



JESUS ANOINTED BY A WOMAN

Matt 26:6–13, Mark 14:3–9, Luke 7:36–50, John 12:1–8

Memory Verse

“The Son of Man must be killed and after three days rise again.” Mark 8:31

OR

“So I tell you that all her sins are forgiven, and that is why she has shown great love. But anyone who has been forgiven for only a little will show only a little love.” Luke 7:47

Context/Background

The story takes place in Bethany, in the lead up to Passover and with the time for Jesus' death and resurrection soon approaching. In John's gospel, Jesus is visiting the home of Lazarus, who had previously been raised from the dead. A woman (John's gospel says Mary) comes in and weeps at Jesus' feet and anoints them with expensive perfume.

Jesus Christ is God's anointed Messiah. The word Messiah means “anointed one” and derives directly from the Hebrew word for “anointed.” Christ comes from the Greek word Christos, also meaning “anointed one.” Thus, Christ is the Greek equivalent to Messiah. When Jesus receives the Holy Spirit at His baptism, He is “anointed” by God in preparation for His life's work (Luke 3:22; cf. Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18). Jesus is anointed with fragrant ointment in His work as the Savior, the King of heaven who was in preparation to die to save His people. The accounts differ in details. Some believe that the gospels are describing three different events occurring at different times. It is clear that in all accounts, the woman loved Jesus and wanted to give him a precious gift, and that in all cases Jesus approved of her actions and stood up for her to his disciples.

Anointing the head is used in the Old Testament as a sign that God has chosen someone for a priestly/leadership role, like King David. In the New Testament, Jesus and the disciples use anointing the head with oil as part of cleansing oneself in preparation for fasting and prayer, and a means of healing people. Washing people's feet was the task of a servant, and normally a sign of good hospitality to guests arriving dirty from their travels. Some commentators point to the anointing of Jesus' feet with perfume/tears and drying his feet with her hair is an act of extreme humility, a foreshadowing of Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

Ointment, oils, and perfumes used to be put in vessels made of alabaster to keep them pure and unspoiled. The boxes were often sealed or made fast with wax to prevent the perfume from escaping. Alabaster was a beautiful substance and strong enough to keep the oil or perfume completely contained until the time of its use.

Nard (spikenard) was a very strong, long-lasting perfume which was extremely expensive. Jewish burial customs required that dead bodies be covered in a mix of spices and perfume to cover the smell of death.

Summary

After the dinner, while they were reclining at the table, a woman (Mary) comes to Jesus and anoints him with a jar of pure nard, a very expensive perfume. She wipes it on his feet with her hair, out of her great love for Jesus. Many of those who were there were disapproving of this. Judas (who John points to as a thief) says that the money for the perfume should have been given to the poor instead. But Jesus sticks up for Mary, using it as an opportunity to foretell of his own death and burial. Mary gives Jesus the most expensive perfume as a special gift.

Relevance/Application

Themes: love, forgiveness, service, appreciation

Younger students:

- God loves acts of kindness and caring
- Jesus cared for the woman and stood up for her.
- Jesus loves it when we worship him by giving him our best.
- Money isn't as important as loving God.

Older students:

- Jesus encourages us to put our love of God and the needs of others above material possessions.
 - Jesus defended the woman's devotion to him. We should stick up for others who are doing the right thing.
 - Symbolism and foreshadowing – Mary's act was symbolic of anointing a body for burial and Jesus used this act to foreshadow his own death and burial.
 - When God sent Jesus to the world to die and forgive us, he gave everything. He is asking for the same thing from us. In [Matthew 22:37](#), Jesus says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind." He tells us to love God with everything. We may not have expensive perfume oil, but we have our time, talents, and treasure to give.
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Christian Studies Framework

Christian Beliefs Key Idea/s explored in the story

Key Idea 2 The person and work of Jesus the Christ is central to Christianity

Key Idea 3 A Christian worldview is shaped by the biblical teaching of sin and grace

The Christian Church

Key Idea 3 Christians pray, worship and celebrate the sacraments

Catechism Connections

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.

Discussion/Wondering Questions:

Early Years

- Why do you think Mary wanted to put perfume on Jesus' feet/head?
- How do you think Jesus felt when Mary anointed his feet with the perfume?

Primary

- Why do you think Judas didn't like what Mary did?
 - If you were in Mary's place, what would you do for someone you love?
 - How would you feel if someone shared something special with you to show they care?
 - What is the most expensive or meaningful gift that you have given someone? What would you give Jesus for a gift if He came to your house?
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Secondary

- How do you think Mary felt when the others suggested she should have given the money to the poor instead?
- Why was it significant that Judas made this comment?
- What impact do you think Jesus' words had on Mary and the disciples?
- This story is told in all four of the gospels. Why might that be significant? Each account is a bit different from the others. Why do you think this is so? Does it matter?
- Learn more about anointing (see The Bible Project link below). Can you make a connection between anointing and baptism?
- What do you think is the significance of a woman anointing Jesus?

