

## GIVING AS WORSHIP

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom he had raised from the dead. So they prepared a dinner for Jesus there. Martha was serving, and Lazarus was among those present at the table with him. Then Mary took three quarters of a pound of expensive aromatic oil from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus. She then wiped his feet dry with her hair. (Now the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfumed oil.)

JOHN 12:1–3 (NET)

### MARY'S GIFT: A LOVE WITHOUT LIMITS

In the final days before his crucifixion, Jesus visited Bethany and shared a meal at the home of Simon the former leper. Also present were Mary, Martha, and Lazarus—Jesus's close friends and the cohosts of the gathering. While Martha served the meal and Lazarus reclined at the table, Mary did something both extravagant and unforgettable.

She broke open an alabaster jar containing about twelve ounces of pure nard, a rare and costly aromatic oil imported from the Himalayan region. Its value, estimated between \$40,000 and \$50,000 in today's terms, indicated its rarity and its luxurious nature. Mary poured this oil on Jesus's head and feet as a deeply personal, sacrificial act of worship.

Like King David, who once declared, "I will not offer to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24), Mary knew that real worship demands sacrifice. Her offering wasn't convenient or calculated—it was costly, heartfelt, and extravagant. And it filled the house with the rich aroma of devotion.

### A LIFE TRANSFORMED

Mary of Bethany, one of six Marys mentioned in Scripture, was no stranger to Jesus. In Luke 10:38–42, we see her sitting at his feet, absorbing his words while her sister, Martha, busied herself with household tasks. Mary had chosen "the best part," as Jesus put it—a heart postured toward him.

Later, when her brother, Lazarus, died, Mary ran to meet Jesus, falling at his feet in tears (John 11:32). Her grief moved Jesus deeply. And then, in front of her and the others who had gathered there, Jesus performed a staggering miracle: He called Lazarus out of the grave.

That moment no doubt left an indelible mark on Mary's soul. Her extravagant act of worship wasn't sudden or impulsive. It was the culmination of a transformed heart overcome by the love, power, and compassion of Christ.

### A LOVE WORTH EVERYTHING

Not everyone appreciated Mary's offering. Judas Iscariot and some disciples criticized her, suggesting that the oil could have been sold and the money given to the poor. But Jesus rebuked them, affirming the depth and beauty of her act. What the critics saw as waste, Jesus saw as worship.

Mary's actions invite us to reflect. How has Jesus changed your life? What has he delivered you from? How has he loved you when no one else could or would?

When we pause to remember who he is and what he has done, our hearts—like Mary's—begin to overflow with love. And that love calls for response: not out of guilt or obligation, but out of joy and gratitude.

### **WHAT CAN WE GIVE?**

Mary gave her finest and humbled herself at Jesus's feet. Today, we may not have alabaster jars or expensive oil, but we each have something precious to offer. When offered sincerely, time, talents, resources, attention, obedience, and worship carry the same fragrance of devotion.

What will you offer to your Savior and King? Let Mary's example inspire you to love Jesus boldly, worship him sacrificially, and hold nothing back.