

John Ch 12:1-3

“Characteristics of Commitment”

We approach Ch 12 with the shadow of the cross coming sharper into focus as it relates to the purpose and plan for Jesus’ life. Some weeks have gone by since the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and the public plotting by the Jewish leaders to put Jesus to death is in affect. and As the Passover approaches, less than a week away, Jesus now begins to push the events forwards once again that will culminate in His death, and ultimately His resurrection for the sins of the world.

Jesus was never *ignorant* of the plan of the cross for His life, He *orchestrated* it, and so we need to have a solid grip on the fact that these things that took place in Jesus’ life, especially as they pertained to the cross, were not random chance events that just wound up going that way and so the Father went ahead and utilized it for His glory. No, foreshadowed thousands of years earlier throughout the scriptures, it was all a carefully planned event from before the foundations of the world to bring about the salvation of all who would call upon His name, and place their faith in Him.

Peter tells us, “...*you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*” 1 Peter 1:18-20 John, in speaking of the A.C. in the book of Rev says, “*All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*” Rev 13:8 So the cross was never the result of a random course of events. and That’s why Jesus would so often say things regarding His life like, “*No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.*” John 10:18 and “...*whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*” Matt 20:27-28 This wasn’t something that just took place beyond His control, this was something that was very much *under* His control, He laid His life down, out of His love for you, and His love for me. Jesus said, “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*” John 15:13 and So where do we find Jesus when the cross is pressing in on Him, less than a week away? With friends, so lets read these 1st 8 vs and then we’ll begin to observe them a little more closely.

Vs1-8

Now these vs reveal to us 2 types of people to us as it pertains to a relationship with Jesus Christ we have the *committed* in vs 1-3, and the *counterfeit* in vs 4-6. Now if you dip just slightly back into last weeks text in vs 56 of Ch 11 you find the *curious*, and if you look just ahead into vs 9-11, you’ll find the *contentious*, and or the *critical*. and This pretty much represents the full gambit as it relates to peoples positions on Christ.

There are those who are simply curious, their not in anyway hostile towards the Lord, or have anything personal against he Lord, they simply don't know much about Him, and are interested and open to learning more, they're curious. and We'll see this type again in vs 20-21 when certain Greeks came to Philip and said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." God help us to be like Philip and Andrew who when there were those around them who wanted to see Jesus, they did everything they could to make sure that they seen Him. There are people around you everyday who are curious about your relationship with Jesus, they're watching your life, and my life, and they want to see Jesus, and may you, and may I be those people who are able to lead them to Him.

Now to the other extreme, there are those who are constantly *critical* of the Lord, contentious regarding anything that *pertains* to the Lord, and they think that you Christians are the root of the world's problems, and that if you were just erased from the planet, everything would go much better.

So consequently you and every one or every thing that you associate with they want removed from the sphere of their lives. and That's the type of people that we have represented in vs 9-11, whatever measures necessary, just get rid of Jesus and everything He stands for, and everyone He stands with.

But then in between these 2 groups we have 2 other groups, those who are committed, and those who are counterfeits, and we see various characteristics emerge from both of them here in this text, but we want to hone in specifically on the characteristics of the committed today so notice.

Vs1

So the stage is set 6 days before the Passover, 6 days before the Lord's passion, the cross is less than a week out. Now what's the significance to the cross, and the feast of the Passover? Many of you no doubt are readily aware, but for those of you who perhaps may not be, the Passover is that feast that God initiated when He delivered the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt.

After the Lord through Moses had brought all of those plagues upon the land (frogs, lice, water to blood, darkness, hail and all of those things) to no avail, He said to Moses this is what I'm going to do. I want you to tell the children of Israel to take a lamb, with out spot, and with out blemish. and I want you to slaughter that lamb (and your family is going to consume the whole thing tonight and anything that's leftover I want you to burn in a fire,) but I want you to take the *blood of the lamb*, and I want you to strike the lintel, and the doorposts of your homes. and Tonight the Angel of the Lord is going to "Pass over" the land, and any house not found abiding under the blood of the lamb, the 1st born in that house is going to die, the wages of death will visit each home not found under the blood.

