

Power, Money, or Jesus
John 11:45-12:11
April 19th, 2026

Saturday – In the tomb

Sunday – Resurrection appearances (Luke 24:1-53)

1. Some want _____ more than they want Jesus.
(11:45-53)

2. Back and forth to _____ (11:54-57)

3. Some want _____ more than they want Jesus.
(12:1-11)

4. Applying the Word

a. What is my relationship to _____ and
_____?

Timeline of Holy Week

Saturday – Meal at Bethany outside Jerusalem (John 12:1-11)

Sunday – Triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-44)

Monday – Clears the temple (Luke 19:45-46, Mark 11:12-19)

Tuesday – Temple controversies (Luke 20), Olivet discourse
(Luke 21)

Wednesday – Sanhedrin plots to kill Jesus (Mark 14:1-2)

Thursday – Last supper (Luke 22:14-30), upper room
discourse (John 13-17)

Friday – Arrest, trial, and crucifixion (Luke 22:47-23:54)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 11:45-12:11

1. What stands out to you about the dynamic in the council in 11:47-53. What was their communication like with each other? What did they value?
2. Can you think of other ways that a desire for power can lead people to justify unethical actions? How might people (us) be guilty of this in everyday life?
3. In what sense did Caiaphas “prophesy?” What did he mean by his words? What greater meaning did he communicate?
4. What additional details are included in Mark’s account of the anointing of Jesus? (Mark 14:3-11) What differences do you notice from a similar but separate incident in Luke 7:36-39?
5. How is Mary’s gift a picture of extravagant love? What might extravagant love for Christ look like today?
6. What reason does Judas give for objecting to Mary’s actions? What is his true motive? Can you think of other ways that people cloak bad motives behind religious language?
7. What does Jesus mean by his response in v. 8? What are some right and wrong ways to apply that to caring for the poor today?
8. What does it look like for us to love money more than Jesus? How can you guard your heart against the love of money?

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Big idea: The Sanhedrin prioritized power and Judas valued money. Both missed Jesus.

Intro

Jesus' most impressive miracle to this point in John – the resurrection of Lazarus after 4 days in the tomb – revealed the ruling motives of people's heart.

The chief priests and the Pharisees wanted to cling to the meager but still real power given to them by the Romans.

Judas wanted money, even if he had to get it through theft.

Both missed Jesus.

Power – influence, authority, political – and money are both useful tools but terrible masters.

We can use a position of influence for good and for Jesus – whether at work, in politics, in the church – or we can crave the power in itself and for ourselves.

We can use money for good things – provision, generosity, enjoyment – but it can become a master that we serve and crave for itself and status we think it brings.

We are warned about these in the narratives and in both cases we are directed to something better, to worship and devotion to Christ.

1. Some want **power** more than they want Jesus. (11:45-53)
 - a. Many believed after they saw the resurrection.
 - i. But some went to the Pharisees, perhaps only to report this miracle and encourage the Pharisees to believe, but more likely John is setting up the contrast, implying a more malicious intent.
 - b. The chief priests and Pharisees convened a council – lit. “Sanhedrin”
 - i. The chief priests were from the extended family of the high priest.
 - ii. The Pharisees were an influential, religiously conservative minority.
 - iii. They gathered in a Sanhedrin, which was the Jewish ruling body under the Romans, in which there were about 70 men, mostly priests and Pharisees with some older men and wealthy landowners.
 - c. Their dilemma
 - i. What are we doing?! Like an exclamation or “What are we going to do?” like a question
 - ii. He is performing signs
 1. They don't claim that He is faking it, they tried that with the blind man Jesus healed in John 9 and that didn't go well.
 2. They even use John's word – sign - “an event which points to something significant”
 - iii. If we let Him keep doing this, everyone will believe in Him
 1. They realize belief in Him will grow
 - iv. And the Romans will take away our place and our nation
 1. Their stated concern was not for the people

