

## “Sit Down at His Feet”

John 12:1-8

3/21/10

One thing I love about children is that, if they find something they really love, they're not too concerned with who's watching them or what they look like. That's especially true when you watch them in the arms of someone who loves them. A baby knows when she's in her mother's arms—safe, secure, pure devotion.

### Read John 12:1-8

Good ol' Mary. Once again she finds herself caught up in the moment—and serves as an example for everyone around her. She's not worried about who's watching, how much the perfume cost, what else is going on. All she wants and does is to sit at Jesus' feet and worship Him. Pure devotion.

As we now have reached our 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent, preparing our hearts before God to celebrate Jesus' journey to the cross and Resurrection, we hear a lot about what we need to do or not do. But this morning is about the power of pure devotion to God—how He will transform us as we are caught up in His loving embrace. It's something we can't worry about who is watching, what is going on, or what it may “cost” us. It starts simply fully present in the moment with Him.

### Devotion to Christ is fully present in the moment with Him.

In the book [\*Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus\*](#), authors Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg explore how the Jewish culture and heritage of Jesus influenced his life and ministry—and how it influences our understanding of the Gospels.

Spangler travelled to Israel several times while researching the Second Temple Period and writing the book. Her first flight was aboard El Al Airlines, which is the preferred method of travel for many Orthodox Jews. She writes of being fascinated by the ritual and symbolism of the Jewish faith she observed even during that flight:

“I tried not to stare as a bearded man three rows ahead stood up and began carefully winding a long strip of leather around his arm. He was observing a daily custom common among Orthodox Jews—binding small boxes, called *tefillin*, to both head and arm. These boxes, I knew, contained parchment scrolls inscribed with the ancient command recorded in [Deuteronomy 6:6-8](#): *‘These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.’*

“As the young man wound the dark strand of leather around his arm, I could hear him speaking in Hebrew. Later I learned that he was echoing the words of [Hosea 2:19-20](#): *‘I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord’....*

“In the seat next to me was a teenage girl, piously bent over her prayer book. When she wasn't sleeping through the long flight, she was reading and praying, rocking rhythmically back and forth as she read and meditated on the Hebrew words. Later, I asked a white-haired rabbi I met in Israel about this practice, called *davening*. The rocking motion during prayer, I discovered, is a way of expressing that one's whole self, body and soul, is caught up with God. The old rabbi explained that the movement of the body mimics the flickering flame of a candle, calling to mind the saying that ‘the candlestick of God is the soul of a man.’”

*Sam O'Neal, Geneva, Illinois; source: Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg, Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus (Zondervan, 2009)*

**Devotion to Christ is not worried about what others are doing or thinking.**

Mary was caught up with Jesus, body and soul, as she anointed His feet. And the beauty of the moment goes even deeper in seeing how God was using Mary for such a significant moment. This anointing of Jesus foreshadows His impending death.

Mary simply immersed herself in devotion to Christ and became part of God's awesome plan for salvation. If she was worried about what Judas or others were thinking, perhaps she would have missed out.

Let nothing come between you and God—not a person, your schedule, your lifestyle, your worries, your fears.

**Devotion to Christ is being caught up in His love.**

Why is this important? Is there more to devotion of Christ? Of course, just being caught up with God, body and soul, is enough. But it is in the embrace that change begins to happen. Love changes things. Because love gets deep into all the corners of our lives.

**Devotion to Christ dives deep into all the detail of our lives.**

Many of us have heard about some of the outlandish demands made by music celebrities in their contracts with concert promoters. One of the most notorious came from the rock band Van Halen. Each contract insisted that "a bowl of M&M's be provided backstage, but with every single brown M&M removed." If the band arrived and saw that the bowl had any brown M&Ms in it, they were free to cancel the concert and receive full payment. Who knew a bunch of hard-rockers could be such divas?

But wait.

