

Sermon

Psalm 126

John 12:1-11

The Extravagant Gift



So far in our series we had been taking a journey through the first half of John's Gospel account.

We've noted seven miracle signs; seven being the number of perfection in that ancient culture.

Those seven signs point to Jesus as the glorious incarnate word of God. They are:

1. Who Turns Water into Wine? (John 2:1-11)
2. Who Heals the Sick? (John 4:46-53)
3. Who Heals on the Sabbath? (John 5:1-29)
4. Who Feeds the Multitude? (John 6:1-14)
5. Who Walks on Water? (John 6:16-24)
6. Who Heals the Blind? (John 9:1-12)
7. Who Raises the Dead? (John 11:1-44)

We have also noted Jesus' seven "I Am" statements.

In them Jesus declares himself to be the great "I Am" of the Exodus:

the bread of life 6:35, 48, 51

the light of the world 8:12; 9:5

the door of the sheep 10:7, 9

the good shepherd 10:11, 14

the resurrection and the life 11:25

the way, the truth, and the life 14:6

the true vine 15:1

We concluded Part (A) of John's Gospel account with the raising of Lazarus in John 11.

In the first half of the gospel John uses board brush strokes to cover the first three years of Jesus' ministry based around the seven miracle signs.

In the second half of John which we are now beginning we focus on the events in the last week of Jesus ministry on earth.

This is the week that has come to be known as Holy Week.

Beginning with Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem and concluding with his death and resurrection.

A key theme is Jesus glorification as He is lifted up on the cross; the moment death, Satan and Hell are finally defeated.

It is worth bearing in mind that in the book of the Revelation; John continues Jesus' story.

That story is the revealing of Jesus, now ascended to the Father until his return in glory to judge the living and the dead at the final day.

But back to John 12.

John 12 is the bridge between part A and part B in the gospel account.

In John 12 Jesus relates to four different groups where we catch a glimpse of their varied reactions to Jesus.

12:1-11 - His friends and disciples at dinner.

12:12-19 - The Passover pilgrims on Palm Sunday.

12:20-36 - The Gentiles who ask to see Jesus.

12:37-49 - The unbelieving Jewish Leaders.

The key verses in John 12 are verses 7 and 8.

This is where Jesus announces that “His Hour” has finally arrived. The hour in which he will die for the sins of the world.

7 Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

The raising of Lazarus is the turning point for Jesus.

It marked the time that God’s eternal plan to redeem the world had finally arrived.

Satan, death and Hell would be defeated and divested of their power to plunder God’s creation and His creatures.

Now Lazarus is alive again. Jesus is at dinner with his friends in the home of Lazarus. Don’t miss the poignant nature of this visit.

This is a farewell meal with his dear friends. Martha is serving. Lazarus is the host.

And Mary? As usual we find her at Jesus feet, no doubt paying careful attention to her Lord.

There is a distinct possibility that Mary realised what was about to befall Jesus at the coming Passover.

Theologian Warren Weirsbe suggests that: “Her act of worship is public, spontaneous, sacrificial, lavish, personal and unembarrassed.”

In this act we see how Mary’s heart overflows with love for her Lord.

Money could be given to the poor at any time, but this act of kindness directed toward Jesus must be done now before the chance is gone forever.

Mary did not want to throw her bouquet at Jesus funeral. Now was the time for it to be offered.

Jesus tells his disciples to remember this event whenever the events of this night are told in the future.

But is that the only reason John includes this event in the gospel?

What deeper significance does John have in mind when he relates this story? Don’t miss it because it is significant.

I believe John wanted to make a connection between the extravagance of this outrageously expensive perfume and Jesus own extravagant gift – the giving of his life in our place.

As John writes in John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

That’s what Jesus did for you and for me. It seems that no one at that moment, except Mary, understood that completely.

May it be that we grasp the extravagance of Jesus gift of himself for us.

And so Jesus public ministry comes to a close.

Hostilities will rise to fever pitch.

His gentle compassion and miraculous signs will be ultimately meet with violent oppression and unbelief from the Jewish leaders.

The Passover Pilgrims will welcome him as the Messiah, the Son of David, with shouts of Hosanna.

But Later when they realise he is not the kind of Messiah they expected they will cry “Crucify”.

When the Gentiles ask to see Jesus, John gives us a foretaste of the truth that Jesus would die not only for the Jews but for all people.

His will be a gift of such extravagance that all of heaven will sign about it throughout all eternity.

May it be that each of us grasp, like Mary, the greatness of God’s love for us as in the weeks ahead, as we journey towards the ultimate miracle/sign revealed in his death, resurrection and ascension to the Father.