

11/7/2021 - John 11:55-12:11 - "The Cost of Devotion"

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[0 : 00] We're going to be considering what was just read in a sermon titled The Cost of Devotion. And we're going to start out with a question for you today.

What is the cost of your devotion to Jesus Christ? What is the cost of your devotion to Jesus Christ?

Now, when we are considering a question like this, many can honestly evaluate their lives that Jesus Christ and following him has costed them something in their life.

Some of us, a great deal, dealing with maybe your friend list before you came to Christ was vast.

And then all of a sudden you became a Christian and nobody wanted to take friendship with you anymore. And your friend list went down. Maybe your popularity has decreased.

[1 : 18] Maybe you have received this stigmatization from the world that you are now a follower of Jesus Christ. Maybe some have been outcasted from their family who may be of a different religion.

Maybe a loss of that promotion because you're a Christ follower. Maybe even the loss of a job because you wouldn't shut up about Jesus Christ. And on and on the list can go.

What is the cost of your devotion to Jesus Christ? In that sense that we can be encouraged, we can evaluate possibly a sense of at least some sort of cost that's attached to that.

We can be encouraged in this sense that our devotion to Christ has costed something on this earth. And that comes with a proper perspective that our treasures aren't to be stored here upon earth, but it lays waiting ahead in heaven.

And we will be blessed and rewarded for our devotion on this earth tenfold in the next life to come. Now, however, I believe that at times we can give in to the pressures of the world, and we may justify that our devotion to the world, to society, to our employer, and to our work, is devotion to God.

[2 : 57] And a mistake that is. A great mistake that is. This is a misprioritization of devotion. This is a confusion of devotion.

Taking the source of devotion and placing it upon our work as making that being a replacement of our devotion to God. But what this in turn becomes is an idol in our lives.

False worship in our lives. And we're going to see something in this passage today as we look upon the end of John chapter 11 going into chapter 12.

And we're going to see the tale of two disciples occurring in this passage. You have Mary, an unofficial disciple, but a student of Christ nonetheless.

And we have Mary and we have Judas. It's the tale of two disciples and their devotion. And John contrasts.

[3 : 56] John writes in a way that is very cyclical. It kind of goes round and round and round. You really feel it in the letter, John, 1, 2, and 3. And you can sense that contrasting nature even in this passage as he helps us distinguish the two.

And I don't want to take too much more time in kind of setting the stage of the text today. But let's dive right in. And for any note takers, I found this to be helpful today in our note taking.

So this is how we're going to be breaking up the passage today. And if you're on the live stream, it probably is all over my face. That's fine. I don't know how to fit it any other way. So it's just a bunch of text in my picture.

That's fine. So passage breaks today. We're going to be looking at our reason for true worship. We're going to be looking at our reverence of true worship, our rejection of true worship, and our response of true worship.

So let's pray as we get into the text today. Because true worship comes at a great cost for devotion.

[5 : 09] Let's pray. Father, we are humbled to be gathered here at this time, especially a day where we take the Lord's Supper.

A time where we see the community of God coming together, being united in a simple act that you have told us to do.

Father, help us to be a church that glorifies you, that shines a light upon a lost, dark, and sick, hurting world.

Father, let your word be proclaimed boldly and precisely today. And we pray that we are challenged but yet encouraged by your word today.

We praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Let's go into the first section today. We're going to see the reason for worship.

[6 : 17] Our reason for true worship. We see the scene. You know, a good story has a good scene, a good setting taking place to set up what's going on and what's coming up.

And this is the beginning of a new section where it introduces us to a certain time. This marks in verse 51, it talks about the Passover of the Jews.

And this is going to be the last mention of the Passover in the Gospel of John. We're in the section of the Gospel of John where Jesus is days away from the cross.

And we still have many chapters to go. But there's not going to be a mention of the Passover again because he's going to be nailed to the cross.

He's going to be ascended into heaven by the next time this feast is observed. And at this time, the passage sets up the new scene of saying that Jesus Christ has a bounty on his head.

