

Wasted Worship

Every act of worship that is spent on Jesus is always worth it.

John 12

INTRO

We certainly live in a value-based world.

- We have “Extra Value meals”
- The Dollar General store is a big hit.
- But people don’t just like good values, they also value good things... at least the things that they define as good.
- How we measure value is called a “Value System”

Everyone has different value systems, but whatever value system you have, there is one thing everyone has in common:

ILLUSTRATION

EXAMPLE 1: One of the families at our church was moving and clearing out their garage. The guy had boxes full of baseball cards that he had never really even looked through. I use to collect them as a kid and was intrigued. He asked me if I wanted any of them. My wife—I mean, I—didn’t want boxes of baseball cards sitting around the garage so I grabbed a small shoebox of cards that was sitting on the top.

- I took them home and didn’t think much about them for about a week. Finally, I saw the box again and opened it up. I was expecting a bunch of worthless 1983 score baseball cards full of forgotten players.

- I was a little overwhelmed when I opened the box and the first cards sitting on the top say “Mickey Mantle”, “Willie Mays” and “Joe DiMaggio”.
- Who would have ever thought that the little white box was worth over \$1000 dollars! My friend was excited and still let me keep it! I started treating that box differently.

EXAMPLE 2: But it doesn't have to be monetarily valuable to be valuable. I remember when I was cleaning out my garage and putting together a pile of things for the goodwill. I took all that stuff including an ancient pogo stick and dropped it at the Goodwill. That night my youngest daughter wanted to know where her favorite pogo stick in the whole wide world was. Let's just say there were some tears that evening.

Let's not talk about the time I accidentally took my wife's \$200 snow jacket and a bag full of the family's snow gear to the Goodwill. I told my wife, “Hey next time don't put the snow gear in a white trash bag and set it next to the other white trash bags that say, “Goodwill” on them. That didn't go over well.

QUOTE

The more valuable something becomes, the more difficult it is to give it up.

APPLICATION

Typically, the only time you see someone giving up the few valuable things they possess, it's because they have found something, that to them is more valuable. There's a series of analogies that Jesus gives in Matthew 13 as He is discussing the nature of God's kingdom. It goes like this:

[Mat 13:44-46 NKJV] 44 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

And while there is much here we could discuss, today I just want you to see one main principle:

QUOTE

“The treasure in the field and the pearl of great price were more valuable to the finder than everything else they possessed. They spent their greatest treasures to purchase for themselves hidden, more valuable treasure.”

APPLICATION

But how many would have looked from the outside and thought, “What on earth are they doing? Why are they giving away everything that matters?”

- The person that doesn’t know about the treasure in the field, or the pearl of great price, sees these people’s actions as a form of waste and foolishness.

Well today, in preparation for communion, I want to go through a story in the Bible of someone who sacrifices what she valued most for the greater treasure of gaining Christ, and those around her who chided her for her waste and foolish extravagance.

The title of this morning’s message is, “Wasted Worship?”

BIBLE VERSE

Jhn 12:1-8 NKJV – 1 Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. 2 There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. 3 Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. 4 But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, who would betray Him, said, 5 “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. 7 But Jesus said, “Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. 8 “For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.”

APPLICATION

This is a story of worship, sacrifice, courage, embarrassment, humiliation, and praise. It's actually a story that is incredibly relevant for us today because it forces the question, "How much is Jesus worth to me?"

Interestingly, the word worship in the English language is a compound word combining the words "worth" and "ship."

- We have friendship, companionship, relationship, kinship, and worthship (worship).
- Ship = the acknowledgment of something Worth = something's value
- Worship – the acknowledgment of worth and value.

I believe the same attacks, struggles, temptations, and actions that Mary displayed 2000 years ago still apply to our worship today. In this story, we learn 4 lessons about the worth of Jesus Christ.

1

Is Jesus worth more than what I value the most?

BIBLE VERSE

3 Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

APPLICATION

300 denari is about 1 year's wages.

Many people believe this may have been her dowry for her future husband, securing the marriage.

This oil would have taken years to collect.

For an unmarried, Jewish woman, this would probably equate to her greatest earthly treasure.

And the lavish way she spends it all on Jesus goes against all human logic and wisdom.

- This isn't what they would teach you to do in Dave Ramsey's financial peace academy.

