

Topic: Even Lazarus Was Targeted for Murder!

John 12:1-11

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I. Introduction/Biblical Background

In Chapter 11:43 that immediately precedes our lesson for today, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. The narrative is focused on Jesus' ability to defeat death. When Lazarus fell ill, his family wanted Jesus to come and heal him. Not being in a hurry to come to His friend's aid, Jesus remained where he was for several days so that those who witnessed the miracle would see and believe. Before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He proclaimed, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Jesus backed up His words with action. Even though Lazarus had been in the grave for four days, Jesus raised him from the dead, thus defeating death. When the religious leaders heard about the miracle, they became afraid that many of the people would become followers of Christ. Therefore, they sought to have Jesus arrested and killed. John 11 ended with Jesus safely away from Jerusalem but with a price on His head. Jesus did not retreat out of fear for His life, but because it simply was not yet time for Him to be arrested and killed. Also, we see in today's text that there was a plot to kill Lazarus as well.

II. The Lesson: Even Lazarus was targeted for Murder!**1. Verses 1-2**

It was six days before the Passover festival. Jesus returned to Bethany, located about two miles from Jerusalem, to attend a dinner in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. The dinner was given for Jesus, and among the guests at the table was Lazarus who was raised from the dead. Jesus and Lazarus' family were close friends. The family owed Jesus a great debt of gratitude for what He had already done for them. As in other biblical accounts, Martha was doing the practical task of serving the meal, and Lazarus, who was unaware of the plans the religious leaders had for him, was seated at the table with Christ. The raising of Lazarus from the grave finally caused the authorities to take action to murder both Jesus and Lazarus.

2. Verse 3

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, poured a very expensive perfume on the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. A respectful woman did not unbind her hair in public. Mary was unconsciously performing a prophetic act by anointing the feet of Jesus. She did this act under the influence of a heart full of love and gratitude. Furthermore, it showed her humility, for it was a servant's work to attend to the feet of the guests. Mary thought nothing was too great and good to bestow on her Savior who had brought her brother back from the dead and who was seated at the table with Christ. Mary felt that she could not give too much love in return. Having received freely, she freely gave.

3. Verses 4-6

Observe in these verses that Judas coveted. He was critical of Mary's action and blamed her as being guilty of wasteful extravagance. Judas declared that the ointment would have been better used if it had been sold, and the money given to the poor. It was vain to expect a man such as Judas to do very much for Christ when he had no sense of the debt he owed to the Savior. Judas Iscariot, who was chosen by the Savior as one of His apostles, for the kingdom turned out to be a thief and a traitor. He was the treasurer for Christ and the disciples, but from time to time, he used the money for himself. Nevertheless, we know that Christ knows everything and was aware of his deceitfulness. It shows how many chances the Lord gives us to change our ways, repent and return to Him.

4. Verses 7-8

When Jesus responded to Judas in Verses 7-8, we see that He sided with Mary. Jesus will have none of Judas' indignation and told him to leave Mary alone. Mary's act of love had a spiritual meaning. It was like a prophecy. She was prophesying about His death. Jesus took Mary's gift as an act of preparing Him for what would soon happen, His arrest and crucifixion. The real sense of Jesus' comment concerning the poor was that they would have many opportunities to help the poor, but they will not always have Jesus' presence. Jesus pointed to something that should be valued above all else in that time and in this time---the presence of the Lord. Our opportunity to serve the Lord will also come to a close. Still our time is not yet finished. We can still seize the moment so that Jesus can greet us, "Well done...Enter into the joy of the Lord"! (Matt. 25:23).

5. Verses 9-11

It is interesting to notice that only the chief priests were mentioned here. They were from the Sadducees' party that did not believe in the resurrection, and the fact that Lazarus was alive contradicted their belief. The religious leaders plotted to kill Jesus and Lazarus. They did not believe that Jesus was God, and believed that they had a reason to kill Him. However, Lazarus had done nothing, but the fact that he was alive was evidence of Jesus' power over even death. Nobody could deny the miracle that Jesus had done. Lazarus himself was a chief witness. For that, the leaders plotted to murder Lazarus, too. They could not deny the fact of his having been raised from the dead. He was a witness to the truth of Christ's Messiahship. Yet, these proud men would not stop their evil deed to commit murder rather than confess themselves to be in the wrong. This evil attitude towards Jesus and Lazarus caused them to plan another wrongful act. John explained that because of Lazarus, many of the Jewish visitors believed in Jesus. Not only were many believing in Jesus because of Lazarus' miraculous resurrection, but also many who saw the miracle continued to bear witness about Jesus (John 12:17). The miracle convinced them that Jesus had been sent by God. Lazarus' resurrection prompted many to turn from the religion presented by the chief priests and other Jewish religious authorities to the teaching and Lordship of Christ. They moved from the legalistic teachings of the Sadducees and the Pharisees and embraced the Gospel about Christ that was proclaimed by Christ. The religious leaders concluded, therefore, that they must hide the evidence. Judas' response and their own clearly displayed that they did not see or understand who Jesus was and is.

III. Conclusion

Judas and the Jewish leaders who sought to kill Jesus and Lazarus were acting out of selfish interests. Judas was only interested in acquiring money. The Jewish wanted to hang onto their power and influence with the people. Therefore, they didn't stop at nothing to hold on to their earthly titles and positions! That meant also killing anyone who they felt threatened their hold on power! The resurrection of Lazarus pointed to the unquestionable supreme power and authority of Jesus as the Son of God. And Lazarus was one of the living witnesses to Christ Power! However, by targeting Lazarus for murder, they only succeeded in forfeiting their opportunity of securing their own Salvation in Christ!