Preschool–Grade 6

Mary Anoints Jesus

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Give your best to Jesus. Mary gave Him something very costly, with all her heart, and Jesus said, "Let her alone."
Bible passage: John 12:1–8. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." *John 12:3 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), 3 or 4 numbered smell cups covered with paper towels, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, paper and pencils, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Fill and number the smell cups.

1. Opening game: Smell Detectives (5–10 minutes)

Kids number a paper from 1 to 4. Pass each cup around. Kids lift the paper towel, sniff without peeking, and write their guess. Then show the answers. Ask: *Which smell was strongest? Could you smell it across the room?* Say: "John was there at this supper. He tells us even what the house smelled like."

2. Bible story: Mary Gives Her Best (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to John 12. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Friends in Bethany. Martha, Mary and their brother Lazarus lived in Bethany (John 11:1), and "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (John 11:5). When Lazarus died, Jesus cried, "Lazarus, come forth," and he that was dead came forth (11:43–44).

The supper. Look up John 12:1–2. The **passover** was the feast when God's people remembered how God brought them out of Egypt. **Supper** is an evening meal. Martha served, and Lazarus, the man who had been dead, sat at the table with Jesus!

Mary's gift. Look up John 12:3. Ointment is a sweet-smelling oil. **Spikenard** is named in the Bible with the chief spices, like saffron and cinnamon (Song of Solomon 4:14). **Costly** means it cost a lot. **Anointed** means poured it on. **Odour** means smell. Mary did not give a little bit. She gave a whole pound of it, and the whole house smelled of it.

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Judas complains. Look up John 12:4–5. Judas Iscariot was one of Jesus' disciples. **Should betray him** means he would later turn Jesus over to His enemies. Three hundred **pence** was a lot of money: a worker earned one penny for a whole day of work (Matthew 20:2), so it was about three hundred days of pay. **Look up John 12:6.** John tells us the truth about Judas: he did not care for the poor. He was a thief. He **had the bag**, the money bag for Jesus and the disciples, and took what was put in it.

Jesus answers. Look up John 12:7–8. Let her alone means "Leave her alone." **Against the day of my burying hath she kept this** means she kept it for the day He would be buried. Jesus knew He was going to die for our sins and be buried. This happened in the last week before the cross. The very next day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem, and the people met Him with palm branches (12:12–13).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Mary gave a whole pound of very costly ointment (12:3). Why do you think she gave so much?
2. Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her own hair (12:3). What does that show about how she felt about Jesus?
3. Judas said it was a waste (12:4–5). Is anything we give to Jesus ever wasted?
4. The whole house smelled of the ointment (12:3). When we love Jesus, how can other people "smell" it, or see it, in our lives?
5. What is something you can give Jesus this week? (Your time, your voice, your money, your help.)

Recall questions

1. How many days before the passover did Jesus come to Bethany? *(Six days, John 12:1)*
2. For how much did Judas say the ointment could have been sold? *(Three hundred pence, 12:5)*
3. What did Jesus say Mary had kept the ointment for? *(The day of His burying, 12:7)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **ointment** is a sweet-smelling oil; **spikenard** is the kind of ointment; **very costly** means it cost a lot; **anointed** means poured it on; **odour** means smell. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Mary gave her best to Jesus, and Jesus said she kept it for the day of His burying. Jesus was about to give His very best for us. God loves you, and the Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: pick one way to give Jesus your best (your time, your voice, your help, your offering) and do it every day.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. John 11:1: In what town did Mary and Martha live? *(Bethany)*
2. John 11:2: Whose brother was Lazarus? *(Mary's, the Mary which anointed the Lord)*
3. John 12:1: How many days before the passover did Jesus come? *(Six)*
4. John 12:2: Who sat at the table with Jesus? *(Lazarus)*
5. John 12:3: How much ointment did Mary take? *(A pound)*
6. John 12:4: Which disciple complained? *(Judas Iscariot, Simon's son)*
7. John 12:6: What did Judas carry? *(The bag)*
8. John 12:9: Whom did the people come to see besides Jesus? *(Lazarus)*

7. Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your very best for us when You died, were buried and rose again. Help us give You our best with all our hearts, even when it costs us something. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: John 12:1–8 is the account this lesson follows. Matthew 26:6–13 and Mark 14:3–9 tell of an anointing at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper; this lesson keeps to John's words and does not mix in details from those chapters.

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