

Wanted: Jesus of Nazareth

Կը Փնտրուի Յիսուս Նազովրեցին

John 11: 45-57

John 12:1-11

Last Sunday badveli Kevin covered an important section from the Gospel of John, the resurrection of Lazarus. It is the last sign out of the seven signs that John recorded in his Gospel.

Each sign is important, and each sign has its explanation (NIV commentary calls it “sign and explanation” or “miracle and discourse”).

Signs are not enough to produce faith.

People saw that Lazarus was risen and alive. Some believed in Jesus and some did not. Signs alone cannot provoke faith. Miracles do not of themselves transform lives.

E.G. In the Gospel of Luke, there is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16). Both died. The rich man wanted help from Abraham. The rich man was not a believer, and he urged Abraham to warn his five brothers about what would happen after the end of life. Abraham said,

“Let your brothers listen to Moses and the Prophets.”

The rich man says, “No, let someone from dead go to them, and they will repent.”

The Abraham’s reply is interesting: “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

This brings me to our passage:

⁴⁵ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

“What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.” (John 11:45-48 NIV11)

-The Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

Many believed, yet others went and complained to the Pharisees. The result was to call a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

Sanhedrin was the supreme Jewish religious, political and legal council in Jerusalem. It was made up of members of both Pharisees and Sadducees.

We have a problem. What is the problem?

Here is this man performing many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation. (John 11:47b,48 NIV11)

Strange, they don't believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Yet, they are afraid of him.

First, they are afraid that more people would believe in Jesus;

Second, Romans don't like messianic claims. It is a threat for them to find more people who believe in a new Messiah, thinking this is a political rise up.

-Caiaphas the High Priest

⁴⁹ Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."

⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, ⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. ⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to take his life. (John 11:49-53 NIV11)

Caiaphas ruled the Sanhedrin from AD 18 to AD 36 and took personal responsibility for the political stability of the country. He worked for 10 years alongside the Roman governor Pilate, and together the two men forged an uneasy peace in the country.¹

Thus Caiaphas wants political stability... and if there must be a sacrifice, better to lose one man than the entire nation.²

They don't want to lose their political power. So, let us get rid of Jesus of Nazareth.

Don't you love politicians' logic and "moral" philosophy? Nothing has changed in the world; politicians will do anything to gain power.

But Caiaphas comes in the picture saying, "You guys don't know what you are talking about." Then he says:

it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish...

Do you remember John 3:16? **For God so Loved the world that**

Caiaphas is “prophesying” without knowing it.

-**One man died**, so that we will not die, so that we will have life, so that we will experience resurrection. Yes, one man will die, your majesty Mr. Caiaphas... Yes, with his death, Jesus took on our punishment, so we will not perish. Thanks, Mr. Caiaphas, for your prediction...

-**Romans** did eventually bring their judgment over the city of Jerusalem and its temple. In 66-70 AD the temple was burned and destroyed.

-As we heard in chapter 10, Jesus said

I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen (10:16)

Here also John emphasizes the same concept, the universal church of Jesus Christ:

“Jesus would die for the Jewish nation,⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. (John 11:51b,52 NIV 11)

-The red flag is up. Like in Western movies, there is a sign: **Wanted: Jesus of Nazareth**

“So from that day on they plotted to take his life.” (John 11:53 NIV 11)

How tragic is that some believed, yet some did not, and wanted to kill Jesus.

-**Jesus disappeared from the scene.**

⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead, he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples. (John 11:54 NIV 11)

This is it. Jesus was done with public signs. After this, and with the exception of his victorious entrance to Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), Jesus will only teach and appear to his close circle, to the ones who believed in him, until his arrest.

Let us review where we are in the gospel of John
The Gospel of John is divided to two major parts.

The Prologue 1:1-18

Chapters 1-12 the **Book of Signs**. We encountered seven signs.

Chapters 13-21 the **Book of Glory** when Jesus interprets the “hour of glorification”, his departure through the cross.³

Let us move to next chapter which prepares us for the next section.