There's going to be an outcry in the land of Egypt such as there has never been, nor will there ever be like this again. and As you know that night the Angel of the Lord passed over the land of Egypt and every house of Egypt was stricken with the death of the 1st born, but the children of Israel were saved alive as by the blood of the lamb. and So the Pharaoh told Moses, take your people and go, just get out of here. and So the Passover spoke to the children of Israel of the deliverance as by the blood of the lamb, both from death, and from the chains and bondage of Egypt.

That's why at the last supper (which was the feast of the Passover just about a week from this point) "...as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, *"Take, eat; this is My body."* Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *"Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."* Matt 26:26-28 He's saying, these elements that you've partaken of throughout the years, and decades, and centuries that have spoken to you of the blood of the lamb, and how through the slaughtering of *that* lamb, the taking in of *that* lamb, and abiding under the covering of the blood of *that* lamb saved you from death, and delivered you from the bondage of Egypt, *that* covenant is old, it was a *foreshadowing*. It's *fulfillment* is now, no longer do I want you to partake of the fruit of the vine, and the unleavened bread and think of the body and blood of *that* lamb, but do this now in remembrance of *Me*, the true Passover Lamb of God. and Through *My* being slaughtered, through taking *Me* into your innermost being, by abiding under the covering of *My* blood, you're truly saved from death, and set free from the chains and bondage of *sin* as opposed to the bondage of Israel.

So the significance of the Passover to the cross is huge, it's all about being delivered from death, and set free from bondage. and So as Jesus is preparing to be slain for the sin of the world, that *we* might be saved from death, delivered from the bondage of sin, though fully God, He's fully man as well, and so He just seeks a bit of refuge (if you'll allow me that term) in the comfort of a few friends.

So He makes His way back to Bethany where He'd raised Lazarus from the dead, and spends time there with His friends. with those who are truly committed to Him, Jesus likes to spend time with those who are truly committed to Him, He seeks those people out, that His presence might just abide with them, and that's the scene we have here. The Lord sought out those who were committed *to* Him, that He might spend time *with* them, the bible says, "*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.*" 2 Chron 16:9 Or belongs fully to Him, and is completely committed to Him, and surely He showed Himself strong on the behalf of this family having raised Lazarus from the dead. and So we want to take note of the nuances and characteristics of these who're committed to the Lord. Because I think we have in these 3 people, Martha, Lazarus, and Mary, a picture of what it means to be committed to Jesus Christ both individually and then also corporately as a church body.

Vs 2-3

So in these 2 vs we have 3 people, each of them simply being who they are and yet I believe they serve to give us a profound and complete picture of both the *individual* who is spiritually healthy, and then also a spiritually healthy body of believers corporately. Did you notice the 3 things that we have going on here we have #1 Martha Working, #2 Lazarus Witnessing (which comes into view a bit more in vs 9) and #3 Mary Worshiping. Martha's there *servicing*, Lazarus *silently shouting* the reality of a renewed and restored life, and Mary *submitting* herself to the Lord in worship.

In order to get a bit more of a rounded account of the happening here it's good to compare the accounts given in Matthew and Mark's gospels as well, but one thing we want to disqualify right off the bat is the account of Luke Ch 7 as being one and the same as the anointing of Mary of Bethany. They both anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with their hair, but there are some stark differences as well. #1 In Luke ch 7 the woman is referred to as being, "a sinner" meaning most likely a prostitute, but nothing negative is ever recorded of Mary of Bethany, #2 the house in Luke 7 is a Pharisee's by the name of Simon, this house here is a man named Simon's as well (we glean that from Matt and Mark,) (Simon being a common name, Simon Peter etc) however he's referred to as Simon the leper (speaking of his *former* ailment obviously), not a Pharisee.

So the gospel writers are clear to make a distinction between the 2 events that took place over the course of Jesus' ministry. But even in that we have a principle that we can glean regardless of how sinful, or how saintly a person may be, if they're willing to humble themselves and come to the feet of Jesus in worship and repentance, the Lord will receive them and be gracious unto them. (It's that whosoever principle that the bible's so clear about)

But we see here 1st of all, Martha working, she's serving the Lord, and His disciples, sort of catering this supper at Simon's house. and This is one of the essentials needed in the body of Christ today, service, those who are willing to work as unto the Lord, now we know we're not saved *by* our works, but surely the bible teaches that we've been saved *unto* good works. God has a plan and a purpose for your life, and serving Him in some manner or another is a part of it. Paul told the Ephesians "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*" Eph 2:10 Writing to Titus, Paul said in regards to Christ, "...*who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*" Titus 2:14 and Surely that's what we see here in Martha, one of Christ's own special people, zealous for good works. and Believe me when I say we could go on and on with scriptures regarding the call of God upon our lives unto good works, but primarily I wanted you to see this aspect of God's call upon our lives as demonstrated in Martha.

