



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 12: 1-11

Winter 2023

"A Timeless Fragrance"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. It is good to be back, and back in the Gospel of John. It's been a number of weeks that we've been out of it—and this is actually a providential, (everything's providential), but a providential break that we took because we begin in chapter 12 this morning which is the second half of the Book of John and begins a new section of the Book of John, as I'll mention in our lesson.

Our text is a magnificent text. It's a text, that if you want a nice parallel to it, is the passage in Luke chapter 7, with this unknown woman, (known only as 'a sinful woman'), who comes and weeps over the feet of Jesus. Well—this is not that incident; this is different. But it rises to that occasion; and I'm afraid I don't have words that can match the magnificence of this text.

But John chapter 12 begins this new section of the book, and it's introduced magnificently in verses 1 through 11,

**12** Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. <sup>3</sup> Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending

to betray Him, said, <sup>5</sup>“Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?” <sup>6</sup> Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. <sup>7</sup> Therefore Jesus said, “Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. <sup>8</sup> For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”

<sup>9</sup> The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; <sup>11</sup> because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

John 12: 1-11

May the LORD bless this reading of His word and bless our time together in study and worship. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank you for this time together. Thank You for coming to this text this morning and bringing us to this passage. Every passage in the Bible is magnificent because all of it is from You. Some may not make a great impression upon us at first reading, and even after a second or third and time of study, but it's all from You. And it all has a purpose—not one word is wasted. And what a picture we have in this passage. What a great text it is, and not one drop of that perfume was wasted on Your Son. And Father, may we learn the lessons that this woman taught the disciples, and should be teaching us from this passage.

Father, we look to You to bless us and build us up in the faith—and to say that, to say, ‘build us up in the faith’, means not only strengthen our faith but broaden our faith. And to say that means, ‘to give us a greater understanding of the Triune God and a greater love for the second person of the Trinity’, who was worshiped there in Bethany by Mary. She loved Him. May we love Him like that; create that within our hearts. —That will change everything.

So LORD, we pray Your sanctifying ministry will go forward in our hearts. And if there's anyone here that doesn't know Christ, that You would convict them of that sin, that you would convict them of their lost condition, and bring them to a saving knowledge of Him.

So we pray for that; but we pray also for our material needs, LORD. They're passing; they don't last—even the worst of them don't last; but we pray for our brethren and sisters who are in difficulty. And I pray for our health; we can lose it in a moment, and I pray that You'd strengthen all of us. But even when we lose our health, You bless us through it; that's the miracle of the Christian life. You're always in control.

And You're in control of this moment. You're guiding us, and I pray that You would lead us gloriously through this passage, that may we enjoy it and learn the lessons of it. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

*(Message)* I don't know much about perfume, (I begin with that disclaimer), but I read that today's most famous fragrance is the one Coco Chanel introduced in 1921, *Chanel #5*. It's been called 'Timeless'. Maybe. Like I said, I don't know much about perfume, and I don't think I've ever even gotten a whiff if Chanel.

Still, I would say a far finer fragrance was released in AD 33 by Mary of Bethany when she anointed the feet of Jesus. John was there and wrote, "The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." (vs3). What a wonderful moment—and an expensive act of worship by Mary, with a fragrance that really is timeless.

But not everyone liked it. That's true of most perfumes, I'm sure. In fact, I read that some people think Chanel smells old fashioned. But the offense taken here was not from the fragrance, but from the act that released it. It was an act of worship. And the offense was spiritual—and it caused an uproar.

That's not surprising. Paul would later write in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, of our worship of the Lord and of giving offense with the Gospel of salvation—giving offense when we make Christ known and how it divides people. He calls us "a fragrance of

Christ" to the world. (vs15). He wrote that it is, "to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life." (vs16). That was Mary here in John chapter 12, verses 1 through 11. And it will be us. If we're public in our love of Christ and vocal with the Gospel it will cause an uproar. It will cause an offense, like some overpowering perfume.

