

INTRO:

Hey so good to be back with you. While I definitely appreciate the occasional change of pace, I DO miss it when we're not able to gather like this/as I hope you do. So it is good to see you!... As many of you know, we're making our way through the Gospel of John in a series entitled, "*That You Believe.*" That name stemming from the fact that, REALLY, John's whole reason for writing is to get you to see that the more you come into contact with the real Jesus, the more it becomes impossible to remain neutral TOWARD Jesus. Given who Jesus revealed Himself to be, YOU can't be ambivalent about Him. You're either committed or uncommitted to Him.

And it's this idea of **commitment** that I want us to consider today. BOTH because we've come to a section in John which gives us just this unbelievably beautiful picture OF commitment, but also because: If you could distill down/*I want you to think about this* - distill down BOTH your greatest joys AND greatest pains, I think what you'd find is that they all revolve around commitment... Ya think about the truly great joys in life - the love of a spouse, a life-long friendship, satisfying career, even just following a favorite sports team. The joy OF those things is part-n-parcel with commitment IN those things *is it not?* Likewise, don't you have to admit that your greatest pains are very often the result of a LACK of commitment? When a spouse or significant other leaves you? A parent neglects you/a friend betrays you/an employer fires you? Or just some particular habit or hang up you can't seem to get past. Those things don't just hurt; they're devastating PRECISELY because of the LACK of commitment involved in em. Commitment, even if it somewhat taboo these days, as we sadly seem to be more concerned with fulfilling personal desires, commitment really is at the center of everything...SO let's read **John 12:1-11** together and consider what these verses have to tell us ABOUT commitment...

TEXT:¹

So you can see we're CLEARLY moving closer to Jesus' crucifixion. Not only about 2 weeks out FROM that crucifixion - it says, "*Six days before the Passover*" or Palm Sunday weekend, BUT you see that the Pharisees have now moved from simply PLOTTING to kill Jesus to trying to stamp out everything AROUND Jesus, including PEOPLE like Lazarus. And so to orient you; while functionally, we've covered a little over half of John's Gospel to this point, effectively we've covered close to 99% now of Jesus' life and ministry on earth, since the rest of John, from here on out, is gonna essentially span only 2 weeks, with the focus being on the second of those weeks/the Passion Week...And so it's in the midst of this that we have here this really beautiful picture of commitment...by Mary/a picture that tells us 4 things ABOUT commitment. **First, Why Commitment to Jesus Is So Important/Why It's So Important:** And when we say Mary's a beautiful picture OF commitment, we get that from the fact that, at this party here, which you see is being held in Jesus' honor for just having raised Lazarus from the dead, Mary, it says, "*took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair.*" And at first glance, it's easy to miss the level of commitment Mary's displaying there UNTIL you see two things: **One**, that this "*expensive ointment*" is

¹ Works consulted:

- "Cost of Commitment - Growth in Christ, Part 2 - May 13, 1990 - John 12:1-8, 23-26 - *Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (NYC: Redeemer Church, 2013)
- Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King! With Study Guide*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 174-80.

actually the equivalent of about a year's salary. Cuz ya see in **v.5** Judas says, "*it coulda been sold for 300 denarii.*" And typically a denarii was the equivalent of a day's salary. So do the math: 300 denarii is 300 days worth of work or almost a year's salary. So I don't know what you make in a year, but imagine using that up in one fell swoop to worship Jesus like this...But then **Two**, you gotta see that IN worshipping Jesus, she does so by "*wiping His feet with her hair.*" And in Jesus' time a woman unbinding her hair was regarded as immodest/unseemly. And yet Mary does it without any thought otherwise, presumably because she's so moved by feelings of commitment to Jesus that she's willing to brave whatever social disapproval might come her way...Which you see, it does! Judas doesn't just criticize her, he basically virtue-signals all over her, saying that she shoulda sold the perfume to "*give to the poor.*" Though as we're told, he cares nothing about the poor/only about lining his pockets...Which is WHY, you see, Jesus says, "*Leave her alone, so that she can keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you don't always have me.*" And a lot of people have misunderstood Jesus to be saying that caring for the poor is unimportant or that you can never make a dent in poverty so why try, but frankly, Jesus isn't trying to say ANYTHING about poverty OR what we're supposed to do about it. Rather, He's telling Judas and those listening that while they think that Mary lacks a sense of proportion - ya know, that she's wasting resources - IN-FACT, she has a PERFECT sense of proportion. Cuz as Jesus indicates, she perceives that He's gonna be gone soon. And so she's decided that if she doesn't have much time left with Him - knowing all He's given her and WILL give her - she's gonna give HIM everything she's got. That's what her commitment looks like!

