

# John 12vs1-26

Life comes through Death...

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# Life comes through Death...

## John 12 vs 1-26

### **Introduction**

In our last study we noticed that the final part of John's Gospel has to do with LIFE... that Jesus came to bring through his death.

The structure of the final part of the Gospel makes this point. The section opens and closes with miracles of LIFE – the resurrection of Lazarus in ch 11, and Jesus' resurrection in ch 20. These miracles of life are succeeded and preceded by teaching on Jesus' death:

- ch 12 is all about Jesus' death.
- chs 18-19 record the details of Jesus' trial and crucifixion.

So the life that Jesus offers... comes to us by his death.

The end of ch 11 makes it clear that the Jewish leaders are gunning for Jesus. Far from hiding away, Jesus deliberately goes towards his death and ensures that his death coincides with the Passover.

ch 12 is made up of six sections. We shall tackle the first three in this study and the last three in the next.

- 1) Jesus' Death and our Devotion (vs 1-11)
- 2) Jesus' Death and his Royal Identity (vs 12-19)
- 3) Jesus' Death and Life for the World (vs 20-26 )

### **Jesus' Death and our Devotion**

Read ch 12 vs 1-11: *Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. <sup>3</sup> Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" <sup>6</sup> He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the money bag he used to help himself to what was put into it. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."*

<sup>9</sup> *When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, <sup>11</sup> because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*

The section is 'bracketed' by mentions of Lazarus, whom Jesus has just raised from the dead. This miracle of life-giving forms the back-drop to everything that takes place.

There are four main characters and at least three major lessons:

Let's start by looking at Mary:

v 5: *"Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"*

The cost of Mary's act:

- This is a very humble thank offering: 1 denarii = a day's wages... so her generous action is the equivalent of an entire year's salary!

The devotion of her act:

- Just imagine the state of feet after wearing sandals in a dry, dusty, filthy environment!! No wonder your servant would wash your guests' feet on entry to your house. If you really wanted to honour your guest – you might have deigned to do so yourself...
- But NO - Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her hair!!
- This is a woman who KNEW who was before her - the very Creator of the Universe!
- A woman's head remained covered – she would only show her hair to her husband... so WHAT an act of personal debasement and honour in the presence of her Saviour.

So - serious expense and costly personal sacrifice - THAT'S GRATITUDE!

Her action also shows total recognition that Lazarus HAD been dead... and has been brought back to life - saved!

PLUS – by anointing Jesus in this way, we gain another pointer to the death to come for Jesus... and the anointing of his body after death. Hence:

v 7: *Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial."*

- Jesus' return to Lazarus' house links together Jesus' life-giving work and his death.

In short – Mary gives the equivalent to her ALL – why? Gratitude for life with him, her Saviour.

Contrast her despair in ch 11:

Read ch 11 v 32: *Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

Is Mary's washing action a model response?

- It's not such an unreasonable thing to do, is it - to give in such a complete way - when we realise who we're dealing with?
- It is the sort of response Jesus provokes when people realise how THANKFUL to him we each should be for the eternal life he brings now, and in the future.

In contrast... let's look at Judas - what do we learn from him?

- Judas is a man of the world. He is about to sell Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.
- He sees neither who Jesus is... nor the value of what Jesus has done. He'd rather have money than Jesus' life-giving death.

Now let's move to vs 9-11...

Judas' response is matched by that of the Chief Priests who simply want to bury the evidence about Jesus, rather than face its consequences.

*Read ch 11 vs 9-11: When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, <sup>11</sup> because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*

It's COMICAL! The Chief Priests plan to put to death someone (Lazarus) they KNOW has just been raised to life! ...“Let's kill him – so that he is dead AGAIN”!

Why?

*v 11: ...because on account of him [Lazarus] many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*

- The High Priest's power base was crumbling... and that - NOT the truth - is their priority!

Today some will say that we are idiots (“What a waste!”) if we freely give our lives to serve Jesus. Others will respond with outright hostility as they refuse to consider the evidence.

We conclude this section by summarising what we have learnt about Jesus:

- He has explained Mary's act as in some way pointing to his death. It is not clear whether Mary understood this. BUT Jesus certainly did!!

Jesus knows:

- That he is going to the cross
- That Judas will betray him
- And that the life he has come to bring is possible ONLY in and through his death

## ***Jesus' Death and his Royal Identity***

Now let's read vs 12-19:

*vs 12-19: The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" <sup>14</sup> And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,*

*<sup>15</sup> "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"*

*<sup>16</sup> His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. <sup>17</sup> The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. <sup>18</sup> The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. <sup>19</sup> So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."*

This section contains two important Old Testament references. Both have to do with Jesus' royal identity. John wants us to know that the man who is on his way to the cross is the King – God's Messiah!

We find this same point stressed in chs 18 and 19 at Jesus' trial, and later as he hangs on the cross.

