

The Last Chance People Have

#0725

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—October 30, 1964

We'll begin our study this evening with the 12th chapter of John. We shall find parallel references in Mark 14 and Luke 7. Before reading the scripture, I'd just like to refresh our minds with a statement which is familiar to a number here:

"It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit" *Desire of Ages*, page 83.

You know, as you study the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) it is interesting how many chapters are devoted to the last week of Jesus' life, the last week. If you want something interesting during these Sabbath hours, take Matthew and notice how many chapters there are just on the last week. Do it with Mark. Do it with Luke. Do it with John. You'll find that inspiration has seen fit to spend a great deal of time on those closing days of the life and ministry of our Lord here in this world.

Now, this scripture that we are about to read deals with an event that took place on Saturday night at the beginning of that last week. It's in Simon's house:

"Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him" John 12:1-3.

Wonderful to have Simon on one side of Him, whom He had cured of leprosy, Lazarus on the other, whom He had raised from the dead. But there was another one there that had more appreciation than Simon. Who was that?

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" John 12:3.

As some of the other writers tell it, His head was anointed, as well as His feet.

“Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?” John 12:5.

Judas was not the first man nor the last to murmur about something that somebody was doing for Jesus. John says:

“This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was...” John 12:6.

What?

“...a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always” John 12:6–8.

How much longer were they going to have Him? For six days. Did they know it? No, nobody knew it. That’s what I want to study with you a bit tonight, friends, is the last chance that people have, the last chance.

Now, this particular supper was the last public supper that Jesus attended in this world. He had the Passover supper alone with the twelve, as we shall see presently in the upper room on Thursday night. This was the last time, as far as we have any record, that He was entertained in this way. And nobody in all the world except Jesus knew that that was the last time.

But Mary, bless her heart—she did the thing that she would have done if she had known. That’s the thing. She poured out her heart’s love and gratitude with that ointment.

Those who are acquainted with the money value that is expressed here tell us that a common laborer would have needed a whole year’s work to get the money to buy what Mary bought. Mary had bought this at great sacrifice. She had heard Jesus speak about His approaching death, and she thought that she would save her money and buy this to anoint His body.

But now, she had heard people say that He was going to be crowned king, and she thought that she would show her love and gratitude by anointing Him here on this occasion. Jesus appreciated it. Judas didn’t. He had his eyes on the money that it cost. Simon didn’t appreciate it.

As Luke tells the story in Luke 7, he murmured—thought Jesus shouldn’t have permitted it. The disciples caught the spirit of Judas, and they murmured—started talking about what might be done for the poor. But Jesus appreciated it.

And as Matthew and Mark tell the story (you can read it there), he said, wherever this Gospel is preached, this deed that this woman has done will be told as a memorial of Christ.

And so it has been, friends, for 2,000 years. All around this world, millions of people have heard the story of this great love gift of Mary, her simple act of faith and affection in anointing the head and feet of Jesus and wiping His feet as the tears flowed freely because of what He had done for her in pardoning her sin and giving her a place with His disciples.

Desire of Ages has a wonderful comment on this, page 560:

“The fragrant gift which Mary had thought to lavish upon the dead body of the Saviour she poured upon His living form. At the burial its sweetness could only have pervaded the tomb; now it gladdened His heart with the assurance of her faith and love. Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus offered not their gift of love to Jesus in His life. With bitter tears they brought their costly spices for His cold, unconscious form” *Desire of Ages*, page 560.

I wonder if anybody else has ever done that, friends. I wonder if anybody else has ever waited till somebody was dead to show their appreciation. Why friends, it's so common that it's commonplace, isn't it? Yes. Well, tonight I trust that God will lift us above that carelessness.

These little lines impressed me:

When I have time, so many things I'll do
To make life happier and more fair,
For those whose lives are crowded now with care.
I'll help to lift them from their low despair,
When I have time.

When I have time, the friends I love so well
Shall know no more the many toiling days,
I'll lead his feet in pleasant paths always,
And cheer his heart with words of sweetest praise,
When I have time.