[7 : 23] We see that there are informants all around the chief priests in verse 57 and the Pharisees have given orders that if anyone knew where Jesus was, they should let them know so that they might arrest him.

Now, this Passover is significant because you have this preparation for Passover, which is significant in and of itself. So you have the Jewish feast taking place and they're observing this.

But then you have this sort of subtle undertone of intensity that, oh, yeah, I forgot. Jesus is, they're after Jesus. This indicates for us that the Jews at this time were, for lack of a better term, caravanning into Jerusalem.

It seems like a popular thing on the news right now. But then you have the Jews at this time. And they are going to celebrate what God has called them to celebrate in commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt.

That when Exodus 6-6 was God's promise that he would redeem his people, which Moses then directed the people of God, saying, let my people go in Exodus 8 to the Pharaoh of that day.

[8 : 43] And obviously there were many plagues that took place. And that ushered in Pharaoh's refusal to let God's people go.

It ushered in 10 plagues to take place. And the 10th plague being that of the Passover. And this is a horrific night if you did not listen to God's word.

This is a night that a firstborn would die for those who refused to listen to God's instruction. And those who were spared, the families who were spared, would prepare a spotless lamb.

They would prepare that spotless lamb. They would sacrifice that spotless lamb. They would put the blood upon their doorposts. And God's judgment that night would then pass over their household to spare their firstborn.

And for the Pharaoh of that day, it did not end well for his firstborn, which ultimately led to him releasing the Israelites at that time. So in a very real way, when we're looking at the reason for true worship, what is our conviction of why we worship?

[10 : 02] We see that the blood of the lamb saved the Israelites from death. And the enemy of God suffered his wrath. And you see, this is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

From our point of view, looking back in redemptive history, through the death and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, he is our Passover.

In a spiritual sense, we apply the blood upon our lives through our faith in him. And solely by trusting Jesus Christ to save us from death that is impending in our lives apart from him.

And this Passover of the Jews is modeled and is fulfilled by Jesus Christ. This is the gospel church. Passover is a time that brings meaning and application to Christ's death and resurrection.

It's a picture of substitutionary atonement, of a one for another. And he died the death that we deserve.

[11 : 09] We, his people, who have claimed our faith in him. And this is our deliverance from bondage of sin, similar to the Israelites then.

This is truly a time to celebrate. And honestly, if you're a Christian today, we celebrate Passover every single day. Because Jesus Christ has sacrificed for us.

And God's wrath has passed over us. This is something we celebrate and we can celebrate every day. This is the conviction for true worship.

The reason why we worship. And so setting that scene, we move into a certain time period, a certain location. So keep in mind that time and that tension that's developed in the narrative.

And John turns our attention to Bethany. Look with me in verse 1. Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

[12 : 15] So they gave a dinner for him. There, Martha served and Lazarus was one of them, reclining at the table. John takes us as an audience right now to this little home in Bethany.

And this is where Lazarus is. This is where Martha is. This is where Mary is and Jesus. And context within the Bible, immediate context within this gospel.

And then also synoptic context within the other gospels in the Bible. It indicates that this was actually a pretty packed party. You had other disciples there. John highlights specific details about his perspective.

Similar to having a painter in a room. They're all painting the same object. And one painter will see something that stands out in their mind because it's significant to them.

John doesn't detail the other disciples for John's own reason. He's not leaving something out. He's highlighting something else. And so we see the people that he is highlighting.

[13 : 22] And we could imagine if we're coming up on Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving and the dinner chatter that often happens. Usually yelling at the crazy uncle to, you know, stop talking about probably politics this year.

Maybe vaccines or, I don't know, choose your weapon these days. There's a plethora of things that we could probably battle on at the Thanksgiving table this year.

But imagine the chatter that happens at our own tables. Or maybe if you have teenagers or maybe grown-up teenagers or maybe young kids, it's kind of like silence at the dinner table.

Because for some reason, the kids love to respond with, eh, day was okay. Or, yeah, I had a good time. You know, just absolutely non-existent chatter at the dinner table.

I want you to picture for a moment our perspective that it would be to be at this dinner table.

