**WHY JESUS?**

**It’s Your Decision**

**John 12:1-11**

20150125

Good morning!

We are back on track in the Gospel of John in our series called WHY JESUS?

We have been working our way through the fourth book in the NT called John. It is an account of the life and ministry of Jesus. It is a book that answers the question WHY JESUS? Why believe in Jesus? Why trust in Jesus? Why follow Jesus? WHY JESUS?

We know this is the reason for the book being written because the author, the disciple John, tells us that in John 20:30-31. It reads,

**Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

John 20:30-31

So John tells us why he wrote the book. It was so that we would believe in Jesus. There is a whole bunch of stuff that John could have included in the book. But he gets selective so that he can hit this one nail of truth over and over again. And that truth he wants to drive home is this one. Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and you need to believe not truth about him but you need to believe in him and when you do you will have life with God.

So we have been on a journey through the book of John, on and off over the past two years. A journey designed to get us to believe for the first time or to deepen our belief in Jesus as the one who came to offer us a right relationship with God.

Now, we are up to chapter 12. This is a kind of transition place in the Gospel.

For the first 11 chapters we have been looking at three years of public ministry in the life of Jesus. But when you get to chapter 12 things really slow down. This is the last week in Jesus’ life. And John will take 8 chapters to tell it. Some even suggest that 25% of the Gospel of John is actually about one day, the Thursday of this last week of Jesus’ life. So this is a concentrated, deeply detailed, vitally important week. And we are going to step into it today. This is the week that ends with Jesus’ crucifixion. This is the mission for which he came. Let’s jump into John 12. So let’s just do that. But before we do let’s pray.

PRAY

Life is loaded with decisions. You and I make hundreds, make that thousands of decisions every day. Some of them are important. Some of them don’t really matter that much.

Some decisions you and I just have to make.

You may not want to. You may not feel like it. You may fear making the decision. You may not feel ready to make a decision. But sometimes you just have to make a decision. You don’t have the option of whether or not to make a decision you just have to make it.

So you are driving down the highway and all of a sudden there is this exit, this off ramp and you know you have to get off somewhere and you are travelling 100 km per hour (wink, wink) but you are not sure if it is this exit or the next one and you simply have to make the decision right there and right then.

Sometimes you have to make a decision.

You are in the line at the drive through and you have not really done a lot of thinking about what you want to eat. You have been telling stories or laughing with your friends who are also in the car with you and then there you are with the window down and the crackly voice asking if it can “take your order”. You don’t know. You don’t know what to choose. But you have to make a decision. And you have to make it now.

Sometimes you have to make a decision.

You are in the doctors office and you have a medical problem and he lays out the facts for you and tells you that you need to pick this procedure or this other procedure and you don’t want either but you have to make a decision. You need to make one.

Sometimes you have to make a decision.

And some times the decision really matters.

I want to tell you about one that really matters. One decision you have to make. One decision that will change your life forever. Ready?

The decision I am talking about is the decision about Jesus.

THE DECISION YOU MAKE ABOUT JESUS REDEFINES YOU AND RESETS THE DIRECTION OF YOUR LIFE.

It doesn’t get any bigger than that.

THE DECISION YOU MAKE ABOUT JESUS REDEFINES YOU AND RESETS THE DIRECTION OF YOUR LIFE.

And what is the decision that you need to make about Jesus? It is a bit of an unusual decision in that you don’t ask about a lot of people. And it is a core question about Jesus. It is a question that is the ultimate question about Jesus.

The ultimate question about Jesus goes like this . . . who is he? Who is this man? There may be other questions as well but the identity question is really the primary question. Who is he?

There is always this tension around Jesus. You read about it in the Bible and you see it in every day life. It is the tension of a decision. It is the tension of a decision about him

He brings you to this place where you have to decide about him and the decision is not about whether he is a nice guy or a smart guy or a good guy or a bad guy it is a decision about his identity. Is he the God guy?

No one else puts people in the position Jesus does. Am I God and if I am what are you going to do about it?

Is Jesus who he and his followers claim him to be?

This identity question is huge because a whole lot is at stake.

If Jesus is God then what he says is true,

If Jesus is God then what he does is right.

If Jesus is God then what he promises will happen.

If Jesus is God then what he asks must be obeyed.

If Jesus is God then his call to believe in him and follow him is the most significant decision I can ever make.

THE DECISION YOU MAKE ABOUT JESUS REDEFINES YOU AND RESETS THE DIRECTION OF YOUR LIFE.

What is your decision about Jesus?

Let’s look at an event in the life of Jesus where a number of people are making decisions about Jesus and it impacts their life big time.

We are in John 12:1-11. Jesus is at a party. The party is thrown in honour of him. The story is also found for us in Matthew and in Mark where we learn a bit more about who is there and what happens from a different perspective.

Let me read the account to you. If you have a Bible turn with me to John 12 starting at verse 1.

