

## WASTE OR WANT?

**HERE WE ARE IN CHAPTER 12 OF JOHN AS JESUS HAS DINNER AT THE HOME OF LAZARUS, WHO JESUS HAD RAISED FROM THE DEAD BACK IN CHAPTER 11.** THERE IS AN INTERESTING EVENT THAT TAKES PLACE NEAR THE END OF CHAPTER 11. (read verses 45 thru 57). FROM THESE VERSES JESUS IS OUT IN THE COUNTRY NO LONGER IN PUBLIC VIEW, BUT **MOST INTERESTING IS CAIAPHAS' PROPHECY OF JESUS' DEATH** FOR A NATION. GOD USED CAIAPHAS, BUT HE AND THE OTHER PHARISEES SAW HIS WORDS FROM A PURELY POLITICAL VIEW AS A WAY TO SAVE ISRAEL FROM THE ROMANS BY GETTING RID OF THIS TROUBLESOME MAN CALLED JESUS. *"And from that day on they planned together to kill him"* IN FACT THE LAST VERSE OF THE CHAPTER TELLS US THEY HAD GIVEN ORDERS IF ANY KNEW WHERE JESUS WAS, TO REPORT IT THAT THEY MIGHT SEIZE HIM.

**GIVEN THIS BACKGROUND JESUS WENT TO LAZARUS' HOUSE FOR A MEAL. CAN YOU IMAGINE THIS SCENE?** SITTING WITH JESUS AND HERE IS LAZARUS WHO JUST A SHORT TIME BEFORE HAD BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD! AND JESUS, QUITE AN EXAMPLE FOR US, AFTER ALL JESUS KNEW HIS TIME HAD COME, BUT HERE HE IS WITH FRIENDS HAVING A MEAL. **I BELIEVE WE CAN LEARN FROM HIS EXAMPLE THAT WHEN YOU KNOW GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE, THERE IS A PEACE THAT DOES PASS ALL UNDERSTANDING AS PAUL TELLS US IN PHILIPPIANS 4:7.**

WE JUST COMPLETED A STUDY BY ADAM HAMILTON ON *"WHY? MAKING SENSE OF GOD'S WILL"*. ONE OF THE CHAPTERS IN THE STUDY WAS TITLED *"WHY CAN'T I SEE GOD'S WILL FOR MY LIFE?"*. **WE ARE GIVEN "TOOLS" TO FIND HIS WILL FOR US,** AND GOD, JUST LIKE A PARENT DOES NOT FILL IN ALL THE DETAILS. **WE, WITH GOD WORK TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH IT.** HOWEVER WE CAN WASTE OUR LIVES AND END UP WANTING BECAUSE WE FOLLOW OUR OWN WAY AND CHOOSE NOT TO WORK IT OUT WITH GOD.

**IN TODAY'S READING WE ARE WITH JESUS ON HIS JOURNEY TO CARRY OUT GOD'S WILL FOR HIS LIFE.** *LET'S FOCUS ON WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SIMPLE ACT OF MARY ANOINTING JESUS WITH PERFUME, IN FACT A VERY EXPENSIVE ONE CALLED SPIKENARD.* IT WAS USED TO REFRESH AND EXHILARATE A GUEST IN JESUS' TIME. **MARY DID NOT STOP, AS WAS THE USUAL CUSTOM, WITH ANOINTING ONLY JESUS' HEAD, BUT HIS FEET TOO AND THEN WIPING WITH HER HAIR. AN AUTHENTIC GESTURE OF LOVE AND ADORATION OR WAS IT A WASTE OF EXPENSIVE OIL?**

**WHAT DOES THIS SCENE HAVE TO DO WITH US?** AFTER ALL, WE DON'T GO AROUND ANOINTING PEOPLE WITH PERFUME. **WHAT IS THERE TO TAKE AND USE IN OUR LIVES?** IF WE READ A SCRIPTURE JUST TO TAKE IN WHAT I **SHOULD DO** THEN WE ARE MISSING WHAT GOD HAS FOR US IN HIS LIVING WORD. IN THE WORD JOHN IS REVEALING THE VERY NATURE OF GOD, THAT GLIMPSE OF THE KINGDOM AS IT SHOULD BE! JUST LIKE THE DISCIPLES IN THIS STORY WERE JUST LIVING BY THE PRINCIPLES, LIVING RIGHT, BUT **MARY WAS GOING DEEPER LIVING TO LOVE GOD, BEING A LIVING SACRIFICE. MARY WAS LIVING BEYOND THE RULES GOING PAST JUST DOING THE RIGHT THING.**

