**WHAT WILL YOU GIVE JESUS?**

We’ve officially entered into the Christmas season and if you haven’t done so already, you’ll soon be buying Christmas presents for people in your life. I won’t ask what you plan to get any of them but I will ask you to consider what you plan to give Jesus. Everyone in our passage this morning, John 12:1-11 gives Jesus something. So let’s read it (note: this event is also mentioned in Matt 26 and Mark 14).

READ John 12:1-11: 1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they gave a dinner for him there [the dinner is in Jesus’ honor and is being held in the home of Simon the Leper]. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. 3 Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard [12 oz of costly aromatic oil from India that was sealed in an alabaster flask], and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair [Matt & Mark acct say she poured it on his head as well]. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. **I** 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 5 "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii [equivalent of a year’s salary, very expensive] --- why was it not sold and given to the poor?" 6 He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. 7 Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial [Jesus connects her action to his death and burial which He is fully aware is soon coming]. 8 For the poor you always have with you [a reference to Deut 15:11, “there will never cease to be poor in the land”], but you do not always have me." [again, Jesus knows His death is imminent] I 9 When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there [in Bethany], they came, not only on account of him [Jesus] but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead [that event, raising Lazarus from the dead was a huge deal]. 10 So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, 11 because on account of him [Lazarus] many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus [Lazarus is walking, living proof that Jesus’ claims to be the resurrection and the life are true].

You can just hear the Pharisees: “The people are turning to Jesus. We’ve got to do something about this!” So they plan to kill Jesus and have been since way back in Ch 5. Now we see they plan to kill Lazarus as well. The tension is mounting!

There are several different characters mentioned in this story – main character is Jesus; Lazarus, Martha, Mary, Judas (and Jesus’ other disciples) and finally a large crowd of Jews. Each one of these individuals and groups gives Jesus something in this story. Let’s look at each one.

V 1-3, Lazarus, he’s walking evidence of Jesus’ power, a living witness of what Jesus can do. Lazarus is enjoying his resurrected life. He converses over dinner with his good friend Jesus. Lazarus is a friend and that’s important. His gift? Just being there, talking to Jesus and showing his appreciation.

Martha is serving dinner. It’s a good thing. Martha sometimes gets a bad rap for having her priorities wrong, but not in this story. Here we see her servant’s heart. This is her role. This is her gift to Jesus. She’s serving the dinner. She’s serving Jesus.

Mary gives Jesus a gift. It’s a rather unusual and expensive gift. She takes an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, a pure fragrant oil, and anoints Jesus’ with it. This is an outward expression of her love for Jesus. After all perfume is a woman’s love fragrance. What she does is an act of love and worship. Jesus associates what Mary does with his burial (Jews didn’t practice embalming dead bodies, perfume was often used to mask the odor, Jesus knows the future, he knows His death and burial are near, he knows they will not have the time to do this after His crucifixion). Whether Mary intended it that way or not is unknown, but Jesus makes that connection. What Mary does is a significant act, a spiritual act, an act of love for her Lord. The room is filled with the sweet fragrance of worship.

V 4-8, However, this wonderful scene is interrupted by the self-interest of Judas. Always and forever Judas will be associated with the betrayal of Jesus. John hasn’t forgotten. This is how he describes Judas in v 4 (and even back in 6:71 he mentions that Judas was going to betray Jesus). John not only speaks of Judas as a traitor, he also tells us that Judas is a thief, v 6. All Judas sees is money. That’s his focus, his priority and it would eventually be his downfall. Judas tries to act all spiritual and noble, like he’s really concerned for the poor. In reality he’s watching this potential windfall (expensive gift) being poured out and in his mind wasted. Matthew’s account says the other disciples chimed in with Judas: “And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, ‘Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.’” (Matt 26:8-9) Some people claim to be all about ministry but their real concern is for themselves. That’s the case here. Judas’ gift is a gift of pretense. He pretends to care when he really doesn’t. It’s all about him.

Jesus defends Mary’s actions and calls what she did a “beautiful thing” (Matt 26:10). He rebukes Judas and the disciples, “Leave her alone!” He points everyone to His death on the cross, less than one week away, when He will make full atonement for the sins of the world – this will be HIS gift to US. Jesus’ statement, v 8, READ IT, reminds us of what’s really important. The poor, those with physical needs, they’ll always be available for us to help, and we should. But when you and I have an opportunity to give to Jesus, to worship Him, take it. Those opportunities may not always be there. Jesus places a high priority on our worship.

V 9-11, The last character is the large group of Jews (as the leaders go, so go the people). The Jewish leaders have their own gift waiting for Jesus. They plan to kill Him. Little do they know that this is actually part of God’s divine plan. All they know is that they hate Jesus. They don’t like His message. They reject His claims. They’re hostile to Jesus and will be hostile to the Christian movement that follows. So everyone in this story has something to give Jesus. What will you give Him? What does Jesus want? He wants you! Specifically He wants you to honor Him as your King by what you say and do. *[sing “You Are My King”]*