

The Gospel of John
Week Nineteen
John 11:45 - 12:19

Day One

45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. 47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

v. 45 – Jesus had raised Lazarus in view of all who came to comfort the sisters, but Jesus gave the real comfort by raising their brother! Those who saw this extraordinary event put their faith in Him. Yet those who had concluded that Jesus was not from God were not impressed even with raising Lazarus.

v. 46 – Some immediately carried the report back to the leaders about what Jesus had done. There are some who love to carry news to others, being the first ones to tell people things they did not know. I am one of those people. I have to be mindful not to gossip, for I love to ask, "Did you know this or that?" and, when they don't, I enjoy being the one to tell them.

v. 47 – The Council was frustrated with the situation at hand, and called a meeting to discuss their next steps. They had tried to contain Him, trick Him, and arrest Him, all to no avail, for He continued to minister and tug on the hearts of the people. The Council acknowledged that Jesus was performing miraculous signs. They saw and heard about what He did, but they absolutely refused to believe, convinced that Jesus was a fraud. It is amazing that they could have beheld such acts of kindness and mercy yet attributed those acts to the devil himself.

The Council was determined to maintain control even if it meant murder. This is an example of leadership at its worst. They did not take time to study the situation or to appoint a committee to investigate. Their minds were made up and they were ready to act accordingly.

v. 48 – The Council expressed their real fear: Rome would crack down on the nation if Jesus was exalted. They were thinking like politicians and not spiritual leaders. They were also still operating from a flawed conception that the Messiah would be a political and not spiritual leader. They were correct that Rome would not tolerate a king other than Caesar, but Jesus was already King, and His kingdom was not of this world. Yet the Council did speak truth, for Rome would eventually react to Jesus' message and persecute His followers. The answer, however, was not to eliminate Jesus but rather to trust and follow Him! **Are you not following Jesus in some area because you perceive, like the Council, that you will lose something and not gain something?**

Day Two

49 Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! 50 You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." 51 He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, 52 and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. 53 So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

v. 49 – Caiaphas took over as leader of the deliberations and proceeded to berate the whole group as stupid, saying they knew nothing at all. I would imagine he was tired of the talk and wanted some action against Jesus once and for all. Since he was the high priest, God was using him for His own purposes, for the chief priest was appointed to be the one to sacrifice the Lamb of God.

v. 50 – Caiaphas was only concerned with the political implications, for the high priest was an appointee of the Romans. That position stood to gain much wealth from the operations in the Temple, so Caiaphas had to protect his personal and family interests. That meant maintaining a good working relationship with Rome that allowed the Jews to pursue their own worship and internal power structure. Caiaphas thought he was simply saying that it would be worth it for Jesus to be eliminated so that the nation could endure. He did not realize that he was saying much more than that.

v. 51 – John gave us more insight into this scenario and let us know that the Holy Spirit was using Caiaphas to prophesy God's intent as things were about to unfold. Jesus would indeed die to preserve the Jewish nation, but not for the reasons Caiaphas imagined. Jesus gave His life to establish the true Israel, those who would put their trust in Him as their means to the Father.

v. 52 – John expanded on this thought by indicating that Jesus' nation or flock would extend beyond Israel to the Gentiles as well. Jesus did indeed die for all men and not just the Jews to create one united people of and for God.

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26-29).

v. 53 – The Jews had dabbled in trying to contain and eliminate Jesus. From this point forward, it was their consuming passion to do so. They did not realize that God was using them for His purposes. The Jews were not in control of this process, yet they acted of their own free will and were held accountable for their actions. They were not innocent but God used their evil to obtain His own purposes. I don't quite understand how God can do this, but I accept that He can.

Day Three

54 Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples. 55 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. 56 They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the Feast at all?" 57 But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.

v. 54 – Jesus once again had to hide, for the exact day of His departure was not quite imminent. He had to wait for the Passover, so He kept a low profile and stayed in the desert village of Ephraim. I have been to Israel many times and I can tell you that those desert villages are hot, even in the winter and spring.

v. 55 – Now events would move swiftly to bring about the reason for Jesus' coming to earth. The Passover was at hand when many lambs would be slain to commemorate the first Passover in Egypt, when God took the firstborn of anyone who did not have the blood of a lamb on their doorpost. You may want to review that story as we prepare to look at Jesus' death in the remaining chapters in John. You may go to Exodus 12 to do so.

