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## JOHN 12:1-11

John Series: Get a Life in Jesus

[PRAYER] Lord, I pray for Pete as he goes on a business trip this week, gone next Sunday. Peter Brown. I also pray for Caroline as she continues to go through the radiation treatments that she's experiencing. Lord, we're grateful for the warmer weather. It seems warmer anyway than we had last week. So thank you for today and for the things that we experience in this day. Lord, we know that you're in control and that control that you exert over our world is something that we can fall into, embrace, and appreciate. So now we come before you to thank you for your greatness and your power and your strength and your knowledge about us and about our situations. So Lord, we trust you now. Use your word this morning in us to provoke some things that will help us to leave different people today. Lord, I pray a special blessing on those that are visiting here today who may not know you as their Lord and Savior yet. We ask that you would introduce yourself to them in a very personal and special way today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thanksgiving is a tool that God uses in our lives to center us spiritually, to move us into a place where we need to be to help prevent all kinds of other problems that might exist in our world. Thanksgiving is a real key element in our lives.

Today in our chapter we're going to learn about this gratitude as we compare Mary breaking the perfume on Jesus' feet to Judas who resents that. I'm going to look at that dynamic that exists. My goal today would be that you would, as you look at God's word, experience a desire to move more in the gratefulness side, to move more into gratitude in your life, especially gratitude for your relationship with Jesus. That's what's happening in the passage. So that's where we're headed in this passage today as we look at John 12.

If you would stand with me as we read the passage today. We'll do this in honor of God's word is to stand and look at what He has to say in John 12. Let me read these verses. If you have your Bible, I encourage you to read them right out of your version or out of the scriptures that you have in your hand and take notes in your Bible. It becomes this spiritual journal for you in essence as you go through it over the years.

*John 12:1-11 – Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. That's what we talked about last week, about the resurrection that came in his life and the lives of other people as they watched Lazarus being raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 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.*

*But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." Just think \$25,000. Let's just use that number, \$25,000. 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.*

*"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."*

*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. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.*

You may be seated.

So they're coming not only to see Jesus, but notice they're coming to see Lazarus because he rose from the dead. There's a great interest today in people who have died and come back to life. There's movies, books, articles, videos on YouTube, all kinds of things that you can find. In fact I googled "coming back from the dead," or something like that this week and the number of Google search tells you how many they have. It was 1.7 billion Google search items came up in just that search about coming up from the dead. It's an interest that people have. So the crowds started forming. They saw the Twitter feed or the CNN feed or whatever, so they want to see this guy, see what he has to say. That's kind of the end of our passage.

But I want to go back into the meal. I want to look around the table, I want to see what's happening around the house of these people. So as a backdrop today, it's going to be blurred a little bit so we can see the letters, but this is an example of an early first century house. Just one example. Notice the roof on top. That's in some of the Bible stories that we see. See it's kind of built into the side of a big wall and building and so on. I don't know if this is what it looked like. All I want to say is it looked different than our houses as they're trying to decide and learn and grow and meet people. In this case they're with Jesus on a special mission.

So let's look at the passage verse by verse as we go through it. Notice it says in verse 1 he gives us a timeline. Now this is important because the first time we see that we're getting close to the crucifixion of Christ, which is going to happen at Passover. So *six days before Passover*. We're in the last week here. There's a lot going to happen. There's twenty-one chapters in the gospel of John. We're only at chapter 12. We've got a lot to do before we get there. I was thinking this week wouldn't it be great if we could get to the resurrection story at Easter time. But there's so much between here and there, and the rate we go it's going to take us probably a little bit longer. So we'll probably have two Easters this year as we're progressing through this story. But this is where we are in the time frame.

It's in Bethany. We've talked about Bethany already. It's two miles from Jerusalem. And we want to zero in on this special meal that was planned. Notice that this was a meal in Jesus' honor. So they want to express love to Him. They want to express appreciation to Him, they want to express honor to Him. I'm sure it's because of the resurrection experience that they had that

Lazarus came back from the dead. So they have this special meal planned for Him that's focused in on Him.

