

Holy Monday
St. John 12:1-23
April 14th, 2025
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The Day of My Burying

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“Jesus therefore said, ‘Suffer her to keep it against the day of my burying. For the poor ye have always with you; but Me ye have not always.’”

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, the main focus of this Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John is the anointing of our Lord by Mary. But underlining the main event there are continuous references to Lazarus. It is almost as if St. John wants to focus our attention on the burial and resurrection of our Lord + Jesus by pointing out that Lazarus also died, was buried, and raised again. The raising of Lazarus did not happen very long before the events of today’s Gospel reading. Not more than a few weeks. So, his raising from the dead was still fresh on everyone’s mind. That our Lord sixth days before the Passover chooses to eat in the house of Lazarus puts that focus back on the raising of Lazarus for the people.

This is what writers call subtext. It is an underlying theme that points to the main theme. It is the use of other familiar events to draw our attention to the main event. The death and resurrection of Lazarus is to prepare the readers minds for the death and resurrection of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. This is what this anointing of our Lord by Mary is all about. It is about the day of His burying. She would not be able to anoint Him with oil after His death, as was the custom of the Jews for burying, because Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus would take that task upon them after His crucifixion and death. She would also be prevented from doing it after His burial because by the time they reached the tomb, He had already been raised from the dead.

But this anointing of the feet of the Lord + Jesus with a pound of very precious, pure nard by Mary is meant to point to His death and burial. Everything about this text is pointing to our Lord’s death and burial. The raising of Lazarus is mentioned several times throughout. It happens in Bethany, less than two miles (a mile and seven eighths) from Jerusalem, where Lazarus lived. Lazarus was one of them that ate meat with them. The Jews sought to kill Lazarus, too, because many of the Jews believed on the Lord + Jesus because of his being raised from the dead. The multitudes had gathered to welcome the Lord + Jesus into the city of Jerusalem because they had heard that He had raised Lazarus from the dead.

Every mention of Lazarus is a reminder to the reader of his death. He had been dead for four days. His body had begun to stink from the process of decay. But the Lord + Jesus had raised him from the dead. Therefore, every mention of Lazarus is also a reminder to the reader of the Lord's power over death and the grave. This serves to direct our focus to our Lord's death and burial. As does having His feet being anointed by Mary. Our Lord even tells us this is the case when the disciples begin to grumble about the waste of the precious pure nard.

We know that Mary believed in a resurrection of the dead even before her brother was raised from the dead by the Lord + Jesus. Martha, her sister, had met our Lord before He reached their home and said that Lazarus would not have died if He had been there. To which the Lord says that her brother will rise again, and she responds with her confession that he will rise again on the Last Day. Then the Lord tells her that He is the resurrection and the life, all that believe on Him, though they die, yet will live. After asking her if she believes it, she says "Yes." because she knows that He is "the Christ, the Son of God." Martha then went and got her sister Mary. And Mary said the same thing that Martha had said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Both sisters believed and confessed the same thing about the Lord + Jesus. They believed Him to be the Messiah, the Son of God. This faith in Him could only have been strengthened after having witnessed their dead brother being raised again from the dead after four days.

They are not the only ones who believe that the Lord + Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The Apostles had already confessed this. And we are told by St. John that many of the Jews believed on Him after the resurrection of Lazarus. A great multitude even welcomed into Jerusalem because they believed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the Lord God. They took off their garments and laid the branches of olive and palm trees before Him in His way into Jerusalem as He rode on a young ass. These people would have gladly made Him their King, but not the kind of King that He came to be. They would have made Him an earthly King, a King that would only defeat their earthly enemies—the Romans. But our Lord came to establish a heavenly Kingdom. He came to defeat our spiritual enemies: sin, death, and the devil.

This would only happen if He were to offer up His life and a ransom for the sins of the whole world. Only through His suffering and death, can the powers of Hell be defeated and destroyed. His death would come about not because of those who believed on Him, but by those who rejected Him as their Messiah. Judas Iscariot is the first individual mentioned in the Gospel reading who would play a role in our Lord's arrest and sentencing to death. He was the one who led the grumbling of the disciples at the waste of the very precious pure nard. He even presents his argument in noble sounding words. "What about the poor?"

It was not compassion that motivated Judas Iscariot, but greed. He exchanged eternal life and immortality for eternal death and destruction for thirty pieces of silver. He was in charge of the moneybag, and often took from it. He would have gladly put the three hundred shillings received from the sale of the very precious pure nard into the moneybag so that he could steal that, too.

Our Lord, in His compassion even tries to reach Judas before his betrayal of Him. Judas could have still been forgiven after his betrayal if he actually had faith in the Lord + Jesus. St. Peter denies Him three times, and is still forgiven, for He believed on the mercy of the Lord + Jesus. Judas Iscariot has no such faith, and so the Lord's words of rebuke bounce off the hard, stone heart of Judas Iscariot and do not take root. Judas would enter into a plot with the other individuals in today's reading who desired the Lord + Jesus to be dead—the chief priests and the scribes. He would agree to deliver the Lord up into their hands in the absence of the crowds for thirty pieces of silver.

This would lead to the day of our Lord's burying. For they would falsely accuse Him of crimes worthy of death, even though He was innocent. They would spit upon Him, and slap Him, and pluck out

His beard. They would deliver Him over into the hands of Pontius Pilate, who would scourge Him, and whose soldiers would mock Him, beat Him, and shove a crown of thorns upon His head. Finally, they would demand that He be crucified on a tree, and have Barabbas released unto them. He would suffer, die, and be buried. Just as Lazarus had died and was buried.

But just as Lazarus was raised to life again by the Lord + Jesus, He too would raise Himself up again from the dead on the third day. For this is what everything in today's Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John points to. It points us to our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. This, my dear friends, is how we begin Holy Week. This is our focus on Holy Monday. We look to our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. For just as Lazarus' death and resurrection pointed to our Lord's. Our Lord's death and resurrection points us to our own. For just as He was dead, buried, and rose again, we too, shall rise again from the dead after we have been dead and in the grave.

This is why we need not fear death. For our Lord has taken the sting of death away by His own death. He has destroyed death, and opened up the gates of Heaven for us poor, miserable sinners. For He has paid the penalty of our sins by His death, and has clothed us in His righteousness in the waters of Holy Baptism. Therefore, we need not be sad and afraid of the day of our burying, but we can rejoice that by our deaths we will join our Lord + Jesus forever in Heaven. There we will live forever and ever free from sin and shame. 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!