

**::Life Group Resources::**

**Life: Unlimited :: Generosity That Doesn't Hold Back:: November 5/6, 2011**



**Gathering Together**

1. Share a story about a generous act that took you by surprise.

**Reading the Text**~ Read: **Matthew 26:6-12 & John 12:1-8**

2. What part of the sermon or scripture passage this week was particularly important or meaningful to you?
3. This week's sermon takes these two passages and places them next to each other to get a fuller picture. Where and when did this take place? Who was present and what types of relationships did they have with Jesus?
4. Mary letting down her hair to wipe Jesus' feet (John 12:3) was highly provocative and the perfume liberally anointed on Jesus was incredibly costly (John 12:5). What do you think motivated Mary to behave in such an extreme way? Why do you think Jesus received the gift?

**Going Deeper**

5. What message does 1 Timothy 6:17-19 have for us today?
  - a. A life marked with *Unrestrained Generosity* "may take hold of the life that is truly life" (6:19). Based on this passage, what are characteristics of this true life?

**Living It Out**

6. Judas pretended kindness and compassion, but really acted out of selfishness. How do we sometimes fall into a similar trap in our marriages? What keeps people from being generous? What keeps you from being generous to your spouse and to others?
7. Mary took all that she prized in her alabaster jar and without restraint lavished Jesus. We all have an "alabaster jar" filled with what we most treasure - what is in your alabaster jar?
8. What do you do with your alabaster jar (ex. keep it safe on a shelf on display, hide it, etc.)?
  - a. What are you willing to do? How can you live with *Unrestrained Generosity that doesn't hold back* lavishing Jesus with your treasures?

**Prayer** Begin thinking and praying about your strengths and opportunities for growth with our eight Life Marks: Uncommon Friendship, Unquenchable Joy, Unexpected Grace, Unstoppable Faith, Unshakeable Hope, Unfailing Love, Unfathomable Peace, Unrestrained Generosity, Uncommon Friendship, Unquenchable Joy.

**Ministry of Hope:** We pray for the Ministry of Hope as they continue to provide food and medical care to the orphan children in Malawi. Be with them especially at this time as they head into the "hungry season" before the crops are ready for harvest. Provide support for them as they head into a new year, enabling them to continue all they do.

**Daystar University:** May your hand be upon this institution as they exist to educate future Christian leaders from across the African continent. Encourage the faculty as they teach and bless the students in their studies. May these leaders be used greatly for you.

**This week's focus::**

Mary shows living with unrestrained generosity for Jesus in these passages. Mary poured out her alabaster jar of costly perfume that was a treasure. She did this out of great love and devotion for Jesus. Mary's story is one that Jesus said "must be told whenever gospel is preached throughout the world" because her story is a picture of his story... Jesus poured out his life for us showing us the great extent of his love—sacrifice of great price. How can we, like Mary, live in ways marked by unrestrained generosity?

**John 12:1-8 & Matthew 26:6-12**

**Context**

It is only six days until the Passover and Jesus' crucifixion—this is the last supper before the Last Supper. At the home of Mary and Martha, Jesus was anointed with an expensive ointment as a sign of life. Mary did not know it, but the ointment (one used in embalming) expressed not only her love, but the love of God, soon to be shared as Jesus gave up His life for us.

**Reclining at the table.** (John 12:2 & Matthew 26:7) Greeks normally reclined on couches at special meals like feasts or banquets. Jesus was invited to many banquets—this one probably in his honor. Early traveling teachers were often invited to lecture at meals in return for free meals and lodging.

**Bethany.** (Jn. 12:1 & Mt. 26:6) Bethany was one of the villages near Jerusalem where Passover pilgrims could spend the night with hosts.

**A pint of pure nard** (Jn. 12:3). **Alabaster jar of very expensive perfume** (Mt. 26:7). The "pint" may have been about twelve ounces. A flask would normally contain no more than an ounce, so Mary is tremendously extravagant here. This perfume (undoubtedly imported from the East) was expensive, worth a year of a common laborer's wages, and had probably been kept in her family as an heirloom. Its fragrance was preserved by sealing it in alabaster (the favored container for perfume). Once the flask was broken, its contents could be used with their full freshness only once.

**She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair.** (Jn. 12:3) It was customary to anoint the heads of important guests, but a host would provide only water for their feet. Further, religious Jews resented married women who uncovered their heads and exposed their hair to men's gazes; because Mary's brother and sister, but not her husband are mentioned, she may have been unmarried (thus young, widowed or divorced); but acting thus toward a famous (albeit single) rabbi might still raise some pious eyebrows. Anointing his feet is an act of extreme humility, since the feet symbolize lowliness (1:27). Jesus will soon wash his disciple's feet (Jn 13) as an act of extreme service.

**She poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.** (Mt. 26:7). It was customary to anoint the heads of important guests, but this woman's anointing of Jesus is extraordinarily costly.

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**Judas Iscariot ... keeper of the money bag.** (Jn. 12:4–6). Some rabbis delegated their school's financial concerns to their disciples; some other groups, like the Essenes and some Greek philosophers, held property in common. Only those whose virtue was most trusted were permitted to keep group funds (13:29); thus, Judas's treachery is all the more scandalous.

**It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.** (Jn. 12:7). **When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.** (Mt. 26:12). In Jewish tradition, kings (including, by definition, the Messiah, or "anointed one"), priests and others had to be anointed for service. But here Jesus stresses a different kind of anointing undoubtedly unintended by the woman: anointing a body for burial. Bodies were normally anointed with oil to clean them, then rinsed with water before burial. This was an important act on Mary's part; those executed as criminals may have sometimes been denied anointing before burial (though not Jesus; see 19:39).

**You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.** (Jn. 12:8 & Mt. 26:11). Jesus' reply probably contains an allusion to Deuteronomy 15:11, which urges generosity to the poor, who will always be in the land. He does not down play giving to the poor but plays up his impending death; devotion to Jesus himself must precede and inform all other important and godly agendas.

**Resources Taken From**

1. Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Jn 12:1–8). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.
2. Richards, L., & Richards, L. O. (1987). *The teacher's commentary* (735). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.