

Holy Monday
St. John 12:1-23
March 30th, 2026
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald P. 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, at the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is more commonly known to us as Passover, the lamb for the Passover sacrifice was to be selected. The lamb was chosen a week before it was slaughtered at twilight on Passover night. It was to be without blemish, spotless, a lamb of year old. The lamb was young and pure, taken from either sheep or goats. It was to be a male lamb or ram. It was chosen a week before Passover, and it was slaughtered at twilight, the time of day when the sun has set, but there is still light emanating from the sun that has set.

This is why we for Holy Monday we have this Gospel from the Apostle and Evangelist St. John. The events in the house of Lazarus of Bethany take place a week before our Lord's crucifixion and death on Good Friday. This is one of the points of significance of the anointing of our Lord + Jesus by Mary. With her anointing one week before His crucifixion and death, our Lord + Jesus is chosen as the sacrificial Lamb to atone for the sins of the whole world. His blood would mark the posts and lintels of the cross. With His blood the wrath of the Lord God passes over us. His blood atones for our sins, so that all we who cling to Him in faith may have the forgiveness of their sins.

Our Lord tells us this in the Gospel reading. The Apostles, led by Judas Iscariot, were indignant that this woman Mary would waste such a fine and expensive ointment in such a way. Judas, who was in charge of the money, points out that this pure nard was worth over three hundred shillings, or denarii. A denarius was one day's wage, so this ointment of pure nard was worth over eighty percent of a person's annual income. And Mary just poured it over our Lord's head. To Judas, and those who agreed with him, this was a useless waste. But our Lord + Jesus sets them straight. He says that she did this “against the day of My burying.” In other words, this ointment of pure nard was sign of the Lord's death. By this ointment of pure nard, the Lord + Jesus is chosen as the sacrificial Passover Lamb.

But unlike the lambs and rams used for the Passover feast, which would be completely consumed, or burned, during the Passover. For they would be killed, and go the way of all things. Our Lord, however, would not just be killed, but He would live again. He would conquer death forever. He

would not only serve as the Passover Lamb, but He would rise again from the dead, so that all those who are in Christ—all those who dwell in the Christ—will also live forever after their deaths. And in this rising to life again, our Lord + Jesus would reign as King forever and ever. This is the second significance of this anointing of pure nard by Mary.

In the Old Testament, certain individuals would be anointed with oil as a testimony to their title and office. The first office that introduces the anointing of oil was the office of high priest. Aaron, the first high priest, was anointed with a special oil that was made at the instruction of the Lord God. This oil was to be used for no other purpose. It was a mixture of myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, cassia, and olive oil. It was to be used only in the anointing and consecrating of the tabernacle of meeting, and all that was associated it: the Ark of the covenant, the table for showbread, the lampstand, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering, and the laver. All of things, plus Aaron and his sons, were to have this oil poured upon them for seven days. It was to be used only for the consecration of the tabernacle, its implements, and the high priest, and his sons. No one else was to be allowed to use this special anointing oil of the Lord God.

This is how special it was. It was a mark of the high priesthood. And its odor, its smell, would be distinct. Psalm 133 talks about this anointing of Aaron the high priest. In the psalm he is covered with it. It ran down his beard, and all over his clothes from the top of him to his feet. He was fully anointed from head to toe and for a whole week. Only he received an anointing from this oil. It was the special odor and smell of the high priesthood.

Kings were also anointed as a sign of their kingship. We are not given a description in the Scriptures about the type of anointing oil used, just that both Saul, David, and Solomon were anointed in this way. We can assume the pattern was followed by subsequent kings. Indeed, we are given other examples in the Scriptures.

What this means is that our Lord + Jesus is also anointed in such a way. He is anointed on this day as both the High Priest and as King. He is anointed as the High Priest, because this ointment of pure nard is a special, and expensive, oil used only upon the Lord + Jesus. Like the Aaronic priesthood, it was poured over our Lord's entire person. For even though St. John records that it was poured upon His feet, another Gospel records that it was poured upon His head. The combination of these two Gospels shows that, like Aaron, our Lord + Jesus is fully anointed from head to toe. The odor of the anointing filled the whole house. Like the oil that anointed Aaron, it left a distinctive odor, so that all could smell it. The odor of the pure nard marked the Lord + Jesus as the true High Priest, Who would be both the One performing the sacrifice, but He was also the sacrifice itself.

But our Lord is not just anointed as the High Priest, He is not just chosen as the sacrificial Lamb, but He is also anointed to be our King. He will rule and reign over us. We get a glimpse of this kingship in the Gospel reading for today. Indeed, we heard about it yesterday from the Gospel of St. Matthew. Our Lord + Jesus rides triumphantly into Jerusalem upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. He is lauded and praised as the Victor and King. He has come into Jerusalem to defeat sin and death, to defeat the devil once and for all, so that the devil has no more authority to accuse any who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits. This triumphal entry takes place the day after, on the morrow, of His anointing by Mary in Bethany. Having been anointed the day before, He rides into Jerusalem as a conquering King, because He will soon be glorified.

And that is how our Gospel pericope ends today. Our Lord announces that after all of these events, including the final sign of the Gentiles seeking Him out, that the hour for Him to be glorified had come. Our Lord is glorified in His death. As we will hear more about tomorrow in the conclusion of the twelfth chapter of St. John, our Lord was first glorified by His birth—by His incarnation into our flesh. He took upon Himself our nature, so that He might fulfill perfectly the Law and will of the Lord God for

us. Now He will be glorified in His crucifixion and death. He will suffer the punishment—all that we deserve—of the cross and shame. For this is the reason He has taken upon our flesh. He has come to suffer in our place. This is why a week before His crucifixion and death, in the house of Lazarus in Bethany, He is anointed by Mary. He has been chosen for us to be our sacrificial Lamb. By His death, the wrath of the Lord God passes over us, so that through faith in the Lord's works and merits, we have the forgiveness of our sins. Where we have forgiveness, we also have eternal life and salvation from sin and death.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us give thank daily that our Lord + Jesus—the One Who is the spotless, and perfect Lamb of the Lord God—has won redemption for us. Daily can we rejoice in our Holy Baptism, for in baptism, we are crucified with the Christ, and buried in His grave, so that just as He rose again from the dead, we too, may rise again from the dead. Indeed, through our daily contrition and repentance, through the daily drowning of the Old Adam, we rise again each new day as a new creation, free from sin and death. Thanks be to our Passover Lamb, our Lord + Jesus! 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!