

“Surprising Situations” (Jn. 12:1-19)

Intro: Throughout His whole ministry, Jesus pointed to the hour to come as one of confrontation between Him and the religious establishment. Here we find ourselves in John’s account in a transition between Jesus’ signs (miracles) and His sacrifice (Passion Week and redemptive atonement). After the resurrecting of Lazarus, Jesus is the honored guest at a feast in Bethany where Lazarus and his family attended. Here, an extraordinary act was done to Jesus, of which Jesus said it will never be forgotten (Mat. 26:13). Her act and the event which John subsequently records, point to Jesus’ mission and person, respectively.

1. Surprising Devotion (1-7)

a. Scandalous

- i. A woman letting her hair down in a public party was inappropriate.
- ii. N. T. Wright likens it to one who would lift up her skirt/dress past her thighs in such a setting.
- iii. Furthermore, hair on feet is an obvious taboo as only servants would attend guests feet and certainly with a rag.

b. Sacrificial

- i. Judas pointed out the ‘waste’ of such an act.
- ii. This was a sacrificial act of devotion. After all, could even a year’s wages repay Jesus for resurrecting her brother?
- iii. She was always at the feet of Jesus and thus recognized His unique holiness, authority, love, etc. She may have thought that such was the least she could do.

c. Symbolic

- i. Although it is almost certain that she didn’t anticipate His upcoming crucifixion and burial, Jesus notes that it was done providentially as symbolic for His burial. After all, it was a week away.
- ii. Certainly Jesus cared for the poor; but it was His actual sacrifice that would atone for the poor in spirit – and thus the central historical act of atonement ought to be marked by such an acknowledgement of devotion, worth, acknowledgment, etc. It was an act of singularity, albeit Mary could not grasp the significance of it at the time.
- iii. Oh, that our lives would be fully devoted to Jesus. Not frivolously, but with great consideration and commitment.

d. Sad

- i. Judas was not concerned for the poor but his purse (v. 6).
- ii. At a time when unity, charity, and honesty were essential, Judas’ selfishness, greed, and deception ruled his heart.
- iii. It is a given that the world will oppose such convictions, but it is tragic when one who carries the name of Jesus attacks a believer for her devotion to Jesus. We must be careful of judging intentions. Presumption will lead you to opposing the will, person, glory, and wisdom of God. It is better to be accused of wrongdoing and suffer for it than be seen as virtuous while having selfish motives. See 1 Pet. 3:17; 4:12-16.
- iv. Though Mary was righteous in her act, she appeared scandalous. And though Judas was wrong, he pretended virtuous.
- v. If you are devoted to Jesus, you will be targeted, “cancelled,” ridiculed, persecuted, imprisoned, or martyred. And sometimes such is done by those who deceptively carry the name of Christ. The term “carry” as in “you shall not carry the name of the

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YHWH in vain” is indicative more so of Judas’ actions that on cursing with God or Jesus in the curse.

- vi. One’s actions may seem frivolous/wasteful, but be careful of pragmatism. Some well-meaning Christians can get swept into the “social justice’ movement as it seems compassionate and caring for the underprivileged. However, said movement is a politically charged divisive ideal which seeks to actually undermine the values and virtues and victory of Jesus. It is easy to seem like you’re doing good but actually doing good will be met with disapproval of the consensus. See Mat. 5:11-12; 1 Pet. 4:14.

2. Surprising Dualities (12-18)

a. Their Perceptions

- i. No doubt there were multiple opinions about Jesus’ person and mission. And even though many sought to make Him king, they misunderstood the nature of His Kingdom.
- ii. Those of whom John had recorded as having tried to force Jesus’ national reign (Jn. 6:14-15), are certainly mixed in with the crowds who welcomed Jesus’ coming to Jerusalem.
- iii. Jesus was, indeed, affirming His kingship albeit of another dominion (cf. Jn. 18:36).

