



A few weeks ago my wife Charity and I snuck away to Tahoe for a few days. Charity had never been to Tahoe so this was a big weekend for us. I grew up in the mountains and love getting back to them while Charity grew up at the beach and enjoys spending time there. As much as we needed this time as a married couple I felt the pressure to help her fall in love with an area that has been so meaningful to me. I wanted to show her how amazing Tahoe is so we woke up Friday morning, grabbed a quick breakfast and headed over to Emerald Bay.

After a morning hike I checked movie times at Heavenly. Since this was a romantic weekend I found a great love movie playing. After dinner we headed to the theater and brought our tickets to *Iron Man 3*! You're laughing at me but all the super hero movies have a love story tied in them. If you haven't seen *Iron Man* the relationship between Tony Stark and Pepper Potts has been developing through the trilogy, but this isn't the only love story we see in *Iron Man*.

The other love story depicts how much Tony Stark loves Iron Man. If you've watched any of the *Iron Man* movies you can't miss how Tony Stark basically worships the Iron Man suit he created. Before creating the suit he was a drunk millionaire playboy traveling the world leading a major weapons manufacturer. He starts with one suit saving his life and from there becomes fixated on what Iron Man does for him. After creating the suit he spends all his time in his workshop tinkering with, adjusting, studying, improving and re-developing the Iron Man suit. The bottom line we see is a man who has focused his entire life on a suit capable of making him almost indestructible. Tony Stark worships the Iron Man suit and gives all his time to this astonishing invention the world craves.

Most of us are like Tony Stark; we have given our entire life to one thing that consumes the majority of our thoughts. There are many things this might be: money, power, family, worship to God. Most of us want to think we've dedicated our life to worship but unfortunately it's probably something else. You think: "I don't worship power" but you sit in your office thinking about how to become the CEO of your company. You think: "I don't worship sex" but how you spend your time at night tells a different story. You think: "I don't worship money" but you go no longer than 10 minutes before you think about how to get more.

Open your Bible to John 12. This morning we're going to study 19 verses where we get to examine how worship changed the lives

of four individuals and two groups of people. We're going to see who, or what, these six different examples choose to worship.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to 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.

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."

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. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the king of Israel!"

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" (John 12:1–19).

If you've been with us for the entire series of "Come and See" you may have noticed this is the third time we see mention of the

Passover. It's actually pretty cool for me because every time I've preached in this series I've gotten these passages happening right around the Passover. Before heading to Jerusalem for Passover, John tells us Jesus came to Bethany to a banquet held in his honor. If you look back to chapter 11 you will see that after the high priest determined to kill Jesus He was no longer able to move around publicly but withdrew to a small village called Ephraim.

Martha: Once a Nag, Now a Humble Servant

Something we have to know about this dinner is the boldness of the people who are throwing the party and attending the party. With the religious leaders planning to kill Jesus this is a risky dinner to host. The first person we're going to look at is Martha. *"Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him"* (v. 2). Jesus is attending a dinner given in His honor and Martha is there to serve. We don't see much more about Martha but something has changed in this woman from the time Luke mentions her in his Gospel.

In Luke 10:38–42 Luke gives us an account of Jesus having a meal at Martha's house. While Martha is running around trying to prepare a meal fit for a King, her sister Mary is calmly sitting at the feet of Jesus paying no attention to preparations that need to be completed. Martha gets extremely frustrated and brings her complaint to Jesus thinking He will command her sister to help out. That night, in her home, Martha has an encounter with Christ that changes her life forever. Jesus helps Martha see her demeanor and calmly explains to her what Mary has chosen will not be taken away from her. Martha's humbling encounter with Christ changes her from a nag to a humble servant.

So when we see her here in John 12 we see the changed woman. We see the woman who has learned to worship Jesus by using her talents and desires to serve others. Martha is still serving meals but this time we encounter a woman who had a change of heart. If you were invited to the party you could imagine the aroma of tasty food floating gracefully throughout the entire home. There is no hint of Martha being stressed tonight.

Mary Exemplifies Sacrificial Worship

The next person we're going to look at is Mary, the sister of Martha. Mary is in the same place we found her in Luke's account; sitting at the feet of Christ. While Christ is reclining at the table Mary comes to present the ultimate sacrifice of worship. She doesn't go outside and shout to the whole city about the goodness of Jesus. She doesn't stand up on the table to let everyone know how her life has been changed by Jesus. No; she takes a different approach, a more humble approach. Mary slowly approaches Jesus, falls on her knees at His feet and anoints His feet with an expensive perfume.

This isn't any perfume Mary is using here. This isn't the cheapened version of something bought from a swap meet; this is pure

nard imported from India, a perfume so rare it was imported on the backs of camels to Jerusalem. To buy just one bottle of this perfume you have to be willing to spend a years' wages. Wow! Could you imagine giving your yearly salary to anoint Jesus? For many of us it's too much of a stretch to even begin to think of the cost. Some historians think the perfume may have been her wedding dowry and by her anointing Jesus she is sacrificing everything. The story doesn't end there because Mary is relentless in her worship. After she anoints His feet with perfume she does the unthinkable and wipes them with her hair.

