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.’” We find here a couple of interesting facts. The name **-S-** Thomas, which is Hebrew and Didymus, which is its Greek equivalent both, mean “twin” giving a strong indication that Thomas had a twin brother. Thomas is known in history as **-S-** “Doubting Thomas” because in chapter 20 of John we read, “The other disciples were saying to him

(Thomas), 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.'" (John 20:25) Like Peter who denied Christ three times and then became strong in faith proclaiming the gospel boldly and died crucified upside down, Thomas also had a weak moment. However, here we see a different Thomas, he says to his fellow disciples, **-S-** "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him." His words reflect his love and devotion and courage, in spite of what he understands will be an action by Jesus that leads them all to their death. Here we see a Thomas who loved Jesus so deeply and strongly that he was willing to **-S-** "die with Him." Thomas was sincere and resolute. Yet, at the crucial moment in Gethsemane, which is only a few months away, his faith, like that of all the disciples would be shown to be, for a short period of time, weak and lacking. For the disciples, like us believers today, if we take our eyes off of Jesus as our Lord and Savior we too will flounder.

My beloved let us keep our focus on Christ and demonstrate the courage of "Faithful" Thomas found here. Thomas and all the disciples followed Jesus to Bethany, may we follow Jesus wherever He leads. As the Apostle Paul wrote and lived – may we also live, **-S-** "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

*\*The name occurs nowhere in the Bible except once in a few manuscripts of Luke 6:17, but is frequent in the writings of the first-century historian Josephus. The biblical expressions 'beyond the Jordan' and 'across the Jordan' appear to be the equivalent of Perea in Matt. 4:15, 25; 19:1; Mark 3:8; 10:1; John 1:28; 3:26; and 10:40.*