

Saturday: Day of Appreciation

JESUS' FINAL WEEK - 1

And she will always be remembered for this deed. The story of what she has done will be told throughout the world, wherever the Good News is preached.
– MATTHEW 26:13,
LIVING BIBLE

If I acted crazy, I did it for God;
if I acted overly serious, I did it for you. Christ's love has moved me to such extremes. His love has the first and last word in everything we do.
– 2 CORINTHIANS 5:13-14,
THE MESSAGE

He was known as Simon the leper. But not any longer. Now he is just Simon. We don't know when Jesus healed him, but we do know his life was never the same afterwards. It was during Jesus' last week that Simon had Jesus and his disciples over for dinner (Matthew 26:6). A simple act, but it must have meant a lot to Jesus. During the course of that meal, Jesus witnessed an act of love which the world will never forget. An act of extravagant tenderness in which Jesus wasn't the giver, he was the receiver. Saturday was the calm before the storm. In the company of His friends, Jesus paused and refreshed His soul. And given Jesus' response to Mary, it's likely that He drew a great deal of encouragement and strength from these gestures of love for the difficult days ahead.

WELCOME

What was the best gift you ever received as a child?

WORSHIP

Plan either your worship beforehand, or ask group members to share (and then sing) the songs that most express their love for God. "Listen To Our Hearts" (810), "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go" (48), "Thank You, Lord!" (781), "I Love You, Lord" (779).

WORD

Read John 12:1-11

1. Imagine the scene in Bethany—at this party are at least two people who are living testimony of the power of Jesus. Lazarus' presence created quite a commotion, but the interesting thing is that the one nobody came to see is the one who got noticed the most! What else do you find significant about the setting?
2. Given the value of the perfume (vs 5), how would you have reacted as you watched Mary? Why? What does Mary's action say about the nature of love? [If love is genuine, there is always a certain extravagance about it. Love doesn't always stop to calculate and measure. It certainly doesn't stop to work out just how little it can respectably give.]
3. What did Jesus find so significant about Mary's anointing?
4. Like Mary, have you ever found yourself criticized by someone who didn't understand, or felt threatened by your exuberant response to Jesus? Explain.
5. Although not mentioned in John's account, Jesus said, "*Wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her*" (Matthew 26:13; Mark 14:9). What does this story teach us about Jesus and the way we should respond to Him?

WORKS

In his book, *And the Angels Were Silent*, Max Lucado writes, "Jesus' message is just as powerful today as it was then. Don't miss it: There is a time for risky love. There is a time for extravagant gestures. There is a time to pour out your affections on one you love. And when the time comes—seize it, don't miss it."

What "beautiful thing" (Matthew 26:10) could *you* do for Jesus (or the "least of these") this week?