

JOHN 12:1-8—REAL WORSHIP

INTRO.: Have you ever thought much about the idea of worship? In our day and in our culture & society worship is a somewhat foreign concept. We are a very egalitarian, secular, and individualistic society—perhaps the most egalitarian, secular, and individualistic society that has ever existed. As a result, the whole idea that “I worship something” kind of goes against the grain. For one thing, to worship anything at least implies a certain subservience to the thing worshipped—and none of us likes to admit that we’re subservient to anything!

- Yet, when we think about it, we cannot help worshipping something. We often use the term somewhat loosely: “He worships success.” Or, “They worship the Packers.” Or, “I worship the ground she steps on” (I often say that about Nancy, of course).
- But even talking like that hints at the real truth—So we need to ask ourselves: “What is worship?” Dictionary: “to have or express feelings of profound adoration” “admiring love or devotion.” We worship: “The thing that is most important to us” Or, “The thing we must have or we feel like we’ll die” Or, “The thing around which our life revolves.” *So how do we know what we worship?*
- What do you habitually think about to get joy and comfort in the privacy of your heart? The true god of our heart is what our thoughts go to when there is nothing else demanding our attention. What occupies our mind when we have nothing else to think about?— Career advancement? Material goods such as a dream home? A relationship with a particular person?
- Another way to discern our heart’s true love is to look at how we spend our money. Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there is your heart also.” (Matt 6:21) Our money flows most naturally toward our heart’s greatest love.
- Turn to neighbor—30 seconds: “What do you think most people worship?”
- It’s different for all of us: Family—Success—Personal peace, affluence, and comfort—maybe other things. Yet all the things I listed have one thing in common: they all revolve around “ME.” Not “Me, Jonathan”—but “Me, each one of us.” In other words, it’s “My family” “My success” “My personal peace, affluence, comfort, etc.” Or, if you’re married it’s: “OUR family” “OUR success” “OUR personal peace, affluence, comfort, etc.” *When it all boils down, all these things are largely forms of worshiping the SELF.*
- Everybody knows we shouldn’t be so selfish, and should “love our neighbor as ourself” and all of that. Yet, since we really are not that way, how can we approach getting there?

Today’s passage of Scripture will point us to the answer. JOHN 12:1-8 [READ]

PROP.: Jesus ALONE is worthy of our worship.

O/S: We will see that **Jesus ALONE is worthy of our worship** when we see: (1) how *counter-intuitive* this passage is; and (2) how *ironic* this passage is.

OBSERVATIONS: Before looking at how this passage leads us to the kind of people we want to be, let me first make two brief background observations.

vv. 2-3: Martha and Mary—encountered them before in Luke 10 when Jesus was teaching at their house.

- **Martha:** *then Martha was serving, but was complaining that her sister Mary was not helping out. Here she is serving again.* She has a **servant’s heart**. But this time she’s not complaining about her sister.
- **Mary:** *then she was “sitting at Jesus’ feet”; now she is anointing His feet.* Look at **Mary’s heart:** In **John 13** Jesus has to teach his disciples to wash the feet of others. Here, Mary is doing that from her heart, w/o having to be taught. *She has the heart of a worshiper.*

I. HOW COUNTER-INTUITIVE THIS PASSAGE IS.

A. vv. 4-5 Judas asks “Why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?”

- That question is a valid one—Matt 26:8-9 (probably referring to the same event) says it wasn’t just Judas who said that, but all the disciples were saying the same thing.
- The question is important when we consider the fact that 1 denarius was the average worker’s daily wage—which means that that perfume was equal in value to *an entire year’s worth of wages*. A HUGE SUM. A great amount of good could have been done with that money.

B. That’s why this passage is so counter-intuitive—because again and again:

- The Bible talks about our responsibility to provide justice and help to the poor. Deut 15:11 God says:

“The poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, you shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.” *Jesus prob. alluding to this in v. 8.*

- Jesus himself told the Rich Young Ruler in Mark 10: **“Go, sell all that you have and give the proceeds to the poor and THEN come and follow me.”**
- The Apostles James says: **“If you tell someone, go in peace, be warm and filled, but do nothing to actually help the person, what kind of faith is that? It’s DEAD.”**
- Yet here Jesus says: **“Leave Mary alone—I’m more important—even at the cost of lavishing on me the equivalent of THOUSANDS OF dollars of purchasing power in today’s terms that could have been used to help others.”** WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

C. God knows what we are like on the inside. He knows that even when we help others we act from *mixed motives*. Acting out of pragmatism—even to meet real needs—can mask a spirit that knows nothing of LOVE, WORSHIP, or DEVOTION. **1 Cor 13:** **“If I give all of my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”**

- But God doesn’t want to leave us like that. If we are left to ourselves we’ll do some OK things, some bad things, but we’ll always be the same—with ourselves as our own frame of reference, just like we all said at the b/g of today’s msg. So He wants to change us from the inside-out.

II. THIS IS WHERE THIS PASSAGE IS TELLING US THAT THE ONLY WAY TO BECOME THE KIND OF PEOPLE WE WANT TO BE, AND NEED TO BE, AND KNOW WE SHOULD BE, IS THROUGH THE DOOR OF IRONY.

A. THE IRONY IS: for us to be changed on the *inside*, we have to look *outside* of ourselves. Because God knows that we can’t change our fundamental nature—we can’t transform our own hearts. *We have to change our object of worship.* We have to become *enamored* (which means to be “filled or enflamed with LOVE”) with the only thing worthy of our worship—God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ.

