

Mary of Bethany

A woman at the feet of Jesus

We meet a woman from Bethany, a little village very close to Jerusalem, called Mary. She is not a main player in the gospels or a main actor. She would not be from the top cast in a series depicting the life of Jesus, yet in the few scenes she appears in the gospels, there are amazing lessons we learn from Mary- rather from Jesus, concerning our relationship with Jesus.

Every time she appears, in a way or another, we are told that she is at the feet of Jesus. There are marvelous lessons.

Mary of Bethany

3 scenes at the feet of Jesus

1. Sitting at the feet of Jesus: the “one thing” - wonder and adoration
2. Running and falling at the feet of Jesus: trust and lament

3. Anointing and wiping the feet of Jesus: Worship and sacrifice

Scene 1:

Main Scripture: Luke 10:38 – 42

“Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. [39] And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. [40] But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” [41] But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, [42] but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:38 – 42)

1. SITTING AT THE FEET OF JESUS: THE “ONE THING” - WONDER AND ADORATION

1. Sitting at the feet of Jesus: the “one thing” - wonder and adoration

Hurry creates worry – Rick Warren. The tyranny of business doesn't mean productivity.

Application:

- Three Kinds of wonder:

Peter Kreeft was talking about great books – the reading that makes. A difference and changes us- which makes us better, wiser and happier.

So, he talks about wonder. A great book grabs us, gets our attention and appeals to our wonder.¹

First – emotional wonder: shock, surprise, amazement. An almost mystical experience

As it gives us a self-forgetful out of mind, out of the ordinary experience . ecstasy (out of self.

Second – Intellectual wonder: the desire to inquire , curiosity, we wonder what, why , whether, when , where or who. We want to explore the new world, and the new line of vision.

However, When this is satisfied and our questions are answered, we do not cease to wonder- the third type : **Contemplative / appreciative wonder**: it is the sinking deeply into the beauty, wisdom and holiness that has been discovered , uncovered and unpacked by our curiosity and questioning.

It is an act of contemplation and love, or both the mind and the will.

Contemplation is not a mere looing , and love is not a mere feeling or desire. It is basically that the two can become one thing. It is in our fascination with a masterpiece, divine art of most deeply a person.

The supreme joy of lovers is to contemplate each other, and this is why our supreme joy is the beatific vision of God. However, (we forget this –) but **God is joy and he rejoices in our joy , for we are his beloved even more truly than he is ours. We may stop loving him but he cannot stop loving us.**

¹ Kreeft, Peter. *The Two Greatest Novels Ever Written: The Wisdom of The Lord of the Rings and The Brothers Karamazov*. Park Ridge, IL: Word on Fire, 2025.p15,16

Saint Cure of Ars saw a peasant alone in church, silently and attentively praying with a passion and joy. He asked him : “ What do you do when you pray ? the peasant answered: “ I look at him and he looks at me.

This is the best definition of the complicative prayer.

This is the triumph of Mary’s “ONE thing “ needful over Martha’s “many things” Luke 10.41,42) . It is so incredibly easy that its incredibly hard.

“But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:41 – 42

Read these incredible verses from Zephaniah and David

Zephaniah : The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. [Zep 3:17](#)

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16.11

My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. Ps 63.7-9

I believe this is the one thing that Jesus is referring to

THE ONE THING that David asked :

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple. (Ps 27.4)

Now come to the feet of Jesus and gaze upon his beauty , wander in adoration.

Some people say that this is St. Mary College – where we study knee ology (not just theology) – kneeling at the feet of Jesus

2. RUNNING AND FALLING AT THE FEET OF JESUS : TRUST AND LAMENT

The plot

We all know the story. Jesus was most likely in Perea² and the two sisters sent to Jesus that Lazarus was ill – the one whom he loves. Jesus heard it and said

“This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

Then he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then he said lets go to Judea.

“Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?”

After his disciples objected he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.”- i.e. he was dead. They didn’t understand , so he said plainly “Lazarus has died,

Jhn 11:15 and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

Thomas, cynical as he is, said : , “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

Meeting with Martha :

Martha new Jesus was coming and went to meet him. She said

“Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” John 11:21

You can tell that **Martha is a strong Middle Eastern woman** now who doesn’t dare to speak to Jesus honestly and bluntly. Every time she speaks its like a question or instruction! She approached him knowing that he is a miracle worker and could have saved Lazarus. But now she needs to see him, as the Son of God. She talked about the past, Jesus answered that he will rise again. She thought this would be in the last day – she talked about the future.

² We do know that Perea, part of the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, was an expanse of land, east of the Jordan River. It was approximately 20 miles wide and 60 miles long. It extended from its northernmost boundary in northwestern Decapolis, to its southernmost boundary where the Arnon River (i.e., Wadi Mojib) empties into the eastern side the Dead Sea.