One of the things I think we see here in this story is that there are three different people, three different ways that we can learn how to honor Jesus more. So just think in terms of your affirmation or your appreciation of Jesus. Here's some ways that you can do it. First of all, notice that it says *Martha served*.

She was probably back in the kitchen. Now kitchens weren't like ours. They were very rustic, I'm sure. But there was a basin of water and she could make cakes back there with something with flour in them we know from the menu kind of things that people would eat. So maybe she was making cakes. Maybe she was cooking some meat of some kind. She's in the back and she's serving this out. So she's using service as a way to appreciate and value Jesus.

We can do that in our lives. Certainly it's the service that we do that enhances this sense of value and appreciation we have for the Lord.

I'm really grateful for the people who serve here on Sunday. There's a lot that goes into what happens here on Sunday morning. And the people that are a part of this, I'm very grateful for what they do. There's also service that happens in the course of the week as we pray for each other, care of each other, look in on each other, and so on. So service is one of those ways that we can express honor to Jesus. That's what Martha is doing.

Another example of honor to Jesus is Lazarus. Notice what he was doing. *Lazarus was among those reclining at the table*. As I'm pondering this, here he is, reclining at the table having a discussion. I think it's much easier sometimes to give service or money or something else than it is time. He's just sitting there and he's just listening and talking.

One of the ways that we can show appreciation to other people is by listening to them, especially when they're hard to listen to. I'm sure Jesus wasn't hard to listen to, but he's sitting around the table just enjoying the conversation being a part of that. It's a way to honor Jesus is just the giving of his presence. Sometimes that means putting down the cell phone or turning off the TV during the meal time so that we can give the essence of our presence to someone else. So Lazarus is demonstrating that honor in that way in the midst of our story.

And then comes the third person. These are an all-cast presentation here. We've got all the people we know already. We've got Lazarus, we've got Martha, and now Mary. There's going to be a contrast between Mary's way that she's serving and Judas. So let's look a little bit more at Mary and what she's doing here.

*Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume*. Notice it's expensive. So the emphasis is on its value. So it's elaborated upon about the sacrifice that she's making here. This isn't like a cheap aftershave. This is some real deal here and it's worth a lot. The estimate of the value comes a little bit later in the story, about a year's wages. So we're thinking maybe \$25,000 worth of perfume being poured out on Jesus' feet. The emphasis is on the sacrifice that's being made. In the midst of this sacrifice, she's offering something really special to Jesus.

Now I wonder if Martha and Lazarus were in on this gift. I wonder if they knew this was coming out, so when the gift came out their smiles came on their faces where other people gasped, surprised at what was happening. I'm not sure exactly in the story of what's going on and who all knows about it, but I imagine. Sometimes you have a party for someone and some people are in on it and some people are not in on the gift that's coming out. So when the gift comes out here, it's just [gasp]. Some people are going, "Wow. That is big."

Now what she's expressing is gratitude in her life. And this gratitude is pretty significant, demonstrated by the sacrifice. One of the ways that we demonstrate gratitude to the Lord is through our giving, through sacrifice. When God designed giving in the Old Testament, He designed it for a purpose. It's not a tax. Giving was a tenth set up in the Mosaic law and it was designed to represent the whole. So when you come and you're giving a tenth, you're saying, "Lord, I just want to give a tenth as a demonstration of the whole. I'm giving it all to you."

Now God had another plan in mind besides just gathering money in order to fund the spiritual operation of the people. God knew that the generous giving of people does something for them in their hearts. God's design was that the people would have their spiritual balance inside of them. So giving became a way for them to practice thankfulness in order to build something in their heart called gratitude.