-Lavish Love, Praise and Devotion

Let me quickly review the outline of the Gospel of John:

We are in chapter 12, which is the end of the first part of the Gospel of John. This chapter prepares us for next section of the Gospel. In this chapter, **will find devotion towards Jesus and also unfortunately the rejection of Jesus.**

We are in Bethany (which means the house of the poor). Jesus is invited to a dinner party.

Let us read the Word:

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ 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. (John 12:1-3 NIV11)

As we are approaching the Passover (6 days prior), Jesus appears in Bethany.

My friends, the hour has arrived (John 17).

This dinner is not just a simple dinner to honor Jesus.

-The Anointing of Jesus by Mary

The truth is that what Mary did was a sign of Jesus' burial.

She is dumping a **pint** (0.5 liter, or one pound) of **pure nard**.

"Nard was a rare and precious spice imported from northern India. Nard is a shrub whose leaves and shoots were harvested and taken by caravan to the west. Sometimes it was mixed with its own root to increase its weight."⁴

If you notice, Mary used pure nard, one pound, which is worth one year of salary. Wow, \$40,000 or 50,000 in today's terms.

-Mary used her hair to wipe Jesus' feet. Can you see Mary's acts of worship, praise, devotion towards Jesus? A woman should not undo her hair in front of a man. Also, Jesus is allowing this to happen; it tells us today how we should devote ourselves to Jesus. It is a lesson to us to come to the feet of Jesus in humility and devotion.

-I think Mary, like Caiaphas, may be saying (with her action) more than she knows. Her act of love is a prophetic statement about what is coming next in the life of Jesus.

This is not an ordinary dinner. This dinner is a preparation for Jesus' final hour. I don't think people understood what was going on. At least Judas did not.

Jesus said: **"Leave her alone," "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. (12:7 NIV 11)**

What Mary did is an act of lavish love towards Jesus.

Judas,

Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." ⁶ 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. (John 12:4b-6 NIV11)

Judas? Interesting, he is "so caring" towards the poor. This is all happening in Bethany (the house of the poor). I don't think so.

But what is the interpretation of Jesus' answer

"you will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me" (John 12:8).

Does Jesus care for the poor? Does Jesus waste things?

To acknowledge the endless needs of the poor was not unusual (Deut. 15:11). Jesus' presence among them, however, is unique. This is not to deny our responsibility to the poor, but it alerts us to the wonder of who Mary and Martha are hosting that day.⁵

N. T. Wright explains:

The only explanation is that Jesus believed that his coming death would be the action through which the world as a whole, **including the world of poverty and all that went with it, would be put to rights**. We who live on the other side of his death and **resurrection**, and yet still face a world of poverty, crippling debt and all the evils which follow from them, may find ourselves wondering whether the church has always got its priorities right.⁶

I have seen social action towards the poor without Jesus. The church's mission is to reach out for the needs of the people, but more importantly to help humanity find Jesus as their Savior. Put Jesus in the center of our ministry.

Application:

Who are you in these stories?

1. Caiaphas, a religious man who knows the Holy Scriptures but not God who is the author of that book; he is a politician: the end justifies the means, interests are more important, in the name of “god” you can justify your actions.
2. Judas, a prudent treasurer, doesn’t have spiritual eyes to see who Jesus is; his calculations are earthly; he doesn’t have a Godly vision.
3. Mary, who surrenders everything to Jesus, she is worshipping Jesus with everything she has.; devotion, lavish love towards Jesus.
4. Martha, in the kitchen, always busy serving...

I will end this sermon thinking about this: Jesus is facing the cross, Jesus is facing his death, burial and resurrection. Jesus is heading towards his death and glorification.

1. Gary M. Bruce, *NIV Application Commentary* p321
2. *ibid* P321
3. *ibid* p88
4. *ibid* p338
5. *ibid* p 339
6. N.T. Wright. *John for Everyone*, p 23