[14 : 35] Because when you place yourself at an empty seat at that table, that brings all of this meaning to life of what's really happened.

Here you have Jesus. You have Lazarus, who, mind you, was just dead for four days. You could imagine probably the conversations that took place.

Like, so how was it? What was it like? Are you going to write a best-selling book and put it on shelves of a waiting in the heaven or something? I don't know. There's a lot of weird books out there about these experiences that we just don't see in Scripture.

But we see something, a marveling experience at a dinner table between Jesus and those gathered.

I would imagine that seeing Jesus and Lazarus reclining at that table, it would be a moment of probably speechlessness.

[15 : 42] After what just happened. And that the only response to that is a certain devotion to Jesus that comes in a unique manner.

And that's why I believe that not much is detailed about this except Mary's action. And we see, probably after the meal, Mary used this time to show her devotion to Jesus Christ.

A bold act of humility to Jesus Christ and sacrifice for Jesus Christ. She took a pound of expensive ointment and poured it out upon her feet.

It would probably be about a can of soda, probably about this much of expensive ointment. And she anointed the feet of Jesus. And not only anointed the feet of Jesus with this expensive oil, she let down her hair, which was culturally rebellious at that time.

And wiped his feet with her hair. And the gift that she provides Jesus is typically used for that of preparing a body after death to cover up the stench.

[17 : 03] And so this is probably not something, she didn't live a lavish lifestyle, I would assume. It was probably a family heirloom that was passed down throughout generations.

It's that expensive artifact that you have sometimes hidden in the back of your home in certain corners of the attic. This is a gift that is like no other.

Great quantity, great value. The house was even filled with the smell of it, the text says. That's how much there was.

I get mad at my kids for spraying Febreze. And this entire house was filled with this scent and this perfume that's being poured upon Jesus' feet.

And actually context, just as I mentioned, John highlights different things in the other gospel accounts. He's pulling things out. The other gospels actually indicate that this perfume was actually poured upon his head as well.

[18 : 10] There was so much of it that it was poured out upon his body to anoint him. This is \$20,000 of our equivalent currency of ointment, church.

\$20,000. Let's see, if I could do the math, it's a lot of my cars multiplied. I don't live that lavish lifestyle. So you could be assured of that \$20,000.

Let's zoom out for a minute. If you're to see it at the table, let's take ourselves out of that house for a moment. While the world around at this time is preparing their lambs for sacrifice, Mary is preparing her lamb for sacrifice.

Whose death will take away our sins. And her worship at this time, this act of devotion is poured out upon Jesus Christ as not only John 10, the consecrated king, or the consecrated son of God and the king of kings.

Just as the act of anointing somebody is an act of anointing them as well as a king. For Mary and the majority around, this action was emblematic of the surpassing value that Jesus Christ had to them.

[19 : 53] And not one drop of her devotion went to waste. And her attitude of humility actually predicates true worship for us.

Wow, right? Wow. Church, consider the context. It's almost like we've forgotten about the bounty.

You got Dog the bounty hunter from television out on the hunt for Jesus Christ as informants are going around. We almost forgot about the looming tension, haven't we?

We are lost in this act of worship. And here within this little location in Bethany are disciples of Jesus Christ. Worshiping the God of the Passover.

The one who the Jews were modeling the celebration that Jesus fulfilled in himself. Now, we see that reverence in our worship gives little concern for the situations and circumstances around.

[21 : 06] The entire world could be combating each other. And that should never intrude upon our devotion to Jesus Christ.

There could be bombs, guns, everything going off. And that should never change an instant, a drop of your devotion that you pour out to Jesus Christ.

Secondly, we should see the washing of feet. That's significant, isn't it? It's not going to be too much longer where we see Jesus washing the disciples' feet. This is a significant act of humility.

And humility, we learn in this passage, in worship needs no introduction. Look at this passage.

There's no introduction. This is an act that speaks for itself. Mary didn't get up from that table and say, Now, ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to do an act of humility. Because I am truly humble.