It's not the worship that causes the offense. The world's full of worship. Everyone alive worships someone or something. It's the object of worship—it's Christ that is the offense. And especially 'Christ crucified'; that's really what Mary's act was all about. That's how Jesus explained it; It was "for the day of my burial", He said. (vs7).

But it was not a fragrance of death, but of life, a fragrance of eternal life. In fact, this incident marks a division in the Gospel of John. With it we leave what is often called 'The Book of Signs', chapters 1 through 11, and enter 'The Book of Glory', which is chapters 12 through 22.

The seven signs attesting to our Lord's deity have been completed—with the greatest of them, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Now this Gospel moves on to the glorification of the Lord in His crucifixion and resurrection. And it's introduced with Mary's act of devotion, done in anticipation of the Lord's death and burial.

This happened six days before the Passover. Jesus has returned to Bethany, (where He had raised Lazarus), even though His great miracle had provoked the animosity of the leaders in nearby Jerusalem. They had put out a warrant for His arrest, (that's how chapter 11 ended), and they had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it so they might seize Him.

Jesus had removed Himself from danger by retiring to a quiet place. But now the Passover was less than a week away, so He has returned to the area of Jerusalem to observe it. But not only to observe it, but also, (and primarily), to be 'It'— to offer Himself up as the Lamb. The one who had raised Lazarus from the dead would soon go

to His own death as the sacrifice that would deliver His people from their sins—and from death itself.

And so following His Father's leading, He came back to Bethany on His final journey to Jerusalem, where on Calvary He would conclude His mission of salvation. The occasion of His return to Bethany, though, was a celebration, a dinner that was given in His honor. Verse 2 simply states, "They made Him a supper," and lists some of the guests that were there.

Matthew also recorded the incident and gave the location as "the home of Simon the leper", (Mat 26:6), a man whom the Lord had, no doubt, healed of leprosy. He hosted the supper out of gratitude for the mercy that he had received—but also the occasion seems to have been a celebration of the raising of Lazarus, who was one of the guests with the Lord. It was an expression of gratitude by all those there—but also an act of courage. It was done in defiance of the Sanhedrin and the danger of being charged with breaking the law. They disregarded that, and did so gladly, openly. Openly associated with Christ, the greatest man who ever lived, the God-man, who had shown them grace upon grace. And they wanted to honor Him, regardless of the consequences.

The dinner proceeded, with Martha serving the guests, when Mary approached the table with, "a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair." (vs3). It was done quietly; it was done without fanfare; but it couldn't go unnoticed because the room was immediately filled with the scent of perfume. Everyone was astonished—(not the Lord)—but everyone else there was astonished by what she had done. It was a lavish act by Mary, completely unexpected—and expensive. It was what we might today call, 'over the top'.

At least some there thought it was. John's description of it shows how luxurious it was. The perfume was made of nard, an aromatic herb that's grown in the highlands of the Himalayas, between Tibet and India. The cost of transporting it by camel and caravan across those ancient trade routes, like the Silk Road, must have been enormous.

And this was the pure stuff. It was customarily mixed with inferior substances to lessen the price. But this was "pure nard, very expensive". In fact, the cost of it is given in verse 5. It's given by Judas, who knew exactly how much all this was worth, and what it cost. As we see, he was a man very interested in money. But he evaluated it as 300 denarii. This is a lot of money in those days. A laborer was paid a denarius a day. So this amounted to a year's wages for a working family.

For Mary it may have been her dowry, or maybe her life savings. But what took an ordinary working man to earn in a year, she poured out in a moment, a matter of minutes, in a gift to Christ. It was extravagant, but also risky, because she then let down her hair and with it wiped His feet. Now in the orient, it was considered inappropriate for a woman to loosen her hair in public. But Mary wasn't worried about public opinion. I don't think she even gave a thought of that and the consequences. She wanted to honor Christ—and she did that not only with her gift but with her act of self-denial. She was so absorbed with Christ that she forgot about herself and became, as it were, 'a fool for Christ', and began to wipe His feet with her loosened hair.