**12 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor.**

When we look into the parallel accounts in Matthew and Mark we learn that the dinner was held in the home of a man named Simon the leper. We know that this party was thrown because of the miracle that happened back in chapter 11. There Jesus raised Lazarus back to life. Jesus had to leave right after that and go into hiding because the authorities wanted him dead. He was not ready to die just yet so he hid out for a few days and now it appears he has returned to Bethany the very place where he raised Lazarus from the dead.

**Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.**

**3Then 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.**

The amount of perfume that Mary poured on Jesus was about the size of a can of pop. That’s a lot of perfume. And the parallel accounts tell us that it wasn’t poured just on his feet but it was poured on his head as well,

**4But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,**

By the way, almost every time, if not every time Judas is mentioned the writers include that he was the one who betrayed Jesus. They cannot just write his name down without including that reality. They obviously were so stunned by what he did that they cannot shake it.

**5“Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” 6He 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.**

So right away we know that Judas is seen by the other disciples as a betrayer and a thief. They do not know this at this time but they certainly figured it out.

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

**9Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, 11for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.**

Right here in this passage we have a lot of people who have made decisions about Jesus. We have a room full of them and others who are not there in the house but are included in the account and they too have made a decision about who Jesus is.

Let’s look at the players in this passage. And I want to do it by asking and answering the question “What do they each believe about Jesus?”

The first person whose name is listed in the Matthew and Mark accounts but who is not listed here is owner of the house who has thrown the party there. It is a guy named Simon the leper

**SIMON THE LEPER**

It is a little odd, isn’t it, that Simon is referred to by his illness? Hi, my name is Simon the Leper. (Reach out your hand as if to shake an imaginary Simon’s and then pull it back to brush back your hair.) It would kind of be like introducing yourself as Dave the Diarrhea or Annie Acne and so on. Who goes around with a nickname that is a disease?

Obviously he doesn’t have leprosy now or he wouldn’t be in a home with others. Leprosy is a disease that manifests itself at some point visually and in Israel such diseases forced the individual into quarantine. It is likely that Simon was healed of the leprosy by Jesus but for whatever reason, whether it is his choice or another’s, the label has stuck to him. And every time he introduces himself to others there has to be this question about what happened to him. Simon would then tell them that he was once a leper and he lived in a leper colony but Jesus had cured him. Maybe he was one of the 10 lepers who was healed by Jesus. Remember that account where only one came back to say thank you? Maybe it was Simon who was the one who said thanks.

Simon is a man who was healed by Jesus and who has made a decision that this man is one worth following so he throws a party for Jesus in his house even though he has to know this is incredibly dangerous. The chief priests had put a bounty on Jesus’ head at this point and by having him in his house and not reporting where he was Simon was putting himself in danger. You only do that when you believe in him as Simon did. He was wiling to take the risk, to pay the price, to bring Jesus into his home even though the price might be high. Simon the Leper made a decision about Jesus even though it might cost him big time.

I am not advocating we go around and call ourselves names like Simon did. But there is something cool about a guy who keeps the blessing of God before him like that. I think it is neat. Do you think of what Jesus has done for you with that kind of prominence? Maybe you are Tom the forgiven. Or maybe you are Sally the loved. Or perhaps you could pick a nic name like Janice the Justified.

Simon chose Jesus because of what it was that Jesus had done for him personally. And he was willing to pay a huge price to follow him.

Another person at the party was Martha.

**Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Martha served,**

John 12:2a

**MARTHA SERVED**

Martha has a sister named Mary and a brother named Lazarus. This is the second time we have seen her busy in the kitchen. The first time she was there she was angry at her sister Mary for hanging out with Jesus and not doing something domestically. But Jesus challenged Martha telling her essentially that Mary was different and Martha was different and Martha needed to do her thing and Mary hers.

When Martha speaks to Jesus at Lazarus’ funeral she does so with great faith in him. She believes that he is the Messiah. She believes that he has the power over death. And she sees her brother, after four days in the tomb, raised to life.

I can imagine she feels so deeply touched by Jesus’ healing of Lazarus that this act of cooking and baking in the kitchen is an opportunity for her to worship Jesus with what she does best. She was one who loved to serve Jesus.

Martha was big on selfless serving. Martha loves to serve Jesus. She has made this great dinner for all the guests. There are at least 16 adults in the room. Her decision was to serve Jesus with what she had and to do it with energy and passion.

Jesus talks about this decision to serve him and others in John 12:26

**Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.**

Martha has made a decision about Jesus and it is impacting her life. She believes in him as the resurrection and the life. She serves him with what she has.

When you believe Jesus is who he says he is then you want to serve him.

Simon the Leper was in the room.

Martha too and she served.

Another man was there.

**while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.**

John 12:2b

**LAZARUS WAS WITH HIM**

Lazarus never says anything. Even when he is the centre of the account but he doesn’t seem to do much and he doesn’t seem to say much. Right here he is not doing much except like all the other men he is gathered around the table and is simply waiting to be fed.

When you go back to the previous chapter in John it is Lazarus who is raised from the dead. It is likely then that this party is being thrown to thank Jesus for his bringing Lazarus back to life.

