

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 7th February 2010
‘Judas Iscariot Turns Against Jesus’
John ch.12:1-11

Introduction

If I was to say the brand name L'Oréal, I wonder could anybody complete their advertising slogan for me? 'Because I'm worth it' or 'Because you're worth it' or 'Because we're worth it.'

A 23 year old woman came up with that slogan in 1973 for the Beauty & Cosmetic Industry giant, L'Oréal. It was originally '**L'oreal – because I'm worth it!**' And over the years it has taken on a meaning all of its own. But it was changed slightly in 2005. They softened it from "**Because I'm worth it**" to "**Because you're worth it**". This was after concerns in France that the original appeared too money-oriented. More recently Cheryl Cole appears on their adverts, and she says, '**Come on girls, because we're worth it!**'

The original slogan, 'Because I'm worth it' - isn't just too money-oriented, it's self-oriented. 'Because **I'm** worth it' gives the impression 'I can do what I like, I can spend money on myself without limits.' It justifies anything I want to do, regardless of how it affects anybody else. It is basically selfish, self-centred and egotistical: 'Because I'm worth it!'

Are you wrapped up in yourself, in your own self-worth; or are you taken up with Jesus? Are you sitting firmly on the Throne of your life, or is Jesus? How much is He worth as far as you are concerned? Is He worth giving your life to? Is He worth giving your worship to? - Because that's what worship means. Worship means giving someone what they are worth: It comes from an old English word 'worth-ship'. So let me ask you tonight: What does Jesus mean to you? What is Jesus worth as far as you are concerned?

Here in John ch.12 we have the story of Mary, the sister of Lazarus. (The man who has just been raised from the dead in the previous chapter: 11) This Mary anoints Jesus with expensive perfume in her home in Bethany, just before he enters Jerusalem, heading for the cross - because as far as she was concerned, '**He was worth it!**' This was her way of showing what Jesus meant to her, how much He was worth to her. That's what He was worthy of.

This seems to be the third occasion that something like this has happened to Jesus in the Gospels. Matthew 26:6-13, and Mark 14:3-9 seem to record a similar story when Jesus was in the home of a man called Simon the Leper, when a woman comes with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, breaks it and pours the perfume on Jesus' feet.

But that seems to be a different occasion to the story that Luke records in Luke 7:36-50, where Luke talks about a former prostitute anointing Jesus' feet, in the home of Simon the Pharisee, not Simon the Leper, up in Galilee.

And as she wept over her sin, Jesus told her that she has been forgiven because of her great faith. And we get the punch-line from that particular story: *'She who has been forgiven much; will love much.'*

However, here in John's account (in John ch.12) we are in another home – this time in Bethany (only 2 miles from Jerusalem), not up north in Galilee. And this time it's in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They are throwing a party to celebrate the fact that Lazarus has come back from the dead – that he is alive and well again, and Jesus is their guest of honour, because he had the power to raise Lazarus from the dead.

Yet again a woman comes forward with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume - she breaks it and pours the perfume on Jesus' feet. This time the woman is Mary, the sister of Lazarus. She is showing her gratitude to Jesus.

A discussion and an argument follow this incident and Judas, one of the 12 disciples is provoked to go to the Jewish authorities to betray Jesus.

John tells us here in v.1 that it's only six days until the Passover Feast in Jerusalem. So Jesus is in his last week. He would be on the Cross on the Preparation Day for Passover (on Friday). So this was the previous weekend.

From the other Gospels we know that Jesus had been telling his disciples for some time now that he was going to Jerusalem. There he would be arrested, and put to death, but on the third day he would rise again (e.g. Matt 16:21). However the disciples refused to believe it.

But it seems that Mary has come to believe what Jesus has been saying, and what she now does she does in preparation for his burial (v.7). She believes that He is going to die, just as he said, but she also believes in Him as her Saviour and Lord.

Nobody is more important to her than He is – not even her brother Lazarus – otherwise why didn't she use this family heirloom when she was embalming Lazarus to lay him in the tomb just a few weeks earlier? (v.7). *'She saved this perfume for the day of Jesus' burial.'* Jesus meant more to her than anybody!

Here in this home in Bethany a dinner is being served in Jesus' honour. He's the special guest (v.2). Martha is serving the meal, the risen Lazarus is among those reclining at the table with Jesus. A large crowd has gathered and is looking on as the evening unfolds (v.9).

I want you to notice the attitudes towards Jesus of each of the people in this story. Their attitude towards him lets us see what they think he is worth...

1. Martha – was serving Jesus (v.1)

She always did - according to Luke 10:38-42. That was Martha's way of showing what she thought of Jesus. She served him in practical ways, with all her heart. But a bit like some of the rest of us, maybe Martha was so busy serving, she didn't always just give the time to sit at Jesus' feet, to learn more from Him, and just to spend time with Him, like her brother and sister did.

Maybe it was the very fact that her sister Mary took time to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to Him that gave her the faith and insight to see what was about to happen to Jesus.

As well as serving Jesus, we also need to take time to sit at his feet, to listen and learn from Him, and to be renewed spiritually by him too.

2. Lazarus – was fellowshiping with Jesus (v.2)

We can only really have true fellowship with Jesus whenever we have been *spiritually* raised to life from being dead in our trespasses and sins: (See Ephesians 2:1-10). Lazarus has just been physically raised to life again, so we can only begin to imagine just how grateful and privileged Lazarus felt, to have been one of the few people that Jesus actually raised to life while he was here on earth! He wanted to spend time with the Lord Jesus now.