*[Now, she could do all of this somewhat easily, anointing the Lord's feet because of the custom in those days of reclining at a table, rather than sitting at a table as we do. When people ate, they would lie on couches with their heads near the table, leaning on one arm, and then eating with the hand that was free. Their feet would be extended to the end of the couch, away from the table, which made it easy for her to approach the Lord and anoint His feet.*

*In fact, not only anoint His feet, but we know she anointed His head as well. Matthew and Mark, in their accounts of this, record that she did that. She poured perfume on His head, as well as His feet. And they emphasized the head because it reflected an act of honoring Christ as king. 'Kings were anointed', and that's what seems to be reflected in their interest in that event.]*

But John's attention was on the feet—because that was the appropriate place for a creature before her Creator and Savior, the Son of God, in the place of humble, thankful worship. And that's what Mary showed here. She loved Jesus, and gave all that she had to Him in a selfless, costly act of love.

But too costly for some. Judas was appalled and asked, "Why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii and given to poor people?" (vs5). He wasn't alone. Matthew states that the other "disciples were indignant" as well. (Mat 26:8). Judas had an influence on these people; they followed along with him. And you can just hear people today saying, 'Think of all the hungry children whose mouths might have been filled. What a waste. A liquid fortune poured out in an impulsive and careless act.' Well, so it seemed to Judas. And according to Matthew, this is what provoked his betrayal.

But the act wasn't impulsive. It was a carefully thought out act of worship. Mary believed this was the best investment of all of her worldly possessions, to give it all to Christ in one magnificent moment of worship—one grand display of love. She cared more about Him than she did about the perfume, (of the money that it might have brought her and the security that she might have had). Judas didn't; he cared nothing for the Lord—it's just that simple.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Mat 6:21). Judas' treasure was money; that's where his heart was. It's really just that crass. I think in modern times people have tried to find some 'noble motive' for Judas' betrayal of Christ: 'He was a patriot.' 'He was trying to provoke the Lord to be the king.' None of that is true.

Here's the reason: He loved money. It's just as I said, that crass. He disguised his real love in altruism, in a concern for the poor, a desire to help the needy. But it was all a masquerade—just as it is so often in politics today. John exposed Judas here in verse 6, "Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it."

The money box was used to meet the needs of the disciples—and also to give alms to the poor. It was filled by the Lord's followers; and many of them were women. In fact Luke talks of this in Luke, at the beginning of chapter 8, saying that, 'They gave out of their means.' (vs3). So these poor women helped support the Lord in His ministry. And Judas was in charge of that box. He was 'the treasurer', which shows how much the disciples trusted him and how highly they thought of him. He had influence over them.

But it was fake. All of the time he was stealing from them—and the grammar of the statement indicates that it was continually. 'He was continually stealing from them'. That's, as I say, the sense of the statement.

Now none of the disciples knew that at the time. They took Judas to be a genuine disciple, and a distinguished man of integrity. It was only later that they learned the truth. But as John looked back on the incident and reflected on it, he was able to understand Judas' real motive for protesting Mary's sacrificial act of worship: He was a thief. He coveted what she gave to Christ and felt that it was all wasted on Him because he valued the Lord very little. In fact, the value he put on Christ was proved later in the week when he betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver—a pittance. The Son of God was just 'pocket change' to Judas.

Mary, however, couldn't calculate His value. For her, no amount of perfume or possessions could match the worth of Christ. And so to show how much she valued Him, she gave Him everything she had. And I'm sure, when she emptied the last drop on His feet, her only regret was that there wasn't more to pour out. That there wasn't one more drop to fall.

Mary of Bethany is the opposite of Judas Iscariot, who is a man like so many. I think we all have some Judas in us. You do. I do. (I'm talking about myself.) We all have a love for things, don't we? A love for this present world. It's very attractive to all of us. We may be willing to offer the Lord something, but are we willing to offer Him the best



we have? Our time, our thoughts? That very often seems to be the problem for the people of God.

