

Remember the story of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead? Here is the sequel, the celebration banquet some days later: John 12:1-8.

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

#### Questions for Discussion

The cost of the perfume, which Mary "wasted" on Jesus' feet, was about a year's wages for a working man -- perhaps \$30,000 in today's economy. No wonder Judas complained! What do you think? Was the expense worth it? Even for Jesus?

In John's gospel, this anointing comes at the beginning of "Holy Week." Another anointing -- with 100 pounds of spices! -- concludes the week at Jesus' burial. Can we make anything of the symbolism of these two lavish anointings?

When Jesus said that we will always have poor people with us, did he mean (a) that we will never end poverty, so don't bother, or (b) that when he is gone, we can keep on helping the poor?