

CHURCH IN THE CITY



Now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! Eph. 5:8b

FEBRUARY 22-23, 2025

## “A New Offering”

*Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for Him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with Him at table. <sup>3</sup> Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples (he who was about to betray Him), said, <sup>5</sup> “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” <sup>6</sup> He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. <sup>8</sup> For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me.” John 12: 1-8, ESV*

Today our church, MDPC, is a church deployed: A church with hands and arms and legs and feet...along with heart and mind and soul and strength. She isn't a church contained within these walls. She was never meant to be.

When Jesus was once asked by a teacher of the law, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” He answered with direct simplicity, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself: There is no commandment greater than these.”

If it is nothing else, Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet is a living picture of this command.

**Her offering is an act of love in context.** It has a “before” and an “after.” What has come before is a miracle. Her brother Lazarus has been raised from the dead! She has witnessed a resurrection, an empirical fact that could not be refuted. A gift. A jaw-dropping demonstration of power. What will come after is another death, and a better, more impactful resurrection. She doesn’t know this yet, but Jesus does.

**Her offering is also an act of love in character.** It takes place at Jesus’ feet. This is a place familiar to Mary. She was—to the chagrin of some—often found at the feet of her teacher, hanging on His words. Her place, her posture wasn’t new. She is seen again at Jesus’ feet after her brother Lazarus has died. This time she is in tears, saying all she felt and believed to be true: “If You had been here, my brother would not have died.” By her place, her posture, we see her intimacy with Jesus growing.

**Her offering is to an audience of One.** On this evening, in this place, around a full table at Bethany during a celebratory dinner, Mary’s focus narrows to one: to Jesus. Her offering shocks some in the room. It offends others. She doesn’t care. She means to honor her friend and rabbi with the best that she has: costly perfume, tenderness, even the very hair on her head! All the others present disappear. She is before her master and friend.

But what is it that makes Mary’s offering new? Just this: She has come to understand and believe that her friend and teacher, Jesus, is the resurrection. She has come face to face with the Living God and believed in Him. When He raised Lazarus from the dead, Jesus told Mary: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” She said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

Her confession changes everything. All that she does now comes from a place of loving worship: love for God that spills over into love for others whom God loves. And it is not a weak, wavering human love. It is the all-powerful resurrection love of Christ who, by His once-for-all sacrifice, makes all things new. An offering that fills a room, a house, a neighborhood, a city, a world...with the forgiving, restoring, grave-robbing, life-changing love of God in Jesus Christ.

May we go forward together this morning as contagious, joyful, overflowing carriers of that same love. Amen.

Written by Leigh McLeroy  
MDPC Teacher & Writer-in-Residence