Israel had a problem with that. The prophet Malachi spoke of that at the beginning of his book when he brought God's charge against the priests who were offering defective sacrifices to Him: "*You* are presenting defiled food upon My altar", He said. (Mal 1:7). What they were doing was they were giving the LORD the sick animals, the lame lambs and the blind sheep for sacrifice, and keeping the healthy ones for themselves—and for sale: 'Why waste a good lamb on a sacrifice?'

The LORD said they, "despised My name", (Mal 1:6), because their offerings reflected their true attitude toward Him. They loved their things more than they loved Him. So they held back the best for themselves.

Mary was different from that. Because she loved Jesus Christ above everyone and everything, she gave Him the very best that she had. He was her treasure. That's where her heart was, in the Lord. That's why she gladly gave everything to Him. And in doing that, without saying a word, she taught us how we're to be.

But the disciples, who didn't get the lesson at all, rose up against her. So the Lord now rises to her defense and heaps praise on her, not only for her great love, but for her keen insight. "Let her alone," He said, "so that she may keep it for the day of My burial." (vs7). That's what this is really about.

Now, this is a difficult verse to translate, but the idea seems to be that she kept the perfume and didn't sell it, so she could have it for the day of His burial. In other words, (and this is what is remarkable), she knew Jesus was going to die, and die very soon—and that knowledge guided her decision to honor the Lord's death while He still lived. She understood, what even the disciples had not yet realized, that Jesus was about to lay down His life for her, for them, and she anointed Him in anticipation of that.

The poor are important, but the Lord explained, "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me." (vs8). In other words, 'The disciples would always have opportunities for relieving the poor of their difficulties' —and it is right to

do that. Nothing in the Lord's words here suggest indifference to the plight of the poor. In fact, He understood poverty very well. He experienced it. He said, "The foxes holes, and the birds...have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." (Mat 8:20). He didn't have a home; He knew poverty; He knew the hunger of it; He knew the experiences of it very well. —He lived a poor life.

But they would still be around, the poor, long after Jesus Himself had been taken away. The time for deeds of devotion toward Him, that time was short, shorter than the disciples knew. And so the opportunity to honor Him before He died was to be seized quickly, if it was to be taken at all.

Mary understood that. She seized the moment while she had it. She gave everything she had to Him as a gift of her gratitude for all that He had done for her and her family, and all that He would do, and all that she knew He was about to do. And she had no regrets.

Of the many lessons that we find here, one of them is to seek the opportunities God gives to serve and honor Him—and seize them. What's our expression? *Carpe Diem*; "Seize the day!" Few things cause greater sadness than opportunity lost. Mary didn't miss the opportunity to give her gift to Christ because she understood Him—she understood His mission, and she understood Him and His mission even better than the disciples did.

Now you wonder, how could that happen? How did she gain such insight? The disciples had been informed of the Lord's death for He had told them that repeatedly. You read through the Synoptic Gospels and there are three different occasions when He tells them, in detail, of what was going to happen. So it was no mystery. Still, it was Mary, alone it seems, who understood what He was saying. So how did she come to such insight?

I think the answer is found in the place where Mary is so often seen—at Jesus' feet. We see that here; we saw it in chapter 11, where she falls at His feet. It was where she was in Luke chapter 10, when the Lord visited their home there in Bethany. Mary, we

read, "was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His Word." (Luke 10:39). Mary was attentive to Christ's Word.

And if we want to know the mind of God, have the wisdom of God, have the joy of knowing Him in depth, then we must be attentive to His Word. It's His revelation. It is inspired and given, Paul said, "for training in righteousness." (2Tim 3:16). So to have what Mary had, we must do what Mary did, sit at Christ's feet. Listen to Him. Study His Word. That's how we learn about Him. That's how we increase our faith and grow in our relationship with Him.

Let me read something from Ephesians chapter 4. This is the ethical section of the book; this is where Paul begins to apply all of the great theology of the first three chapters. And he begins the chapter, (vs1), by telling them to, "walk in a manner worthy" of their calling. In other words, 'live your life well, and correctly.' And then he warns them in verse 17 about walking like the Gentiles walk: 'No longer do that, you Gentiles. You've been called out of that life.' And then he says, in verse 20, "But you did not learn Christ in this way", meaning, 'the way of the Gentiles', this way 'of chaos and darkness'.