Lazarus has always been a follower of Jesus but I am sure the die and then come back to life experience was something that just put that follower energy over the top. Like the others, hanging out with Jesus would cost him. Truth is that as you see in verse 10 the authorities wanted to kill Lazarus because the miracle was causing many to become followers of Jesus.

I don’t know if Lazarus and the others were aware of this at the time, they may have been, but certainly he must have felt the anger of those who hated Jesus and may have felt some of it directed toward him. Little did the religious leaders know that they would have bigger fish to fry. Jesus himself was about to be resurrected and that act would rattle their cages in ways they had never even considered.

Their desire to kill Jesus was part of God’s plan and it would result in the greatest source of hope humanity would ever know

Are you like Lazarus in your reaction to Jesus? So grateful for who he is and what he has done that you just want to be with him; just want to walk with him; just want to listen to him speak into your life.

Lazarus made a decision to be close to Jesus no matter the cost.

**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.**

John 12:3

**MARY POURED PERFUME**

Nard came from India. This was pure nard making it even more costly. It was worth a year’s wages according to verse 5. Think about what you make in a year in a full-time job and you get an idea of how much this was worth . . . we are talking $40,000 or so in today’s terms.

In addition it was in an expensive alabaster jar which added to its value and she broke it. This might have been a family heirloom. This might have been her dowry.

Mary sacrificed a great deal to give this to Jesus. What decision did she make about him? He was her everything

Like David in 2 Samuel 24:24 she refused to offer to the Lord something that cost her nothing. This was unrestrained sacrificial love. Mt and Mark tell us that she poured the perfume on Jesus’ head and John tells us she also poured it on his feet. Then she wiped his feet with her hair. Washing another’s feet was a degrading act reserved for the lowest of servants. It is interesting that we have the story a few chapters later of the disciples refusing to wash each other’s feet in the upper room. This woman washes Jesus’ feet with this very expensive perfume and then dries them with her hair.

By letting down her hair she was doing something that would have shocked the onlookers. She abandoned herself to do this in spite of the cost and in spite of the shame she might have experienced. Here was total sacrificial abandonment to Jesus.

She believes he is God, she has seen him raise the dead, she knows he fulfills the prophecies why else would she act this way? And the decision to believe in Jesus means that she is going to sacrifice her all for him.

**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.**

**“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.”**

**John 12:4-8**

**JUDAS OBJECTED**

Judas pretended to be philanthropic. These are chronologically the first recorded words of Judas. He had expected Jesus to usher in his kingdom and perhaps he would get to be the minister of finance. He decided to get come financial remuneration for the three years he had spent with Jesus. He was a thief and he was one who used to pilfer the moneybox. So persuasive was his “righteous indignation” that the others joined in (Mt Mk).

Judas is a great example of missed opportunity. Here is a great example of someone worshiping the money god when the real God was right before him.

Judas was at a crossroads. Jesus had just publicly rebuked him. He could fall at Jesus feet and worship but instead this is the moment, according to the Mark account, when he went to the chief priests to betray Jesus for 30 pcs of silver. Judas knew the price of everything and the value of nothing

There is this standoff between Judas and Mary. One has to ask, “Are you with Mary or with Judas?”

Judas is a man who wants Jesus power and wants Jesus leadership but only if Jesus does it his way. Let’s let Jesus be God but only if he is God the way I want him to be God. Judas wants God on a string.

**Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.**

John 12:9

**LARGE CROWD CAME TO SEE**

Not sure where the crowd is at spiritually. Perhaps they are curious people, spiritual seekers who have come to see Jesus and Lazarus. They may have been the same ones who would call Jesus was King on Palm Sunday, the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey and then days later cry out crucify him.

Here are a group of people curious about Jesus and coming to make a decision. I trust they will move beyond the miracle of a healing and dig deeper into who it is that Jesus claims to be.

**So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well,**

John 12:10

**THE CHIEF PRIESTS PLAN TO KILL**

Notice the terms “as well”. They wanted to kill Jesus and they wanted to kill Lazarus. When you think of the response to Jesus of pure hatred and desire to eliminate him and anything that would thwart their goals and their plans and their freedom to be leaders, it is sad. These men were jealous of the people going over to Jesus. We read in the last verses in the passage that many of the people were starting to believe in Jesus. So they want to eliminate Jesus and Lazarus to build their own kingdom

Their decision about Jesus was one of hatred. They wanted him dead.

It doesn’t matter how much proof you have . . . even the resurrection of Lazarus was not enough for some.

**for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.**

**John 12:11**

**MANY OF THE JEWS WERE BELIEVING**

Some were responding to Jesus by putting their faith in him. Notice that they are believing in him. The terms assume a deliberate decision to move away from their religion and put their faith in Jesus.

THE DECISION YOU MAKE ABOUT JESUS REDEFINES YOU AND RESETS THE DIRECTION OF YOUR LIFE.

You are free to make any decision you wish about Jesus. But what you cannot do is not make a decision.

Jesus said you cannot be neutral toward him.

**He who is not for me is against me . . .**

Luke 11:23