[22 : 06] And I desire to present to you an act of devotion because I'm so humble. And this expensive ointment I present to you, in my humility, I'm going to pour out humbly upon Jesus Christ's feet.

Because I'm humble. Humility doesn't need an introduction. We learn something about humility in this.

Humility is practiced. Humility is never proclaimed, church. Mary did not announce her act of humility. She just did it.

And so the extravagant worth of Jesus Christ's church, the consecrated Son of God and the anointed King of Kings, calls for extravagant, humble worship.

This is not only forgetting our circumstances surrounding us, as bad off as they can be, and this is also forgetting ourselves in the process.

[23 : 09] This is true reverence, true worship. And so true worship of Jesus Christ has no concern about the tension around only peace within by the Holy Spirit.

True worship has no boast. True worship has no boast only in the name of Jesus Christ. And true worship is offered regardless of the cost. Church, I got to ask us.

We need to be challenged by his word today. How might we gauge our worship along the lines of Mary's attitude and how she is encountering the Son of God in this passage?

We're going to have a moment to think about that even further, but let's jump to this next section, which is our rejection of true worship.

We see in verse 4, it continues, John's contrasting writing style, it's on full display. He turns the camera from Mary and over to the other side, to Judas.

[24 : 12] And we see a response to Mary's humble and sacrificial act of worship. And one thing that we can learn quickly is that to reject true worship of God most certainly includes accepting false worship of something else.

Peter said it perfectly as he was leading us in one of the songs this morning, that something's teaching us something. And the same is true that we're worshipping something in our lives.

And those who claim that they don't worship anything, they're actually worshipping themselves. So everyone is worshipping something. And so we learn something.

If you're not worshipping the true God and rejecting that, you're worshipping something false. And so that clues us into something interesting in this passage. Look at the premise of this rejection in verse 5.

Judas, he says, Why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor? In other words, our resources, guys, come on.

[25 : 24] What are you doing? The house smells like a flower. What are you doing pouring all of this? You're wasting it. We could sell this for so much money to be used to help the poor.

And John narrates some insight in verse 6 into the premise of that statement. He was selfishly justifying hoarding resources in the name of activism.

And this, in turn, robbed Jesus of true worship. In such mass selfishness from the outside, it actually revealed pragmatic compassion in exchange for extravagant devotion.

And we see two sides of truth from Judas' response. While the immediate context makes it tragically clear that there are going to be those who claim they're following Jesus Christ and are only concerned about the return on investment.

They're only concerned about the money that's coming into their bank accounts in the name of Jesus Christ. And they turn Jesus' name into a business.

[26 : 46] But we also see, additionally to that, that I think is subtly much more pertinent into our lives today, is that I can see a separate issue at hand.

Because a text like this causes us to ask ourselves a very good question. Are we devoted to God?

I'm going to take this slow so you can think about it. Are we devoted to God or are we devoted to the mission in God's name?

Are we devoted to God or are we devoted to the mission in attaching God's name to it? Now hear me this morning. Judas poses a problem.

He poses a problem of one or the other. Devotion to Christ or devotion to the mission of Christ, the poor.

[27 : 51] Extravagant devotion or social activism. But God created both of these to exist in a divine hierarchy.

That devotion comes first. And activism second. As an actual response of that first devotion.

And you see, one of the most striking passages I believe in scripture is found in Matthew 7. Where these followers of Jesus Christ run to him.

Saying, Lord, didn't we cast out demons in your name? Didn't we do signs and wonders in your name? Didn't we prophesy in your name?

And what did Jesus respond to them in that passage? Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. I never knew you.

[28 : 50] And then I see something that's taking place in this house in Bethany. And all of the mystery and wonder of how that passage can be so tragic in Matthew 7.

It comes to life. Because we can often miss being devoted to Jesus Christ. As being first and foremost apart from our devotion to the mission field.

And actually being falsely devoted to other things in this life. Not Jesus Christ. And we live in a day and age that runs on Duncan, right? Some of us Starbucks.

Some on Maxwell House. But I think you should repent of that. We live in a day and age that we live in this productive culture.