**WHEN YOU KNOW GOD BY THE VALUES HE REVEALS TO US IN THE SCRIPTURES THEN YOU LIVE TO LOVE HIM AND LOVE OTHERS. THIS IS WHAT MARY DEMONSTRATED IN THIS ACT OF ANOINTING JESUS.** THE DISCIPLES HAD KNOWLEDGE OF, BUT MARY HAD THE DEVOTION TO JESUS, LOVING HIM FOR WHO HE WAS!!!

**WE CAN BE A BIBLICAL SCHOLAR AND KNOW JESUS INSIDE AND OUT, BUT IF WE DON'T HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM, HAVE A VIBRANT LIFE WITH HIM AND THROUGH HIM, THAT KNOWLEDGE IS NOT THAT IMPORTANT. WE KNOW BY EXAMPLE AFTER EXAMPLE IN VARIOUS OCCUPATIONS OF WORK.** A bridge builder can have all the knowledge of how to build a bridge and how it is supposed to work, but if they don't have the experience that bridge may never function. THIS IS WHAT I AM SAYING ABOUT THIS DINNER TIME STORY. **IF WE DON'T EXPERIENCE JESUS WE ARE MISSING THE FULLNESS THAT CAN BE EXPERIENCED BY A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM AND FOLLOWING HIM.**

**NOW WE HAVE ALL HEARD AND HAVE READ OF PEOPLE WHO FOLLOWED GOD AND JESUS AT A COST. IN TODAY'S SETTING THAT STATEMENT IS BORNE OUT. IT COST MARY LITERALLY, SINCE THE PERFUME SHE USED WAS EXPENSIVE. ITS WORTH WAS AROUND 300 DENARII ABOUT \$24,000 IN TODAY'S MONEY. **WAS IT A WASTE?** THOSE AT THE TABLE THOUGHT SO, ESPECIALLY JUDAS. FOR JUDAS WAS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT HELPING THE POOR, BUT RATHER THAT THE MONEY WOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR HIM TO TAP INTO LIKE HE HAD BEING DOING.**

**DO WE SOMETIMES SIT BACK AND JUDGE PEOPLE'S ACTIONS AS WASTEFUL IN OUR EYES? WE HAVE TO STOP LOOKING AT SITUATIONS AND JUDGING SOMEONE'S "EXTRAVAGANT" ACTIONS. **IF THEY HAVE A SENSE, A PROMPTING TO DO SOMETHING, WHO ARE WE TO QUESTION THAT?** MAYBE THERE IS AN UNDERLYING THOUGHT ON OUR PART OF ENVY OR JEALOUSY OR EVEN A FEELING OF INFERIORITY?**

**WE ARE ALL SPECIAL IN GOD'S SIGHT. GOD DOESN'T SEE THE THINGS WE USE TO DIVIDE EACH OTHER, LIKE CLOTHES, LOOKS, HOW THEY TALK, WHERE THEY ARE FROM THE LIST IS ENDLESS. JUST TAKE A MINUTE TO THINK OF THE PEOPLE GOD USED IN THE BIBLE, AND HAS USED DOWN THROUGH THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH. GOD USED PEOPLE WHO WERE WILLING TO ANSWER THE CALL. ONE SUCH PERSON FOR ME IS NOAH. THE MAN FLAT OUT DID NOT WANT TO GO, THOUGH HE DID, EVENTUALLY AND WAS BLESSED.**