The Jews had to be ceremonially clean to celebrate the Passover, so many went to Jerusalem early to take care of that requirement. This was the shortcoming with Judaism. They had to constantly repeat rituals of cleaning and forgiveness. This was to indicate that the ultimate source of cleansing and forgiveness had not come yet, and of course that source was and is Jesus. He has paid the price once and for all so that we can be cleansed and come to God through His righteousness and not our own.

v. 56 – The leaders had a 'Jesus watch' going on, and were anticipating His arrival so they could seize Him. Jesus wasn't operating on their time schedule, however, but rather the Father's.

v. 57 – The warning was out that Jesus' presence was to be reported and then He was to be arrested. The stage was set for the dramatic events of the days to come, but meanwhile, Jesus had much teaching to do before He was arrested.

By the way, how did John know so much about the happenings in the Council? It had to be because some of the Council became believers and later reported the events as they beheld them firsthand. The Council and Caiaphas did not have the last say. God did and He always does. Are you resting in that truth?

Day Four

1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." 6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

vs. 1&2 – Jesus came back to Bethany and was treated to a dinner in His honor. The people were honoring Him but the leaders were looking to kill Him. **Ironic, isn't it? Martha served, which was her usual role, and Lazarus reclined at the table with Jesus, but where was Mary?** Notice that the men sat on the floor, thus they reclined at the table, using some pillows on which to rest their elbows as they ate.

v. 3 – If you remember, Mary was the one sitting at Jesus' feet while Martha served in Luke 10:38-42. This time Mary found another way to get around serving and the ordinary by performing a truly extraordinary ritual on Jesus. She took a pint of expensive perfume, which was probably her dowry for when she got married, and poured it on Jesus' feet. What's more, she wiped His feet with her hair. What an extravagant expression of love and affection! What an intimate picture of worship and adoration! The whole house was filled with the fragrance of Mary's act, not to mention her hair!

Someone once said that a fanatic is anyone who loves Jesus more than I do. That makes Mary a fanatic. I marvel at her boldness, not concerned with what anyone would think, not even Jesus. Mary did what was in her heart, which was full of love and adoration for the man and God who had raised her brother from the dead. She was not content to just honor Him with a dinner. She wanted to give Him a personal expression from her own heart, and she did.

I must say that I would have been extremely uncomfortable in this situation, which of course is my problem and not Mary's or anyone else's. The outpouring (literally) of love and intimacy would have caused me embarrassment, so I can understand the reaction from some of the men. Yet I love the fact that Mary just didn't seem to care. **What could you do for God if you had this kind of God-awareness instead of self-awareness?**

vs. 4&5 – One of the men did speak up and object to the act of worship and that was Judas Iscariot. Judas would have a large role in the days to come, so John introduced him here. Looking back with hindsight, the apostles realized that Judas was heading for trouble and could see it in his statements such as this about Mary's act of worship.

Judas' summary, however, gives you an idea of how valuable the perfume was, for it could have been sold for an entire year's wages! That was quite a sacrifice on Mary's part! **What do you have of value that you have lavished on the Lord? Your time?**

Your talent? Is there anything you have that would be considered too big to give to God? I hope not!

v. 6 – John gave us some editorial comments, for it turns out that Judas was a thief and pilfering the money bag that the disciples had to care for their needs while traveling. **Do you cut corners sometimes and take what doesn't belong to you, even little things? Notice that the term for doing that is thief! That's a strong word, don't you think?** When you pilfer or steal, you break one of the original commandments by not trusting God for what you have and taking someone else's.

Day Five

7 "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. " It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." 9 Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, 11 for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

v. 7 – This is the second time Jesus had to come to Mary's defense when people criticized her actions. The first time was from her sister and this time was from Judas' remarks. **Jesus understood why Mary had done what she did, but I wonder if Mary knew why she had kept that perfume?** It was for Jesus' burial. This is an indication that sometimes we don't fully understand what is happening today, but if we keep our focus on Him, we will find out in due time.