Because here's the thing about commitment to Jesus/**Why It's So Important: It's the only way you can actually KNOW Jesus.** Jesus can only be known through commitment. As the old cliché goes: You can't have Jesus as Savior and not Lord. And if He's not Lord OF all, He's not your Lord AT all." You can't know Jesus apart from committing absolutely to Him. As Tim Keller says, "*He can't be sampled. He can't be someone you look to as you would an assistant when ya need to get something done, or like a money-back guarantee in a time of hardship.*" No! You're either committed or uncommitted to Him. There's no partial commitment when it comes to knowing Jesus. It's why Jesus is telling Judas and the group, that Mary actually has it right when she's willing to look at the most precious thing in her life and say, "*it's not too valuable to give up if it means getting Jesus.*"...Perhaps unsurprisingly, this is WHY relationship with Jesus is often, in the Scriptures, equated to marriage. Cuz of course marriage is a zero-sum game when it comes to commitment **right?** Like, if I go to Abby and say, "*Sweetie, I just want you to know, you're an amazing wife and so I am 99% committed you. For every 100 days of our lovely marriage, there's only gonna be 1 day in which I'm gonna be married to and with another woman. 99%! That's an A+.*"...You better believe, if I said that, Abby's response WOULDN'T be, "*Oh Sweetie, you're so great!*" It'd be, "*You're a cheater/you're not committed at all.*" Cuz anything less than 100% isn't commitment. And it's the same with Jesus! Commitment to Jesus is so important, because it's the only way to KNOW Jesus...That's the first thing.

Here's the **Second: What Commitment Is NOT:** And I'll tell you: understanding this is SUPER important, because if you've been in church for any length of time, you've likely been given all kinds of definitions for what it means to be committed to Jesus **right?** Most of em likely

revolving around some form of obedience. Like, you're really committed to Jesus if you read your Bible every day, or tithe and give generously to the church, or if you don't partake in certain sins, or if you consistently share your faith. These kinds of things **right?** Such that if I asked you right now to "rate" your commitment level to Jesus, immediately what you'd do/what we'd all do is sorta mentally survey each area of our lives to see how close to "perfect obedience" we'd get IN those areas **right?**...And I'd say, for some of you, THIS is why you always feel defeated and less than - because you're looking at your life and going, *"I wanna be committed to Jesus, but my goodness, my obedience TO Jesus falls SO short."* While for others of you, this is why you always feel better than (and nobody really wants to be around you), cuz you're looking at your life and going, *"look how great I'm doing. How committed I am."* What both of you have to notice/what we ALL have to notice here is that Jesus says nothing about obedience or disobedience being the mark of commitment to Him. Ya notice, He doesn't praise Mary for her obedience, but nor does He condemn Judas for his disobedience. I mean frankly, if it was about absolute obedience, He shoulda praised Martha, since according to **v.2**, SHE'S the one doing all the work. But He doesn't because absolute obedience ISN'T commitment. **How could it be?** If it were none of us would EVER be committed to Jesus. Not to mention, passages like **1 Corinthians 13** are clear that you and I can actually be incredibly "obedient" and NOT committed to Jesus. As it says, be able to *"speak in the tongues of men and angels; have prophetic powers; understand all mysteries and knowledge; have the kind of faith that's able to move mountains;"* even *"be so generous as to give away everything including your life,"* and that obedience...be worthless because it's not, as Paul says, *"rooted in love."* Absolute obedience is NOT what commitment to Jesus is. If it was we'd never need the Gospel, since the Gospel is that you're saved NOT by your record of obedience, but by Jesus'. Saved NOT by what YOU do, but by what He's DONE. How HE'S substituted His perfect, sinless life of obedience for your imperfect, sinful one. Commitment is NOT absolute obedience.