Well, Mary had time that night, didn't she? Now, do you know why she happened to do it that night, friends? Because the Holy Spirit prompted her to do it. That's why. She was on the beam. She was on the right wavelength.

And if you and I are on the right wavelength with Heaven, the Holy Spirit will help us to do the right thing at the right time, and then we won't have any regrets. We won't be thinking, “Oh, I missed a chance—the last chance, the last chance.”

564 of this same wonderful book:

“Christ values acts of heartfelt courtesy. When anyone did Him a favor, with heavenly politeness He blessed the actor. He did not refuse the simplest flower plucked by the hand of a child, and offered to Him in love. He accepted the offerings of

children, and blessed the givers, inscribing their names in the book of life. In the Scriptures, Mary's anointing of Jesus is mentioned as distinguishing her from the other Marys. Acts of love and reverence for Jesus are an evidence of faith in Him as the Son of God. And the Holy Spirit mentions, as evidences of woman's loyalty to Christ: "If she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work" *Desire of Ages*, page 564.

That's from 1 Timothy 5:10, that last text.

"Christ delighted in the earnest desire of Mary to do the will of her Lord. He accepted the wealth of pure affection which His disciples did not, would not, understand" *Desire of Ages*, page 564.

And so if Jesus went down into the valley of the shadow, as He came to that dark hour of Gethsemane and Calvary, the shadows were lightened by the memory of this deed of love by a poor woman that did not fully understand why she did what she did. She did it because of the Spirit's prompting. She did it because she loved Jesus.

Oh, my dear friends, up in Heaven tonight, the heart of Jesus longs for our love! He has lost none of His interest in His children here below, and so I say, He's lost none of the loneliness that oft afflicted Him here on earth. Jesus walked a lonely road.

So many were thinking of Jesus as somebody they could get something out of rather than giving something to. Weren't they? They thought of Jesus in terms of, Here's somebody that can heal me. Here's somebody that can comfort me. Here's somebody that can bless me. Well, that pleased Him. He loved to bless others. He loved to heal. But, ah, you remember those 10 lepers that He cleansed? How many came back even to say thank you? Just one, just one.

Yes, in this view of the last supper at Simon's house, we get a glimpse of how much Jesus appreciated and still appreciates some return, some response, some gratitude on our part.

My point is, friends, that was the last chance for some people, and Mary was the only one that saw and seized the opportunity of the moment. Jesus didn't tell her it was the last chance. He didn't tell anybody it was. And there's many a last chance that you and I get that comes to us not labeled, not labeled. In fact, very few of the last chances we have come labeled—very few.

Well, now, let's go to the last supper of Jesus with His disciples in the upper room. We'll turn over to Luke, the 22nd chapter. This is on Thursday evening. He was crucified, you remember, on Friday. This is Thursday evening.

Describing it in advance, Jesus said in the 11th verse to His disciples who went ahead to make arrangements:

“And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready” Luke 22:11–12.

So Peter and John went and found, as they had been told, and there the guest-chamber was—a large upper room, and there they made ready for the Passover.

The 14th verse says:

“And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God” Luke 22:14–16.

Was that the last Passover? That was the last. He told them, It’s the last time I’m going to eat with you this way until we eat together in the kingdom of God.

But, my dear friends, somehow or another, it did not impress them. Somehow or another, they missed it, and the evidence of it and the cause of it is found in the 24th verse:

“And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest” Luke 22:24.

Think of it, friends. There they were—the last supper with Jesus—and what were they doing? Having a strife about which of them should be accounted the greatest. And Jesus was about to leave them. They didn’t think so. They thought He was going to be crowned king right there. The question was which one of them was going to win the election. That’s where their minds were.

And so they lacked sympathy for Jesus. They lacked an understanding of what was on His heart. And as the result, they lost—oh, what an opportunity they lost! One of them could have done what? Washed Jesus’ feet.

