Preschool–Grade 6

Mary Anoints Jesus

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: True worship gives Jesus our best, even when it costs us and even when others call it a waste.
Bible passage: John 12:1–8. Students read John 11:1–5 and John 12:1–11 out loud themselves.
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)* and "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." *Mark 12:30 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read John 11–12. Write both memory verses on the board.

1. Opening game: What Would It Cost? (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. Students stand if they would do it, stay seated if not. 1) Spend your whole birthday money on a gift for someone else. 2) Give up a Saturday to help clean the church. 3) Sing out in church when friends near you are quiet. 4) Keep doing what is right when friends say it's a waste of time. Ask: *Which of these costs the most? Why is it hard to give when someone says it's a waste?* Say: "Today we meet a woman who gave something very costly, and one man said it was a waste."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: John 11:1–5, then John 12:1–11. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **passover** (12:1): the feast that remembered how God brought Israel out of Egypt; **supper** (12:2): an evening meal
- **ointment** (12:3): a sweet-smelling oil; **spikenard** (12:3): a costly ointment, named with the chief spices in Song of Solomon 4:14
- **anointed** (12:3): poured oil on; **odour** (12:3): smell
- **should betray him** (12:4): would later hand Him over to His enemies
- **pence** (12:5): silver coins; one penny was a day's pay (Matthew 20:2), so 300 pence was about 300 days of work
- **had the bag, and bare what was put therein** (12:6): kept the money bag and carried off what was put in it
- **against the day of my burying** (12:7): for the day He would be buried

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Notice: Mary had sat at Jesus' feet before and heard His word (Luke 10:39). Here she is at His feet again, this time giving. Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, sat at the table (12:2), and so many people came to see him that "by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus" (12:11). The next day Jesus rode into Jerusalem (12:12). Within the week He was crucified, at "the preparation of the passover" (19:14).

Teacher note: 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 account and doesn't mix the details.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Mary's ointment was worth about three hundred days of pay (12:3, 12:5). What does the size of her gift say about how she saw Jesus?
2. Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her own hair (12:3). What does that show about humility in worship?
3. Judas made his complaint sound kind, "given to the poor" (12:5), but John tells us his real reason (12:6). How can people hide wrong motives behind good-sounding words? How do we guard our own hearts?
4. Jesus said, "Let her alone" (12:7). Why do you think He defended her in front of everyone?
5. Jesus said, "me ye have not always" (12:8). What did He know that the others didn't?
6. "The house was filled with the odour" (12:3). How can one person's worship affect everyone around them?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in Mark 12:30: **thou shalt** means you shall; **thy** means your; **soul** is the inner you, your life. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say John 12:3 this week; keep working on Mark 12:30 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Mary kept her ointment against the day of Jesus' burying. Jesus was about to give Himself for us. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. What is something costly to me (time, money, comfort, what friends think) that I could give to Jesus?
2. Has anyone ever made me feel that serving God was a waste? How does Jesus' "Let her alone" (John 12:7) help me?
3. Write a short prayer telling Jesus you love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30).
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: give Jesus one costly thing, without being asked and without telling anyone. Pray Mark 12:30 each morning.

7. Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Yourself for us, and for dying, being buried and rising again. Help us love You with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and give You our best even when others don't understand. In Jesus' name, amen."

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