So then **Third, What Is It Then?** And ya gotta look closely at Mary's example here, cuz there's a number of things, you see, that characterize her commitment. On the one hand, you've obviously got **generosity**, given how much the perfume she used cost. Generosity is certainly evidence of commitment to Jesus, because when you're willing to give anything in order to get Jesus/share Jesus with others, it shows what your heart truly values. As Jesus Himself said in **Matthew 6:21**, *"where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* So you got generosity. But you also see there's **intentionality**. Jesus tells us that Mary had been keeping this perfume for this kind of occasion. So here's a woman who's strategic and thought-out with respect to her generosity. And we all know: intentionality is a sign of commitment **right?** When you just throw something together, be it a date, or an assignment, or a project, it shows you don't really care. The time and intentionality you put into things, in many respects, reveals where your commitments lie...So you got generosity, intentionality, and then finally, **humility**. Cuz to anoint Jesus' feet like this, meant Mary would've had to've assumed a posture of subservience/bowed down before Jesus...And for Mary, this wasn't a 1x thing. 3 times in the Gospels she's mentioned in association with Jesus' feet. Be it *"sitting at His feet listening to his teaching;"* *"falling at his feet in worship,"* or here *"anointing His feet in devotion."* Her humility springs from a whole-hearted commitment to Him as Lord. So generosity, intentionality, and humility.

But what you gotta understand is that those things AREN'T THEMSELVES commitment to Jesus; rather they're MARKS of what commitment to Jesus looks like. In other words, they're things that signal one who, like Mary, has given themselves to Jesus. Put the weight of their lives entirely ON Jesus...Cuz see, that's what commitment is. Commitment means putting ALL your weight on something, such that if what you're putting it on...fails...you're in trouble. It's what each of you are doing RIGHT NOW as you sit in your chair. You're committed to that chair/ putting all your weight on that chair, so that if it breaks or someone slides it out from under you, you're in trouble...**Proverbs 3:5** says it this way, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not LEAN on your own understanding."* **Translation?** Commitment to Jesus means not even "leaning" on your understanding of things. Or LEANING on your strength, your skills, your ability to manage, control, work things out, your anything. Rather, commitment is putting the weight of your entire life on Christ. All your hope for the future, for example, in He and His resurrection. All your needs for the present on Him and His grace. Subjecting all your understanding of things - how you see the world, understand yourself, relate to others - to He and His word. THAT'S commitment!...Friend, commitment is looking at every area of your life and asking two questions/write these down: **One**, *"Am I willing to do what Jesus commands in every area OF my life?"* And then **Two**, *"Am I willing to thank God for whatever comes TO my life?"* *"Am I willing to do what Jesus commands in every area OF my life?"* Since you see that's what Mary's doing here in giving Jesus her best. And then two, *"Am I willing to thank God for whatever comes TO my life?"* Since in GIVING her best, you see, Mary is in a sense thanking Jesus both for what He's done AND what He will do in His death...Those two questions are KEY, because they aren't about how WELL you're obeying, but rather IN WHAT you're trusting! So they're not so much about your behavior as they are your belief, because it's your belief, you understand, that not only guides your behavior, but actually reveals what you're truly committed to. Those questions simply help unearth your belief and subsequent commitment. Because/**listen** if you're saying in some way, *"Jesus I wanna be committed to you, but there's this one area of life in which I'm not going to or I can't obey you"* or *"Jesus, I refuse to believe that that bad thing that's come into my life could ever be good/ever work out for good."* If you're saying things like that, then REALLY what you're saying is, *"Jesus, I want you to come into my life as Savior, but stay out of it as Lord."* To which Jesus is like, *"Um, I'm confused. Cuz either all of me comes in, or all of me stays out."* You can't have it both ways. You can't, for example, invite ME into your home and say, *"Charlie, come on in. But 'Dunn', you stay out!"* No! Either Charlie Dunn comes in or Charlie Dunn stays out. The same is even more true with Jesus Christ. You can't have "Jesus," which literally means "Savior," without "Christ," which literally means Messiah or Lord. It's all or nothing, because commitment is all or nothing. Again, it's leaning the entire weight of your life onto Jesus! **So let me ask you:** Where are you saying, *"Jesus I'll obey you here, but not there."* ... *"Jesus, I'll trust you in this, but not that. You can have access to these rooms of my life, but not that back one/that's mine. Jesus, I'll put my weight on you with this, but I'm gonna keep leaning on MY understanding, my strength/ability in that."* In other words, is there any area of your life/maybe your whole life, in which you're reserving the right to be the final decision-maker/final arbiter of truth/final authority? Cuz if you are, you're not committed to Jesus. And if you're not committed to Jesus, you'll never KNOW Jesus, because Jesus can't be known apart from commitment! THAT'S what commitment is!

