

*Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 2There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. 3Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" 6(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) 7Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. 8You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.*

"I'm not worth anything," she said. "I can't do anything for anyone. I'm not worth anything."

She has outlived most of her world. Most everyone who rejoiced at her birth is dead. Before too many years she will die. She has cooked her last meal, washed her last load of clothes, swept her last carpet. Now she is stored in a warehouse called a nursing home, waiting.

I'm not worth anything.

Mary took costly perfume, perfume that cost a whole year's labor to buy, and poured it on Jesus' feet. For three hundred days she would have to work a long day in the fields - up early in the morning, dragging home at the end of the day exhausted - falling into bed, then rising before the sun to begin it all again - every day except on the sabbath - week after week for a whole year and in this moment what all of that labor earned poured out on Jesus' feet - filling the whole house with the fragrance.

Was it worth it? To her it was. Jesus had raised her brother, Lazarus, from death.

But to Judas it was not. "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" he asked. A family could have been fed for a year with what was spilled on Jesus' feet that day. Though John tells us that Judas said this because he was the treasurer for the disciples and wanted to embezzle the money for himself, still it is a good question. The fragrance would soon be gone. Jesus would soon be dead.

But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

Once there was a woman who took her very last penny and dropped it in the offering plate at the temple. Everything she had to live on she offered for a temple that would not be standing in forty years.

Now here was a woman who poured that expensive perfume on a man who would be dead in a week.

And another woman cries, "I am not worth anything."

In this world, nothing will last. Bright colors are soon faded, shiny metal rusts, concrete cracks, a girl with a whole life ahead of her is suddenly old, waiting to die.

What is worth doing? What would you invest a day's labor in, a year's labor, a lifetime? What makes "a soon to die woman" worth anything? What makes all of us "soon to die people" worth anything?

Will you give to the poor? Tomorrow there will still be poor people.

Will you love family? There will be as much heartache as joy in that.

Will you live for pleasure? Those who do soon grow weary.

Jesus loved. The more love a person needed, the more love Jesus poured out.

I tried to tell the woman who felt worthless of Jesus' love for her. "Jesus loves you more than his own life," I told her.

The only Son of God says you are worth more than his own life.

Not because you fix a meal for someone, or pay some bills, or can help them while they are sick. Not because you have something to give or do for Jesus or others. But simply because Jesus loves you he died for you.

He wants to be with you and you with him forever.

That is the only thing that matters, that has any worth to Jesus, to be with you whom he loves.

Mary knew that was all that mattered to her as well. Jesus.

For he is the love of God. Jesus is the love of God that has no end. Nothing in life can take him from you, nor you from him, not even death could keep him from holding onto you.

Everything and everyone is worthless apart from him, dust to dust. A flower blooming for a moment then gone. But in him love has no limit, no end. In him love and life are eternal.