**FOR ME I WASN'T IN A BIG FISH, BUT I WENT THROUGH SOME "SMELLY" TIMES. I AM BLESSED BECAUSE I DID ANSWER THE CALL AND IF I HAD NOT I WOULD HAVE NEVER MET ALL OF YOU!!!! WHEN WE ACT ON BEHALF OF GOD THERE IS A COST, BUT THE BLESSINGS ARE FAR MORE NUMEROUS. THERE WAS A PHRASE IN OUR RECENT STUDY. "RESURRECTION MEANS THE WORST THING IS NEVER THE LAST THING". **THINK ABOUT YOUR LIFE OVER THE YEARS AND HOW TRUE THOSE WORDS HAVE BEEN FOR YOU.****

NOW I ASK THE QUESTION AGAIN, "WAS HER ACTION A WASTE?". WHAT IF WE LOOK AT MARY'S ACTION AS WORSHIP. WHY DO I LOOK AT IT THAT WAY?, BECAUSE THERE ARE IN HER ACTIONS ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP.

**FIRST, MARY'S WORSHIP WAS A SPONTANEOUS THING, NOT SOMETHING SHE HAD TO DO, WHICH WAS OBVIOUS FROM THE REACTIONS AROUND THE TABLE BY OTHERS. JESUS WAS PRESENT AND SHE FREELY RESPONDED TO HIS PRESENCE. WHEN WE COME TO GATHER FOR WORSHIP ON SUNDAY MORNING OR AT ANYTIME, DO WE SENSE HIS PRESENCE AND ARE READY TO RESPOND TO IT? NOW IF WE COME WITH OUR HEARTS AND MINDS FULL OF WORRY AND CONCERN, JESUS WANTS US TO LAY THEM DOWN AT HIS FEET, EXPECT HIS PRESENCE AND RESPOND OUT OF THE LOVE AND GRATITUDE WE HAVE FOR HIM AND WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US!!! LOVE CAN DO WHAT RULES AND REGULATIONS CAN NEVER PRODUCE.**

**SECOND, MARY IS NOT FOCUSED ON HERSELF, AND HER ACTION IS SACRIFICIAL EVEN EXTRAVAGANT. WHERE DOES THAT "WORSHIP" COME FROM? IT REFLECTS HER HEART FELT UNDERSTANDING OF WHO JESUS IS. WHEN ONE REALIZES THAT FACT, THEN ONE CAN GIVE WILLINGLY, WITH JOY, AND WITH ENTHUSIASM TO HIM. **THE GIVING, THIS WORSHIP IS NOT OUT OF A SENSE OF DUTY OR DONE WITH COMPLAINING.** THERE IS THE FAMILIAR SAYING "YOU GET OUT OF IT WHAT YOU PUT INTO IT".**

**IF YOU COME ON SUNDAY MORNING AND YOU GET NOTHING OUT OF THE SONGS, THE PRAYERS, THE READINGS OR THE MESSAGE, MAYBE YOU SHOULD ASK "WHAT DID I PUT INTO IT"? MARY IN HER ACT OF WORSHIP PUT HERSELF INTO IT, EVEN USED HER HAIR!!! ARE WE THINKING "WOW, SHE REALLY BROUGHT IT". DO WE NOD OUR HEAD AND IN OUR SPIRIT ADMIRE SUCH DEVOTION, SUCH WORSHIP? HERE'S A CHALLENGE TO CONSIDER. WE HAVE ALL AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER BEEN A BIT EXTRAVAGANT ON OUR CHILDREN, GRANDCHILDREN OR EVEN OURSELVES, BUT HAVE WE BEEN EXTRAVAGANT ON JESUS? **HAVE WE GIVEN OURSELVES TO JESUS FREELY, JOYFULLY, AND WITH A WILLING HEART?** TRY IT, YOU WILL LIKE IT!**

