

Sermon John 12  
John 12:1-19, 20-36

- *The smell of Nana.*

I loved visiting my grandma Nana when I was younger. Every time I came into her house, there was this distinctive smell. Nana's smell. Nana's perfume. When she visited our house, Nana's smell would be everywhere! When she died, and we went to her house to clean up, Nana's perfume smell was still there. In her home. In her clothes. In her belongings.

Smell is one of those things that can really evoke strong memories. I love the smell of a fresh Christmas tree, the smell of a roast dinner that hits you when you open the door as you come home. I love the smell of coffee in the morning. The smell of the beach.

- I hate the smell of sickness and death.

The smell of a hospital, a veterinarian's surgery, a funeral home. I don't know what it is, but its not a "happy" smell.

John chapter 12 is about the smell of death. Jesus has just raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. And because of this, a lot of Jews put their faith in Jesus.

Now it's 6 days before the Passover. But it was also a week before Jesus would be arrested and crucified. He's about to go into Jerusalem for the Passover meal, which will actually be his Last Supper with his disciples.

- **Time for burial**

But before Jerusalem, Jesus goes back to Bethany for dinner at the house of Lazarus. His sisters Martha and Mary are there. Martha is serving dinner, and Mary comes over to Jesus, with a jar of very expensive perfume, called Nard. About half a litre. Worth about 300 denarii. 300 days' wages. For us, in today's terms, that's about \$65,000. This is more expensive than Nana's perfume. Maybe Mary was rich. Maybe this was an inheritance passed down through generations.

But she pours the **whole bottle** over Jesus' feet and wipes it with her hair. Now imagine – the whole place is completely filled with the smell of this expensive perfume.

Now compare that to chapter 11, verse 39 when Jesus asked them to remove the stone from Lazarus' tomb – his sister Martha said:

- *"But Lord, by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days."*

She knew the smell of death. The smell of a dead body after 4 days – no-one wanted to smell that, not even his sister. But Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. He overcomes that smell of death by overcoming death itself.

But now, Jesus is the one about to smell like death. In one week. And Mary comes in and pours this perfume over Jesus and overwhelms the house with this fragrance. Why? Perhaps she doesn't understand the **full** significance of this. But Jesus does. He says:

- "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial" (verse 7).

Mary pours this perfume over Jesus as he's about to **become** the smell of death. This is his burial preparation.

And Judas responds. Judas questions the waste of this valuable perfume. "It could have been sold and the money given to the poor!" he says. This was a beautiful act of worship and adoration for Jesus. But Judas doesn't see that. He isn't really concerned about the poor. He was the treasurer of the

disciples' money. He wanted the money in his money bag so he could dip into it whenever he wanted. He's really thinking about how he can get his **own** hands on the money.

But Mary's act wasn't about money or generosity. It was an act of worship – an act of glorifying Jesus.

And then we come to the Jews.

Many Jews are putting their faith in Jesus because of this miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead.

But the chief priests, the leaders of the Jews, want to kill Jesus because he's having such an impact in their religion. But now they also want to kill Lazarus because he's added to the problem! They don't understand who Jesus is and what he's about to do.

Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem on a donkey, to fulfil the prophecies of the Old Testament. He's about to reveal himself as the King of the Jews, and the Saviour of the world. He's about to get arrested, and then crucified.

And why?

- **Time for glory**

To rid the world of the stench of death once and for all. That's the big picture here! Jesus knows the pain he's about to face. But he also knows that the purpose is to defeat death. So in verse 27, he says:

- *27 "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!"*

Jesus is saying: "I know what's about to happen. I know what's ahead for me. But will I say "Father, take this away from me?" Will I say "This is too hard. I don't like what you're doing! I don't agree with your plans!"

No. I will say: "Glorify your name!"

**Glorify your name God.** Do **you** say that in your life? **Glorify God!** Is that our purpose? At work? With our family. In our church. In our ministry. **Glorify God!** Is that what we want? No matter what struggles we face. No matter what we see others doing that we don't like or understand. Are we out for ourselves? Do we fear others becoming greater than us? Are we afraid things won't go the way we want? Are we afraid others might have more influence than us? Or do we say "Glorify God!"

How do we do that? It's in the previous verse – verse 26, Jesus says:

- *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.*

Jesus is going to die so God will be glorified. We must follow Jesus for God to be glorified in **our** lives. We must follow him to the cross. To the place where God's purposes are first.

Verse 28:

- *Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."*

God glorified Jesus in his life on earth. Now God will glorify Jesus on the cross – through his death, and then his resurrection. How is the cross a moment of glory? Because in that moment on the cross, in that moment when Jesus dies and rises, at that moment, the devil is completely defeated, and Jesus reigns as King over all, forever. Jesus is lifted up on the cross, then he's lifted up as King.

- **Time for judgement**

But then, as King, having defeated Satan, ... **he brings judgment.**

- *31Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.*

This is why people need to be pointed to Jesus NOW. Jesus has been glorified, Satan is driven out, and Jesus is made King. And **now** is the time for his judgment.

While we sit here, people are heading towards hell because they don't know Jesus. They haven't been pointed to him. And the more time we spend glorifying ourselves, the less time we spend pointing people to Jesus.

We live in a world that is full of the stench of death. It stinks. But the tragedy isn't that people die. It's that people die not knowing Jesus. And so they die without the promise, or chance, of eternal life. So what do we say when God's will for us is difficult?

What will WE say? *"God, spare me from difficult times. Make my life comfortable. Give me an easy path."*

Or do we say: "Wherever God leads me, I will glorify Him."

- We glorify God when we stop glorifying ourselves.

We glorify God when we live for his purposes.

We glorify God when we look at the stench of death in our world, and we KNOW Jesus is the only one who can take away that smell – and we do something about it. We live for that. We share that. We put his purposes above our own. We put his glory above our own.

We glorify God when we walk his path and not our own.

So let me ask you: What **is** God's will for you?

At home, at school, at uni, at work, at church – what is God's will for you? In the little things. The big things. The easy times. The difficult times. What is God's will for you? Ask that question. Pray that question. Ask each other that question. If we want to glorify God, we need to answer that question daily – What will glorify God in my life, today, right now? What choices? What path? What direction?"

What choices are you facing right now? Have you spoken to God about them? Have you considered what choice, big or small, will bring glory to him?

1Six 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. 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.

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

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.

### **Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King**

12The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. 13They 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!"

14Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

15"Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

16At 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.

17Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. 18Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. 19So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

### **Jesus Predicts His Death**

20Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. 21They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." 22Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

23Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

27 "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." 29The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

30Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. 31Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. 32And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." 33He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

34The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

35Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. 36Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.