- a. “They are believing something false”
 - b. “He is leading them astray from the truth”
 - c. “He’s a false messiah”
2. Their concern was for their power and position and status quo under the Romans.
- d. The Romans brought their peace – the Pax Romana – by force.
 - i. It was a period of peace and prosperity in the ancient world with easy travel made possible by the Roman roads, but it was enforced by military power if there was a hint of rebellion or dissension.
 - ii. Their concern was that if the Romans thought the Jews were rallying around a Messianic figure, that they would come in and squash this quickly, taking away their place and their nation.
 1. Their power in the Sanhedrin and their small measure of independence under Rome.
 - iii. On one hand, their concern makes sense.
 1. Within months Jesus will enter Jerusalem to crowds waving palm branches and identifying him as the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel.
 - iv. However, shouldn’t they have asked, “could this guy who raises the dead actually be the Messiah? Could He be bringing in a better kingdom than we have now under the Romans?”
- e. Caiaphas spoke up
 - i. He was the high priest who served from AD 18 to AD 36
 1. “that year” doesn’t mean only that year but rather that fateful year in which Jesus died
 2. DA Carson, “His father-in-law was Annas, who himself filled the office during the years AD 6-15, and whose influence prevailed long after his term of office. Caiaphas remained in office until ad 36, when he and Pontius Pilate were both sacked at the same time.
 3. The high priest was appointed by the Romans and the average tenure was less than 2 years. For Caiaphas to serve for 20 years indicates some political prowess.
 - ii. He attacked them – you know nothing at all
 - iii. He spoke more than he knew, the peak of irony recorded in John.
 1. Surely you are not greater than Abraham, are you?
 - a. Wording expects a negative answer
 - b. Irony again in John in that we know the answer is the opposite of what they expect, Yes, he is greater than Abraham!
 2. Caiaphas meant: It’s better for Jesus to die (for us to kill him) than for the Romans to come in and take away our whole nation.
 - a. He even used sacrificial language – huper – “for” – on behalf of, in place of.
 3. The greater truth – Caiaphas’ intentions were evil, he meant this for harm for Jesus and for selfish gain. He wasn’t thinking in terms of justice or truth or even prophetic fulfillment. However, God communicated a greater truth.

- a. As John MacArthur wrote, “God sovereignly turned his wicked, blasphemous words into truth” (John, 484).
 - b. Jesus would indeed die for the nation and not even just the nation, but in order to gather together into one the children of God – Jew and gentile alike.
 - c. Caiaphas understood Jesus’ death to be substitutionary – substituting himself for the nation to the Romans – but God’s intention is for His death to be substitutionary for sinners as the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
 - 4. We get multiple answers to the questions, “why did Jesus die?”
 - a. Because the Jewish leaders were protective of their own power and so they “sacrificed” him to the Romans.
 - b. Because God laid our sins upon Him and He died for us.
 - iv. So from that day on they planned to kill him.
 - 1. More intentional, more planned less “in the heat of the moment” than the other attempts.
- 2. Back and forth to ***Jerusalem*** (11:54-57)
 - a. Once again He left Jerusalem, the epicenter of this conflict, to go outside Jerusalem to a city called Ephraim about 12 miles away.
 - b. It was a place of temporary safety for a short period of time, because another Passover was coming and the march toward the cross intensifies.
 - i. This was the third and final Passover of Jesus’ public ministry.
 - ii. The first was in John 2 when He overturned the tables.
 - iii. The second was in John 6 when He fed the 5,000.
 - iv. And now the approach of the final Passover kicks off the dramatic last week of Jesus’ life before the cross.
 - c. John has 11 chapters devoted to Jesus’ early life and three years of public ministry and 10 chapters devoted to the last week.
 - i. John has been called a passion narrative with a long introduction.
- 3. Some want ***money*** more than they want Jesus. (12:1-11)
 - a. Six days before the Passover He came to Bethany
 - i. This meal was probably Saturday evening after sundown on the Sabbath.
 - ii. Timeline of Holy Week
 - 1. Saturday – Meal at Bethany outside Jerusalem (John 12:1-11)
 - 2. Sunday – Triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-44)
 - 3. Monday – Clears the temple (Luke 19:45-46, Mark 11:12-19)
 - 4. Tuesday – Temple controversies (Luke 20), Olivet discourse (Luke 21)
 - 5. Wednesday – Sanhedrin plots to kill Jesus (Mark 14:1-2)
 - 6. Thursday – Last supper (Luke 22:14-30), upper room discourse (John 13-17)

