

## Unveiled—Week Seven: Unveiled Silence

We're going to play a game: *Waste of time? Not a waste of time?*

- Facebook
- Pulling weeds
- Fishing
- Scrapbooking
- Letting your kids pick out their own clothes
- Going to the DMV
- NFL Football
- Going to Walmart on a Saturday in December
- Making your bed
- Calling technical support
- Hallmark Christmas movies
- Serving God

We all know people who think that serving God is a complete waste. They wonder why we give our time, our energy, and our money to God. They wonder why we're giving the best we have to a God we cannot see. They don't understand why you came to church on Sunday morning to sing, to teach Sunday School, to serve communion, to watch the nursery.

This morning, we want to put the "serve" back in worship service. Every Sunday we have a worship service. This Sunday we are going to look at service as worship.

Christians most often define "service" as "**work we do for others or for God,**" There's nothing wrong with this understanding, but it's incomplete. We also need to see service as an act of worship and as not a waste.

I'm going to use a phrase throughout this message, so I want to go ahead and define it now. I want to give due credit to Arron Chambers for this. The phrase is: **Altared Service**

You know what an altar is. We've talked about the altar of burnt sacrifice in some of the previous sermons in this series. An altar is something on which you make a sacrifice. That sacrifice might have been an animal sacrifice. It could be grain or some crop. There was even an altar of incense where sweet smelling aromas would be offered as a symbol of prayer.

### **Altared Service is service that is done as an act of worship**

This Sunday, instead of the book of Exodus, I want us to turn to the New Testament, and John 12.

The events of John 12 occur one week before Christ's crucifixion. Jesus is in Bethany, which is a suburb of Jerusalem—in the home of some of his closest friends, two sisters and a brother. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. The other thing you should now about this time is that Jesus in the previous chapter has just raised Lazarus from the dead. He turned a funeral into a party.

So now Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, are hosting this dinner in honor of Jesus.

John 12:1-8

*1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3 Then 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.*

*4 But 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." 6 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.*

*7 "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."*

The two sisters are serving in this event: Martha and Mary. Here's what we read about Martha's service in vs. 2, "*Martha served.*" That's it. Just two words. "*Martha served.*"

The rest of the account is about Mary's service, which we'll look at in a moment, but first I want to look at Martha's service. Poor Martha. I think she gets a bad rap. Martha is the kind of gal who was always in the kitchen. She was always willing to help out. If there were hungry people who needed to be fed, there was Martha throwing something together.

In one of the other major stories where we see Martha, in Luke 10, Jesus is again at their house. It says that Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening to his teaching, "*But Martha was distracted with much serving.*" Martha got upset with her sister, because she wanted help. Somebody's got to feed all those people. Dinner isn't going to make itself. Listen to what Jesus tells Martha. "*Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.*"

Let's be very clear. Martha's problem is not that she is serving. She's a hard worker, and she likely had the gift of serving. If Martha had a problem, it is that her heart and focus were in the wrong place. Jesus isn't knocking her choice to make dinner and serve food.

Don't take what I say today as degrading her approach to service. That being said, Martha and Mary were both serving Jesus, but Mary's service was different—it was an example of what I'm calling: Altared Service.

Mary's service was viewed by Jesus as an act of worship that would be talked about forever. It was more of an act of worship than Martha's was, in this specific moment.

Martha and Mary were different people and had different views about service. What did Martha think she was doing in Luke 10? She thought she was serving Jesus. What was Martha really doing? She was "distracted." She wasn't seeing what she did as an offering of worship to Jesus. She saw work that needed to be done, and the help she wasn't getting. She was focused on herself. She was focused on the work, and she was focused on her sister.

The one thing she wasn't focused on was Jesus. Altared service will bring us closer to Jesus, but distracted service will drive a wedge between you and Jesus, and between you and others.

Are you serving Jesus or are you just distracted? Being faithful and being busy are not the same things.

What did Martha think Mary was doing?

1. Wasting time.
2. Neglecting her responsibilities.
3. Being selfish.

What did Jesus think Mary was doing? The “better” thing...and what was Mary doing? She was worshipping Jesus.

Do you enjoy worshipping Jesus? I love when we worship full of passion, joy, and love for our Savior.

Do you prefer worshipping Jesus or working for Jesus? Jesus prefers service that is done as an act of worship.

In Luke 10, and maybe in John 12, Martha was serving Jesus without seeing Jesus.

Are you more like Mary or Martha? Are you more comfortable being busy for Jesus, or sitting at His feet?

We need more altared service—servants who keep the “service” in “Worship Service.”

We need people who look at their service as an act of worship. Altared service is service that is an act of worship.

Let’s go back to ] John 12 and identify three characteristics of Altared Service.