Everything has to be done in a productive sense. We always have to be busy. We live in an age where social activism actually has tragically entered into take center stage of pulpits around.

[29 : 56] While devotion to Jesus Christ sort of tagged on to that missional agenda that churches have. But you see, devotion to God is a prerequisite of all the church's social activism.

Sadly, the church vainly devotes itself to the mission and not Jesus Christ. And in this, we have a recipe of false worship when we do that.

Made in the name of pragmatic compassion. We can hear sort of statements similar to, well, the sacrifice is too great, right?

We can almost hear people. I can hear voices in my head. And that's sometimes a bad thing. But I can hear instances in my history of people who have said that following Jesus Christ just costs them too great.

The sacrifice is too great. And after all, like, why do they have to be part of a church? There's so many other needs. Why waste time with a church? There's greater important things of important matters at hand.

[31 : 12] Don't waste your time and money on that. Let's get our priorities right. Time is limited. I'm not going to attend that Bible study.

And I don't even have time to read my own Bible because I'm so busy to the mission that I'm called to. Prayer? I don't have time for prayer either.

Because there's so much hurting and so many needs. Church, you can forget church. What are we getting together for, for the Lord's Supper? Why would we huddle like this? We don't have time to spare.

It's right around the corner. This is self-righteous piety. This is self-righteous reverence. And it's false. Jesus rebukes Judas in this passage. And we see that. Let me read his rebuke.

[32 : 16] Jesus said, Leave her alone so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. Similar to saying that she's kept it for this very time period right now.

For the poor, look at that in verse 8. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me. In a fallen world corrupted by sin, there will always be poverty.

Regardless of what CNN tells you. There will always be poverty in a fallen world. This is an illusion of Deuteronomy 15 verse 11.

And Jesus says that very specific fact. Do not allow the mission to cloud your devotion to me.

And if we as a church do not prioritize our devotion to God first, our efforts, our potlucks, our outreach events, our efforts to do good in the world, our turkey canvassing, everything, our efforts of doing good in the world is stripped of meaning.

[33 : 35] And God is in turn stripped of his glory. For us, church, let us never be guilty of falling for the same mistake. And we see the response, the response, lastly, in this section, the response of true worship.

And the narrative, as we see plainly, is that this ends, this narrative, this pericope, ends with sort of this sense of Jesus versus the religious.

You see on one side, the Jews are going after Jesus. And they're seeking out not only Jesus, but also Lazarus.

And the popularity of the religious, they're losing followers. Like crazy. Their citizenship in Rome is at stake, and the world has simply gone after Jesus.

And this is actually the very words that soon will be said in Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The world has gone after Jesus in verse 19, as we'll see.

[34 : 43] In a sense, in the tense climate of this day, this narrative ends, and the shepherd is simply gathering his sheep. We see it in real time as John is providing for us.

And the sheep know his voice. And the sheep are known by the shepherd. Our following of Jesus Christ will often be perceived as very radical.

You're going to follow Jesus? Do you know what you're doing? Or maybe abnormal, which will lead to hatred.

In some cases, in some countries, even death. But it is when our witness is challenged that our devotion is also tested. If you could imagine what's going on in here, the Jews of this day are leaving that which was common in their life.

In a sense of, kind of an image of repentance, of leaving false worship and chasing after, following the chief shepherd, the source of true worship, true devotion.

[35 : 53] And our devotion like this, in this manner, reprioritizes us. We're almost done today of taking this passage and applying it.

This reprioritizes our lives even today. Reprioritizes the way we live. If anybody's a workhorse, I have gone through seasons of being an extreme workhorse, of just working around the clock.

Round and round I went. Just suffering from extreme fatigue in the name of providing for my family. But not one instance did I ever consider maybe changing my lavish spending habits, maybe downsizing our home.

Instead, I ran round and round the clock. And I know many women who work in the name of providing for their family without considering sacrificing their lavish spending habits.

And they sacrifice their God-ordained roles in this life in the name of service to God. And they're missing that completely. They're misprioritized.

[37 : 04] And this affects our marriages. You want to see marriages crumble? Start working around the clock and see how that helps your marriage. Or could it be that God has ordained something for marriage?