The difference between gratitude and gratefulness: Gratitude is something in your heart that you experience inside. Gratitude. A feeling of gratitude. And then there's gratefulness. That's what comes out. To say thank you or to have manners can be a form of demonstrating gratitude. But gratitude is in your heart and it comes out through gratefulness. Gratitude is something that's very important for our spiritual emotional mental health in our lives.

You think about in the story when there are ten lepers, Jesus healed the ten lepers. I'm sure they all felt gratitude, but only one expressed gratefulness. Only one came back and said thank you. Because here's what's important: Gratefulness exercises gratitude inside of our hearts. We all need gratitude inside of our lives and we see a contrast here between gratitude and resentment, Mary and Judas.

Thankfulness and gratefulness and gratitude and appreciation are all a part of what God has as a spiritual discipline inside of us for us to develop to keep us spiritually centered. It's kind of interesting to see how often the word 'thankfulness' is used in the Bible and in different ways.

Notice it's used in Psalm 100:4 when it says – *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.* So when you come corporately to gather together. This is a psalm of ascent. They would sing this as they were coming up the road up to Jerusalem. It was a high point, so everybody's coming up the various roads to Jerusalem. They would sing the psalms of ascent. This was one of them. Let's *enter his gates with thanksgiving.*

Now when we come together on Sunday mornings, we don't come with our cup empty to get filled so we can go home with a full cup. That's not how it's designed. God has designed our church, *the church*, to be a place where you come with your cup full. You come and you share it with others and you leave with a cup that's running over. That's the idea here. So he says *enter his gates with thanksgiving.* You come with thanksgiving because you have something to give, something to share, something to offer in worship and the worship experience.

Now Philippians 4:6 goes directly to mental health. Let's talk about mental health for a moment. It's strategic for all of us. Anxiety. There are some solutions here for anxiety. There are a number of them, but notice right in the middle of them is thanksgiving. Thanksgiving helps us get our minds on things that we're grateful for instead of allowing other things to control us. Thanksgiving is really important for mental health, as reported by the scriptures.

In *Thessalonians 5:18* it says – *Give thanks in all circumstances*. It's to be a lifestyle that we have. We are thankful people. *In everything give thanks*. Why? because it's doing something inside of our hearts to develop gratitude that we're going to need and we're going to use in our lives.

In *Ephesians 5:4* notice it talks about our speech. *Nor should there be obscenity*. Now this is foul language, not necessarily cursing or using God's name in vain. This is foul language. Christians don't use toilet language. There should not be any things that are obscene. We don't talk about sexual relations in terms of obscene words. We don't do that. There should not be *any foolish talk*. We don't talk about problems that people have or race or sexual issues. We don't joke about that. That's *coarse joking*. We don't do that. Why? Because they *are out of place*. They're inappropriate. That's what the passage is saying. *But rather* here's what's appropriate for Christians. When we're talking it's about *thanksgiving*. We're sharing thanksgiving with our mouth. There's something that's coming out. And when we do that it affects the whole dynamic of people around us.

And that's why (let's go back to our passage) it says in the last sentence – *And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume*. Wow. Just the smell filled the whole room. Maybe the whole house. Yeah, the whole house. Wow. Just filled the whole house with the fragrance of the perfume. The process of moving the odor or the smell to the whole house is called diffusion. The atoms diffuse into the air and then they get to our noses where we smell. So this beautiful smell just filled the whole room.

But in the same way here gratitude filled the whole room with this thanksgiving, with this gratitude, and everybody could feel it. Everybody could smell it. Everybody could enjoy it. And that's what happens in our lives as well. As we're grateful people, it affects all the people around us. They feel it. In a house where a person is grateful, that gratefulness starts to affect the other people. the environment. Gratitude raises the frequency level in a house to a place where other people experience appreciation. *The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume*.