#### I. **First, altared service is Senseless.**

Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus’ feet and then wiped his feet with her hair and the disciples thought she was crazy. Led by Judas, they became indignant. Matthew adds this little detail in his gospel.

Matthew 26:8,9

*“Why this waste?” they asked. “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.”*

They thought she was insane. What she did was completely sane and insane all at the same time. During this time in history, it was completely sane and socially appropriate to give a dinner in honor of someone. It was also completely sane and socially appropriate to have your lowliest servant wash the feet of an honored guest in your home. Journeys were long, days were hot, roads were dirty, and Odor Eaters were still two millennia away. But, it was completely insane to wash your guests’ smelly feet with every last drop of your most expensive perfume!

But this act of altared service made perfect sense to Mary. It showed she truly understood who Jesus was and what He was worth. This act of altered service showed that she saw Jesus as:

- 1. King:** Such an extravagant gift was only lavished on a king. This was very appropriate in view of the fact that on the next day He would proclaim Himself the King of Israel through his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
- 2. Priest:** John 12:3 and Mark 14:8 define this as an anointing. As priests were anointed, this is in keeping with the fact that Christ was a Royal Priest and was about to make atonement for His people.
- 3. The Savior Who Must Die:** As He had told the disciples that He must die, so He must have also told her. While they were unable to grasp this, Mary did. She undoubtedly recognized her sin and need of a suffering Savior and

did this as an act of faith and devotion. She understood the reason for His death (her sin), and the significance of His death (her salvation).

This act of altared service also made perfect sense to Jesus. This is why Jesus defended her.

John 12:7,8

*7 "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."*

When was the last time you did something for God that made no sense to the people around you? Do something senseless for God. A few weeks ago I challenged you to think boldly, to do something bold. I know some of you took that to heart. We had some ladies who watched a bunch a kids so some moms could enjoy a break. Latashia, Kathy, Emily were doing something bold, and it made a difference. Do something senseless for God.

1. Give your life to Him.
2. Give more of your money to Him.
3. Give Him your altared service.

## II. Altared service is Priceless.=

Mary was not concerned about how much that perfume was worth. All she cared about was showing Jesus how much He was worth.

In verse 5 John tells us that this perfume was worth about a year's wages. The average American makes about \$45,000 a year.

Here's what you could buy for \$45,000:

- 180 55" LED Flat Screen TVs
- 37.5 MacBook Laptop Computers
- 136 Dell laptop computers
- 1.26 years of tuition at Harvard
- This house in Marlboro, Maryland
- This Audi A5 2.0T Quattro!



So, by today's standards, Mary essentially anointed Jesus with a Audi A5 2.0T Quattro!

How much is enough to give Jesus?

- 1%?
- 5%?
- 10%?
- 100%?

The disciples of Jesus—who should have known better—led by Judas said that her priceless service to Jesus was a "waste," but John explains that Judas had ulterior motives.

John 12:6

*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.*

Let me tell you what I believe about giving to Jesus:

1. God deserves the best of our lives.
2. God deserves the best of our finances.
3. God deserves the best of our service.
4. It's never a waste to give your best to God.

When was the last time you gave an extravagant gift to Jesus? Have you done anything for Jesus that made others say, "What a waste! That money could have been used on something much better."

### III. Altared service is timeless

Altared service is not just Senseless and Priceless; it's also Timeless.

Some people go to great lengths to leave a legacy.

Frank Stoeber wanted his legacy to be that he was the creator of the World's Largest Ball of Twine. He learned of the existence of the World's Largest Ball of Twine (twelve feet and 21140 pounds) in Darwin, Minnesota, so he set out to beat it. Day after day, week after week, and year after year he worked passionately to roll the new World's Largest Ball of Twine, but he died when his ball was still one foot too small. In his honor, the city officials of his hometown put Frank's passion on display as the "Second Largest Ball of Twine." But, since his death, countless people have added to the ball of twine and it is officially the world's largest ball of twine! Francis Johnson's ball of twine in Darwin is the "World's Largest Ball of Twine Rolled by One Man."



Matthew 26:13

What will be on display from your life after you are gone? Are you doing important things? Are you doing timeless things?

Here's Martha's legacy from the scriptures we've looked at today:

Martha served. But here's Mary's legacy:

*Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."*

Mary's act of service was timeless. It was an expression of altared worship.

Do something timeless?

- Adopt an orphan.
- Mentor a child of a single parent.
- Sponsor a child through Compassion International.
- Serve at the food pantry.
- Love your neighbors.
- Change diapers in our nursery.

- Teach our children.
- Volunteer somewhere.
- Minister to our community.

Not just because you love to serve, but because you love Jesus and you want to worship Him more completely.

Always remembering, altared service is true worship and is never a waste.