John 13 tells this part of the story in the 4th verse. Who did the feet washing that night? Jesus. I was meditating on it this week, friends, and I was thinking—Judas’ feet were washed. Who washed them? Jesus. Peter’s feet were washed. Who washed them? Jesus. And I got to wondering, who washed Jesus’ feet that night, and I’m afraid nobody did, I’m afraid nobody did.

They lost that precious opportunity. You know, there were various experiences in the lives of these disciples that came back to them in after years—after He had gone. Here in *Desire of Ages*, 565, it says:

“He had been everything to them, and they did not realize that soon they would be deprived of His presence, that soon they could offer Him no token of their gratitude for His great love. The loneliness of Christ, separated from the heavenly courts,

living the life of humanity, was never understood or appreciated by the disciples as it should have been. He was often grieved because His disciples did not give Him that which He should have received from them. He knew that if they were under the influence of the heavenly angels that accompanied Him, they too would think no offering of sufficient value to declare the heart's spiritual affection...When Jesus was no longer with them... they began to see how they might have shown Him attentions that would have brought gladness to His heart"
Desire of Ages, page 565.

Ah, dear ones, remember, there's somebody that, for Jesus' sake, you can love and show attention to and do things for. Children, do it for father and mother while you have the chance. You do not know when the last time is. Husbands, do it for your wives. You don't know when the last time is. Wives, do it for your husbands. You don't know when the last time is—you don't know.

No, I'm afraid that the dear Savior never got His feet washed that last supper. He took care of everybody else, but nobody, nobody, took care of Him. Well, they at least got a lesson and a blessing, and there in John 13, as you read on, He told them about His love for them and told them to love one another.

And then, finally, they went on out—where to? The garden of Gethsemane. And for this, I take you to Matthew's account in the 26th chapter. Here again, is another last chance, my friends, but oh, how they missed it, oh, how they missed it! Matthew 26, beginning with the 26th verse:

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee..." Matthew 26:36–37.

Who's that? James and John.

"...and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me" Matthew 26:38–39.

Watch with me. What would you have done, friends, if Jesus had selected *you* to go with Him under the olive trees and there pray with Him and watch with Him, what would you have done? What did they do? Ah, think of it.

"And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep..." Matthew 26:39–40.

Doesn't seem possible, does it?

“...and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” Matthew 26:40.

One hour. Already they were asleep. Now, we’re told that they had tried to keep awake—half tried. But they were tired, they were weary, and they had gotten so in the habit of Jesus doing everything for them that somehow they missed this glorious opportunity to do something for Him. You see?

Poor, poor human beings, and Jesus in His great love, even in His hour of agony, sought to excuse them. Forty-first verse:

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” Matthew 26:41.

Oh, yes. He didn’t scold them. Oh, He exhorted them, and He pled with them, so this time they’ll stay awake, won’t they? He goes away again:

“He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again...” Matthew 26:42–43.

What? Again? Yes, again.

“...for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.” Matthew 26:43–45.

Where was their chance? Alone, alone—He trod the winepress alone. Oh, this is something of what broke Peter’s heart several hours later as he ran from the courtyard stumbling through the streets of Jerusalem and down across the brook on his way back to this garden, and there where Jesus had wept and prayed and left the drops of bloody sweat upon the ground, Peter threw himself down upon the earth and wished that he might die. Oh, how ungrateful he had been, how foolish, how blind, how selfish! If he’d only stayed awake, then he might have gotten the help as well as giving Jesus help.

I have a little book here that was published in 1878. It’s *Volume 3* of the old *Spirit of Prophecy*, and deals with the life of Jesus. It’s the forerunner of *Desire of Ages*. Page 96 and 97 of this book, speaking of this scene in Gethsemane:

“But no sympathizing countenance greeted him after his long struggle; the disciples were fast asleep” *Spirit of Prophecy, Volume 3*, page 96.

Now, listen:

“Ah! if they had realized that this was their last night with their beloved Master while he lived a man upon earth, if they had known what the morrow would bring him, they would hardly have yielded to the power of slumber” *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume 3, page 96.

