

# Mary.....or Mary?

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**John 12:** <sup>12</sup> Six days before the Passover Jesus came to *Bethany, the home of Lazarus*, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> **Mary** took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them<sup>[a]</sup> with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii<sup>[b]</sup> and the money given to the poor?" <sup>6</sup> (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) <sup>7</sup> Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it<sup>[c]</sup> so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

**Matthew 26:** <sup>6</sup> Now while Jesus was *at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper*,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>7</sup> **a woman** came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. <sup>8</sup> But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why this waste? <sup>9</sup> For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor." <sup>10</sup> But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble **the woman**? She has performed a good service for me. <sup>11</sup> For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. <sup>12</sup> By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. <sup>13</sup> Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

This is the same story, and one we've all heard every year (and maybe more than once a year) for as long as we can remember. If we've watched Jesus Christ Superstar this is where Mary Magdalene is singing "Everything's Alright" and Judas cries out "people who are starving matter more than your feet and hair!"

We don't actually know which Mary anointed Jesus that night. Depending on which Gospel you read, these Marys referenced could be two different Marys of the Bible who were known to be traveling companions (or at least in the presence of) Jesus on a regular basis.

So; Mary...or Mary? How many Marys do we actually even know? We know there was Mary of Nazareth, mother of Jesus. We know there was Mary Magdalene – the first witness. Finally, Mary of Bethany – Martha’s sister, who had refused to come out to meet Jesus when her brother Lazarus had died.

John tells us Jesus went to Bethany, the home of Lazarus who He raised from the dead. Those details in that retelling allows us to believe the Mary we are supposed to remember is Mary of Bethany – but was it Martha’s sister who anointed Jesus’ feet with her own hair?

Matthew would have us know that Jesus went to Bethany and into the home of the leper Simon. A woman, unnamed but with a very expensive jar full of very expensive ointment, then anointed Jesus at the table – *this Mary* is left unnamed but defended by Jesus again – ‘leave her alone’.

Matthew’s rendition says something else that matters: “...wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

In remembrance of *her*. This is Jesus’ anointment – His readying for crucifixion.

You can decide which Mary – but remember Mary when you tell this story and hear this Good News.

The virgin Mary who carried a baby and left her home.

The Mary who first witnessed Jesus’ resurrection.

Or the Mary who was angry, sad, and hurt by Jesus and did not go out to meet Him.

Remember Mary, the woman – strong, ambitious, and steadfast in her faith.