But notice, "you did not learn Christ" and not "you did not learn about Christ." Well certainly they did learn about Christ, but the point is, you didn't learn Him personally. You didn't enter into a personal relationship with Him. You did not learn Christ in this way if, indeed, you heard Him. When would they have heard Him? Paul heard Him, as Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road. He spoke directly to him.

There's nothing recorded in the Book of Acts, in Acts 19, about anything like that occurring in Ephesus. They didn't hear Him audibly, like Paul did. They heard Him through the message of the apostles. They heard Him through the Word of God. And that's how we hear Him; it is alive and powerful and, "sharper than any two-edged sword". (Heb 4:12). It is a supernatural book. We enter into our fellowship with Him, a relationship with Him, through the Word of God. That's how we come to know Him better. He talks to us through Scripture. And that's where we need to spend our time— at His feet.

But, of course, that's the challenge that we face, isn't it? Because today there are so many things—some neutral things, some good things, that can occupy our minds and time. The Christian life isn't complicated. In fact, when you compare it to the religion of Israel, full of its types and shadows and all of the details, it's very simple. It's not a complicated life. It requires discipline and sacrifice. Sacrificing the 'good' for the 'best', to become reacquainted with Jesus Christ—and that will lead to fervent love for Him. That was Dr. Johnson's counsel on this passage. Mary is an example of it and as a result, she had fervent love for Him and the understanding to give the right gift in the right way at the right time.

And it was at a hostile time when it was dangerous to be openly identified with the Lord for the authorities were seeking to arrest Him. And now that would be even more dangerous and that would only intensify, because we read, "The large crowd" began to gather in Bethany in order to see Jesus. Many of these were probably pilgrims who had come up to Jerusalem for the Passover: But they'd not only come to see Him, they had also come to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.

Word of the miracle had obviously spread, spread wide and far and people wanted to see if it were true—see the evidence of this. So Lazarus became an attraction. Streams of people came over the Mount of Olives to Bethany and John wrote, "Many of the Jews...were believing in Jesus." (vs11).

Well, that only increased the concern of the authorities. Now Lazarus was a threat to them. So the chief priest planned to put Lazarus to death also. Now, the priests were Sadducees; that was a party of the aristocratic elite and wealthy in Jerusalem. That's really where their influence was located, in Jerusalem, around the temple—they were 'the elite'. And they were materialists, complete materialists. —They denied the spiritual; they denied the resurrection; they denied the very possibility of resurrection—and Lazarus was a proof of the very thing that they denied.

So rather than bow to the evidence, they decided to bury it by putting Lazarus to death, along with the Lord, which shows the hardness of the unbelieving heart.

That's not just these men. That's typical of the unbeliever. What do you do with the evidence? I don't like the evidence—so I'll bury it. The heart of the unbeliever, the unregenerate heart is impenetrable—it's like stone—apart from grace.

And there was grace. It worked through Lazarus to draw people to Christ, so that, as John wrote, "Many believed." That should be true of us as well. Our lives should draw people to Him.

This is a difficult thing about being a preacher, as I have to examine myself in that light also. But it's true. We should be an example that draws people to Him. Our faith in salvation, the new life that we have, is every bit the miracle that Lazarus experienced. Even greater. We have experienced life from the dead. Paul tells those Ephesians in chapter 2, verses 1 and 2, "You were dead in your transgressions and sins." We all were dead in our transgressions and sins. "But God, being rich in mercy...made us alive together with Christ." (vs4-5).

So, the miracle in your life and my life, as a believer in Christ, is just as great, (and I would say greater), than the one that took place in Bethany with Lazarus, and the physical life that was given to Him. So our lives should draw people to Him. Our faith, our salvation, it all should draw people. They should see something in us, for we've experienced life from the dead. And that should lead them to see the glory of God. So we should so live to be what Paul told the Corinthians that he and the apostles were, "a fragrance of Christ", which is to some, 'an aroma of death', but to others 'an aroma of life.'