That’s the point. It all hangs on that little word with two letters—if—*if* they had known, *if* they had realized. Oh, I trust that you and I will not have to learn some things the hard way the way these disciples did. I hope that we’ll not have to break somebody’s heart with our ingratitude until the sight of it breaks our hearts.

“Ah! if they had realized that this was their last night with their beloved Master while he lived a man upon earth, if they had known what the morrow would bring him, they would hardly have yielded to the power of slumber” *Spirit of Prophecy*, Volume 3, page 96.

I repeat, friends, if, like Mary, we’re on the right wavelength, if, like Mary, we’re listening to the Spirit’s voice, we will be at the right place at the right time with the right words. We will be doing the thing which we would do if we knew when the last time was, but we can’t know when the last time is. That’s the point of our lesson tonight—can’t know.

Therefore, we must be on the beam every day. We mustn’t let an hour go by without being in tune. Then, we don’t have to be on attention. We can just do the things that God’s providence appoints.

Somewhere I saw it put like this: It is never too soon to do a kindness because we never know when it may be too late. That’s it.

Somebody else has put it this way:

It isn’t the thing you do, dear,
But it’s the thing you leave undone,
Which gives you the bitter heartache,
At the setting of the sun.

The tender word unspoken,
The letter you did not write,
The flower you might have sent, dear,
Are your haunting ghosts of night.

The storm you might have lifted,
Out of your brother’s way,
The bit of heartsome counsel,
You were hurried too much to say.

The loving touch of the hand, dear,
And sorrow is all too great,

To suffer our slow compassion,
That tarries until too late.

And it's not the thing you do, dear,
It's the thing you leave undone,
Which gives you the bitter heartache,
At the setting of the sun.

Do you think it's possible to live a life without regrets like that? I believe it is, dear friends. Jesus did. There in the border of Gethsemane, He knelt down with His disciples and prayed that wonderful prayer to His father recorded in John 17, and in the fourth verse, He said:

"...I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"
John 17:4.

He always said the right word at the right time. Didn't He? Oh, that He may abide in our hearts and that He may make us glad in making others glad, that our thoughts may ever be not so much on what others can do for us but on what we can do for them.

For Jesus says:

"...Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these
my brethren, ye have done it unto me" Matthew 25:40.

Isn't that nice, friends? Ah, yes. I thank God for it!

Life is too brief,
Between the budding and the falling leaf,
Between the seed time and the golden sheaf,
For hate and spite.

We have no time,
For malice and for greed.
Therefore, with love,
Make beautiful the deed.
Fast speeds the night.

And if, like Jesus, to follow this program costs us our life; if like Jesus, living in this way means that we are burned out, burned up, in service for others; we shall like Him know a joy that the world knows nothing of.

"...He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be
satisfied" Isaiah 53:11.

So, tonight, as we're meditating on these closing scenes this last week of Jesus' life, let us think of that last supper at Simon's house, that last supper in the upper room, that last prayer season together in Gethsemane, and let us note that in

each one of them there was a last chance. Most of them missed it. Mary, thank God, was on the job, and her act of grateful love cheered the Savior's heart.

We, too, like Mary, can offer our gratitude to Jesus and to those that His providence appoints day by day, and as we do, thank God, friends, eternity won't be long enough to get over the joy of it.

"The humblest workers, in co-operation with Christ, may touch chords whose vibrations shall ring to the ends of the earth, and make melody throughout eternal ages" *Ministry of Healing*, page 159.

Isn't that nice? I thought of it this way. Suppose you were going someplace where the only music you would ever hear would be from a tape recording. How many tapes would you take along? If you were going to spend 10 years, how many tapes would you take along? How many will you take along for eternity?

"Oh," but says one, "There'll be a great deal of music in Heaven." Yes, there will. There'll be plenty. But there's a certain type of music, which if we ever hear it, will be the echo of the music we've touched in this world.

A million years from now, Mary will still be rejoicing in the echoes and reechoes of that simple act of grateful love that last night at Simon's house, and nothing that is done through pure love is ever lost. It makes music throughout eternity.