It would have only required a couple of drops of this essential oil to “get the job done”, but instead of using a couple of drops on Jesus, she uses everything on Jesus, not even sparing a couple drops on herself. And notice, Jesus doesn’t stop her.

- **Jesus doesn’t say, “Stop, you really need some of that. Really, I’m not worth it.”**
- Why? Because He was worth it, and that lavish, sacrificial act of worship was worth more than the oil itself.

True worship occurs when the object of our sacrifice holds greater worth than the sacrifice itself.

I think about times I have said no to Jesus because I was afraid of what it might cost me... and I have had many of those times. I love my life too much to lose it, my money too much to give it, and my time too much to offer it... but in reality, Jesus is always worth it.

You see, the sacrifice is only painful when I value the thing being offered more than the One I am offering it to.

- This is why viewing every act as an act of worship to Christ first, will make it less burdensome.
- As a husband I should be serving my wife and children, standing up and showing them Jesus. Not only do I need to learn to value them above myself, but I also need to see my service to them as an act of worship to Jesus that deserves the complete spending of myself for their benefit.
- This can be a reality in every area of life. This is why Paul wrote 3 times (1 Corinthians 10 and Colossians 3) – Whatever you do, eating drinking, in word or in deed, do it all for the glory of God.

Even when we corporately worship this can be a reality. What do we value the most? Our pride? Our dignity? Is lavishly pouring ourselves out to praise the Lord worth being a bit embarrassed?

- I think it is! If I feel like I need to give a greater expression of worship to let the Lord know of my gratitude, love, and surrender, then so be it. Of course, not ever wanting to do it in a way that disrupts corporate worship or stumbles other believers, but there are certainly times when we need to humble ourselves in order to spend ourselves on worship.
- David didn’t value his appearance as King more than his worship before the Lord. He would rather be seen as undignified as a king in order to be seen as an extravagant worshipper of

the greater king.

BIBLE VERSE

Phi 2:17 NKJV – 17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

2

Is Jesus worth more than the opinions of others?

BIBLE VERSE

4 But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"

APPLICATION

Certainly, the murmuring in the room and the outright outburst from Judas would have been enough to embarrass Mary to the point of running out of the room in tears. Mark's gospel indicates that the accusation of Judas spread to the other disciples, and many of them were expressing their opinion that Mary was wasting her gift of Christ.

But she is not phased, because her focus at that moment was purely on Jesus and His worthiness of this act of worship.

- She was not distracted by the awkwardness and discomfort that her act of worship caused the others around her.
- Perhaps their criticism came less from the place of logic and more from the place of conviction; the conviction that none of them gave such a valuable gift to Jesus, none of them was willing to humble themselves and embarrass themselves to demonstrate love to Christ.

This is not the first time Mary was criticized for her worship decisions. Her own sister brought accusations against her previously.

- **[Luk 10:39-42 NKJV] 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached**

Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” 41 And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 “But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

This is why Paul, during his ministry said:

Gal 1:10 NKJV – 10 ...Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

We always want to honor and respect others in humility and love, but when it comes to expressing our love to Christ, the perception of others should not be a factor in our decisions. They might perceive what you’re doing as a waste, but all that matters is if Jesus perceives your action as worship. Any act of worship that is “wasted” on Jesus is never really wasted at all.

ILLUSTRATION

There have been times when I have watched others take actions for Jesus that I considered senseless and foolish, only to end up ashamed that I was not willing to worship Jesus with such extravagant obedience. As the years have progressed, it has been an active pursuit of mine to love Jesus in such a way that regardless of other people’s perceptions, I could know at the end of the day that I gave Him everything I had to give. I have a long way to grow, but may it be all of our aims!

3

Is Jesus worth more than the enemy's lies?

APPLICATION

Judas pipes up with an objection that would have seemed fairly reasonable to everyone at the table. Couldn’t a year’s worth of wages be used for something more productive? Spent on something that would provide a more concrete and measurable impact? After all, the poor could be fed for a lifetime on that kind of money!

- **First** of all, it wasn’t Judas’ perfume, so he didn’t really have any say on how someone else spent their own resources.

