

January 28, 2024, Pastor Jason Smotherman

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1) Putting yourself in the position of Mary, what would giving a year's wage to Jesus make you feel, think, and question?
- 2) In your biblical understanding, what would it mean to bring the whole tithe into the local church? Does it only include 10% of what is left over (net profit)? gross? income only? inheritances? House sales? Note: this question's intent is to spark conversation on an individual level on how hard it can be to trust God's will ALL of our life, not to bring manipulation or condemnation in any way.
- 3) Offerings are a part of sacrificial giving and include our giving to missions, benevolence, outside ministries, and generosity to those around us. We encourage you to find a person this month to bless as a tangible way to let you know that God is allowed to be a conduit of His will in our life.
- 4) What have been some struggles in the past when it comes to the areas of giving and what would it take for you to start?

SERMON NOTES:

The Weapons of our Warfare – Supernatural Generosity

Matthew 6:21

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where a person directs their income tells a lot about his/her priorities in life. Christ's teaching is very simple and clear. **What we do with our finances/treasures reveals what is inside our heart.**

Examples:

I may say that I love **the local church**, which is God's answer to spread the gospel throughout the world (through believers in action). For certain, there are imitations, cheap forms, business wolves who have swept in and acted like **A** church, but I am talking about **THE CHURCH**. If I love **THE CHURCH** but I never give to **THAT CHURCH**, no matter what I say, my heart is not in the church, because my treasure is not there.

Rick Renner

I may say I love the Lord, but if I don't tithe as the Lord commands, what does it say about me? I'm either ignorant about tithing, or my words are cheap. If I really loved the Lord, my money would reflect that I love Him. I would tithe.



Words are cheap and easily spoken. Anyone can say he loves his church. But when a person sacrifices and gives to the church, he is demonstrating that his words are real. His heart really is in the church.

Consider -

A man who says he loves his wife but never gives her any money or special gifts to demonstrate that love. Yet somehow that same man is able to find the money to go fishing, buy a fishing boat, go work out at the gym with the guys, and so on. What has he demonstrated? **He loves himself more than he loves his wife. That's why he's spending his treasure on himself."**

"How many men have told their wives, "I love you, Sweetheart" and then spent all their extra money on themselves? Then the wife is told that there just isn't any money available to do what she wants to do. How does it make the wife feel when her husband does this to her time after time? He can say, "I love you" all he wants, but she knows he really loves himself. What he does with his money tells the real story.

Jesus made it very clear that where a person's treasure is — where his money is — that's where his heart will be also. So if you really want to know where a person's heart is, follow his money and you'll find out.

John 12 tells the incredible story of a woman who literally changes the atmosphere and aroma in the room.

Jesus and His disciples were having dinner in the home of Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

This family was very close to Jesus during His earthly ministry. At that dinner, Mary showed her love by bringing Jesus an extremely expensive gift. The Bible tells us that Mary brought Jesus a gift of ointment of **spikenard** — in fact, she brought Him **an entire pound of it!**"

Some scholars have estimated -

The worth of the ointment was about a year's worth of wages. Nard is made from a plant that grows in the Himalayas and is used as ointment or perfume. **The cost of the ointment was worth about 300 denarii, about \$72,000 in U.S. dollars.**

"The word "spikenard" comes from the Greek word nardos, which describes one of the most expensive perfumes that existed at that time.

Context:

Spikenard was an uncommon perfume extracted from grasses that grew in the country of India. Once the juices were squeezed out of the grass, they were dried into a hard, lard-like substance. Turning that lard like substance into perfume was a very lengthy and costly process.



If you add to this the cost of transporting spikenard from India to other parts of the world, you can see why this particular perfume cost so much money.

Spikenard was so expensive that few people could buy it; most had to buy one of the many cheap imitations available. But the word used in John 12:3 tells us that **Mary didn't bring Jesus a cheap imitation; she brought Jesus the real thing** — an ointment so valuable that it was normally reserved and used only as gifts for kings and nobility. This was the gift Mary brought to Jesus."

**Many bring a cheap imitation,
our desire must be to bring the real thing**

We can learn more about the value of Mary's gift in John 12:3, where it says the ointment was "very costly." This phrase "very costly" is from the Greek word **polutimos**, a compound of the words **polus** and **timios**. The word **polus** means much or great. The word **timios** means to honor, to respect, or worth. Together these words describe something that is of great worth or something that is of considerable financial value.

