



Servant's Corner

April 2014

Extravagant Giving

By Rich Henderson, Love INC Director

There is an act of extravagant giving recorded in the events of Holy Week. By comparing the accounts in Matthew 26:6-16, Mark 14:3-11 and John 12:1-8 here's the story that emerges: Jesus was in the town of Bethany and had been invited to dinner at the home of Simon the leper. While there, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, broke open a bottle of a very costly aromatic ointment and anointed Jesus' head and feet. We are talking **very** costly—it would cost the average worker over 300 day's wages. Given San Jose's annual median household income of approximately \$77,000, that is the equivalent of \$63,000!

Given the incredible cost, we can understand the response of some of the disciples who felt that this was poor stewardship and an irresponsible waste of money. Surely it would have been better to sell the bottle and give the proceeds to help the poor. We are told that Judas Iscariot was the spokesperson for the disciples who held this opinion. (John tells us that Judas wasn't really concerned for the poor but was upset that the huge sum wouldn't be available to pilfer as was his habit as the group's treasurer.)

Instead of reprimanding Mary, Jesus commends her. He explained that there would be other opportunities to help the poor, but that Mary had served him well by anointing his body for burial. He made a point of instructing his disciples that wherever in the world the gospel story was told, Mary's act would be mentioned as a memorial to her. It seems this was the last straw for Judas. Matthew records that after hearing this, Judas offered to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

While I would like to fancy myself defending Mary had I been there, the truth is I could see myself reacting like the disciples who agreed with Judas. \$63,000 is a very expensive gift. Certainly a more modest gift could have sufficed. Why was Mary right and Judas wrong?--**simply because Jesus is worth it.** As we approach Holy Week, may we remember that no gift could be too extravagant for a Savior who loves us enough to give His life for us.



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