

John 12:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Analysis

Mary anoints Jesus' feet with expensive spikenard (pure nard), then wipes them with her hair. The act is extravagant worship—the oil cost a year's wages (v. 5). Feet-anointing was servant's work; using hair was radical humility. Mary's act demonstrates love beyond calculation, worship beyond propriety. The fragrance filling the house symbolizes worship's impact—genuine devotion affects everyone present. This anointing fulfills Jesus' prediction (Matt 26:13) and previews His burial preparation. Mary grasps what others miss: Jesus' imminent death.

Historical Context

Spikenard imported from the Himalayas was extremely costly. Women's unbound hair was considered intimate, making Mary's act shocking. Her behavior demonstrates devotion transcending cultural propriety.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does Mary's extravagant worship teach about appropriate response to Christ's grace?
2. How does her prophetic anointing demonstrate spiritual insight others lacked?
3. In what ways does genuine worship affect those around us?

Interlinear Text

ἡ	οὖν	Μαρία	λαβοῦσα	λίτραν	μύρου	νάρδου	
G3588	Then	Mary	took	a pound	of ointment	of spikenard	
	G3767	G3137	G2983	G3046	G3464	G3487	
πιστικῆς	πολυτίμου	ἥλειπεν	τοὺς	πόδας	τοῦ	Ἰησοῦ	καὶ
G4101	very costly	and anointed	G3588	feet	G3588	of Jesus	and
	G4186	G218		G4228		G2424	G2532
ἐξέμαξεν	ταῖς	θριξίν	αὐτοῦ·	τοὺς	πόδας	αὐτοῦ·	ἡ δὲ
wiped	G3588	hair	his	G3588	feet	his	G3588
G1591		G2359	G846		G4228	G846	G1161
οἰκία	ἐπληρώθη	ἐκ	τῆς	ὀσμῆς	τοῦ	μύρου	
the house	was filled	with	G3588	the odour	G3588	of ointment	
G3614	G4137	G1537		G3744		G3464	

Additional Cross-References

John 11:2 (Parallel theme): (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

Luke 7:46 (Parallel theme): My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

John 11:32 (References Jesus): Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

John 11:28 (Parallel theme): And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

Song of Solomon 1:3: Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org