The fact the Mary possessed this is incredible.

How many people can say they have a year's wages in reserve?

Just by having this proved that she was a proper steward of the resources God gave her.

Even more remarkable was what she did with it.

She literally poured her life out as an offering at the feet of Jesus.

John 12:3 says, "Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus...."

To be clear:

What I am not saying -

- Give a years offering this morning.
- Equating Parkway (the organization) to Jesus.
- Promising prosperity because you give to His church.

I am clearly saying -

The weapon God uses often times to change the aroma or the atmosphere in a room

(perspective) is that of generosity. **Generosity unlocks atmosphere changing properties in the space around you.**

When Mary took the lid off that expensive bottle, tipped it downward, and began to pour that precious ointment onto Jesus' feet, **everyone in the room must have gasped!** This kind of perfume was not normally used for feet! Rather, it was the kind of ointment used to anoint the heads of kings and dignitaries. Mary's actions would have been considered a horrible waste in most people's minds, but that wasn't how she saw it. Mary loved, appreciated, and valued the feet of the Master!"

**Others will gasp at what you give because
they don't understand why you give.**

Her giving didn't just reach the crowd in the house.
It had an audience in the past. The prophets declared what they saw.

Isaiah 52:7 describes why Mary felt this way: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, **Thy God reigneth!**"

It also reaches into the future. Scripture records this moment.

Your generosity builds upon those that have gone before you and extends to those will come behind you.

You see, no other feet in the entire world were more beautiful to Mary than the feet of Jesus. Jesus had changed her life. Jesus had brought her brother back from the dead (see John 11:32-44). Jesus had brought new meaning into her family. To Mary, every step Jesus took was precious, honored, and greatly valued.

John 12:3 tells us she wiped his feet with her hair.
So not only did she give him what represented her life, she used her hair which represented her "glory". Her wonder, identity, her being was on full display.

After she poured the spikenard onto Jesus' feet, Mary reached up to her head and untied her long, beautiful hair, gathering it in her hands. Then she leaned down and began to wipe Jesus' feet dry with her hair.

In the days of the New Testament, a woman's hair represented her glory and honor. The apostle Paul referred to this in 1 Corinthians 11:15 when he wrote that a woman's hair was a "glory" to her.

For Mary to undo her hair and use it as a towel to wipe Jesus' feet was probably the greatest act of humility she could have shown. She was demonstrating how deeply she loved and how greatly she valued Jesus. She didn't throw a financial offering at His feet, but she possessed an attitude of worship as she gave Jesus the best gift she had to offer.

Can you imagine the tears that streamed down Mary's cheeks as she touched those precious feet. In total humility, she dried Jesus' feet with the glory and honor of her hair. John 12:3 tells us that "...the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." Certainly the house would be



filled with the odor of spikenard once Mary poured an entire pound of that expensive perfume on Jesus' feet!"

"Considering how much spikenard cost, this was an enormous amount for Mary to use to anoint Jesus' feet.

In fact, Judas Iscariot indignantly asked Jesus, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" (John 12:5). The Greek word for a "pence" is denarius. In that day, a Roman denarius was one day's salary. So when Judas announced that the spikenard could have been sold for three hundred pence, he was saying that Mary's perfume was worth three hundred days of salary.

In the end Judas wasn't exposing Mary, he was exposing His own wrong perspective on giving.

You see, it may sound very simple, but it is a fact that if you follow a person's money, you'll discover what is or isn't important to that person's life. Look at a person's finances, and in just a matter of minutes you can tell what he values most in life. The way he spends his money will tell the whole story of what he prizes, cherishes, loves, and adores.

Our generosity and love for Jesus can be seen in how, where, and why we give.

We are supposed to give - **Cheerfully and consistently.**

Where we give - 10% to the local church **of all increase**, with offerings above and beyond, and to give around to those who are in "need".

Why we give - because He first gave, and because we have a heart of gratitude for those who have given so that we may now give to others.

As we give, every dream and mission that God has for us as a collective body can and will be met according to His will.

Closing -

- Stories of Benevolence (9 calls in one day last week)
- Stories of Budget (Mission can be tabled because of a lack of finances)
- Stories of Blessing (If you can trust Him with your salvation, surely you can trust Him with your finances.
- An overview of a tithing envelope.