Now as I look at this story, I have two things going on in my heart. One of them is this wow feeling. You must experience this. Twenty-five thousand dollars worth of perfume put on Jesus' feet and going wow, that's really big. She must really love Him. He is very valuable. I feel that sense of gratitude just overwhelming me. On the other side of me I say, "Twenty-five thousand dollars? What could I do with \$25,000? If I had \$25,000 I could..." and you fill in the blank.

I remember my wife and I have gone to several marriage enrichment things over our forty years of marriage and the last was about five years ago (or maybe it was a little bit longer). But our kids are grown, you know they're out of the house, we're empty nesters now, and we heard that there's this couple that meets with couples and helps them develop a united vision. Because you can tend to when your kids are gone, like my wife and I are very involved in our lives, but in

different kinds of things, then you can grow apart and we didn't want to do that. We wanted to have a united vision, a vision that reminded us that we're together. So we met with these folks for five different sessions. We really only needed one to develop a vision, but we sat through the five sessions that we paid for.

They asked us questions. One of the questions they asked us was if you were given five acres, what would you do with it? My wife says, "Well I know what we'd do with it," right away. "We'd give it to our church so we could build a building." I'm going yes! Yes, that's what we would do. That's fun. We would give it away. I'm not sure they heard that from a lot of different people.

My best man in my wedding forty years ago, his name is Walt. He's a missionary and he trains leaders. But forty years ago (or over forty years ago) we were in seminary together and somehow we got roped into this meeting we didn't know we were coming to. It used to be that people would get you together and they would have Amway presentations, but they wouldn't tell you what they were. You'd get there and they'd say, "Oh by the way, I want to tell you about this way that you can make a lot of money or whatever." So somehow he and I got involved in this thing and we're sitting there and "surprise, we're here to get you into this Amway thing." The question that they asked us was, "If you had five thousand dollars more in your budget, what would you do with it?" And Walt said, "I'd give it away." So it just kind of diffused the whole thing. What would you do with it? "I'd give it away." I just love that. I just remember Walt's response to her and then the leader of this group she's going... Well the point is we don't need any more money. We have what we need and if I had more, I'd give it away. That's basically what he was saying. I really liked that.

I wrestle with that in my heart in this story because on the one hand I'd go, "Wow. The gratitude." But on the other hand I say, "Wow, \$25,000 is a lot of money." And that's what takes us into the next part of this story because I have little bit of Judas in my heart and I wrestle with the Judas and the Mary part in my own life. This is important.

Notice what Judas says. "*Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.*" So he presents that way. He says I could think of a lot of other ways to use \$25,000. But notice it says – *He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief.* He was covering something up.

Inside of all of our hearts we have a continuum. It goes from gratitude to resentment. The further you move toward gratitude, the further away you move from resentment. The further you move toward resentment, the further you move away from gratitude.

There's a lot of work been done in our contemporary society on the value of gratitude. In fact there are three surveys that you can take that can help you measure where you are on a line between gratitude and resentment. The one I like the best is called the GRAT test. GRAT stands for Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test. GRAT. You can take it. It's a self-test. You can take it online. It's forty-four questions and it puts you on a scale between gratitude and resentment. We all have it there. We all have this in our lives. Because if we move toward resentment too much then we start complaining, we start feeling disappointed, we start being negative, we start all kinds of things over in the resentment side. The solution for that is to move

toward gratitude. I'm telling you what the world is saying through this test. That's what they're saying.

The reason they're saying you want to move toward gratitude is because people who have more gratitude in their life are people who have all these good things that come to them. They sleep better. They report less illnesses. They have deeper relationships. They have stronger romantic relationships. They have less stress. And the list goes on and on for these people who have more gratitude in their lives.

God designed our world and our hearts so that gratitude would be one of those things that centers us and puts us where we need to be. It's really important to be there. Now people who move toward the resentment side have lots of good reasons to be there. Judas has a reason. You could have given this money to the poor. He presents well, but Jesus knew his heart. Jesus knew he was just being selfish. He was being self-focused. He was just complaining and he didn't have what he needed was this gratitude or this sense of value inside of his heart. Therefore he's being contrary. He's looking for ways to argue. He's got all these challenges that happen.