Images or objects to spark discussion

- Expensive perfumes – bring in, or samples on card, images on screen.



Image from:

<https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/news/sacred-oils-that-anointed-jesus-bring-comfort-to-the-dying/>



Image from: <https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/socially-isolated-spiritually-onnected/holy-week-anointing-bethany>



Soichi Wantanabe, Mary Washes Jesus' Feet

Telling the Story

Bibles: The Beginner's Bible
The Big Rescue Bible
The NIV Bible

The Jesus storybook bible – Sally Lloyd Jones “Washed with tears” page 280-284

Creative Storytelling:

[“Costly: Mary of Bethany Anoints Jesus” -John12:1-11](#) – script for 1st person monologue from Mary. Could be used for a message (older students)

Other Resources

GROW Ministries

[Woven Together – October - Matthew 26:6-13 Jesus receives worship from a woman](#)

Audio Stories/Podcasts

Bible.is - <https://www.faithcomesbyhearing.com/audio-bible-resources/bible-is>
Audio recordings of the Bible in many different languages and several English translations. All four gospels also available in film versions, searchable by book and chapter. Excellent resource for NESB learners.

Kids' Corner – Bible Stories – [Jesus Anointed with Perfume](#)

Videos: Early Years / Junior Primary

[Jesus anointed at Bethany - Saddleback Kids](#) (1 min 55)

[Mary pours perfume on Jesus- LifeKids](#) (1 min 37)

Middle – Upper Primary

[Mary anointed Jesus' feet Champion Forest Kids](#) (1 min 35)

Secondary/Staff

[Anointing – The Bible Project](#) - information about the use of anointing in the Bible

[Easter Upside Down: Mary of Bethany – The Skit Guys](#) - video monologue from Mary – pay to download.

[Encounters With Christ: Mary of Bethany – The Skit Guys](#) – different video monologue from Mary – pay to download. Maybe more for staff.

Invocation

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

May our prayers be like special perfume before you, O God.

May our worship be a sacrifice of praise.

May we come before you with joy and thankfulness for all you've done

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers

Prayer

God of love,

This day,

May we count not the cost,

But count the moments

That take us into the depth of a love

We cannot calculate,

Quantify,

Or understand,

And draw there,

On the cusp of salvation,

The gift,

The grace,

The giving,

Of such love.

From: <https://www.lifeandwork.org/features/features/view/531-holy-week-reflections-beyond-earthly-things>

Lord,

As Mary poured the expensive perfume on you, she did something extravagant. Help us remember that we often appear to be giving foolishly when we do things for you. We give when it's hard to see what we are getting back. Give us the courage always to love you in extravagant ways.

Amen.

Adapted from <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/prayer/holy-wednesday-prayers-remembering-jesus-anointing-and-betrayal.html>

Mealtime Prayer

At our table may there be
love in every heart for Thee.
By thy goodness we are fed,
and we thank Thee for this bread. Amen.

Blessing

May the extravagant love of God the Father, the forgiveness of Christ the Son, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

[name], love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and love your neighbour as yourself.

Music

[I love you Lord - PBC Creation Station](#) (younger)
[Praise The Lord Every Day - Yancy - VBS Kids Worship - Little Praise Party](#)
[You Are My All In All - Allstars Kids Club](#)
[Great are you Lord – Shout Praises Kids](#)
[GOD IS GOOD - Kids Worship feat. Yancy & Simon - Allstars Kids Club](#)
[10000 reasons – Matt Redman](#)
[Oh we love you – Kingdom Kids feat. Shane and Shane](#)
[Hallelujah, What a saviour – Emu Music](#)
[My God is all I need - City Alight](#)

Activities

Early Years:

- Students could draw different key moments in the story like – the perfume jar, wiping hair on feet, angry faces of Judas and others, coins to represent how expensive it was.
- Make your own perfume (using food grade food extracts eg vanilla)
<https://sugarspiceandglitter.com/make-your-own-perfume-sensory-activity-for-kids/>

Primary:

- Students to act out the story, and talk about the perspectives of different characters.
- Perfume Sniff Test: what's that smell? Soak several cotton balls in fragrant liquids such as perfume, vanilla, or lemon juice. Have students smell the cotton balls to try discerning what the aroma is.

Upper Primary/Secondary:

- A service activity that raises money or items for less fortunate.
 - Guessing game on how much different perfumes cost.
<https://youthgroupministry.com/lessons/mary-anoints-jesus-john-121-8-youth-bible-lesson-on-gifts-of-great-value/>
 - If using during Holy Week, consider making bath bombs or foot scrubs which smell good and then using them to wash each other's feet on Maundy Thursday. <https://www.mckenziefoods.com.au/recipe/fragrant-bath-bombs/> Or give your bath bomb/scrub to someone you love or who needs encouragement.
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