So **Finally, How Then Do Ya Develop This Kind Of Commitment?** Cuz I think we all know/if you've ever really tried to commit to something - Bible reading plan, workout regimen, how you respond to your kids, spouse, when someone criticizes you - we all know, real commitment isn't developed by simply telling yourself, "*from here on out, I'm gonna be committed*" **right?** That kinda white-knuckle approach is, OFTEN what gets people committed...institutionally. **So how do you develop this commitment/where does it come from?**...Look finally there in v.7 where you see Jesus makes mention of Mary perceiving that this perfume was to be used for the day of His burial. **See that?** And we don't know HOW Mary perceived that Jesus was gonna die. It's likely that she was simply attuned to the increasingly hostile atmosphere AROUND Jesus/we don't know. But what we DO know is that Mary is fully committed to Jesus. And it's NOT from a sense of, "*I need to do this cuz Pastor Charlie told me to,*" or "*because the Bible says to,*" or "*because I feel obligated,*" or even "*guilty, trapped, afraid, anxious.*" No! That's not where Mary's commitment/THIS kind of commitment comes from...Rather/**listen:** it comes from Mary perceiving the greatness of Jesus' love for her! Not just all He's done in coming to be WITH her, but NOW all He's gonna do in dying FOR her...You see, before you can ever say, "*Jesus I'm committed to you. I'll give up anything to follow you;*" you have to see how committed He is to YOU. How - even though, as **Hebrews 1:3** says, "*He's the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature, (the One who) upholds the universe by the word of his power.*" - how, even though He's that's great, He nevertheless gave it all up, including His life, to commit to you...In other words, before you'll give anything at all, you have to see how HE gave everything IN all...This is why **1 John 4:19**, one of my favorite verses, says very simply, "*We love BECAUSE he first loved us.*" We don't love to GET God to love us. We don't commit to God to GET Him committed to us. We love and commit to God because we KNOW how much He's ALREADY loved and committed to us in Christ.

Friends, the reason some of you have such a hard time committing to Jesus; be it being willing to trust Him for the first time, or obey Him in every area of your life, or just thank Him for the things that've come INTO your life - the reason you have SUCH a hard time, is because you don't truly perceive the greater cost/the greater price He's already paid to love and commit to YOU. Cuz of course any commitment involves cost **right?** If you commit to attend a party or some event, it necessarily costs you the ability to attend something else **right?** If you commit to someone in marriage, it necessarily costs you the ability to be with other people. Commitment always involves cost, such that the reason some of you have such a hard time truly committing to Jesus...is because you feel the cost is too high...Ya think, "*if I really commit to Him, I'll lose my freedom in this area. Lose control over something in my life. Be setback financially. Might even lose friends, family, etc.*" You think the cost is too high. And so you're always sorta hedging with Jesus. "*I'll do this/believe that/I'll participate here...as long as it doesn't cost me too much.*" But as we've seen, that's not commitment. Rather, that's a failure to come to grips with One who's given Himself utterly to you...Cuz if you did, what you'd see is that it's not crazy, or radical, or super spiritual to give yourself utterly to Him...it's reasonable...reasonable. When you see what Jesus has done for you there's only one way you can operate commensurately, and that's to give yourself to Him/commit to Him. This why **Romans 12:1-2**, after Paul spends 11 chapters outlining the glories of what Christ has done to graciously forgive, justify and save you apart

from anything you could do on your own, says “*therefore present yourself to Him as your REASONABLE act of worship.*” Reasonable!...If someone gave you a billion dollars, what is it for you to give a thousand/a couple thousand/even a million?...Likewise, what is it for you to give ANYTHING in comparison to what you’ve been given in Christ?...Friend, the only way you’ll ever REALLY find the ability to commit to Jesus/stop RESISTING commitment to Jesus/experience **The Joy Of Commitment To Jesus**...is when you see the height, width, and depth to which He’s already gone to commit to you!...*Do you see that this morning?...Will you let yourself see that this morning?...Let’s Pray...*