

Holy Monday  
St. John 12:1-23  
March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## The House Was Filled with the Odor

*In Nomine Iesu!*

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

### **Sermon Text:**

“Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.”

### **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.

My dear friends, Holy Monday prepares us for the events of the coming week. The Apostle and Evangelist St. John sets up the scene. Lazarus had been raised from the dead. And we get the impression for St. John’s Gospel that this event had not happened too long ago. The raising of Lazarus is the key event that sets up Holy Week. Not only does this event prove that the Lord + Jesus is the Lord over life and death; that He can raise up dead flesh even after it has been in the grave for four days, even after the flesh has entered the point of decay and begins to stink, but it enlists two very different responses to this resurrection. The one is joy and wonder, the other response is hatred and anger.

St. John makes it clear in today’s Gospel reading that there were multitudes that witnessed the raising of Lazarus. These multitudes bare witness of this resurrection and told everyone that had come to Jerusalem for the Passover. It is St. John that informs us that this is the reason why our Lord + Jesus is received into Jerusalem in the manner that we heard about yesterday on Palm Sunday. The olive and palm branch bearing crowd went out to meet our Lord because He had raised Lazarus from the dead. They sang His praise, and welcomed Him as the Son of David, the “King of Israel,” the Messiah.

While the most of the crowds were overjoyed at the coming of our Lord + Jesus, others were not so thrilled. The Pharisees sought to kill the Lord + Jesus. They apparently had tried everything to get the people to deny that the Lord + Jesus was the Messiah. Their efforts had failed. We are told by St. John that even the chief priests sought to kill Lazarus as well. He was the reason why everyone believed on the Lord + Jesus. He had shone to everyone that He was the Lord of life, that He could raise someone up from the dead even after he was filled with the odor of death. Therefore, according to the chief priests Lazarus must be killed, and quickly. The fact that Lazarus is not mentioned again after the crucifixion of our Lord must mean that they succeeded. The Pharisees also sought to kill the source of their troubles, the Lord + Jesus.

Therefore, the raising of Lazarus sets up the events of Holy Week. This is why on our wall filled

with icons the raising of Lazarus comes just before the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. For his resurrection sends a sword between two factions: those who rejoice in the resurrection and those who are filled with hatred for the One Who performed the resurrection. The raising of Lazarus also sets up the reason for our Lord's betrayal by Judas Iscariot.

On the day before the triumphal entry of our Lord + Jesus into Jerusalem, He is in the house of Lazarus in Bethany. The sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, are also there. Mary, who is also known as Mary Magdalene, takes a pound of ointment of pure nard, a very precious oil, a very expensive oil, and anoints the head and feet of our Lord. She even uses her own hair to wipe the Lord's feet. As the day of our Lord's death approaches this is another event that causes some offense. Other Gospels tell us that all the disciples were offended by this action, but St. John points out the real instigator. It is Judas Iscariot. He does not actually care about the poor. He only cares about the money that could have gone into the moneybox. Which he would have in turn been able to take out of the moneybox and use for his own greed.

Judas is like many who feign care for the poor. They demand other people "pay their fair share" when they do not use their own funds for the same purpose. Judas, like many people, is more generous with other people's money than they are with their own. Greed is one of the many means by which the devil deceives people. At its root is covetousness. It is desiring to have as your own that which does not belong to you. It is not being content with what the Lord God has given you, and believing that if it is not given to you freely, then you have the right to take it by a show of right; by cunning and crafty deception. Judas is full of this sin. It is the sin by which Satan is able to lead him down the path of his own destruction.

Judas will after this go to the chief priests and ask them what they will give him in order to betray the Lord + Jesus. They will pay him thirty pieces of silver to betray the Lord away from the crowds. This betrayal is nurtured by his greed, but it is planted by our Lord's rebuke of him here on the day before the entry into Jerusalem.

Our Lord's rebuke of Judas Iscariot is not meant to drive him away, however. It is meant to explain to him the events that are about to happen. The fact that it does lead Judas down the path of destruction informs us how firm Satan has him in his grasp. This shows us how dangerous greed can be to us. Money and its pursuit steer us away from the really important things. Earthly possessions will all pass away. This is why we should always be seeking after the spiritual treasures that our Lord desires to give to us. Forgiveness of our sins and eternal life and salvation are far greater treasures than any earthly possession we could have.

This is why Mary is not ashamed to use the very precious ointment of pure nard to anoint our Lord. Her focus was on spiritual things, not on earthly things. Our Lord + Jesus tells Judas that she does this to prepare for His burial, which we know is only less than a week away from these events. But those who are in the home of Lazarus in Bethany on this day before our Lord + Jesus enters triumphantly into Jerusalem; they cannot know that His death is approaching. For them His death is a far-off event. For some of them they may even believe that it is an event that will never happen, for the Messiah was supposed to sit on the throne of David forever. They still believed that He had come to establish an earthly kingdom.

But our Lord + Jesus has come to establish a heavenly and eternal Kingdom. He does this by His death on the tree of the holy cross. On the cross He will atone for the sins of the whole world. He will pay for our sins and the sins of all mankind, so that all those who believe on Him might have eternal life. This anointing of Mary with the very precious ointment of pure nard prepares our Lord for the day of His burial; the day He will take a Sabbath rest from all His work of atonement. The odor of the perfume filled the whole house. The whole house was filled with the odor of death. The smell that filled the house

reminded everyone of death and burial. Indeed, for those who had witnessed Lazarus die and be buried, and stay in the grave for four days, this smell would have been familiar. It would have reminded them of his death not too long ago. It also served as a reminder that death is something we will all have to endure. We will all end up in the grave like Lazarus did.

We will all end up in the grave like our Lord + Jesus did. But He did not stay dead. He was raised on the third day. Lazarus also was raised again on the fourth day. The pound of ointment of very precious pure nard used on our Lord, the Lord of life, reveals that death is not something that will trap us forever. For just as our Lord + Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, just as He raised Himself from the dead, He will raise us from the dead on the Last Day. We will never see nor taste death. For we have been anointed with the sweet-smelling odor of Holy Baptism. We have already been drowned and killed and buried with our Lord in His death. So that as He was risen from the dead, we too walk in newness of life.

Many people in this world reject this good news. They reject the resurrection of the dead as folly and a fairy tale. But for those who are weighed down with our sins, and feel daily the threat and sting of death, the promise of the resurrection brings us great joy and comfort. It is why we are gathered here today. We have come to this holy house to receive the gifts of our Lord + Jesus. We have come to hear that we have been delivered from death by Him. We have come to hear the events that lead to our redemption from sin and death. Lazarus was raised from the dead after his body began to decay. So too will we and all our loved ones who have died in the faith be raised again on the Last Day after worms have eaten our flesh.

For our Lord + Jesus is the Lord of life. He has conquered death, and won eternal life for us with Him in Heaven. He has paid the penalty of our sins, and brought us into the Church where He continues to keep us in the one, true faith by the work of the Holy Ghost, until He calls us out of this vale of tears to our home in Heaven. Let us, therefore, join the multitudes who went out to meet Him and proclaim Him to be the King of Israel. Our King has come. And the hour for His glorification on the tree of the holy cross has come. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

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

*Soli Deo Gloria!*