Let me explain this in more detail so we get the full understanding. In Hebrew culture only a servant would touch the feet of a person. Given the unpaved, dusty roads potentially scattered with urine and animal dung there is obviously a health risk Mary is taking when she touches Jesus' feet. But it doesn't end there! Next we see Mary let down her hair to wipe His feet. In Hebrew culture a woman would only let down her hair in the presence of her husband. Mary's action indicates she is giving up all she has to be a full-time worshipper of Christ.

When I was in college I knew a man named Mark. Mark was a college graduate who landed a great job making a good deal of money but Mark could care less about monetary gains. Mark didn't live in a house or a condo or an apartment; he lived in his truck! He would wake up early every morning and head to the gym for a shower before work. Five days a week he worked so Saturday and Sunday he could drive to Mexico and feed starving children. He would take all he made that week with him so starving kids could eat and worship a Savior named Jesus Christ. When was the last time worship cost you something?

Judas is a Disciple Who Worships Money

Let's contrast Mary's sacrificial worship with our next person. Judas, one of the disciples, was an invited guest to the dinner given in Jesus' honor. He is most likely reclining at the table with Christ watching everything occurring at dinner. Judas cringed when he saw Mary come out with the expensive perfume, wrinkling his face in disgust as she opened it and anointed the King. Putting on his spiritual mask Judas inquisitively asks: *"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a years' wages"* (v. 5). In all honesty it's a good question, and he probably wasn't the only person thinking this. A years' wages would provide care for numerous poor people.

On Tuesday our missions team that went to Honduras joyfully returned—changed. They saw God do amazing things on their trip but they also saw the need at the orphanage down there. Within just a few minutes of talking with Jerome and Carolyn they began sharing the vision for the new orphanage the missionaries want to build; with a year's salary we could probably build it! You say "That's too far away." Just yesterday we sent a crew of people down to the Tenderloin to help the poor with a ministry we call Bags of Love. They went door to door with bags

filled with items people need: toiletries, a juice box and a sandwich to meet the physical needs of poor people.

With needs like this around us every day you begin seeing where Judas is coming from. John is quick to explain the problem with Judas' question; Judas wore a mask. *"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"* (v. 6). Judas spoke the spiritual language but he didn't act in accordance with his words. Obviously John wrote this Gospel post-crucifixion but he felt the need to let us know what Judas desired most. He looked spiritual but greed had taken root in his life and he was no longer able to worship Christ; instead he worshipped money.

Lazarus Worships with His Life

The first three people we've examined have all expressed their worship differently; in every instance the depth of their hearts was revealed. Martha worships Jesus with her acts of service. Mary exemplifies what sacrificial worship looks like. Judas revealed to us how his heart turned from following Christ to worshipping money. Let's turn our attention to the man we skipped in the beginning of the message and look at Lazarus.

If you were here last week Mark taught on Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. The next time Jesus sees Lazarus would be at this dinner party. *"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. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him"* (verses 9–11). We have to assume this large crowd of people were not invited to the dinner party. This crowd wasn't going to allow an invitation to withhold them from seeing the dead man who is now alive. Knowing who raised him from the dead, Lazarus is using his entire life to worship Jesus. He is unafraid to show up at the dinner party for the wanted criminal is evidence of this. He has to know the religious leaders want to kill Jesus but he is not afraid of them and chooses to worship Jesus.

I know when I say worship many of you think I'm referring only to music, but worship is so much more than music. Worship through music is one aspect but Scripture tells us there are other ways to worship God. Lazarus is one of those people who know Christ redeemed their life from death. As he goes about his daily life he has an opportunity to share with others how Christ gave him new life but the greatest example is his life; his life is an act of worship!

Lazarus isn't the only person Jesus has restored from death to life. Janna Weatherby is my best friend's sister. Janna grew up in Big Bear Lake and she is a phenomenal snowboarder. You would never know by talking with Janna that she has won four gold medals in winter X-games. Janna dedicated all she had to

snowboarding and partook in the lifestyle many of the pros have followed. After years of drinking and drug abuse Janna grew weary; she was hopeless and basically dead inside. She found a local church in her area and started attending. One night Janna made the transition from death to life when she surrendered her life to Christ. Janna was once dead, just like Lazarus, but now she has found new life in Christ. She's not a professional pastor or a full-time evangelist but she worships Christ with her life on a daily basis. Have you experienced new life in Christ?

The Religious Leaders Worship Power

In the same verses we just read about Lazarus we see the final two examples revealed who we're studying this morning. The difference is our last two examples aren't two people but two different groups of people. The first group we're going to look at is the religious leaders. There is change with the religious leaders; we're going to see what they worship, not who they worship. We've seen how Mary, Martha and Lazarus worship Jesus with their actions but Judas and the religious leaders worship a "what." John helps us see what they worship in two places in our text.

So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him (verses 10–11).

Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" (verses 17–19).