7. Friday – Arrest, trial, and crucifixion (Luke 22:47-23:54)
 8. Saturday – In the tomb
 9. Sunday – Resurrection appearances (Luke 24:1-53)
- iii. It's six days away. The clock is ticking. The hour is coming.
- b. The last time Jesus was at their house, the house was full of people and there was likely abundant food, but it was a funeral meal. It was hospitality provided to the mourners. This is a very different meal.
 - i. Mark 14 tells us it's the home of Simon the leper – no longer a leper or they wouldn't be in his house
 - ii. Mark 15 and Matthew 26 tell us the disciples are there also.
 - iii. The man Jesus just brought back to life is there.
 - iv. Martha, who in the only other passage that describes this family outside of John 11-12 is complaining about serving, is serving the meal.
 - v. Lazarus was reclining at the table
 1. Ancient custom you reclined at the table, resting on your left elbow and eating with your right hand. Not wrong, just different from us.
 2. Would you have wanted to be at this dinner party? What would you have asked Lazarus? What would you have asked Jesus?
 - a. What were those days in the tomb like?
 - b. How do you feel now?
 - c. Did he heal everything wrong with you? The back ache from the injury in your teens? Your vision? Or did he just resurrect you to the way you were before?
 - d. What are you going to do now?
 - e. There is a cottage industry of books from people who supposedly visited heaven and returned, of which I am skeptical, but here is someone who really did go the grave and return. But the attention is not on him but on Jesus, where it belongs.
 - vi. Mary offers a costly sacrifice.
 1. In each of the three instances of Mary, we see passionate devotion – to his teaching in Luke 10, at his feet in tears in John 11, now at his feet anointing with oil.
 2. She poured a vial of costly perfume on Jesus.
 - a. Loaded with cultural and Biblical meaning that could be lost to us.
 - b. We hear of someone having a bottle of perfume poured on them and we might think of a middle school boy who skipped a shower and attempted to cover up with an overgenerous dosing of cologne.
 - c. Culturally, scented oil would be given to a guest before a meal to anoint his head. Think of Psalm 23:5 where David talks about the Lord anointing his head with oil.
 - d. Biblically, this points to the practice of anointing kings or prophets in the OT.

- i. Even the word Messiah translated as Christ in the NT literally means anointed.
 - e. The alabaster vial would have been carved from a soft stone. Even the bottle was expensive. She likely broke the narrow neck of the bottle and poured out all the contents on Jesus.
 - f. The perfume, John tells us, was nard and was very expensive. It was made from the roots of a plant found in India that would be crushed and distilled into a strongly scented oil.
 - i. In John's account it is said to be worth 300 denarii, or about one year's wage, modern equivalent of \$25,000.
 - c. Judas objects with a veneer of piety – this money could be used for the poor!
 - i. John tells us, with the benefit of hindsight, that he said this because he was a thief and wanted the money for himself. The disciples didn't know it at the time but only learned later.
 - ii. Judas might be the first person to cloak selfish motives with virtuous goals, but he definitely wasn't the last. Modern day televangelists who take in millions often point to an orphanage that the money is used for, but on careful scrutiny a small fraction of donations goes to the charity while the majority goes to his bank account.
 - iii. He had Jesus by his side, after 3 years of watching his sinless life. He had the resurrected Lazarus next to him, an undeniable miracle. And yet he wanted the money.
 - iv. Paul warns of how materialism – the love of money – can cause great harm.
 - 1. **1 Timothy 6:6-10** But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷ For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸ If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. ⁹ But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
 - 2. Money is a good servant but a terrible master
 - v. Jesus warns in the parable of the soils about the deceitfulness of wealth
 - 1. **Matthew 13:22** "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.
 - vi. Consider the contrast between Mary and Judas.
 - 1. She gave something of incredible value as an act of extravagant love for Jesus. Judas wanted to take a steal for himself.
- d. Jesus supports Her action (vv. 7ff)
 - i. Seems that she didn't use it all but is saving some for his burial, not knowing that it was less than a week away.
 - ii. Her act was not wasted and not forgotten. We might wonder sometimes whether our service for Jesus is seen, whether it is significant, whether it matters when it is so brief and passing. And yet it does.

- iii. We will always have opportunities to care for the poor – and we should – but it was a unique opportunity for sacrificial worship.
- iv. DA Carson, “If self-righteous piety sometimes snuffs out genuine compassion, it must also be admitted, with shame, that social activism, even that which meets real needs, sometimes masks a spirit that knows nothing of worship and adoration.” (John, page 429)
 - 1. It’s appropriate to worship with passion and depth of concern for truth on Sunday, and volunteer at Valley Mission on Thursday.
- e. What the Jewish leaders feared was coming true – people were flocking to Jesus and to see Lazarus, the walking miracle.

4. Applying the Word

- a. What is my relationship to ***power*** and ***money***?
 - i. You might say, “My relationship is that I have none of either!”
 - ii. Am I using these things, to whatever degree I have them, to serve Jesus?
 - iii. Am I idolizing these things?
 - 1. One indication of an idol is that I’m willing to sin to get it.

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