

## Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: John Chapter 12: Some Notes

Maybe it doesn't at first reading seem relevant, but think about it. There was a poor youngish couple who had each other, but not much else. The young woman had one treasure: her magnificent long hair. The man had one treasure: his father's watch. Come Christmas, neither had money for "decent" presents. The woman sold her hair to a hairdresser, and bought her husband a chain for his watch. The man sold his watch, and bought his wife a comb for her (long) hair. Now on one perspective, how stupid can you get! Both finished up with presents that were not a fat lot of use to them. On another perspective, extravagant love is what life is all about; and cautious commonsense is death.

This chapter is challenging in all sorts of ways. In terms of relationship to the other Gospels:- How does the sacrificial anointing by Mary of Bethany fit in with the different accounts of the anointing by [ Mary Magdalene]? Why does John have no Gethsemane and no Transfiguration, but allocate something of both of these to Jesus' experience and actions at this stage in his account? Is Jesus fulfilling Old Testament prophecies or challenging them? (The Messiah was supposed to reign for ever... and yes, He does; but not at all as the Jews expected!) Try putting yourself inside the heads of the Roman spectators, the (divided) Jewish leaders, the crowd that came out from Jerusalem crowd and the crowd that came in from Bethany, Lazarus. One interesting point: the Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection, so they had another reason for wanting Lazarus properly dead, quite apart from not wanting a peak Jerusalem population of 2 million plus to riot, and force the Romans to destroy everything. Another interesting point: the Greeks were great tourists and religion/philosophy hunters... and Philip and Andrew had Greek names and were most likely to speak Greek.

Reflection: Why did these itinerant preachers and healers have a charity fund? Why was Judas put in charge of it? Any sympathies with Judas in his comments on extravagance? St George's gets a big donation: give it to the Food Bank? Further beautify the church? Add to the maintenance budget? Robes for the Churchwardens? Add to the Messy Church fund?

The Prophets (including Moses), the Disciples, the Early Church, [and Maybe Jesus] struggled to understand why so many rejected "the message". Hence the apparent explanation that God made them deaf... or, more plausibly, God let them get into a comfortable frame of mind that refused to be disturbed by inconvenient truth. Any suggestions?

William Barclay suggests that whereas for much of the Old Testament period the Jews believed that God spoke directly to people, at least to some chosen people; by the time of Jesus there had to be an intermediary. Jesus was different.

As regards the Palm Sunday procession, it was fairly recent history that the Maccabean revolt had included triumphal processions into Jerusalem, with palms being waved and

songs being sung. No wonder some folk were a bit jumpy! (Our Palm Sunday procession is a bit pale (and short) in comparison, though very fine in its way. What do we do with our respective palm crosses, apart from maybe handing them in for burning later on?