Oh, our Father, interpret aright to our hearts the lesson of the hour. Make us glad to make Thee glad. May self be forgotten in the effort to please Thee, to bring joy to Thy heart. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

Now, is there something that you would like to say tonight?

[Testimony meeting]

[Comments made by Elder Frazee during testimony meeting.]

[Elder Frazee] So glad the dear Lord arranged it. No question about that. And I'll say to you what Jesus said to Nathaniel, "Thou shalt see greater things than these." Tomorrow, if we keep in the path, will be brighter than yesterday or today. Won't it, friends?

...taken from an old Review. You can find it in the *Commentary, Book 2*, page 1004:

"Many times ministers are too precise, too calculating. While they are getting ready to do a great work, the opportunity for doing a good work passes unimproved" *SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 2*, page 1004.

Isn't that interesting? I think we—some of us—need to remember that.

“While they are getting ready to do a great work, the opportunity for doing a good work passes unimproved” *SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 2, page 1004.*

That’s what I was meaning when I pointed out that Mary was on the wavelength. She knew *when* to do something. Some people lay plans for a great work, and then they die, and all the great plans they laid are what? They’re dead with them, yes.

But it’s what I do today, that’s what the angel writes down in the record. Is that right? Let no great plan keep you from the little kind act that the day offers.

The Lord will see to it that somewhere along the line, it costs too much. Then is when the universe finds out whether you’re doing it for love or for arrogance.

This lesson tonight is the heart of the lesson. The lesson tonight is not, “Well, I’m going to go out from this meeting and I’m going to do *more* things. I’m going to write *more* letters and give *more* flowers and speak *more* kind words.” You know, there’s only just so many hours in a day. There are just so many days in a week. That’s all. And you can’t make lists that are big enough to compass everything that Heaven may plan for you to do.

But you *can* do what Mary did. We’re told that Mary yielded to the impulse of the Holy Spirit. We’re told that she didn’t fully understand why she did what she did at that particular time, but God knew, but she knew afterward.

Do you see what I’m getting at, friends? If you and I will be on the beam, on the right wavelength, and do the thing we’re impressed to do, it’s up to God to see that we meet the needs that He sees we can meet.

Oh, how different that is from trying by our human wisdom to compass everybody and everything. We can’t friends. We don’t know. That’s the lesson of tonight. We don’t know when the last chance is. Do we? We don’t need to know. No.

But if we’ll just *do* what the Holy Spirit impresses on our hearts, and when He says, “Speak to this one of the love of Jesus, write to that one, do this thing to help that one...” if we do the thing that God’s providence arranges, we can leave with Him the thousand things we never get done. If we can just intuit the thing that His providence arranges, oh, what a privilege we have in that, dear friends—what a privilege!

Change one letter, then I see that the changing of my purpose was God’s better choice for me.

[Man from the audience] I believe the greatest blessing that we’ve brought out tonight has been that of having our lives so that they are on the beam. Time is so short, we cannot afford to be off the beam for one minute.

Sometimes I get the idea that I must take more time in the morning and more time in the evening, and that may be true, but I need to take more time in between and not get so hurried with all my duties that I leave God out of my thoughts. I need more of Him and His strength, and I know that He will give it to me if I seek for it.

[Elder Frazee] Amen.

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine...
If ever I loved Thee, My Jesus 'tis now.

How many of us would like to let Him know tonight that we love Him more than ever? Shall we? The Lord grant it. Let us stand.

[Singing]

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign,
My gracious Redeemer, My Savior art Thou,
If ever I loved Thee, My Jesus 'tis now.

I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me,
And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree,
I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow,
If ever I loved Thee, My Jesus 'tis now.

I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death,
And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath,
And say when the death dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved Thee, My Jesus 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright,
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus 'tis now.

Remember that next Friday night, the vesper service will be at 10 minutes past five, and so through November, each Friday night.

Dear Lord, we thank Thee so much that we can make Thee happy by telling Thee we love Thee and showing that love. We choose to do this tonight. Give us joy in sharing with others the blessings Thou hast shared with us this evening hour. We ask it for each one, in Jesus' name, amen.

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