How do we do that and become that? Well again, Mary's example teaches us volumes. Her great desire was to please Him, to honor Him, because she loved Him. It's as simple as that—and there's amazing power in that. There was no other motive in her action than that: Sacrificial love. She drew near to Him and gave herself completely to Him, because she valued Him that much. He was her treasure. He was where her heart was. So she anointed Him with her perfume, and wiped His feet with her hair. She

sacrificed her possessions and her reputation out of love. It was a splendid illustration of what the Scott, Thomas Chalmers, called "The expulsive power of a new affection." Love is that power that transforms us, that pushes out of us, (as it expands in us), all of the unimportant stuff and fills our life with Him.

And it was no loss. Not to her, not to others. Think of what happened. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. What an experience everyone had, what an amazing experience! And wherever she went, the fragrance of Christ was on her. That wasn't her purpose, but it was the result. She had the fragrance of Christ all over her hands and in her hair—and this 'aroma of life' wherever she went. And it was the result of her worship and love of the Lord.

Love for Christ, sacrifice for Him is really *a timeless fragrance*. It never diminishes. It never goes away. It is always pleasing to the Lord God and has its eternal reward. And it changes us forever because as we know Him and worship Him, as we grow in our love for Him, and offer our lives to Him in what Paul called in Romans 12:1, "a living and holy sacrifice", we take on more of His character, we're transformed, and we have less of our own. We become like Christ.

Mike Black, in his lesson this morning, spoke of Paul; and Paul says, 'Follow me, I follow Christ.' And as we become more like Him, people follow us, or we have an influence on them because we're like Christ—not because of anything in us, it's Him. So we become more like Him as we worship Him and love Him. And then we become an attraction, a witness, for Christ—and our influence spreads in this world just like the perfume spread and filled the house.

Now that didn't win immediate praise for Mary. Just the opposite, as we see. The immediate reaction was criticism from Judas and the others, (they just followed him and what he did). He had such a real influence over these men. And it will make us an offense as well to others. It will make us "an aroma from death to death". But, the Lord

will defend us, just as He defended Mary. In Matthew 26:13, He said that, 'Wherever the Gospel is preached her act would be remembered.' Still is. It's timeless.

What we should remember about Mary and her very costly offering to the Lord is it wasn't done from a desire to gain anything for herself. It wasn't done to gain favor from the Lord; it wasn't done to gain salvation. It was because she already had salvation. It's because she was saved that she did it. And it was the purest kind of offering, the purest kind of obedience, that which was done out of love, out of disinterested love, meaning, free from selfish motive. You think Mary has any regrets today for pouring out a fortune on the Lord? You know the answer to that.

But what about Judas? If he had been able to pinch the money it would have been his only briefly, and then he would have had an eternity to regret it.

We all need to grow in our love for Christ. As Dr. Johnson put it in his sermon, "To become reacquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal way, that leads to a more fervent love toward Him." That's what we need. That love becomes a power within us that directs our lives and enables us to do the right thing—and do it well.

Others of us need to become acquainted with Christ for the first time. If that is you—if you have never believed in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you need to know you are lost—absolutely, utterly, lost. You are investing your life in temporal things that won't last. And someday you will perish forever. Come to Christ. Believe in Him. Rest in Him who died for sinners and paid their debts in full and forever.

And then live for Him. Offer up your life as a timeless sacrifice, a timeless fragrance for Him, a holy sacrifice, a sweet aroma from life to life, as your life makes Him known to others. May God help all of us to do that.

Father, we do honor You as the God of all grace and mercy, and we thank You for Your Son, whom You sent into the world. He is a beautiful Savior—and He came gladly.

And for the joy set before Him, endured the cross and the shame of it and the pain of it because He knew that there, He would save His people. And He did.

We give You praise and thanks for that, and pray You would increase our love and devotion to Him, to You, to our Triune God. Help us to know You better and give us that desire. And may we pursue Him through the study of Your Word, and listen to Him speak to us through it.

Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

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