Jesus was talking about the now- the present-

“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” John 11: 25,26

She trusted he is the Son of God who is coming into the world.

“She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

John 11:27

- Crime and Punishment : Dostoyevsky understood the power of John 11. In Crime and Punishment, Sonia reads the raising of Lazarus to Raskolnikov, and the murderer hears the eternal book in a dark room. The story is not only about a dead man in Bethany; it is about every dead soul hearing Christ call, 'Come out.'

TEXT: Crime and Punishment by Doestoyevsky

(And drawing a painful breath, Sonia read distinctly and forcibly as though she were making a public confession of faith.)

“Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God Which should come into the world.”

She stopped and looked up quickly at him, but controlling herself went on reading. Raskolnikov sat without moving, his elbows on the table and his eyes turned away. She read to the thirty-second verse.

“Then when Mary was come where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled,

And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see.

Jesus wept.

Then said the Jews, behold how He loved him!

And some of them said, could not this Man Which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?”

Raskolnikov turned and looked at her with emotion. Yes, he had known it! She was trembling in a real physical fever. He had expected it. She was getting near the story of the greatest miracle and a feeling of immense triumph came over her.

Her voice rang out like a bell; triumph and joy gave it power. The lines danced before her eyes, but she knew what she was reading by heart. At the last verse

“Could not this Man Which opened the eyes of the blind...” dropping her voice she passionately reproduced the doubt, the reproach and censure of the blind disbelieving Jews, who in another moment would fall at His feet as though struck by thunder, sobbing and believing...“And *he, he*— too, is blinded and unbelieving, he, too, will hear, he, too, will believe, yes, yes! At once, now,” was what she was dreaming, and she was quivering with happy anticipation.³

³ <https://www.owleyes.org/text/crime-and-punishment/read/part-iv-chapter-iv#root-75877-180>

Meeting with Mary :

Yet with Mary, she leant that the teacher is asking for her, “she rose quickly and went to him”,

“Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” [33] When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.” John 11:32 – 33

She ran to Jesus and , again, fell at his feet.

She said the same words that we hear from Martha- same exact word. Yet, she said them while at his feet. A very different posture. Both have deep appreciation of Jesus, both have trust, both believe that he can heal even from a deadly disease, yet Mary’s position takes it to another level. She chose to weep at his feet.

What was the response of Jesus : When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. [Jhn 11:33](#) , and then as he saw Lazarus, the bible mentions : “Jesus wept”

“Jesus wept.” John 11.35

Mary moved the heart and tears of Jesus, by throwing herself unto his feet and weeping, with trust, faith, adoration and ... lamentation.

Mary teaches us a lesson in **Lament**.

What is lament? Lament is a Prayer in pain that leads to trust. It’s a biblical language for processing the pains of life as we cling to what we believe. Lament refuses to give God the silent treatment.

The Bible is full of lament. One-third of the psalms reflect this minor-key prayer form. Whether it’s an individual, an entire community, someone mourning over their sin, or someone longing for justice, laments are a major part of our divinely inspired song book.⁴

⁴ Mark Vroegop, [“Laments: Praying Lament Psalms,”](#) *Bible Study Magazine* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Faithlife, 2021), 30.

The richest source of laments in the Bible is the book of Psalms. More than half of the psalms are laments of one type or another. ⁵

In Lament we learn, that Scripture doesn't rush us past grief, it teaches us how to bring sorrow, anger, and confusion honestly before God, revealing that lament is not a failure of faith but one of its deepest expressions. Bring it to the feet of Jesus.. She doesn't minimize her pain or loss or agony or regret or remorse, but she brings them all worshipfully, respectfully, trusting, surrendering to the feet of Jesus. Bringing the grief not inquiring about answers.

This is not sanitized faith. This is a raw, honest lament. **Lament is often misunderstood. It is not bitterness. It is not rebellion. It is not giving up on God.**

Lament is bringing pain to God instead of away from Him.

It is written that

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted. Psalm 34:18

Pastor Don taught us

The question is not why do bad things happen to good .The question is why do good things happen to bad people. **Remind yourself of this.**

Listen to these phrases by Jeremiah, in the bleakest and darkest moments of his life and the nations lifetime, the fall of Jerusalem because of their disobedience.

Lam 3:14 I have become the laughingstock of all peoples, the object of their taunts all day long.**Lam 3:15** He has filled me with bitterness; he has sated me with wormwood. Lam He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; Lam my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; Lam so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD. "Lam Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall!

Lam 3:20 My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me.

Lam 3:21 But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

⁵ David M. Jr. Howard, "[Lament](#)," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Glen G. Scorgie (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 567–568.

Lam 3:22 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;

Lam 3:23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lam “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him. “Lam The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. Lam It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

B. A lover and a beloved:

Song of songs parallel with Mary. – kids that’s for later, pastor Jessy or Pastor Chad must clear you first.