**MARY'S "WORSHIP" IS CRITICIZED AND OPPOSED BY THOSE AROUND THE DINNER TABLE. THERE IS A LESSON FOR US AS WE GO FORWARD WITH A NEW WORSHIP SERVICE. YES, IT WILL BE DIFFERENT, BUT IT WILL BE WORSHIP. THERE IS A PHRASE I USE "FREEDOM IN A FORM". GOD IS A GOD OF ORDER AND THAT IS TRUE OF WORSHIP. REMEMBER PAUL WRITING THE CORINTHIANS ABOUT THIS VERY SUBJECT OF ORDER IN WORSHIP. MARY WAS WORSHIPING JESUS IN A WAY SHE FELT LEAD TO. WHEN SOMEONE IS WORSHIPING IN A DIFFERENT WAY THAN YOU OR I, IT'S OKAY. THE OTHER THING TO REMEMBER HERE IS NOT EVERYBODY AT THE TABLE GOT UP AND STARTED ANOINTING JESUS WITH MORE OIL. FUNNY THOUGHT YES, BUT THE POINT IS JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE IS WORSHIPING IN ANOTHER WAY THAN YOU OR I, IT DOES NOT MEAN WE HAVE TO "FORCE" OURSELVES TO WORSHIP THAT WAY AND THE OTHER WAY AROUND TOO. NO ONE SHOULD "FORCE" THEIR WAY OF WORSHIP ON US.**

**NOTICE THAT MARY IS AT JESUS' FEET. RECALL HOW THE DISCIPLES WANTED TO BE WITH JESUS ON HIS RIGHT OR LEFT? BUT TO BE AT HIS FEET?! FIGURATIVELY, THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM AT JESUS' FEET. WHY, BECAUSE THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM TO DO THE HUMBLE, THE MENIAL, THE NEEDFUL NEEDS. HERE IS THE POSITION OF SERVICE.**

**SOON WE WILL HEAR OF THE LAST SUPPER. WHAT DID JESUS DO AT THAT MEAL? HE WASHED THEIR FEET!!!! HE IS OUR EXAMPLE, NOT ONLY HIS ACTION BUT HIS WORDS RING CLEAR FROM MATTHEW 23:10-11 "*Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. "But the greatest among you shall be your servant."Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted"* MARY WAS NOT LIKE THE PHARISEES DOING THIS FOR ATTENTION BUT AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP IN A PRIVATE HOUSE.**

**JESUS HIMSELF APPROVES OF HER ACTIONS AS HE TELLS THE OTHERS TO LEAVE HER ALONE. NOW THERE IS A VERSE ABOUT THE POOR ALWAYS BEING WITH YOU. JESUS WAS NOT INDIFFERENT TO THE POOR, BUT HE WAS ONLY GOING TO BE WITH THEM A SHORT TIME LONGER. THIS IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF IF YOU ONLY READ WHAT IS THERE AND NOT WHAT IT IMPLIES YOU MISS A VALUE IN THE NATURE OF GOD. WHEN WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY IN FRONT OF US, LET GOD USE YOU, BECAUSE WE MAY NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY AGAIN.**

Now in West Texas, rain is a beautiful thing. We got one of those raining during the day sunshine showers. Michael immediately grabbed his niece's hand and walked outside and said, "Smell the rain, Cynthia! Smell the rain!" Even as I relay this anecdote to you, I can smell the rain, just as I did that day over 30 years ago. Now if I can smell rain thirty years after the fact, I wonder how the disciples (especially John) felt every time they smelled spikenard. I think I can tell you. I have the fondest of fond memories of Cynthia and her Uncle Michael smelling the rain. I think every time anyone associated with the selfless act of Mary smelled spikenard, they thought of Jesus and the most selfless act ever.

**MARY'S ACT OF ANOINTING JESUS WAS NOT A WASTE!!! WHEN WE LOOK AT IT CLOSER WE SEE AN ACT OF WORSHIP AND SERVICE. THESE ARE THE VERY FOUNDATIONS OF OUR FAITH. AS MATTHEW 20:28 "*Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*" **JESUS GAVE US THAT PRINCIPAL OF THE KINGDOM. IT'S WHEN WE SERVE THAT WE FILL WHEREVER WE ARE WITH THE SWEET FRAGRANCE OF LOVE JUST AS MARY DID AT THAT DINNER TABLE WITH THE PERFUME AND THAT WAS NO WASTE.****

MAY WE TOO OUT OF LOVE FOR THE LORD, WORSHIP HIM AND LOVE OTHERS AS HE DOES. AMEN.