b. His Mission

- i. Jesus’ mission was not that of a political, nationalistic deliverance but a spiritual, universal redemption.
- ii. His person and mission are seen in the mixture of dual festivals represented here.
- iii. It is not John but the Jews who are seen as celebrating / acknowledging two celebrations. John notes it is the time of Passover week and yet the practices and chants of the Jews are more indicative of the Feast of Hanukah.
- iv. John notes that the event of Jesus’ advent to Jerusalem includes verses from multiple Psalms and Prophets as well as practices of Feasts other than Passover.
 1. Zec. 9:9 is a most obvious reference by the act of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Such emphasized the humble nature of His obedience and passive sacrifice.
 2. Ps. 118:25-26 record the rejoicing of Israel’s King’s advent to come to save them.
 3. John incorporated and, indeed, began the reciting of prophesy with Isa. 40:9’s “fear not.”
- v. The palm branches, the riding into town, and the shouts of hosanna and such are more indicative of Hanukah. However, riding a donkey (instead of a king’s horse), the promised salvation, and the Passover itself are indicative of the perfect, unblemished, atoning Lamb of God, as portrayed by the Passover.

3. Surprising Dismay (8-11, 19)

a. Panicked Scheming

- i. Those in positions of esteem, influence, and power panic at the threat of Jesus’ influence. This is seen by their recorded hyperbole (v. 19).
- ii. We have seen how they continually plotted to discredit and kill Him in stealth. Their exaggeration was earlier stated just verses prior in Jn. 11:48. Their panic was reaching its peak as Jesus’ hour was approaching.

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- iii. I call this a ‘surprising’ dismay because conventional wisdom would see those in power as calm and in control, while Jesus and His teenage band of misfits could pose little threat to the establishment.
 - iv. But as Jesus’ hour approached, their secret scheming was brought to open condemnation and crucifixion.
- b. Personal Convictions
- i. Unfortunately and too often, Christians have unwittingly fallen for the conventional wisdom of sight rather than the Author of our faith. Like the scheming Jews, we panic at the threat of the State’s power, influence, evil, and attacks.
 - ii. Both Christians and general Conservatives have thrown up their hands in defeat as we see the abominable policies enacted by overgrown government. I’ll be the first to claim that unless the LORD intervenes, there is no hope of a free and fair USA. As we ignore the Bible, U. S. Constitution, and Declaration of Independence, we cannot expect our children to enjoy the freedoms we have had. As Phil Robertson of Duck Dynasty wisely said, “America will never be great again, till we make God great again.”
 - iii. Nevertheless, it is the very reality that the nature of Jesus’ Kingdom is not national, political, or militant; that even when we live in a police state – we can reign with Christ by virtue of standing on His person and work, proclaiming His Word, and living righteously in opposition to the State’s demands.
 - iv. It was because the Disciples had learned this fact from the resurrected Jesus that they were able to stand against the Beast of Rome.
 - v. We can’t afford to panic as the Jewish establishment did. We must not fear the Dragon, the Beast, and False Prophet who are Satan, the State, and false religion. It is they who ought to fear us! Not because we are political activists, but because we are spiritual priests!
 - vi. They fear Christ and thus attempt to banish Him from government, education, marriage, entertainment, etc. We are the Church, the Body of Christ, and thus we must “fear not.”
 - vii. How then can we be the viable threat to Satan, the State, and Social religion?
 - 1. Contrition: Repentance, prayer, and firstly revival: personal and corporate
 - 2. Conviction: After confession (of sin) and profession (of Christ), we live righteous and courageous lives.
 - 3. Commitment: We reign with Christ in obedience, humility, evangelism, etc.
 - viii. This is not some step by step plan but rather the description of what Jesus and the Spirit do to and through us. We can’t save ourselves, muster up revival, or even enjoy employment for His Kingdom unless and until He draws us to Himself and we repent un-coerced.
 - ix. Honoring Jesus, not unlike Mary did with her perfume, will certainly be met with misunderstanding and ridicule. And publically associating yourself with Jesus will pit you against the State. But doing these things will have the evil ones panicked because Jesus in us will break evil’s grasp on us and others.
 - x. The day I wrote this sermon, I found out the Canadian pastor Artur Pawlowski was arrested and abused having been deprived of his right to a phone call and lawyer. Yes, this should anger us but not bring us to despair. Artur is upbeat with his eyes on Jesus. There is no doubt that some ‘Christians’ (like Judas) will say he did it to

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himself by ignoring the Fascist dictates of the State. But there is also no doubt that God will use his faith, courage, and convictions to advance the Kingdom. Thy will be done.