Coming face to face with death often gives people new perspectives on things, on life, and on what's really important. Well Lazarus now wants to spend time with Jesus in his presence, just having fellowship with his Lord.

The amazing thing was that Lazarus' life was now under threat, because of what the Lord had done for him! (v.9) Because Jesus had raised him from the dead, the Jews were plotting now - to kill him all over again! How absurd!

3. Mary – was worshipping Jesus (v.3)

Mary is obviously very grateful for what the Lord has done in her family. She is so thankful that she now has her brother Lazarus back, safe and well again. She wants to find some way of thanking Jesus properly for what He has done.

N.B. To worship someone: literally means 'to give them what they are worth or to give them what they are worthy of'. Mary had a lot to thank the Lord for. For her own faith and salvation; for her brother having been brought back to life; for the many times they had shared fellowship together there in Bethany.

She realized that Jesus was now heading for his death, and she wanted to express what she thought of Him while she still could, while He was still alive. It's too late when they're gone.

Jesus meant so much to her, she decided to take the thing she valued most and give it to Him. So she thought of her Alabaster jar full of costly perfume. The Alabaster jar full of perfume was very expensive indeed. It would have been worth a lot of money. It was probably a family heirloom handed down from one generation to the next in her family.

Alabaster was the material the jar was made out of. It is like a very fine porcelain. I've seen it in the Tuscany area of Italy – so it was probably imported to Israel from there by the Romans.

The perfume was extremely expensive as well. It wasn't just a few drops she used – there was about a pint of it / half a litre. It was called pure nard or spikenard. We're not sure what this was, but whatever it was, it was extremely expensive with a very sweet smell (v.5).

We're told it was worth 300 denarii or a year's wages – maybe £10,000 worth in today's money! Yet she thought Jesus 'was worth it!' (To quote L'oreal!)

There was no cap or stopper on these Alabaster jars. You had to break the jar to get at the perfume. Once broken, that was it, it was used up, it was gone! For most people they were just kept as an ornament on the shelf. But Mary broke it and poured it over Jesus' feet, and then wiped them with her hair. She didn't care what other people looking on thought of what she was doing, she was just taken up with her worship of Him. That's how much she thought Jesus was worth. She did it, **'because He was worth it!'**

So Martha, Lazarus and Mary all had different ways of expressing how much Jesus meant to them, how much worth they attached to him. Martha served Him diligently, Lazarus enjoyed fellowship with Him gratefully, and Mary worshipped Him extravagantly.

But there are a few more people in this story I want you to notice who had a different view of what Jesus was worth...

4. Judas Iscariot – He didn't think Jesus was worth it at all! (vs.4-8)

Judas Iscariot was of course one of the original 12 disciples or Apostles. But for some reason this occasion turns Judas against Jesus, and drives him into the hands of the High Priest and his cohorts who have been plotting to put Jesus to death since v.53 of John ch.11.

Judas didn't think that Jesus was worth the extravagant display that Mary had just poured out on him. All of this precious perfume – wasted – as far as he was concerned! Judas would soon betray Jesus for just 30 pieces of silver! That's all the value he put on Him – certainly not thousands of pounds!!

Just look at his reaction to Mary's expression of worship. He objects, and said, *'Why wasn't it sold and given to the poor?'*

But v.6 sheds light on the true condition of Judas' heart – he wasn't saved at all! He had the name of being a disciple, but in his heart he was nothing but a common thief – stealing even the money that the Lord depended on for his living here on earth!

In vs.7-8 Jesus defends what Mary has just done, and points out that she did it for his death. He also said *'The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me'* – Again he was reminding them that He was about to die. Matthew and Mark tell us what Judas did next (See Mark 14:10-11). He goes straight to the chief priests and agrees to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver – that's all the value he placed on Jesus' head. That's all Jesus was really worth as far as he was concerned! The price of a bond-slave – that's all!

5. The Chief Priests – now with Judas on their side (vs.10-11)

They thought Jesus was only **worth** getting rid of.

So they made plans to get rid of him – and of Lazarus too!

So they were out to kill one man who had already been brought back from the dead, and the One man who had power over death! They just hadn't got the message had they? - That Jesus was the Resurrection and the Life!

They were treating Jesus as if he was worthless and good for nothing. And yet he was the man who had gone about doing good throughout his 3 years of ministry here on earth. But to them, he was worth nothing at all!

Conclusion:

So we've seen this evening, that this family in Bethany thought the world of Jesus: Martha served him diligently, Lazarus enjoyed fellowship with him gladly, and Mary worshipped him extravagantly.

But outside of that family home that Jesus loved to go to so much, dark powers were already at work.

Even from within his own group of 12 disciples, one has now become a traitor, valuing his life for only 30 pieces of silver, as if the Lord of the Universe was only worth the price of a common slave.

And now the Chief Priests themselves, the guardians of religion in Israel, agree with Judas that 30 pieces of silver was a fair price for the Son of God, and are now plotting to kill him and Lazarus, who he had raised from the dead!

Isn't it amazing how we devalue the things that are really valuable, and we give false worth to things that are really worthless, in this twisted world in which we live?

What does Jesus really mean to you?

How much is Jesus worth as far as you are concerned?

Do you agree with 'L'oreal – 'because you're worth it?' Or do you agree with Mary and her extravagant use of perfume - because 'Jesus alone is worth it?'

What does Jesus mean to you?

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