Of how work and marriage work? And that the very first thing we ought to be devoted to is not work or even our marriage, but to Jesus Christ. And everything will fall into place beautifully.

This is God's design. Doesn't it sound simple? It's pretty hard in the real life though. Instead of staying out late, maybe for college students who are here today, maybe instead of going out to that party at, it's 11 o'clock, you just got a text from a friend, hey, come out to this party on campus, it's going to be fun, and it's Saturday night, you know that you're not going to be back until 2 o'clock, and just simply saying no.

Why? Because you are devoted to God, and it has reshaped and reprioritized your life to get rest for the upcoming Sunday morning, the gathering of the church, the Lord's Day, a day dedicated to the gathering of the church.

The world will scrutinize, many instances, I can go on and on and on, they'll scrutinize our devotion to God, and we may even lose our jobs because of it, but better off, we are to remain steadfastly devoted to God, regardless of the world's opinion, regardless the cost.

[38 : 34] And so as we close today, we have to picture this from two realms. A passage like this really puts us in this uncomfortable position of self-evaluation.

Trust me, I've gone through it all this week of hyper-evaluation of my own life, and this is the beauty of God's word, to bring us back to our first love, as Revelation puts it to the church in Ephesus.

We see that a passage like this puts us in an uncomfortable position of evaluating ourselves, and the things in our lives, and the things specifically that bring us meaning, the things that bring us value, the things that bring us worth.

So church, I gotta tell you not to neglect and forget your devotion to God. That your devotion to God is solely unique to your relationship with Him alone.

Knowing God and being known by Him. That is your devotion, first priority in your life. Not towards your employer.

[39 : 50] You can say bye to your employer. Find a new job. God will provide, and He will bless that obedience. Not to your employer, not the government in our day and age today, our tense day and age, and oddly enough, not even our spouse, not even our kids.

Our devotion, first and foremost, is to Jesus Christ. And building everything in our lives upon that foundation. God alone deserves our greatest devotion.

And the effect that proper devotion to God will produce within our lives is a counter-cultural lifestyle. People will look at us like with a dog's crooked face, confused at times, like, what?

You're not going to go out after work with us to get plastered like we used to do back in grade school? You're not going to come out late at night? Well, I just let you into an insight of my testimony.

Come on, don't be foolish. You know I'm not the only one. This effect, that proper devotion, this will produce a counter-cultural lifestyle.

[41 : 15] Simply just put it. Take that and apply it in your life as you may. I can apply it in my life and I just did. saying no to sin, saying no to false worship, saying and accepting true worship.

All we are is because of who we are in Christ. This will realign, reorient, reinvigorate our marriages. This will reinvigorate your relationship with your kids.

This will reinvigorate your relationship with that crazy uncle that you just want to slap over the head at the Thanksgiving dinner table. This will give you the central fulcrum of balance in your life that God is the center and the balance, the fulcrum of your life to keep everything checked.

This will give you the center that you need. And if you're not a Christian, we have to think, just as we said earlier, we're always worshiping something, right?

It's either we're worshiping that which is true or that which is false. There's no in-between in a world of many different options and different, you know, relevant belief that exists today.

[42 : 36] What's hindering you from surrendering your life to Jesus Christ? What are you worshiping that you need to leave, that you need to abandon and follow after the chief shepherd?

Maybe the opinions of the world, your family and friends, you know they're going to ridicule you and that cost is too great for you. Maybe if we just want to get honest, maybe various sins in your life, pornography, the cost to give that up is too great in your life to follow Jesus Christ.

Maybe the facade of freedom that you think that you have and that you're going to be giving up all of this freedom to do what you want, lawlessness, antinomianism, just do what you want sort of theology, that the cost of following Jesus Christ and being bound to his will and not yours is too great for you.

Friends, if that is you, the cost of your unbelief is so much greater. There is nothing more costly in your life than unbelief.

So you need to count the cost today and believe in Jesus Christ because we are never promised tomorrow. Can we close in prayer? Let's pray.