SACRIFICE VS. SELFISHNESS

The Real Jesus
John 11:55 - 12:11 // Kip Nanninga
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Kip // Well, good morning. It's great to see everybody this morning. So, I'm going to just start out and be real vulnerable with you today -- ask you a tough question. How's your bracket? The tension of March madness, right? It is upon us. Who would have imagined Friday night the number 16 would knock off the number 1, right? My bracket is obliterated. That's alright. There is still a chance to win with my final four.

We are going to dive into John 12 today. Take your Bibles, turn on your smart phones, go to John 12. I'm excited about this text and what God wants to tell us today. You know, as I was thinking through this text, we live in a culture immersed in tension, the contrast -- just between different things we wake up to that evade, invade our life. Some would say it's always been that way.

Others would say we are more separated now than we have ever been, whether culturally, environmentally, socially, politically, religious -- I can say one or two words and it's going to generate tension. Here we go: tolerance vs. prejudice, the Amazon takeover, racial tension, private vs. public, acceptance vs. rejection, Apple vs. P.C., Winter Park vs. Breckenridge, science vs. faith. Colorado native vs. transplant, gun control, be the church vs. going to church, legalized marijuana, the Patriots, Columbia vs. North Face, Blake vs. Adam, puffy vest vs. fleece, the Broncos, local vs. national, social media, sacrifice vs. selfishness. That is the epicenter of what we are talking about, laser focused today on this text in John 12, the contrast, the tension between sacrifice vs. selfishness. When we reject selfishness and choose to sacrifice, something powerful begins to happen in our hearts.

Pray with me. Father, we love you today. Regardless of the circumstances of this past week, regardless of how we feel today, Father, we proclaim that we love you as an act of our will. Father, speak to us, open our eyes, ears, especially our hearts to what your word wants to tell us today, and what your spirit wants to say. Amen.

So, in John 12 we have some tension, in fact it drips with tension between two people, two different people, two different approaches, two very, very different results and for us to understand the text of John 12 we have to jump back to John 11:55. Here's what it says. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, what do you think? Is he coming? Is he going to show up? But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone that found out where Jesus was should report it so they might arrest him.

Here's a couple of things going on in John 11:55. First of all, the Passover, the Jewish holiday, one of the biggest celebrations around Israel is happening within six days. It happens on Thursday night all the way through Friday night was the Passover, and God had commanded the Israelites back in Exodus and in Deuteronomy, I want you to remember this holy day because that's when the Israelites left the siege of Pharaoh and walked out of Egypt and were free. I want you to remember that. I want you to remember God's faithfulness. Make the pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem. Before you can go into the temple, you must be ceremonially clean. So, if you were to see historical pictures of the temple, you would see pools all around the temple where people would come and get dipped in water ceremonially before they could walk into the temple.

Stretching from Israel is what is called the King's Highway. It's from Damascus, drops down to Jerusalem, wraps around the sea of Galilee and falls south, and so that is the trade route. So everyone is making this pilgrimage on this trade route, the King's Highway from Damascus down to Jerusalem or north up around the sea of Galilee. So, news travels fast on this King's Highway, this Damascus highway, that Jesus, this guy who claims to be the king of the Jews, this guy who claims to be the Son of God, the Messiah is going to make an appearance in the temple, and you don't want to miss it.

Not only that, this is the guy that a few days ago went to a tomb and said, "Lazarus, come on out!", and this guy named Lazarus who was dead, came out of the tomb. And so, people are there, and they are asking, "Where's Jesus? If he's going to be here, he's usually in the temple, so, where is he?" So, in chapter 12 we find out, verse 1, six days before the Passover, where's Jesus? He's in Bethany. Why is he in Bethany? Because that's where Lazarus lives, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor, Martha served while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. We know in Matthew 26, the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Matthew 26 and again in Mark 14, this same story is written. It's a parallel, and those disciples wrote the story, and the Bible tells us this, they are at the house of Simon the leper. But you see, the leper is taken off because Simon no longer has leprosy. How do we know this?
Because back in the Old Testament, the Bible says that anyone who has leprosy could not even come in the gates of the city, let alone be permitted back in their house. If you had leprosy, a terminal disease at that time, you were cast out to a leper colony, excommunicated from all your relationships, from your family, from those you loved, to live your life apart from all that, and essentially die with other people who had leprosy. But they are at Simon’s house and Simon is there.

The second thing we know from this story is Lazarus is reclining at the table. That’s Mary and Martha’s brother. He was dead. They had the funeral service for him. They had the memorial service for him, he was dead. And Jesus says, “Lazarus come out.” Lazarus comes out with his burial clothes on, still smelling of incense, and he’s now reclining at the dinner table with Jesus, and so Mary and Martha didn’t order Chick-fil-a for this one, right? This was a celebration. Mary and Martha are excited. Their brother has been restored. Some historians believe that Simon the leper may have been their father. They are at the house of two men, one with a terminal disease and the other who was dead. This is the amazing thing of God’s mercy, he takes our sin, our trespasses, our death of sin, our disease of leprosy, our failure, our pain, our brokenness, and he brings us newness of life. Now watch what Mary does.