There was actually a good reason behind the clause. The absence of those M&Ms was a matter of life or death. Lead singer David Lee Roth explained [that] ... "Van Halen was the first band to take huge productions into tertiary, third-level markets." He said, "We'd pull up with nine 18-wheeler trucks, full of gear, where the standard was three trucks, max. And there were many, many technical errors—whether it was the girders couldn't support the weight, or the flooring would sink in, or the doors weren't big enough to move the gear through. The contract rider read like a ... Yellow Pages because there was so much equipment, and so many human beings to make it function."

So just as a little test, buried somewhere in the middle of the contract, would be Article 126, the no-brown-M&Ms clause. Roth said, "When I would walk backstage, if I saw a brown M&M in that bowl, well, we'd line-check the entire production. Guaranteed you'd run into a problem." The mistakes could be life-threatening ... In Colorado, the band found that the local promoters had failed to read the weight requirements and that the staging would have fallen through the arena floor.

*Brian Lowery, managing editor, PreachingToday.com, and Kevin Miller, executive vice president, Christianity Today International; source: an excerpt of Atul Gawande's The Checklist Manifesto (Metropolitan Books, 2009), printed in The Week (1-15-10)*

It's funny how a band's ridiculous-at-first-glance contract demand manages to illustrate well the importance in allowing Christ to lead us into all the detail of our lives. There is nothing that can be overlooked or disregarded as unimportant. There are people out there that concerned about a concert, yet we often don't show that same concern for our own lives.

Yes, devotion to Christ, that intimate relationship He desires with us, will expose every little facet of who we are. But that is only a good thing. If something is wrong deep down that is always overlooked, then you are going to crash when the weight of life comes upon you.

Like we heard a couple weeks ago, God digging into your life is a good thing, uprooting, fertilizing with His love, healing, making whole. You got to expose those brown M&M's.

Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that, *“Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

### **Devotion to Christ changes your heart.**

Wayne Cordeiro is a pastor in Hawaii who shares a great image from his earlier years. He says:

“When I was dating my wife, Anna, one thing I admired about her was her love for sports. I love sports too, but there are two sports I don't like. Forgive me if you like these, but I don't.

“The first is bowling. I can't understand it. You pick up this cannonball and throw it on this beautiful maple floor that's tilted. And it goes down and disappears, thank goodness. All of a sudden! swbump! it comes back again. You throw that thing down again, and it goes down and disappears. All of a sudden! swbump! it comes back. All night you're trying to get rid of it. Finally when you're done and you try to leave, they make you pay for throwing that ball down on the ground. That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard.

“The other is roller-skating: four wheels, none of them turn, and they expect you to go around in circles.

“This is a true story. On our first date, I knocked on Anna's door. I was so excited. I said, ‘Where would you like to go tonight?’ She said, ‘Do you like bowling?’ And she picked up her own bowling ball. She had her own bag. Now, I was in love, so when she asked if I liked bowling, my answer was, ‘I love bowling.’ And we went bowling all night. We had a great time.

“The next week I knocked on her door. I said, ‘Where would you like to go this week?’ She picked up her skates. She said, ‘Do you like skating?’ I said, ‘I've been waiting for months for someone to ask me go skating. I love skating.’ And we skated all night.

“I look back on it now and think, What made it easy for me to change? Did I have to work up this thing to change my desire for bowling and skating? No. It was because of my relationship with that girl. Because of the love that I had in relationship with her, change was easy.

“The power to change is predicated upon your relationship with God. How often I think, *God, it's hard to do what you're asking me to do, hard to change. Do I just grit my teeth?* ‘No,’ the Lord says, ‘why don't you just come closer to the cross? Why don't you let me restore and renew my relationship with you? Would you come close?’”

*Wayne Cordeiro, "A Personal Relationship," Preaching Today audio no. 225*

Love is what changes us—not punishment, condemnation, or a turning away from someone. Love. But it takes us coming close to God. Not worried about what someone is thinking. Not scared to expose all the detail.

Verse 14 in Hebrews 4 continues:

*“Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. <sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

There is nothing else greater in this world. There is always work to be done, and as Jesus said, the poor and all the needs of the world will always be there. And we will be there for them.

But we cannot do anything without being connected to the vine, the source of life, the transforming love of Jesus.

Sit down at His feet. He is here. Would you come close? Amen.