B. HOW DO WE DO THIS?

- Thomas Chalmers, “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection”: **“It is seldom that any of our tastes are made to disappear by a mere process of natural extinction through reasoning. . . . But what cannot be destroyed, may be dispossessed and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind. It is thus, that the youth ceases to idolize pleasure, but it is because the idol of wealth has become the stronger, and that even the love of money ceases to have the mastery over the heart [when] another affection has been wrought into his moral system, and he is now lorded over by the love of power. There is not one of these transformations in which the heart is left without an object. Its desire for one particular object may be conquered; but as to its desire for having some object or other, this is unconquerable. . . Such is the grasping tendency of the human heart, that it must have something to lay hold of. . . the only way to dispossess it of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one. . . the way to disengage the heart from the love of one object, is to fasten it in positive love to another, not by exposing the worthlessness of the former, but by addressing to the mental eye the worth and excellence of the latter.”**
- Example—Diet & Exercise: “31-Day Fat Loss Cure.”
- This is where Mary shows us the way. She saw in Jesus something so wonderful that her old affections were dispossessed by the worth and excellence of the supreme, ultimate, affection. **Heb 1:3—Jesus is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His nature.”**
- This is where we need to take Jesus into us—fill our heart and mind with Him—MEDITATE ON WHO He is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. **Col 3** talks about **“keep seeking Him...setting your mind on Him...putting on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to Christ’s image...and how Christ IS our life.”** **Gal 2:20** says: **“I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.”**
- Think about this: Jesus Christ was and is GOD. From all eternity He had everything, and was in perfect communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Yet He gave it all up in order to become a man and die for YOU (and me)—to pay the price that God requires for sin—and to enable US to have new lives.
- Your job will not die for you. Even your family or friends will not die for you—and if one of them threw himself in front of an oncoming car to protect you, such a sacrifice could not give you a new heart, but would probably impart to you feelings of guilt and remorse along with sparing your physical life.

- Jesus Christ is the only God who, if you have Him, will fulfill and satisfy you, and when you fail Him will die for you and forgive you. Jesus calls himself the bridegroom and us the bride. He is looking at us just as a bridegroom looks at his beautiful bride, walking down the aisle toward him—radiant. And He wants her, and He loves her, and He is enamored with her—and everything He has, and everything He is, He can't wait to give to her. *That's how Jesus thinks of us.* And Mary saw that, and it melted her heart. And she started thinking of Him the same way.
- When you see Jesus doing that for YOU—"He loves ME," "He died for ME," "He wants ME"—He will melt your heart, too. When we really grasp that, we don't have to strive to impress others, b/c we have the only One whose opinion really matters. The Gospel frees us to live happy, self-sacrificial, and contented lives.

C. THIS IS WHERE THE IRONY COMES IN AGAIN: The irony is that God—who wants us to be enamored with *Him*—takes ultimate delight in no one other than *Himself*. WHY IS THAT?

- **[READ PIPER]**
- Mary knew that. She lavished her perfume on Jesus b/c he was right there with her. She couldn't help it, b/c He had captured her heart.

D. THERE IS ONE MORE IRONY TO HAVING JESUS AS OUR REAL OBJECT OF WORSHIP: He transforms us from the inside-out so that we now do the very thing that Judas was talking about in v. 5—using our \$ well and taking care of the poor—only *now* from a heart of LOVE, WORSHIP, and DEVOTION.

- The history of the church proves this. Early church characterized by ASTOUNDING GENEROSITY—which *everybody could see*. **Examples:**
 - **Acts 4:33-34**—*Church in Jerusalem*
 - **2 Cor 8:1-5**—*Macedonia*. **WHY** were the Macedonians so generous? **Answer: 2 Cor 8:5**—Their lives changed from INSIDE-OUT; they had a *new affection reigning in their hearts*—JESUS. That changed their values and their actions.
- When Jesus IS OUR LIFE, our lives b/c transformed. We understand the *implications of the Gospel*:
 - If Christ forgave us, how can we be unforgiving people?
 - If Christ gave everything he had for us, how can we just clutch onto our money & possessions?
- Mary lavished her perfume on Jesus b/c he was right there in the flesh with her. But after the crucifixion Jesus rose from the dead. He is alive today. He comes to live inside of those who are His. But He is not with us *physically* in the same way He was with Mary.
- But in another sense, Jesus IS with us physically—in two ways:
 - He is present in all human beings since every person has been created in, and bears, the IOG. Thus, Jesus said in **Matt 25**: "**What you do to the least of these my brothers, you do to Me.**" How we tx. people shows what we really think of Jesus. That's the irony: By being enamored with Jesus, and having Him as the real object of our worship—we *now* are able to see and tx. people authentically, from the heart, not from ulterior motives—b/c we can see Jesus in them, too.
 - He is present in His body, the church. We need each other. We need to encourage each other, and help each other. *That works with my diet and fat loss program*, b/c Nancy is doing it too. And it's working for her. She's not fixing all kinds of carb-heavy meals—but we're eating & enjoying the same new things and supporting & encouraging ea. other.
 - That is why Jesus ordained the church—to help ea. other & show each other the love of Jesus, so that all the world can see that He IS alive. We often do a pretty poor job of that. But the Bible tells us: "**The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning.**" (Lam 3:22-23).

CONCLUSION: Set your mind on Him. Think regularly of how wonderful He is—how excellent He is; how beautiful He is; of His love for you; of all that He does for us. Set your affections on Him. Draw upon Him. Draw upon His body, the church.

- As you do that He will begin working inside of you, to change the **reigning affection of your heart to be Himself.** And THAT will change the rest of your values and actions.
- When Christ is the real object of our worship, He will affect what we think about, our relationships with other people, and what we do with our money—b/c our desires will be different, just like with the fat loss program.
- And just as His lovingkindness is new every morning, so our lives will be new every morning, too.