The Bible says this, then Mary took a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. Why would she do this? I believe Romans chapter 12:1 gives us insight into why she did this. Here’s what Romans 12:1 says, Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God. Why? Because this is your true and proper worship. Mary is worshiping God because possibly her father or older brother, and her brother Lazarus are now there at the table with Jesus. I believe she is offering pure worship because of God’s mercy. She understands and experiences what John was writing about that Jesus is the Son of God and in him you can have life. She’s seeing that before her eyes.

I believe in this moment, she’s experiencing and understanding the deity of Jesus, that he is who he said he is, because I have seen with my eyes, and what is the one way I can honor him and worship him? By getting the most expensive thing in my home. The Bible says this, that she pours it on his feet, an expensive perfume. That amount in today’s society would be $25,000. You could go out and buy a brand-new Honda civic for $25,000. You could put a down payment on a home. You could start a small franchise for $25,000. Mary could have been like, I have this expensive bottle of perfume. I’m going to put a little on my finger and wipe it on his feet or take a Q-tip and dab it on because it’s so expensive, but the Bible says she pours it on Jesus’ feet as an act of worship.

With every great story, right, there’s always tension. There is always the bad guy that shows up and ruins the party, right? Look what happens in John 12:4-6. Judas objects. “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? You have to be kidding me. $25,000 and you pour it on this guy’s feet? Do you understand in the economy of that time, what you have done, Mary? It’s worth a year’s wages,” he says. His mind is just rolling right now. John says this, he did not say this because he cares about the poor, but because he was a thief. Those four words describe Judas’ life. He was a thief. As the keeper of the moneybag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. You understand here that Judas just missed completely what was going on. You see, he was there when Lazarus walks out of the tomb. He was there when Mary is down on her knees worshiping Jesus as an act of worship, and Jesus acknowledges that, and he totally misses it. It slips by him and he misses the point.

You see when we reject sacrifice and choose selfishness, we miss powerful moments. I live down in Castle Rock, and I can stand on my back porch and look straight across and see Castle Rock. It’s beautiful, with the sunrise this morning. A lot of people go up to Castle Rock and climb that. Sometimes we can get our binoculars and look across and see people way up on top. Listen to this, what happened two weeks ago. Panther’s running back Christian McCaffrey’s offseason went from ordinary to traumatic when he and his brothers Max and Dylan heard and responded to 72-year-old Dan Smoker Sr., who fell 25 feet off of Castle Rock and hit another rock during his hike with his grandson. But because of the quick response of the McCaffrey brothers, Smoker survived the fall. As they rounded the corner at Castle Rock, Christian heard Smoker fall and yell out. He says, “It felt like he must have been in the air 10 to 12 seconds or more. I have never heard anything like this in my life as far as trauma and the sound. My brothers and I were in complete shock.”

Smoker suffered a broken femur, pelvis, internal bleeding, bleeding on his brain, nine fractured ribs and a broken neck. At one point his breathing stopped and the group performed chest compressions. Eli, Smoker’s grandson, said this, “Had they done what other people were doing and just kept walking, I would have been alone, and there is no doubt my grandfather would have died.” Christian McCaffrey says, “If we were not listening, if we were not paying attention, we would have missed him.” And I believe that there are times in my life that I miss Him. I miss Jesus. There are spiritual interruptions that Jesus creates in my life and my agenda and my schedule, but I become so self-absorbed and life revolves around me, that I miss those opportunities. And all of us in this room, we are here together on this. We can become so selfish in and of who we are and life centers around us, that we miss those moments when Jesus interrupts our life and says, look what I have created right in front of you, and Judas is missing that moment.

That’s what Jesus is getting our attention about in this text. It goes on, and especially back in Matthew 26 and Mark 14, this is what Jesus says about Mary: Jesus says to Mary, “Truly, Mary, I tell you, wherever this Gospel is preached, because of what you have done, your act of worship, throughout the world, what you have done will also be told in memory of you.” You see when we reject selfishness and choose to sacrifice, guess what happens? We begin to create a legacy because it goes against cultural norms. When we stop long enough to sacrifice our time, to sacrifice
Overcoming addictions, hurt, pain, but because they have discovered that Jesus is the son of God and in him they'll find life, they are standing in this pool today and proclaim to the world that I choose Jesus. Some have found Jesus just recently. Some are following him for a while. Some are you. Over 60 people today will say because of following Jesus, what bravery, some will go against everything they have been told to stand in

I choose her. I choose her. Across our campuses today, over 60 people are choosing Jesus. Why? Because he's better. Jesus is better. I choose her. The word "leave her alone" is the same context, the same power in the Greek saying this, I choose her. Judas, leave her alone. Why? Because you will not always have me.”