It doesn't take us much to see the people around us who have this problem. But maybe we should look at ourselves because I've got this problem. I'm wrestling with gratitude and resentment in my own heart. I need to be moving more toward gratitude as the antidote, as it were, to resentment in my life. Resentment is complaining about the things we don't have. Gratitude is being grateful for what we do have. The two are opposites and they're moving apart from each other and we need to be moving toward the gratitude side in our lives.

Judas had all kinds of things to say here, but Jesus knew his heart. That really there was some selfishness going on inside of him.

So let's look at Jesus' response to what's going on in the house here, to what's even going on in our hearts as we look at the next verse. Look at verse 7. *"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."*

His words are *leave her alone*. I think when we've got the gratitude and resentment in our hearts, if we're moving too far to that resentment side and it's starting to take over our lives, what is Jesus saying? Let it go. Get rid of it.

And what's the solution here? Notice – *you will not always have me*. There's value in putting our value in Jesus Christ Himself. That if we understand that Jesus Christ when He comes into our lives has saved us, not only saved us from our sin in the history of our lives, but He saves us from the imbalance that exists in our lives. If we would move toward more gratitude in our lives for Jesus, then we would be more centered in our lives.

Judas lacked this ability to value Jesus. To see His value, to see His importance. He's grown now over the three years of ministry that he's been with Jesus. He moved further away. He's moving away. And the ultimate path of this resentment is self-destruction. As we already know about Judas, he's going to take his own life. I would suggest it's a bad place out here. If we stay on the resentment side, it moves us further and further down a place that really is bad. We don't want to go there.

Now you can take the GRAT test. I like numbers, so it's nice to take one of these psychological surveys that comes out and do that and get a number and see where I am. I like that. But you know, I can tell you right now, a better way to do this is to just sit and listen to God's word or read God's word and allow the Holy Spirit to do the conviction test. Because when the Holy Spirit convicts us, He says very specifically to each one of us, you need to move a little bit more in this direction. Here's what you need to do with your husband or your wife or your kids or your parents or whatever it is that you have resentment about. You need to move more toward gratitude. The Holy Spirit comes in and not only points out, doesn't just give us a number of where we are. He empowers us to move that direction. It's the beauty of the power of the Holy Spirit. He doesn't just out sin, point out where we are on the graph. He empowers us to move in the direction. He shows us what we need to do in a very specific way. I need that in my own life. I'm sure you do that.

I encourage you to do three things. One is embrace the power of the Holy Spirit in your life today. Just ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Secondly, look for ways to practice gratefulness because it builds gratitude. Look for ways to practice gratefulness because it builds gratitude. And thirdly, watch out for resentment because resentment is self-destructive. You don't want to go down that path. And so when you start experiencing that because of the situations that you're in, you're in danger. Move with the Holy Spirit toward gratitude. It's God's design. That's really the message I think we see in this story between Mary and Judas. Gratitude, resentment. And it comes right into our own hearts to be able to address that in a personal way.

Would you stand with me? Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Holy Spirit, I ask that you would fall down on this place in a very personal and special way. I pray that your conviction would touch us deeply in our hearts, not just to make us feel guilty or ashamed, but that you would empower us to move in a direction that you know and we know that we need to move. Lord, I pray that you'd give us specific practical steps to do that. I ask that you would comfort us in areas where we've experienced pain and hurt. Lord, cause us not to blame or to look for excuses to cover up or to protect our resentment, but to let it go, to give it up. Lord, we ask that you would build gratitude in our hearts and continue to allow it to permeate the room of our hearts and our lives. Lord, we thank you for what you do in our personal lives. Again, I just pray for those who might be here who don't know you personally that you'd motivate them right now to trust you as their Lord and Savior. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.