

**Women's Bible Study – Winter/Spring 2018**  
**John 12: So that you may believe**  
**March 28, 2018**  
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My husband is doing some handiwork in our home and our home is in a physical state of disarray. (TBH - It drives me crazy!) But I have discovered that if I respond well to our situation that my kids are fine with it but if I get uptight about it, then my kids also get uptight about it.

In our home we talk a lot about the need to respond well to those around you. We have another student driver in our home and I find myself constantly telling Eva how it's very important you respond well to the drivers around you. We say, "Though you might think that you are a good driver, if the driver on the other side of the road is not, your response to them is critical.

But it's not just with driving we have to teach our kids to respond well. It's in all of life. I think that's part of the wisdom in training them in the way they should go. We remind our kids often to say thank you, to hold the door open, to look adults in the eye, to be mindful when to ignore comments and when to confront, how to love, how to be welcoming, how to be slow to anger, how to be bold, how to respond with patience, self-control, etc.

Because it is true... our response in life is very important. I recently saw a saying I really liked - It said "Prepare your child for the road, not the road for your child." I think that again speaks to the fact that a lot in life is how we respond to the situations around us...

Well, as we look at chapter 12 today we are going to hop around this chapter and consider the different responses to Jesus. In this one chapter we see from one extreme to the other on how the people respond to this man who claims that He was there at the beginning of time, that He is fully God and promises abundant, eternal life for those who abide in Him. They have seen or heard about him turning water into wine, calling an adulterous Samaritan woman to be one of his missionaries, healing an official's son who was near death, healing an invalid who had been paralyzed for 38 years, feeding 20,000 people from a boy's sack lunch, walking on water in the midst of a storm, healing a man who was born blind and finally raising a man who had been dead for three days back to life. How do you think you'd respond to all this?

1. Well let's first consider the Greeks in verse 20. Some seem to respond **curiously**.

**"Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus."**  
**John 12:20-22**

So we are told that these Greeks were worshiping at the Feast which implies that though they were not Jews - not raised to know the Scriptures and worship the One true God -

they were drawn to the idea of worshiping this one true God and possibly the morality of the Scriptures. They had most likely heard of Jesus but had never seen Jesus.

They came to Philip. Now Philip is a Greek name so although we cannot be certain about it, many commentators believe that these Greeks came to him because they knew that Philip was "one of them." Somehow they knew Philip. Somehow they felt comfortable approaching him and somehow they knew he could get them to Jesus.

They go to Philip and Philip then goes to Andrew - the other disciple with a Greek name and he takes them all to Jesus. I love this point that Svea mentioned back when we were studying chapter 1 and I have not forgotten it. Every time we read about Andrew, he is introducing someone to Jesus.

Let me ask you - Who are "your peeps" that you can bring to Jesus? Maybe it's because of your name (probably not...) but maybe it's something else that you have in common with a group of people who would never step into a church but they know you, have been watching you and they know you know Jesus. Just like Philip and Andrew, it's likely that these "peeps" of yours would be drawn to you because of something you have in common with them. They would not feel comfortable calling up Pastor Steer to ask him questions about Jesus but they would feel comfortable calling up you.

Maybe you work out with these people, maybe you are in the same book club, maybe you work in the same department, maybe you live in the same neighborhood... whatever it is... you have some "peeps" in your life who do not know Jesus and it's important you are connecting with them in hopes that one day you will be able to bring them to your Savior.

And let's consider those Greeks. Some of you here are just like them. You were not raised in a faith filled home. You didn't regularly attend church growing up. You are here because you know there is something about Jesus that is different. You desire a relationship with him and because of a "Philip or Andrew" in your life you have been introduced to the one who loves you beyond compare and promises you eternal life if you will only believe in Him. No matter what you have done or where you have come from He is desiring a relationship with you. Don't just say curious - Seek him with all your heart!

2. There are those who respond to Jesus **selfishly**. They want to be followers of Jesus because they think that is their "ticket" to victory, healing and abundant life.

**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.”**

### **John 12:12-15**

This crowd that was welcoming Jesus as if he was part of the super bowl team returning to their hometown was doing this because they felt like finally they have the big W - Finally, they have a king who will rescue them. They all knew that he had raised Lazarus and he was their “guy.”

The cry of Hosanna! is a Hebrew word (hoshi`ah-na) that had become a greeting or shout of praise but that actually meant "Save!" or "Help!"...Not surprisingly, forms of this word were used to address the king with a need (cf. 2 Sam 14:4; 2 Kings 6:26). Furthermore, the palm branches the people carry are symbolic of a victorious ruler (cf. 1 Macc 13:51; 2 Macc 10:7; 14:4). ... Clearly they see in Jesus the answer to their nationalistic, messianic hopes....and now this crowd is recognizing him as king in the city of the great King. Here is the great dream of a Davidic ruler who would come and liberate Israel, establishing peace and subduing the Gentiles (cf. Psalms of Solomon 17:21-25). ([InterVarsity Press](#) New Testament Commentary)

Ironically though Jesus was not coming through in kingly way... He was on a donkey as foretold hundreds of years before in Zechariah 9:9.

**Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!  
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!  
See, your king comes to you,  
righteous and victorious,  
lowly and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
Zechariah 9:9**

Now I don't think everyone in the crowd was selfishly praising Jesus. There must have been some who were just praising him for they believed that he was their spiritual Savior even if he wasn't their political hero. But it is pretty hard to imagine that they were all genuine believers because they were nowhere to be seen or heard when Pilate was looking for anyone who would protest his crucifixion. If Jesus' own disciples were denying him at that time I imagine many who just happened to be in Jerusalem during Passover and were on the “praising Jesus because of the miracle he had just done” bandwagon, then they too abandoned him.

I'll be honest, I think it's ok to come to Jesus for somewhat selfish reasons. (Yikes... Did I really just say that!?) I think many of us come to Jesus in that way. After all, even Jesus talks to the woman at the well about the 'gift of God.' Through Jesus we are offered glorious hope, perfect peace and indescribable love. Of course we want that and that's why we are willing to lay it all down in exchange for eternal riches.

However, we cannot expect Jesus to be our) genie, our fairy God-mother or Santa Claus. None of those are real and we cannot assume that if we pray in a certain way or are good enough that we will have a happily ever after here on earth. Because God makes it very clear that his description of having life is to first die to yourself. It's those who die who really live. It's those who are last who shall be first. It's those who lose their life who find it. It's those who give who really receive. It's those who are poor who are rich. It's those who mourn who are happy. It's those who hunger who are filled. It's the weak who are made strong. It's the lowly who are exalted. (I should just end my lesson here because we meditate on those words for an entire life time - They are still so counter cultural to our society today!)

Those crowds were cheering victoriously and just a few days later their king was breathing his last breath on a cross. I have realized and continue to realize that my anticipated outcome (or wins) may never happen here on earth. With certain areas of my life that are not the way I like and don't seem to be moving in that direction... that may just be God's perfect plan for me. (However Mary of Bethany reminds me that if we are able to lay it all down and seek just the Savior, we will find more than we ever imagined or hoped for...

3. There are those that respond **whole-heartedly**.

For this we are going to look now at Mary, Lazarus and Martha's sister. First let's set the stage. As you recall Mary is the one who Martha whined about because she was sitting at Jesus' feet instead of helping in the kitchen in Luke 10. And then Jesus says...

**“Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” Luke 10:42**

This was quite unusual that a woman would be able to sit at the foot of Jesus, as if she were a disciple sitting at the feet of her teacher. Martha was correct in assuming that culturally - in the first century of the church - Mary should be in the kitchen yet Jesus praises the fact she is in a position to glean from her Rabbi.

Then as you recall from last week. Mary's dear brother was sick and had died. This is a pretty devastating situation for both Mary and Martha.

As we consider the details of Mary's life, I want to be careful as to not assume anything out of this passage that we do not know for sure. It is so easy to get confused by all the Mary's in the Bible. After all, did you know there are at least 7 different Mary's mentioned in the NT. (That alone is reason enough to believe that the Bible is true... because never would you write a fictional book and include that many duplicate names!) Each Gospel book contains a description of a woman anointing Jesus' feet. Some commentators feel like these are all describing the same situation and others feel like these are different situations based on specific details they give.

Since there is never any mention of Martha and Mary's husbands and they live closely with their brother, Lazarus, it is safe to assume that losing their brother is devastating for more than one reason. John 11 does not make mention of Martha's weeping but does

of Mary's. In fact it's the sight of Mary's weeping that Jesus is moved and also begins to cry.

At the beginning of chapter 12 we are told that Jesus, Lazarus, Mary, Martha and others are at a **dinner party** in Jesus honor. It appears that everyone is at their proper places... Martha serving (hopefully this time a little more joyfully...) and Lazarus and others were reclined at the dinner table with Jesus. I sometimes like to wonder what was involved with their dinner conversation... Was Lazarus talking about what it was like to wake up from the dead? Were they razzing him about the awful stench from the tomb when he came forth? Or was Jesus giving them more hints as to what would happen in those hours and days ahead!?

We are told that Mary took a a pint of nard - a very expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus feet. Nard (though unattractively named) is a precious and expensive rose-red colored oil made from the highly aromatic dried roots and oily stems of the spikenard plant. The plant grows in India. Roughly speaking, this ointment cost the equivalent of... the average wage of a worker for almost an entire year. (<http://www.biblestudy.org/question/woman-washing-jesus-feet-and-its-meaning>)

She then took down her hair and used it to wash Jesus' feet. Ironic that a woman who was once accused of not serving enough (by her sister) is not humbling herself, letting down her hair and washing the feet of her Lord in a way that was as if she was a servant rather than a hostess. You may think, of course, she would do this - Jesus just brought her dead brother back to life. However, we read in verse 10 that...