Quote 1 comes from v12:

Psalm 118 vs 25-26 - this is the final "Hallel" Psalm of praise – sung by the Passover pilgrims as they approached Jerusalem for Passover. They were calling on Jerusalem to "make way" for the conquering Royal Messiah who triumphed over all his enemies:

**Psalm 118 vs 25-26:**

*"Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!*

*<sup>26</sup> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD."*

Quote 2 comes from v15:

Read John ch 12 v 15:

*“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!”*

This quote is from Zechariah ch 9 (a book written between 518 and 520 BC! and clearly prophesying about the coming Messiah):

Zechariah ch 9 v 9:

*“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

- If you rode on a horse – you were symbolising an act of WAR
- If you rode on a donkey – you were symbolising an act of PEACE

So – the King of Peace is coming... to go to his death!

Read v 16: *His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.*

As before, John tells us that after Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples realised how he had fulfilled (again) the prophetic Old Testament scriptures.

So what is the point that John wants us to grasp?

- That Jesus is going to his death in Jerusalem as God's King - the long-promised Messiah!

In vs 17-19 we see the Pharisees in panic mode!

v 17: *The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.*

- Yet more proof that Jesus had very publically raised Lazarus from the dead!

v 18: *The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.*

- No surprise that news of this miracle had spread....and don't forget that this was performed in a town just 2 miles from Jerusalem ....so right under the noses of the religious leaders and Pharisees!

v 19: *So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”*

- You can just hear the Pharisees saying this to the religious leaders can't you?! Effectively - “Our ‘world’... our business... our way of life... is in trouble!”
- At no stage: “WOW! This could be THE MESSIAH!!”

- v 19: **“Look, the world has gone after him.”**  
This could be an exaggerated comment... or it could be the reality that more than the Jews were now following Jesus.

So what is the point John wants us to see?

- That the Pharisees are intent on “burying the evidence” rather than facing the facts and submitting to their Messiah.
- WHAT a contrast to Mary’s devoted behaviour to Jesus in vs 1-9!!

## ***Jesus’ Death and Life for the World***

Read ch 12 vs 20-26: *Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup> So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.”*

Jesus now turns to talk specifically about his death and what will be achieved by it. There are at least four points to note:

### The trigger for his death

The Greeks are Gentiles (non-Jews). What Jesus is going to achieve will be for the whole world!

As the Greeks come and ask to see him, Jesus announces:

v 23: **“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”**

THIS is the moment for which we have been waiting since John 2 v 4: **“My hour has not yet come.”**

- Jesus’ death IS the hour of his glory!! Through his death, he will enable people from ALL nations to know God!

Before Jesus can ‘show’ himself to the world he must first die for mankind...

### The necessity of his death:

v 24a: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone...”**

In order for Jesus to achieve his mission and bear any fruit, he MUST die. His death is ESSENTIAL to his mission of bringing eternal life.

## The fruit from his death

v 24b: “...**but if it dies, it bears much fruit.**”

The outcome of Jesus’ death will be “***much fruit***” - by this the world WILL know him! What a contrast to when we die... we simply turn to dust... but his death – “***bears MUCH fruit***”!!

A few moments earlier the crowd were rejoicing in their Messiah, but what will it really mean to follow this King..?

## The model of his death

vs 25-26: “*Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.*”

Jesus talks of his death as a model of how we are to follow him... this verse is about him and us.

The summary of vs 25-26 = it’s about HATING life lived with ME at the centre... in fact living with ME at the centre is what Jesus died to pay the cost of - my SIN!

So – HATE the sin of not living life with Christ at the centre.

This is NOT about Jesus being some kind of “spoil sport” – but rather about US grasping the stupidity of, and hating, a life that is all about “Moi”... that is, living a life of sin - a life not honouring the Son of God.

We need to realise that life lived with ME loving MY own agenda, MY desires and MY goals and MY aims is precisely why Jesus came to die, to save me from it!!!

MY life lived for ME is SIN!!

Remember the definition of sin – let’s read John ch 5 again:

Read ch 5 vs 22-23: “*The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son, <sup>23</sup> that all may honour the Son, just as they honour the Father. Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him.*”

At the same time, “me” HATING my life is not about me becoming a sour “kill-joy”! It is rather about me hating my own sin and learning to love the Lord Jesus and the abundant life that he offers for eternity!!

Read ch 12 v 26: “*If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.*”

- Following Jesus can lead to a life of persecution – in other words, echoing what happened to him...

Just look again at vs 10 and 11 and remember what the Jewish leaders decided about Lazarus:

ch 12 v 10-11: *So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, <sup>11</sup> because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*

BUT – at the same time, following Jesus means being with him, and being honoured by the Father!!

### ***Jesus' Death – its Direction...***

Some simple questions to ponder as we finish:

- What is it going to look like for you to “hate” this life?!
- What are the benefits of “losing my life”?
- ...And from the end of v26 – why is it worth it?!

“SERVE ME AND THE FATHER  
(that’s the Lord God Almighty!)  
WILL HONOUR YOU”!

- Have you got a better deal than that?!
- Is there a better deal than that!?

Set aside some time of quiet reflection and think about this ....it’s CLEARLY terribly important ...in fact it’s life changing.....

NOW perhaps you can see why Mary acted as she did:

SHE SAW WHO JESUS IS!!

### ***Next time...***

We’ve heard a lot about Jesus’ death leading to his glory... but how??

## *John 12 vs 1-26*

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