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| **Bible life messages** |
| How Can I Celebrate Thanksgiving? |
| John 12:1-8 |
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**1 How can I celebrate Thanksgiving? 2**

**When most of us think about that holiday we vision pilgrims, Indians and turkeys. We follow the family traditions and feast until our tummies ache. 3 That is how the world celebrates “Turkey Day”. But how might a Christian celebrate Thanksgiving? 4**

**How did people in the Bible celebrate it? 5**

**In the Old Testament Law an animal sacrifice was dedicated with unleavened bread and oil to God. It was eaten and no leftovers were allowed. [[1]](#footnote-1) 6 A person would first dedicate himself and then bring the offering. [[2]](#footnote-2) 7**

**King David told his subjects to praise God with their voices. [[3]](#footnote-3) 8 The Apostle Paul wrote to pray with thanksgiving and gratitude. He said, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. [[4]](#footnote-4) 9 Again, he said, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. [[5]](#footnote-5) 10**

**So, does the Bible have any example of a thanksgiving meal? It may in the following passage. Notice the attitudes of the hearts here! 11**

**In the Gospel of John, chapter 12, verses 1 through 8, we read, Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, 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.**

**Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. [[6]](#footnote-6) 12**

**But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. [[7]](#footnote-7) 13**

**“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.” [[8]](#footnote-8) 14**

**In verse 3, we see . . .**

**I. Thanksgiving was Expressed by a  
Grateful Heart – v3**

**Thanksgiving was expressed by a grateful heart. 15 Verses 1 through 3, Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 16**

**Why?**

**This was the Mary who sat diligently listening to every word proceeding out of the Lord’s mouth. [[9]](#footnote-9) 17 But she was also the sister so disappointed with the Lord she wouldn’t even come to Him until He asked for her! [[10]](#footnote-10) 18 So this act was an expression of gratitude for the Lord restoring her brother to her. [[11]](#footnote-11) 19**

**How important does God deem the expression of gratitude? Notice verses 2 and 3, Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 20**

**Martha was the epitome of service. There are two words describing her in this passage, Martha served. 21**

**Lazarus symbolizes concentration and the absorption of God word. There are ten words here for him, Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 22**

**Mary pictures the life of adoration and gratitude. Here, there are thirty-five words for her, Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 23**

**So, how much did she give? 24**

**She gave a pint, a Roman Litra. [[12]](#footnote-12) It amounted to about one pound. 25**

**It was Spikenard, [[13]](#footnote-13) an expensive fragrant perfume imported from northern India. 26**

**The container it was in was a long necked, ornately decorated flask that was tightly sealed to preserve it’s fragrance. 27**

**She was willing to break the beautiful flask and use all of the perfume. She really blew the wad! The house smelled like a perfume factory! 28**

**How much did she spend? 29**

**It cost three hundred Roman denarii, about $50.00. [[14]](#footnote-14) 30 But add the buying power of what most things cost during that day, and it amounted to about $500.00 of our modern dollars! The historian, Pliny, says that a flask of Spikenard this size was a status symbol of luxury back then! For a woman to spend this much may have meant that she cashed in her dowry, her whole life’s savings! 31**

**How much does it cost you to show your gratitude to the Lord? Your gratitude for the cross! Your gratitude for everything God has done for you! Your gratitude for your abundant Christian life! 32**

**Next, we discover in verses 4 through 6 . . .**

**II. Thanksgiving was Challenged by an Ungrateful Heart – v4-6**

**Thanksgiving was challenged by an ungrateful heart. 33 Verses 4 through 6, But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 34**

**Why? 35**

**Look at who asked the question. Notice verse 6, He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 36**

**The Lord accused Judas of betraying Him at the Last Supper. [[15]](#footnote-15) 37 Then, Judas betrayed the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane with a kiss. [[16]](#footnote-16) The betrayal was for thirty pieces of silver, the price for a common slave on the slave block! [[17]](#footnote-17)**

**Judas wasn’t concerned for the poor as much as he was about the money he could steal. 38**

**Do you spend as much effort deciding how to spend money wisely as you do on how to get it? 39**

**Verse 5, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” This just wasn’t practical! We agree that each of us probably would have asked the same question. 40**

**How often do you think to be practical when expressing gratitude to someone you love? 41**

**Was Jesus against poverty programs? 42**

**In Luke, chapter 14, Lord Jesus taught us to give to the poor. [[18]](#footnote-18) 43 In Matthew, chapter 11, He taught us to preach the gospel to the poor. [[19]](#footnote-19) 44 In Matthew, chapter 21, Jesus told the rich young ruler to give all his possessions to the poor and become His disciple. [[20]](#footnote-20)**

**This money could have been given to the poor, but if it were put in the treasury bag it probably wouldn’t have been! 45**

**So, what’s the principal here? 46 Satisfy spiritual hunger. Then, spread the good news of salvation. Finally, benevolence! 47**

**Finally here, we find in verses 7 and 8 . . .**

**III. Thanksgiving was Received by a  
Loving Heart – v7-8**

**Thanksgiving was received by a loving heart. 48 Verses 7 and 8, “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.” 49**

**Why? 50**

**Timing is important. The Lord dreaded what was going to happen to Him in just a few hours. He would experience the agony of Gethsemane, the betrayal of Judas, the denial of Peter and the desertion of His disciples. He would be feeling the scourging, the pain of crucifixion and the Father’s wrath upon the sin of the world. So Mary’s beautiful act against that dark background was very special! If she had waited to use this perfume Sunday morning after the crucifixion, she would have found an empty tomb! [[21]](#footnote-21) 51**

**You could give to the poor every time you have the money, but a person may be receptive to the gospel for only a short period of time. 52**

**The Lord appreciates your efforts to please Him! Mary was anointing Jesus for His burial ahead of time. Funerals are expensive. But you aren’t sorry you spent the money when it’s for someone you love! 53**

**The main question then is – What do you do for the Lord when you have the opportunity?**

**Thanksgiving Day is better spent helping others in Jesus’ name than helping ourselves to all the goodies!**

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1. **Leviticus 7.** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **II Chronicles 29:31 - Then Hezekiah said, “You have now dedicated yourselves to the Lord. Come and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the temple of the Lord.” So the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all whose hearts were willing brought burnt offerings.** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Psalm 26:7 - Proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds. And Psalm 56:12 - I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to you.** [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **Philippians 4:6.** [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. **Colossians 3:16.** [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. **John 12:1-3.** [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. **John 12:4-6.** [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. **John 12:7-8.** [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. **Luke 10:38-42 - As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”** [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. **John 11:28 - And after she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.”** [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. **John 11.** [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. **Λίτρα.** [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. **Νάρδος.** [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. **A common laborer’s annual wage!** [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. **Matthew 26:24-25 - But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.” Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “Yes, it is you.”** [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. **Matthew 26:47-49 - While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.** [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. **Matthew 27:3-5.** [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. **Luke 14:12-13 - When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind . . .** [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. **Matthew 11:4-5 - Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.** [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. **Matthew 19:21 - Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”** [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. **“Do It Now!”, Our Daily Bread.** [↑](#footnote-ref-21)