**"...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 putting their faith in him." Luke 12:10**

So Lazarus was brought back to life only to have his life threatened again. But Mary witnessed her teacher, the one who she knew could heal any disease now have authority over death. This act by Mary shows such radical worship and extreme gratitude but also prepares him for the week ahead.

So I wonder what does this look like in our day. I imagine most of us here desire to give ourselves wholeheartedly to the Lord. However I don't have two cups of nard at home and actually I don't have any expensive perfume. We also don't have Jesus feet in front of us... So how can we relate this story to 2018 in Rochester, MN.

**(Slide 16)** What is your nard? Any sacrifice you make in a way to honor and obey the Lord, He always notices and is pleased. If you reach out to your unsaved neighbor in hopes of sharing the good news - that's nard. If you finally make a bold statement at work about the true hope that lies within you - that's nard. If you decide this is the month that you are going to trust God and begin tithing - that's nard. If you decide that even though Rochester is a great place to live but God is calling you to \_\_\_\_\_, your obedience is nard! Or maybe it's that you decide that God deserves your first fruits of the day and you are going to start regular quiet time each morning - that's nard. What we learn from Mary of Bethany is that humble, genuine worship of our Lord is never a waste of our time or resources!

4. There are those who respond **negatively**.

I honestly could not find one Bible verse that portrayed Judas in a positive light. Even when we are first introduced to Judas in Matthew 10 it says...

**“Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.” Matthew 10:1-4**

We don't ever see Judas in genuine worship or even fellowship with Jesus - He just always seems like a contrarian and his response John 12 is no different... After this incredible act by Mary He says...

**“Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor?... 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.” John 12:5-6**

We know that Judas plays an important role in Jesus arrest and as far as we can tell He never comes to fully know Jesus as his Savior. Judas had witnessed Jesus miracles. He most likely knew what his favorite meal was, where his favorite places to go were but He never knew him as his Savior.

In verses 23-26 Jesus states:

**“Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.” John 12:23-26**

Judas is wanting to protect his life not lay it down. He is wanting to look good, to keep his riches and to serve himself. Mary, Lazarus sister, on the other hand surrenders all that she is and all that she owns for the sake of Jesus. And the Lord was pleased with such worship.

At the end of this chapter we read some very sobering news -

**Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”**

**For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:**

**“He has blinded their eyes  
and hardened their hearts,  
so they can neither see with their eyes,**

**nor understand with their hearts,  
nor turn—and I would heal them.”**

### **John 12:37-40**

This passage tell us that after a time of when God has revealed himself in so many different ways and yet the people refuse to believe that He is God, He blinds their eyes and hardens their hearts so that they may never know Jesus. So that we are careful to not misinterpret this passage, I want to read it one more time in the Message version so that we can see how this blinding and hardening comes only after a long pursuit of the Father.

**Jesus said all this, and then went into hiding. All these God-signs he had given them and they still didn't get it, still wouldn't trust him. This proved that the prophet Isaiah was right:**

**God, who believed what we preached?**

**Who recognized God's arm, outstretched and ready to act?**

**First they wouldn't believe, then they couldn't—again, just as Isaiah said:**

**(Slide 24) Their eyes are blinded,  
their hearts are hardened,  
So that they wouldn't see with their eyes  
and perceive with their hearts,  
And turn to me, God,  
so I could heal them.**

### **John 12:37-40**

After so long of us rejecting and hardening our hearts to our Creator, Savior and Lord, he gives us that control and allows our hearts to harden as we had always hoped they would.

Tony Reinke defines a hard heart as an obstinate and calloused heart that fails to respond to God or obey him. A hard heart is blind to the precious value of the gospel and refuses to embrace Christ. ([www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org))

But let us not forget that God is merciful and gracious beyond compare. He is not eager to allow your heart to be hardened.

**"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9**

Nowhere in Scripture is there a person who deeply desires to follow the Lord but the Lord hardens his heart. The instances that mention the Lord hardening someone's heart is after

they have continuously rejected the Lord even though they have been given several opportunities to see His wonderful deeds.

I am often amazed that the Lord called Judas to be one of his disciples because we never see one instance in which Judas responds with a genuine, humble heart to the Lord. And yet the Lord keeps him as part of his tiny ministry group surrounded by those who will be legendary authors, pastors and missionaries. It always appears to me that Judas is just dead weight compared to the rest of the team. (And at times even the rest of the team did not look that great!) I have no doubt the Lord desired Judas to be as sold out as Peter, James or John but instead he never surrendered his life to the Lord. Instead he served himself and we know no one can serve man and self.

I mentioned in the beginning that our response in different situations is very important. And it's true... Your response in different situations shows if you have good driving skills, a good attitude, or a good witness to those around you. However, the most important response you will ever have in life is that to which the Lord said in chapter 11...

**“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” John 11:25-26**

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