

### **Isaiah 43:16-21/Philippians 3:4b-14/John 12:1-8**

John 12:1-8 should be interpreted within the context of Jesus' passion narrative in John which begins in John 11. In John 11 we see Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. This is one of the few incidents in the gospel of John in which the divinity and Messiahship of Jesus was clearly revealed in Mary's confession, **"Yes, Lord, I know that you are Christ, God's son, he come into the world"**. Now, the rising of Lazarus and Mary's confession brought a lot of discomfort to the Jews, and we are told in John 11:45 **that the council of the Jews plotted to kill Jesus because many people believed in him and followed him.**

So, Chapter 12:1-8 is a continuation of Jesus' passion, our main characters being Mary and Judas Iscariot. As captured in John, Mary anointed Jesus shortly after the end of the Sabbath and the triumphal entry was to take place the next day. In John 12:1b we are told that Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one who had been raised from the dead. In verse 2, we are told that Mary and Martha prepared super for Jesus. The word used for super in this case is **"deipnon"** which can refer generally to any meal but in John it was used three times and pointing to an evening meal, and in two of those times it referred precisely to the Last Super. So, according to John this dinner at Bethany was also sacramental and served the purpose of preparing Jesus for His burial, especially considering that the community was also there witnessing and helping Lazarus to thank Jesus for raising Lazarus from the dead.

It was on this Last Super that Mary then anointed Jesus with pure nard, very precious perfume. According to John, the perfume was worth 300 denarii. Commentators say 300 denarii was a wage for one year. I guess this was according to the unfair standards of the worldly masters but according to the standards of our generous Master Jesus Christ in Matthew 20:1-16, after being hired at different times each one received a denarius at the end of the day implying that a denarius was a day's wage hence 300 denarii would generously equate to a fair wage of 10 months. In Canadian standards, the average wage per hour is \$20/hr i.e., \$3,200.00 per month which is 32,000.00 for 10 months so Mary's perfume was worth about \$32,000.00. I'm not sure if we have people in this Church who match the flamboyant lifestyle of Mary. So, with this picture,

Judas might have been right, **“Why can’t this perfume be sold, and the proceeds channeled towards the poor?”**

We have a synoptic challenge in this narrative. Matthew 26: 8 & 9 says, **“But, when the disciples saw it, they complained, “Why this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor”**. Mark 14:4 says, **“But there were some who said to themselves, why was the ointment wasted? For this ointment might have been sold for more than 300 denarii and given to the poor?”**. However, in their variances, all the gospels agree that the perfume was of great value approximately 300 denarii and it was not proper for it to be wasted on one person moreover for one occasion, it should have been sold and benefited the less privileged ones.

**But I like John because he gives us a clue or justification as to why Mary would make such an incredible sacrifice by donating to Jesus, her brother Lazarus has been raised from the dead. I would think that even if the perfume was worth 10 000 denarii, still Mary would have done the same because there is no monetary value for life. Life is more precious than anything else. So, from a Johannine narration, we can understand and appreciate Mary’s gesture.**

**There are people who generously contribute financially to the life of the Church, may God continue to bless you. When you decide to give financially to God, do it to the extend that people complain and say, “Why is S/He wasting? But you and only you would know that this Jesus at one point raised my Lazarus from the dead. Let the Church be challenged today, contributing financially to the life of the Church is not a sign of richness but and appreciation that this Jesus at one point raised my Lazarus from the dead.**

**There are people who give their talents t the life of the Church, may God abundantly bless you. When you give your talents do it till people complain, but only you would know that this Jesus at one point in history raised my Lazarus from the dead. Let the Church be challenged, when people retire its time to relax but we have amazing people who would retire from their professions but still volunteer to use their talents in the Church. Its not because they have nowhere else to exercise their talents but its because they understand that at one point this Jesus raised my Lazarus from the dead.**

**There are people who donate their time to the life of the Church, may God graciously bless them. If I was one of them I would continue to do it till people complain but only me would know that I am doing this because this Jesus at one point raised my Lazarus from the dead. Let the Church be challenged, those who donate their time to the Church have other things to do but they found a worthy course because at one point this Jesus raised their Lazarus from the dead.**

It is the same God who enable us to bury the negative old as we hope for the future. He promised us in Isaiah that I am about to do a new thing, I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Paul understood this very well when he said, **“For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and I regard them as rubbish in order that I gain Christ”**.

**I pray that God may help us and make Him a priority in all aspects of our lives. Amen.**