- **Second** of all, Judas' internal motive was different than his expressed motive. He kept the money bag (why Jesus allowed Judas to carry the money is another interesting study on its own). He was also a thief. 300 Denari in his possession would have made quite the side income for a long season for Judas! I sometimes wonder if Judas would have sold out Jesus for 30 pieces of silver if he had 300 Denari in his bag.
- **Third**, it teaches us something valuable about the enemy. *I believe Judas typifies Satan in this passage.*
 - Satan will always mock and challenge the Christian's worship to the Lord.
 - ***"Why don't you spend your time, effort, money, and talents doing some more worthwhile thing. What are you really accomplishing by giving it all to Jesus? What a waste of your potential! You could really go make something of yourself in the world, and your wasting time behind the scenes for Jesus? For people who won't ever notice or appreciate you?"***
 - That's his expressed motive, but you know what his internal motive is? The same as Judas. He really wants your worship for himself. He is a worship thief. He knows that any ounce of the worship of your life that he can redirect away from Christ is a win for him.

So how should we respond? By blocking out the enemy's voice and focusing on the one we are worshipping. We need to let Jesus defend our worship rather than believing the enemy's accusations.

- Jesus silences Judas and contradicts his logic. Mary is doing the right thing. Just like when she sat at my feet before and got criticized by her sister for not working. Once again, it is Mary, not Judas who has her priorities correct.
- Jesus will always defend our acts of worship from the condemnation, doubt, and fear the enemy throws our way.

APPLICATION

How many times have we stopped giving Jesus what He deserves because we started believing the wrong voice?

- It was Eve's failure to believe and trust the voice of God over the voice of Satan that caused us all to miss out on God's best for humanity.
- When we choose to respond to the wrong voice, we too will miss out on the greater blessings that come from unreserved worship.

4

Is Jesus worth more than the potential lack of return?

APPLICATION

The other thing that strikes me is that Mary didn't seem to think or care about what she might get back from her costly gift.

- The mentality wasn't, ***“Well I'm giving a valuable gift to Jesus, so I really hope I get something better in return.”***
- The mentality was, ***“I'm giving my all to Jesus because he is worth it. If I get nothing back but only lose what I had, he was still worth it.”***

What she didn't know was the Jesus had a far greater reward in mind. In Matthew 26 Jesus adds, “Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached in all the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

THE SMELL OF WORSHIP: Remember, the fragrance filled the room? You see, she was giving Jesus a gift greater than anyone else could give. How personal was it that over the smell of the blood and sweat; over the smell of the wooden cross and the dust of Golgotha, Jesus' final breaths were inhaling the fragrance of worship? What other disciple gave Jesus such a gift? Who else had the foresight to understand that when he said he was going to die, he meant it? Who else empathized with him and helped him prepare for that brutal moment?

She gave out of love, expecting nothing in return, and in return Jesus, the living God defended and honored her. He made her an irreplaceable part of his story of salvation.

- **The point is, when we bless God with our worship, expecting nothing in return, God always returns the blessing upon us in some, often unexpected form.**

QUOTE

It's impossible to waste anything on Jesus, even if you don't see the return here and now.

CONCLUSION

This is a picture of worship.

- As I said earlier, I think it totally applies to the way we express our worship to God through song and prayer, but it goes so much deeper.
- Do I see my every moment, my every resource, my every treasure, my every opportunity as a way to honor Jesus, declare my love, obedience, and surrender to him?
- Am I willing to give Jesus my all even when I want to value other things above Him?
- Am I ok with the criticism that will come from those around me if I know that Jesus is pleased?
- Will I silence the voice of the enemy who tells me it's a waste and not worth it, and turn my attention to Christ?
- Will I give because Jesus is worth it, even if it means nothing for me in return?
- ***The closer I get to the answer of "yes", the closer I get to unhindered worship.***

I want to make it clear that this is not a message calling everyone to take everything valuable they have, go and sell, and live in poverty as an act of worship. That's silly and highly unproductive.

- What I'm suggesting, is the closer you truly get to Jesus, the more valuable He becomes until his value eclipses the other temporary things I possess. It means that all my time, treasures, and talents become surrendered to Jesus for His use as He sees fit.
- The closer we get to the person of Christ, the less concerned we become about how spiritual or unspiritual others think we are and become more concerned with what Jesus thinks of our worship.
- The more consumed we become with Christ, the less concerned we become with what God can do for us here and now, but we rather respond to what He has already done for us.

There's no such thing as wasted worship unless we waste our worship on anyone or anything other than Christ.