

Holy Monday
St. John 12:1-23
March 29th, 2021
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Mary Anointed the Feet of Jesus

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

From the crowds rejoicing and cheering our Lord + Jesus into Jerusalem in yesterday's Gospel, we are taken to our Lord's suffering and burial. Indeed, we will be presented with our Lord's Passion every day this week as we approach Good Friday and the crucifixion of our Lord on the tree of the holy cross for the atonement of the whole world and the justification of all those who cling to this work of Him in faith. We are taken to the death of our Lord + Jesus by Mary, the sister of Martha, and even more significant, the sister of Lazarus, who was risen from the dead by the Lord + Jesus. Mary takes us to our Lord's death and burial, because she anoints the feet of our Lord with very costly—three hundred denarii worth—spikenard. This, as our Lord + Jesus says, has been reserved for His burial. She anoints our Lord's feet in preparation for His burial.

Mary, and Martha and many of the Jews, had been witness of the raising of their brother Lazarus, who had been dead for four days very recently. Those events took place in just the previous chapter of the Apostle and Evangelist St. John's Gospel. Lazarus had been dead four day. He had been dead so long that, as Scripture tells us, his body began to stink. The corruption of the dead flesh had set in, and his body began to rot, as all human bodies do after the soul departs. The fact that our Lord + Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after being dead so long is a testament to His power over death, and His ability to grant life. No one in Scripture had been raised from the dead after being dead for so long. No one in Scripture had been raised from the dead after the body had begun to decay. Our Lord + Jesus shows His power over death and His ability to grant life in the raising of Lazarus.

Mary had been a witness to this raising from the dead of her four days dead brother, Lazarus. Therefore, she comes with very costly spikenard and anoints the feet of our Lord + Jesus and wiped His anointed feet with her hair. She did this in preparation for His burial. This was the custom of the Jews at the time of burial to anoint the dead body with spices and oils both as a sign of respect for the person who had died, but also as a preservative of the body. This anointed body would be wrapped in strips of linen and placed into a tomb. Since our Lord's death and burial is going to happen in six days from the events of this Gospel, as the Apostle and Evangelist St. John tells us at the beginning of the pericope, Mary is getting a head start on the preparations for our Lord's death and burial.

Our Lord is prepared for His burial by Mary even before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The events of today's Gospel reading precede the events of yesterday's Gospel reading. The Evangelist

even gives his own account of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. But before He enters into the city of King David, the city of the throne of His ancestor, our Lord receives preparations for His burial from Mary. The events of Holy Week begin with our focus being directed toward His death and burial. Even more so, this act of Mary shows us an act of faith. She believed on Him. She believed Him to be the Son of God, the promised Messiah come into the world to redeem mankind from their sins. Her sister Martha makes this confession in the previous chapter, and one can assume by Mary's actions that she believed in the same way that her sister Martha believed.

The Church also spiritually anoints the feet of the Lord + Jesus, when we cling to His death and burial on our behalf in faith. Our faith is our anointing of the feet of the Lord + Jesus. It is our testament that we too believe that what He did for us grants us forgiveness, life and salvation. We cling to His death and burial as the atonement—the payment and ransom—for our sins.

Not everyone was pleased with the actions of Mary, however. We are told that Judas Iscariot, the one who would betray him, raised objections. He believed this act to be wasteful. He claims that he would have sold it and given the money to the poor. People are always more generous with other people's money. The words of Judas Iscariot reveal a few things that are mentioned by the Evangelist. One, he did not really care about the poor, as is often the case when people complain about what other people should have done for the poor. They do not really care about the poor, but are simply jealous of the blessings that the Lord has gifted one with. They always have the poor with them, and if they want to do a good work for the poor, they are free to use their own money to do so. Their concern is not what other people are doing with their money. It is often the case where the people complaining about the lack of care for the poor from someone else, rarely do anything for the poor themselves. Our Lord + Jesus rebukes Judas Iscariot for his attitude, because he should care for the poor out of what is in his own hand, not the hand of his neighbor.

The second thing that is revealed by Judas Iscariot's words is that the Evangelist tells us that Judas did not care for the poor, in fact, he was a thief. What this reveals about Judas Iscariot is that his betrayal of our Lord + Jesus did not just occur when, on account of greed, he agreed to hand over our Lord + Jesus to the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver. No, the Apostle and Evangelist St. John tells us that Judas was a thief who was in charge of the moneybox, and would often take what was in it for his own use. His first act of betrayal of our Lord + Jesus was his impenitence towards being a thief. He was an impenitent thief, before he was an impenitent bribe taker. Greed had already corrupted his heart. He was already consumed with greed long before he was promised thirty pieces of silver.

The third thing that the words of Judas Iscariot reveals is the reason why he offered to betray our Lord + Jesus to the chief priests. Our Lord's public rebuke of his false attempt to feign care for the poor, and which showed his greed to everybody, was the reason that he agreed to betray the Lord. In essence, it was because of revenge that he betrayed the Lord + Jesus into the hands of the chief priests. It was only after he realized what this betrayal meant that he showed any sign of remorse. He realized that his betrayal of the Lord + Jesus meant the death of his Teacher and Master. Unfortunately, his unbelief is revealed in his final act on Earth when he went out and hung himself.

He had also, as one of the Lord's disciples, been witness to the raising from the dead of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. He had also seen the power over death of the Lord + Jesus who had raised a man whose body had begun to decay and stink. In his unbelief he failed to see that the Lord + Jesus could raise Himself from the dead. In his unbelief he failed to see that the Lord + Jesus has all power over death, and has the ability to grant life to those who die in faith to Him. Indeed, the Lord + Jesus has the power over death to raise Himself from the grave. Judas Iscariot failed to see this on account of his unbelief, therefore, he despaired to the point of committing suicide.

This, however, is not the case with Mary. Mary in her faith sees that our Lord + Jesus has power

over death, and can raise Himself from the dead. Even has the Church—we who are here today—believe that our Lord + Jesus has the power to raise all of us who cling to Him in faith from the dead. Therefore, in faith, Mary anoints the feet of our Lord + Jesus in preparation for His burial. This anointing is a confession of faith which shows that just as the Lord raised Lazarus from the dead, He can raise Himself from the dead.

From the cheers of the crowd yesterday, we are taken to our Lord's grave. And in being taken to our Lord's grave, we are also taken to our own graves. On account of our Lord's perfect once and for all time sacrifice of Himself on the tree of the holy cross for us poor, miserable sinners, our sins have been paid for by Him. We cling to Him and His works in faith. All those of us who cling to His works in faith will find our graves to be just like His grave on the Last Day—empty. He will take our body which has decayed and grant us a new and more glorious body to live with Him and all the saints and angels in Heaven for all eternity. Therefore, my dear friends, let us anoint the feet of our Lord + Jesus with the precious spikenard of our faith, for He has suffered, died and has been buried to grant to us all eternal life with Him. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!