She's always busy serving, granted sometimes to a fault, but hey, if there's a fault to be had, surely getting overly occupied in service is a good one to have. But I also want you to notice the growth that's taken place in her over the months that we're able to view into her life, the last supper we saw her catering she got all worked up, overly occupied, and began to complain about how much she was doing and how little her sister was doing. Ever feel like that, like you're doing so much, because no one else will do anything? That's how Martha felt, and of course the Lord realigned her priorities, showed her the importance of allowing service to be the overflow of time spent with Him, at His feet, receiving His word, and being renewed in her spirit. and So I want you to notice that now she's serving again, but what's missing? An attitude, there's no complaining, her service is just unto the Lord regardless of what anyone else does or doesn't do.

There are those of you who are Martha's by nature, servers, the gift of helps, or giving, just oozes from your pores, but this is the lesson, that's a great gift to have, the church desperately needs people with the Martha mentality. People willing to take action and get things done, but what does the bible say, "*Do all things without complaining and disputing,*" Phil 2:14 and So it's good to have a Martha mindset as long as you learn the lesson Martha learned, and regardless of what others do or don't do, you're going to just serve the Lord with out complaining, with out striving, not feeling obligated, or hassled by it, but just joyfully as unto the Lord. and I thank God for every person who helps out in practical ways around here, just joyfully, because they love the Lord, and so they serve the Lord, and serve His people.

Next we have Lazarus, witnessing. and Even though the gospels never record a word ever spoken by Lazarus, his witness is powerfully profound. Talk about a testimony of being delivered from death, having been given new life! Lazarus was a walking practical example of what the Lord wants to do for everyone, He wants to bring those who are dead in sin out of death and into the newness of life. He wants to set you free from those grave clothes that formerly bound you, and give you liberty in Him.

The bible says, "*...where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*" 2 Cor 3:17 That is, freedom from sin, and the things that at one time had you bound up and immobilized. Believe me when I tell you that everyone new the work that Jesus Christ had done in the life of Lazarus, and Lazarus never had to say a word, he just walked around in the newness of life that he'd been given and everyone could see it. and So though his witness was silent (as far as the scriptural record goes) it was by no means discreet or inconspicuous. Jesus (by the very nature of what He's done in your life bringing you out of death and into life) calls you to be His witness, a witness of the life changing power of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus gives you life, there's going to be a noticeable difference in your life.

You've heard me mention several times how the people around me responded when the Lord gave me life, I was different, and I suspect you were to. and Word got around, people were checking you out, wanting to see the reality of what Jesus had done in your life, that's what's happening for Lazarus (again we'll see that in vs9). People were checking this guy out, and being drawn to Jesus as the result of his testimony, "I was dead, but now I live." That's your testimony, and it's mine to, we're to be witnesses of our Lord and His ability to renew and restore life to the otherwise dead. But now that Lazarus is alive, notice where we find him, just sitting at the table, in fellowship with the Lord, where are you to be now that Christ has given *you* life? Just hanging out with Jesus staying in fellowship with Him.

Then finally we see Mary worshiping, again from the position of being at the feet of Jesus. There's so much to learn from Mary, whether it was her *burdens* (in the sense of the death of Lazarus) or her very *best* as see here in this fragrant and costly oil of spikenard, she always brought it to the feet of Jesus. From Mark's gospel we learn that this oil was in a sealed flask, and at in order for her to pour it out it 1st had to be broken. and So often that's where worship will come from in your life and through mine, our broken vessel, when things aren't going real smooth and we find ourselves broken before the Lord, at the end, and we just begin to pour ourselves out before the Lord in worship. That's what Mary did, she worshipped the Lord out of her brokenness, that's what Job did, he was a worshipper, but when did he worship the Lord, when did he come to that place of total submission and humility before the Lord whereby he just poured himself out? On the day he lost it all, when he was at his end we read where he said, "*The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.*" Job 1:21 How sweet is the scent of worship that comes from a broken vessel.