Jesus understood that He was about to die and be buried. This was not going to be a surprise, but it would not be easy. I keep repeating this because some modern critics act like Jesus' death somehow caught Him off guard. It did not.

v. 8 – Jesus was not making a social statement here that conditions for poverty will always exist. Although that's true, He was making a statement that He was not going to be with the disciples much longer. They could minister to the poor after He was gone, but their chances to minister to Him personally and directly would not last much longer.

v. 9 – Once again, Jesus actions had caused Him to be a celebrity. A large crowd found out where He was and came to see Him and Lazarus, the object of His most recent miracle. **Are you willing to be a public figure for Jesus?** Some idolize their privacy, but your time is not your own. It belongs to Him. **Are you willing to have Him use it as He sees fit? Are there any ways that you are hoarding your time, not using it for God's purposes and glory?**

vs. 10&11 – The Jews were also planning to assassinate Lazarus, for his fame was causing many to believe in Jesus. These leaders were ruthless, but Lazarus was under no immediate danger, for it was not God's purpose that he be harmed. **What is wrong with this picture: the Jewish leaders were plotting how they would kill those who were a**

threat to their world and position? Are you involved in any behavior that is inconsistent with your faith? Are you ethics all they need to be? Are there any little things that you need to clean up?

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? (Luke 16:10-12).

Day Six

12 The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. 13 They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" 14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, 15 "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

v. 12 – Word spread quickly that Jesus was in Bethany and on His way to Jerusalem. The people were excited that they would see the man who had performed such a remarkable miracle with Lazarus. Many had come to the conclusion that He was the One from God. **What good news have you heard lately? What good news have you passed on so that others could enjoy and participate in it? Since we have the best “good news” there is in the gospel, when is the last time you shared that good news with someone?**

v. 13 – The people went out to meet Jesus, armed with palm branches, which would be the equivalent of our confetti. They wanted it to be a festive procession. The people shouted “Hosanna,” which means “God saves” or “Salvation”! The people once again demonstrated spiritual maturity and insight by speaking the truth about Jesus, as opposed to their leaders who were set on a course of destruction. In trying to save their nation, the leaders were about to ruin it. The people, however, proclaimed that Jesus was the King of Israel. The people did not understand the nature of their King, but they did speak the truth.

The people were worshiping and praising God with joyful declarations. **When is the last time that you did the same? Do you see and say the truth that the people declared here? Is your worship private or are your expressions of joy and gladness more effusive and enthusiastic?**

v. 14 – John does not retell the story of how Jesus “found” this donkey, for it is told in the other gospel accounts. Remember, each writer had his own purpose and focus for his gospel. Do you have a focus and purpose for what you do? How can you improve in that regard? If you need to review the story of how Jesus got this donkey, please go to Matthew 21.

v. 15 – John did take time to relate the donkey ride to the Old Testament verse in Zechariah 9:9:

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9).

The King did not ride a white stallion into the city, but rather came in on a donkey's colt. Contrast this with some of God's servants today who only want to ride in a Mercedes Benz! Jesus did not make a show and did not expect the best. He humbled Himself and set an example for all of us to follow. Even though Scripture predicted this event happening as it did, it does not mean that Jesus had no choice in the matter. He willingly chose to enter Jerusalem like this, which meant He humbled Himself. **Where have you humbled yourself lately? Where have you denied yourself the honor that could have been yours? When have you chosen to minimize the glory that could have rightfully come your way?**

Someone once said you should humble yourself or be humiliated. You may want to look for opportunities today through which you can truly humble yourself.

Day Seven

16 At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him. 17 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. 18 Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

v. 16 – **What were “these things” that the disciples did not understand?** One would be Mary's anointing with perfume. The other would be His riding into Jerusalem on the donkey's colt. Perhaps Jesus explained these things to them after His resurrection so they would believe and be able to teach others.

I would hope you understand things today that you did not understand earlier in your walk with the Lord. **Can you think of one?** I formerly thought that sincerity caused God to overlook errors on my part. If I was sincere, I would be alright. Now I know that I can be sincerely wrong!

vs. 17&18 – Those who had seen Lazarus come out of the tomb continued to spread the word of what He had done. Many who heard about it went out to meet Jesus, creating quite a stir in the city. As we have seen throughout this study, the Jews were eagerly looking for and seeking after the coming of the Messiah. They were not passively waiting and hoping; they were eagerly keeping a “Messiah watch.” Now they had some hope that Jesus would fulfill their expectations. Hopes were high and I can only imagine the

excitement among His closest disciples. They would have taken part in this procession and perhaps thought their fears of dying with Jesus were misplaced. In a few days, their fears would be realized beyond their wildest expectations.

v. 19 – The Pharisees once again were frustrated in their attempts to curtail Jesus' following. They exaggerated by stating that the "whole world" was following Jesus, but it must have seemed close to reality with the crowd that was in Jerusalem for the Passover. Instead of joining the crowd, however, the Pharisees stood apart from the people and maintained their watch to apprehend Jesus. Their efforts would be rewarded in just a few days, but only because it was according to the plan of God for Jesus.