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~ **Anointed for Burial** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read John 11:47-12:11.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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John 11:47-12:11 NASB	John 11:47-12:11 NLT
<p>⁴⁷ Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let Him <i>go on</i> like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” ⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.” ⁵¹ Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.</p> <p>⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.</p> <p>⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶ So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?” ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.</p> <p>12 Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they made Him a supper there, and</p>	<p>⁴⁷ Then the leading priests and Pharisees called the high council together. “What are we going to do?” they asked each other. “This man certainly performs many miraculous signs. ⁴⁸ If we allow him to go on like this, soon everyone will believe in him. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our Temple and our nation.”</p> <p>⁴⁹ Caiaphas, who was high priest at that time, said, “You don’t know what you’re talking about! ⁵⁰ You don’t realize that it’s better for you that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed.”</p> <p>⁵¹ He did not say this on his own; as high priest at that time he was led to prophesy that Jesus would die for the entire nation. ⁵² And not only for that nation, but to bring together and unite all the children of God scattered around the world.</p> <p>⁵³ So from that time on, the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus’ death. ⁵⁴ As a result, Jesus stopped his public ministry among the people and left Jerusalem. He went to a place near the wilderness, to the village of Ephraim, and stayed there with his disciples.</p> <p>⁵⁵ It was now almost time for the Jewish Passover celebration, and many people from all over the country arrived in Jerusalem several days early so they could go through the purification ceremony before Passover began. ⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, but as they stood around in the Temple, they said to each other, “What do you think? He won’t come for Passover, will he?” ⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the leading priests and Pharisees had publicly ordered that anyone seeing Jesus must report it</p>

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Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. ³ Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, *said, ⁵ “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?” ⁶ Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. ⁷ Therefore Jesus said, “Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. ⁸ For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”

⁹ The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. ¹⁰ But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

immediately so they could arrest him.

¹² Six days before the Passover celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead. ² A dinner was prepared in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate with him. ³ Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus’ feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance.

⁴ But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, ⁵ “That perfume was worth a year’s wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.” ⁶ Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples’ money, he often stole some for himself.

⁷ Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

⁹ When all the people heard of Jesus’ arrival, they flocked to see him and also to see Lazarus, the man Jesus had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus, too, ¹¹ for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them and believed in Jesus.

2. Discover key cultural and historical insights

The following insights are from the article on Bethany in Wikipedia

1. Capper and others have concluded that ancient Bethany was the site of an almshouse for the poor and a place of care for the sick. There is a hint of association between Bethany and care for the unwell in the Gospels: Mark tells of Simon the Leper’s house there (Mark 14:3-10); Jesus receives urgent word of Lazarus’ illness from Bethany (John 11:1-12:11).
2. According to the Temple Scroll from Qumran, three places for the care of the sick, including one for lepers, are to be located to the east of Jerusalem. The passage also defines a (minimum) radius of three thousand cubits (circa 1,800 yards) around the city within which nothing unclean shall be seen (XLVI:13-18). Since Bethany was, according to John, fifteen stadia (about 1.72 miles) from the holy city, care for the sick there corresponded with the requirements of the Temple Scroll (the stadion being ideally 600 feet (180 m) or 400 cubits). Whereas Bethphage is probably to be identified with At-Tur, located on the peak of the Mount of Olives with a

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magnificent view of Jerusalem, Bethany lay below to the southeast, out of view of the Temple Mount, which may have made its location suitable as a place for care of the sick, "out of view" of the Temple.

3. From this it is possible to deduce that the mention of Simon the Leper at Bethany in Mark's Gospel suggests that the Essenes, or pious patrons from Jerusalem who held to a closely similar view of ideal arrangements, settled lepers at Bethany. Such influence on the planning of Jerusalem and its environs (and even its Temple) may have been possible especially during the reign of Herod the Great (36-4 B.C.), whose favour towards the Essenes was noted by Josephus (*Antiquities* 15.10.5 [373-8]).
4. Reta Halteman Finger approves Capper's judgment that only in the context of an almshouse at Bethany, where the poor were received and assisted, could Jesus remark that "The poor you will always have with you" (Mark 14:7; Matthew 26:11) without sounding callous. Ling follows Capper's thesis concerning the connection between then place-name Bethany and the location there of an almshouse. Capper and Ling note that it is only in Bethany we find mention of the poor on the lips of the disciples, who object that the expensive perfumed oil poured over Jesus there might have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor (Mark 14:5; Matthew 26:8-9; John 12:4-6 [where the objection is made by Judas]); this objection may have been made in embarrassment and may also suggest a special connection between Bethany and care for the poor
5. It has also been suggested, based on the names found carved on thousands of ossuaries at the site, that Bethany in the time of Jesus was settled by people from Galilee who had come to live by Jerusalem. This would explain why Jesus and the disciples, as Galileans, would find it convenient to stay here when visiting Jerusalem.

The following insights are from A Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels by Bruce Malina

1. A meal such as this was held in two stages. The first stage initial courses were served and it was also a time for servants to wash the hands and feet of guests and anoint them with perfumes. Stage two the main courses would be offered.
2. For a woman to be present at a meal would be highly unusual and she would usually be considered a woman with questionable reputation.
3. A perfume worth such a large sum should never be wasted upon one person but some of the value should be sold and given to the poor.
4. Alabaster jars were five to nine inches long and made out of ground translucent calcite stone. They were imported from India and the Far East and were heavily taxed. Thus, they were worth considerable sums to the purchasers.

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Answer these reflective questions.

Why do you think the Pharisees and others did not believe in Jesus even though they knew he had raised Lazarus from the dead? Does this say anything about human nature and a hardness of heart to believe?

Why do you think Jesus chose to eat his meal in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper? What would this say to the whole community in Bethany?

How would you describe Mary's heart toward Jesus? Would you say you have this kind of heart toward Jesus?

The account in John tells us that Judas was upset with Mary because he was greedy and wanted the nard for himself. The accounts in Matthew (26:6-13) and Mark (14:3-9) show us that other disciples were upset with Mary's action. Why do you think they were upset?

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Jesus said, “The poor you have with you always, but you do not always have me.” Why did Jesus say this, what did he mean, and how can we apply this in our relationship to Jesus?
