

JOHN 11:45-12:11

The religious leaders plan to kill Jesus

^{11:45} Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith 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 miraculous 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 place and our nation.”

^{11:49} 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.”

^{11:51} 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.

Jesus takes it on the lam

^{11:54} Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

^{11:55} When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t he coming to

Read 11:45-53

- ❖ The *place* Caiaphas refers to (v. 48) is probably their holy place, the Temple.
- 1. What did the authorities fear, and why? How would killing Jesus help? Did it?
- ❖ “The unique feature of this pronouncement story in John is that the key saying is not on the lips of Jesus but on the lips of his enemy. The principle of unconscious prophecy was accepted in Judaism. In particular, the gift of prophecy was associated with the high priesthood. Josephus tells how the high priest Jaddua received an enlightenment that Alexander the Great would spare Jerusalem. Even high priests whose lives were far from perfect had the privilege...” (Raymond E. Brown, *The Anchor Bible Commentary*, Vol 29 Doubleday, Garden City, 1966).
- 2. Caiaphas feared the destruction of the Temple. In the OT, the Gentiles are often pictured by the prophets as streaming toward the holy hill of the Temple (Isa 2:3, 60:6; Zech 14:16); Isa 56:7 characterizes the Temple as “a house of prayer for all nations” (Raymond Brown, *ibid.*). What does 11:52 mean in the context of this OT expectation, and Jesus’ assertion in John 2:19-21 that *he* is the Temple?
- ☞ *Fun Fact!* It has been suggested that Paul saw his collection for Jerusalem from the Gentile churches (described in Acts) as a symbolic fulfillment of the prophecies of the Gentile pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1970).

Read 11:54-57

- ❖ Num 9:10-11 required those who were unclean to celebrate Passover a month late, giving an incentive for purification before Passover.

Read 12:1-11

- ❖ While one’s head or face might be anointed to give a pleasant fragrance, only burial customs included anointing the body (and feet) with perfumed oil.
- ❖ Loosening a woman’s hair in public was considered unseemly or even scandalous.
- 3. What, if anything, can be inferred from these two facts?
- ❖ Jesus quotes Deut 15:11, in 12:8; note that Jesus’ conclusion is not the same as that Moses’, that we should be kind to the poor, who will always be with us.

the Feast at all?"⁵⁷ But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him.

Mary, sister of Lazarus, anoints Jesus

^{12:1} Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at 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.

^{12:4} But one of his disciples, 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.

^{12:7} "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

^{12:9} Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

- ❖ "This contrast [vv. 7-8] fits in well with rabbinic theology. There were two classifications of 'good works'...: those that pertain to mercy, e.g. burial; those that pertain to justice, e.g. almsgiving. The former were looked upon as more perfect than the latter" (Raymond Brown again).
- 4. Setting aside Judas' motive, what is his argument against Mary's lavish display of worship? How does Jesus justify her action?
- 5. Since Jesus is not among us now (v. 8), does Jesus' argument not apply to modern displays of worship, so that Judas' argument now wins the day? (Hah!)
- 6. At the heart of Judas' objection is the idea that the resources for the poor are fixed—that we, and thus God working through us, have only a finite larder from which to feed the poor. Is this true? Is the feeding of the 5k in John 6 relevant? Or is this all just a way to spiritualize away our responsibility to the poor (cf. James 2:14-16).
- 7. Assume Jesus' argument applies even though Jesus is gone. What extravagant or unnecessary gestures of affection, large or small, have you done or observed others doing for Jesus?
- 8. In his commentary (*The Gospel of John*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1966), Charles Erdman says, "...Jesus forever vindicates the most extravagant gifts which are made in devotion to him, and condemns the spurious philanthropy which is not animated by love for him... *True gifts to the poor are in the name of Christ, and to win men to Christ.* Social service divorced from Christianity may spend the treasure of Mary according to the direction of Judas." Do you agree? Must all gifts for the poor be to glorify Jesus, rather than simply out of compassion?
- 9. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:3). We each carry our own burden of spiritual and even emotional poverty. Understanding and grasping our poverty is central to drawing closer to Jesus, and one another. How does worship or glorification of Jesus minister to the poverty within you? Have you experienced this with any of the actions listed in answer to question 7?

