

May 3

Mary “Wastes” a Year’s Wages for Jesus

While the king sat at his table,
my spikenard spread its fragrance. — Songs of Solomon 1:12

[John 12:1-11, Bethany] Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand. Many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. Then they sought for Jesus and spoke one with another, as they stood in the temple, “What do you think—that he isn’t coming to the feast at all?” Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had commanded that if anyone knew where he was, he should report it, that they might seize him.

Then six days before the Passover*, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. So now, when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, they made him a supper there. Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with him. A woman Mary, came to him therefore, took an alabaster jar of a pound of very expensive ointment of pure nard—very precious—and *broke the jar*, poured it on his head, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair as he sat at the table. The house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.

But when his disciples saw this, they were indignant *among themselves*, saying, “Why this waste?” *They grumbled against her.*

Then Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, one of his disciples, who would betray him, said, “Why wasn’t this ointment sold for three hundred denarii, and given to the poor?” Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the money box, used to steal what was put into it.

But Jesus said, “*Leave her alone! Why do you trouble the woman? She has done a good work for me. For in pouring this ointment on my body, she has done what she could—she has kept this for the day of my burial. For you always have the poor with you and whenever you want to, you can do them good, but you don’t always have me. Most certainly I tell you, wherever this Good News is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of as a memorial of her.*”

A large crowd therefore of the Jews learned that he was there, and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests conspired to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus. [Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9] *Matthew and Mark insert this story within Judas’ meeting with the Jewish authorities, two days before the Passover. This reordering juxtaposes Judas’ betrayal and Mary’s adoration.

1. Why this party? Who’s in the story? What are their roles? With whom do you identify?
2. Mathew, Mark, and John all contrast Mary’s actions with the plot to kill Jesus; why?
3. King Jesus, nothing that I do for you is wasted; help me remember that today as I...