What else does Mary teach us about worship? It's often costly, we'll see in a moment that what she poured out upon the Lord was worth about a years wage, she understood that if it cost nothing *of* her, it meant nothing *to* her. David knew the reality of this all to well, and when someone tried to give him a threshing floor in order that he might sacrifice to the Lord he said, "*No, but I will surely buy it for the full price, for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing.*" 1 Chron 21:24 So many want to give God there cast offs, "Hey we were going to throw this away, does the church need it?" No thanks, God's worthy of our 1st fruits, that which means something to us, is costly to us, then it's certain to have come from the heart. People might think you're weird if you lift your hands, it may cost you a shred of your reputation as Mr. or Mrs. Cool if you do that, but true worship is costly, in some way, by some manner if you want to worship the Lord, truly, with your life, it'll cost you, people will often misunderstand why you'd do what you're doing, tell you to quit trying to be so holy and do something more practical with your time or your resources, that's what Judas did. (As we'll see next week)

But one other thing and we're almost done, she teaches us that worship is beneficial, when Mary gave her all to the Lord, let down her hair (which was her glory) and wiped the feet of Jesus with it, her best only being worthy to be placed at His feet. But do you know what happened when Mary wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair? Her hair took on the same fragrance as Jesus' feet, and that's what worship does for you, and does for me, it causes us to take on the fragrance of the Lord, as a matter of fact it'll cause your whole house to take on the fragrance of the Lord. That's what John tells us here. Do you find that the tension in your house difficult to breathe in, it just stinks being there sometimes? Marriage on the rocks, or children falling apart, learn the secret of Mary, the whole house took on the fragrance of Jesus Christ because she spent time at His feet. The next time the unpleasant aroma of tension is in the air of your house, try taking a few minutes with the family and saying, let's just spend a few minutes at Jesus feet, and pray with them, and watch what happens to the aroma of the house, you'll be amazed at how it's affected. Everything changes at the feet of Jesus

How important it is to have these things happening in our lives, and in our church, the characteristics of commitment, working, witnessing, and worshiping, just out of the overflow of our love for the Lord, and time spent /w the Lord. So often we're too consumed about what can the Lord do for us, we've had a hard day, we're bent out of shape, and need to be ministered to. But what about the Lord, we want Him to consider us, but how often do we consider Him?

Yet this is the entire lesson here in these 1st 3 vs, the Lord just wanted to hang with some people who weren't entirely self absorbed. and Don't misunderstand me I know that the Lord doesn't need our coaxing, but wouldn't it be great if in this place, the Lord could find refuge? In the sense of. " Lord, we're here, not because we want You to consider us and bless us and serve us, but because we're here Lord to consider You, to bless You, and to serve You. We're here to *work* for You, to *witness* of You, and to *worship* You Lord. You just come and be blessed, because what You're confronted with everyday makes my problems look miniscule".

Don't misunderstand me, God has no problems (in that sense of the word). But Lord, You're having to watch people rebel against you continually, leave the planet and slip into hell daily which was never Your intent, You're watching people lead lives of further and further perversion and debauchery, You bless nations and no one acknowledges You. But Lord we want you to be able to come into this place, and just be blessed, we just want to serve You, to worship You, to testify of the reality of You. Because we're committed to You. and I think that's happening here, but let's not grow weary in doing well, but let's continue to press towards the mark, to glorify our Lord, and bless His name in this place.

Perhaps you're in a place where the Lord is calling you out, you've been curious about the Lord, but you're ready to be committed to the Lord, what does that entail, how do you do that? By simply giving your heart to Jesus Christ just opening up your heart to Him and saying Lord Jesus come into my heart and into my life, I want to be committed to you, to *work* for you, *witness* of you, and be a *worshiper* of You.

The bible says if anyone is in Christ old things pass away and all things are made new, and no matter where you've come from or where you've been or what you've done. Jesus loves you, and if you'll just humble yourself, and come to His feet in repentance He'll forgive you of all your sin, and give you new life.