Jesus loved Mary. Judas loved money. Mary’s heart was corresponded to the treasure that Jesus is. Judas’ heart contradicted the treasure that Jesus is.

Before we can trust Christ, we first need to watch your life and my life and trust a Christian before we can trust Christ. When we reject selfishness and choose to sacrifice in this day and age, we begin to create a legacy. Finally, when we reject accusations and choose bravery, powerful things begin to happen. Watch what happens in John 12:4-6. Judas begins to attack Mary, begins to accuse her right in front of Jesus who knows all things, right? What’s crazy about this story, is Judas was there with Jesus when Lazarus walks out of the tomb, but it doesn’t matter. He’s so roadblocked by his own self and his own selfish ambition, it doesn’t matter, and so he goes on to attack Mary. He begins to accuse her and says, “Why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?” These words show us two things. First of all, how expensive that perfume was, probably was supposed to be saved like a dowry for Mary’s wedding day, and she uses it all on Jesus.

Secondly, it shows us how suicidal it is when our hearts don’t match the worth of Jesus. Judas will eventually die at his own hands, overcome with grief and shame for turning in Jesus in a few days. He’s paving that way right now. And Judas accuses, “What are you doing? What are you thinking? Why would you give that amount of money to a guy like this and pour it on his feet?” Mary broke four big Jewish customs as a woman in Biblical times. In front of at least 15 men, she violated what Jewish women were supposed to do, and she did it out of bravery. She did it out of worship. She did it because Jesus chose her, and she knew that. A slave was the only person to wash a man’s feet. It was the only person that was supposed to wash a man’s feet. If you were hosting a party, you would not take the time to get down on your hands and knees and wash the feet of people coming in with their sandals on. It was degrading. It was humiliating. That wasn’t your role.

The second thing she does as a woman in Biblical times is you were never, ever supposed to touch the feet of a man. She gets down and not only touches his feet but washes his feet with her hair. Third of all, a woman was not permitted to speak to a man at dinner. She was supposed to be like Martha, out of sight, out of mind, serving, making sure that everything was right, in its proper place so the men could converse. She was supposed to be out of mind. She was right now in the center of the party. The fourth thing is, you were never supposed to let your hair down unless it was for your husband. That was your crown, your glory. She getting down in front of all of these men and opening her hair and washing Jesus’ feet shows a sign of humbleness, of serving, of humiliation. It was her full act of worship.

She broke the culture, chose to be brave and worship Jesus. I want to ask you today, who has been accusing you? What – what is going over and over in your mind, maybe some things since you were a kid, maybe some things as an adult that you have done wrong and the enemy has accused over and over and over in your mind, and just beginning to replay that tape. That is the number one job of the enemy. That is the number one job of Satan as he sends his legion of demons out all over this world. Their number one job, their number one purpose, is to accuse you, is to get you to believe that God is disappointed in your life, to get you to believe that God has no time for you, and when the bottom drops out of life, everything you believed about God, he’s not going to show up. He’s not going to be there. He’s not going to be our champion of heaven. That’s the number one job of Satan, the enemy. Just like Judas accusing Mary, that is his purpose. Let me ask you, have you heard these words that you are not beautiful? That you are overweight? That you do not matter? That your parents divorced because of you? That you didn’t make the team? You didn’t fit in? You were fired because of something? You will never belong? But listen to what Jesus says in verse 7. Jesus says, “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she would save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

That word “leave her alone” is the same context, the same power in the Greek saying this, I choose her. Judas, leave her alone. Why? Because I choose her. I choose her. Across our campuses today, over 60 people are choosing Jesus. Why? Because he’s better. Jesus is better. I choose you. Over 60 people today will say because of following Jesus, what bravery, some will go against everything they have been told to stand in this pool today and proclaim to the world that I choose Jesus. Some have found Jesus just recent. Some are following him for a while. Some are overcoming addictions, hurt, pain, but because they have discovered that Jesus is the son of God and in him they’ll find life, they are standing

REAL. MESSY. NEW.
before us to say I have found and I follow Jesus. Church, that is better than any March Madness victory, right? Right?! We can get excited about that. That’s exciting. We are seeing transformed lives today in this pool because of the work, because of the person, because of the power of Jesus. You see, when we follow the one who sacrificed it all, powerful things begin to happen. Pray with me.

Father, I thank you today that we get to see right before our eyes, just like Mary did when she worshiped Jesus, transformation. People who were lost in their trespasses of sin who now have newness of life, and they are standing before us today saying, I choose to follow Jesus. I choose to stand in bravery and follow Jesus. Father, we love you. Thank you for changing our lives. Amen.