The religious leaders were gripped with fear at the mention of the name of Jesus; they didn't know how to respond. It may be hidden in pious talk but the religious leaders worshipped power. When people went to see Lazarus, on account of what Jesus had done for him, they felt power slipping through their hands, like trying to hold a bottle covered in oil. The crowds were intrigued by Christ and when the religious leaders saw their power slipping away the only solution they saw was to kill Jesus and Lazarus. Verse 19 reveals how deep they believed this problem had become; "the whole world has gone after him!" This is exactly why Jesus came to save the world; remember what he said in John 3:16!

The chief priests and pharisees both began feeling threatened by Jesus. Throughout our study of John we've encountered people who all responded differently to Jesus. Turn back to John 3:30 and you will see a completely different response from someone else who could have been perceived as losing power. Some of John the Baptist's disciples came to him and noted how some of his disciples were leaving to go and follow Jesus. John could have grasped for power but he clearly knew this was the plan of God; *"He must become greater; I must become less"* (John 3:30). John wasn't on earth to promote himself or gain power for himself;

he was here to worship God. This morning you may find yourself worshipping power instead of God.

The Crowd Worshipped Jesus in Action and Word

During Passover the population of Jerusalem would swell from 50,000 people to over 100,000 people. Many of these people would make the journey early and camp on the hillside surrounding Jerusalem days prior to the Passover. After the banquet given in His honor Jesus leaves Bethany and heads to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. If the religious leaders were upset at the crowd following Jesus on account of Lazarus, they are about to lose their cool with what happens next in verses 12–15!

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Blessed is the king of Israel!”

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem the crowd begins to honor their king. Imagine the streets lined with a few people laying down palm branches shouting “Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” The closer Jesus gets to the city the louder the shouting and more people became involved in the celebration. With palm branches falling the tan sand turns to a vibrant green as the crowd praised their King. The greeting they used is no ordinary greeting, it’s actually a Hebrew term meaning: “save” or “save us.” The crowd was so fearless in their worship they boldly proclaimed Jesus the king of Israel.

Triumphal entries were common in the ancient world. It was normal for a crowd to come out and worship the king as he returned from war; think back to King David entering Jerusalem after a victory. Just as David returned from battle, the setting must have been similar for Jesus as He entered Jerusalem. Jesus’ use of a young donkey in this triumphal entry is an attempt to calm the zeal of the crowd. When we look at their worship from afar it seems the only thing suitable for a king but when we examine closer we can see how the crowd missed it.

This crowd has tried before to make Jesus king. Remember back in John 4:42 when Jesus visited Samaria and the people confessed Him as King? What about a year earlier at the last passover when Jesus was feeding the 5,000 and the crowd attempted to make Jesus king by force? Finally Jesus allows the people to worship Him as King but I think the crowd is missing the heart of

worship. Worship isn’t something we **do**; worship is something that envelopes us. Worship isn’t just done in word and action; worship flows out of a heart fully dedicated to something or someone who is worthy of giving your life to.

Sadly you’re too often are like the crowd. You pull into the parking lot late, rush to drop the kids off in children’s ministry and dash into the auditorium. You find your seat as your lips effortlessly utter the words on the screen. You know how to sing the songs, you know when to raise your hands but your heart is far from God. You join in with the crowd so you don’t stick out. Right after the sermon is done you gather your belongings and rush out to beat the traffic out of here. You come here, saying the right things and doing the right things. The whole time your soul isn’t connecting to God and you wonder why you leave disillusioned in your act of corporate worship.

This morning we’ve looked at six different examples of how worship changes us. Unfortunately not all the examples we looked at are positive examples but the common thread we draw is a fairly simple statement: worship changes us. You may have walked in feeling like Judas but would rather leave feeling more like Mary. It takes time to get to the place of Mary but it also takes a letting go. Part of worship is letting go and praising the King who died to save you.

Let me share some practical ways you could allow worship to change you. Maybe you’re not going to start living in your truck and feeding the homeless on the weekends but you could start by carrying granola bars in your car and let your giving of them to those less fortunate be an act of worship. You may not be ready to give up an entire year’s salary but you could start praying for God to reveal a way for you to sacrificially worship Him. You may sense an internal struggle with power and as an act of worship you’re going to commit to addressing your intuition by intentionally memorizing a Scripture verse to help you combat the struggle.

I believe something unique could occur here if we, as a group of people, would take up an invitation to let worship change us. People are going to start seeing the change in all of us and wonder what has happened. We have two options; we could avoid the question so we don’t have to talk about worshipping God, or we could choose to live like Lazarus. We could let everything we do in life be an act of worship to God. We could put away inappropriate words and use our tongues to praise God by loving those around us. Let’s get creative in our personal worship, obviously following Scripture, and expect God to draw crowds to see Jesus.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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Catalog No. 1384–20FC

This message from Scripture was preached on Sunday, June 23, 2013 at Central Peninsula Church
1005 Shell Boulevard | Foster City CA 94404 | 650 349.1132 | www.cpcweb.org. Additional copies available on request.