In this action we see a lover coming to her beloved. In the song of songs:

Songs 2:8 The voice of my beloved! Behold, there he stands, my beloved speaks and says to me: “Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away,

Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.

Song 2:14 O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

Then she says: **Sng 2:16** My beloved is mine, and I am his;

The lover of my soul is worth trusting in the darkest hour, lament is running to him, and pouring myself before him. It is loving him adoring him, choosing and trusting him. He can even RAISE the dead, yet even more, he weeps with us. A love story that includes running to his feet.

3. ANOINTING AND WIPING THE FEET OF JESUS : WORSHIP AND SACRIFICE

Scene 3: dinning table

“Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.” John 12:3

ONE OF THE VERY FEW stories that appear in the 3 gospels. (Matthew , Mark and John). There is a similar story in Luke about a different person.

“In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial.” Matthew 26:12

The anointing : The fact that the story of the anointing appears in 3 gospels confirms its significance to the overall presentation of the good news.

This fact is certainly worthy of note, especially since up to this point about all that is parallel in John with the three other Gospels has been the story of the feeding of the five thousand.⁶

This pure nard was worth a year's wages."

- *Myron* refers to fragrant ointment or *perfume*. *Nardos* indicates that the perfume was made from the aromatic oil of the spikenard plant; nard was imported from India, but it was also produced in Italy, and Corinth specialized in the production and export of fragrant oils. Most ancient perfumes were based on oils derived from plants, unlike modern perfumes which are alcohol-based, and thus were thicker than modern perfumes. The word *pistikos* means 'genuine, unadulterated' (Pliny, *Nat.* 12.26.12: 'Pure nard is distinguished by its lightness, its reddish-brown color, the sweetness of its fragrance, its pleasant flavor'). The term *polytelēs* means 'very expensive, costly'; in verse 5 the value of the perfume is specified.⁷

It is a mark of devotion.

The use of this costly unguent rather than the cheap oil that would be more commonly used is a mark of devotion. Mary did not regard Jesus as a casual, run-of-the-mill guest but as a very special person; for him a very costly offering was just right, like a King, Messiah, anointed one... that she may have been giving symbolic expression to her conviction that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.⁸

A. Memory

As a matter of fact, even the gospel writing, after so many years, (at 90 A.D.) is now defined by her act:

"Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. John 11.1-2"

B. Why this waste?

⁶ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, vol. 25B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 31-32.

⁷ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 344-345.

⁸ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 647.

“And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste?” Matthew 26:8

OPERATION AUCA – when they died newspapers said WHY THIS WASTE

Operation Auca was a missionary effort in the 1950s to reach the Waorani/Huaorani people of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Five evangelical missionaries — Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Peter Fleming, and Roger Youderian — sought to make peaceful contact with this isolated tribe by flying over their settlements, dropping gifts, and learning simple phrases in their language. After several months, they established a camp called “Palm Beach” along the Curaray River in January 1956.

At first, there were hopeful signs. Some Waorani visitors came to the camp, received gifts, and even interacted with the missionaries. However, because of internal tensions, fear, and misunderstanding, a group of Waorani warriors attacked the missionaries on January 8, 1956. **All five men were speared to death, and the news of their deaths spread around the world.**⁹

The news and journalists wrote afterwards: Why this waste, why wasting the lives of youth and their men to mission work, little known to them that those were the words of Judas.

The story did not end with their deaths. Their sacrifice deeply moved the evangelical world and stirred renewed commitment to missions. Most remarkably, Elisabeth Elliot, the widow of Jim Elliot, and Rachel Saint, the sister of Nate Saint, later returned to Ecuador and lived among the Waorani. Through their forgiveness and continued witness, the gospel reached the same people involved in the killing of the missionaries. The movie **End of the Spear**, depicts their story in a wonderful way.

“Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. ”Mt 26:13

Jim Eliot famous quote : **he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot loose.** Mary understood that before Jim Elliot. Nothing poured out for Jesus is waster.

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Auca

What is our alabaster jar- dreams, comfort, plans, ambition, resources.

Don Carson on his commentary on Ps. 1:6 “For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.” (Ps 1:6) wrote this .

“Fifty billion years from now, if I may dare to speak of eternity in the categories of time, no one will be talking about the significance of Stalin or Pol Pot, but every cup of cold water given in the name of Jesus will still be remembered and celebrated, because the Lord watches over the way of the righteous; the way of the wicked will perish.”¹⁰

He wrote once commending people who are behind the scenes working, like our people in the Blast camp sacrificing their time and rest to serve kids. : For all those people behind the scenes who are unknown, it’s important to remember that 50 billion years from now, people will still be honoring those who give a cup of cold water in the name of the Lord.¹¹

Conclusion : Come to His feet

At His feet we learn. At His feet we lament. At His feet we worship.

¹⁰ D. A. Carson, *The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God’s Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2010), [89–90](#).

¹¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/evangelism-in-the-21-century-part-3/>