This morning, Family, we draw closer to the death, burial and resurrection of our King Jesus. He attends a supper given in His honor. Lazarus is there, alive and well, along with Mary and Martha. Martha is serving all, while Mary does something beautiful. In this, we see the presence of God, His Divinity and His Kingship, enveloped in an anointing of the Messiah: “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” (John 12:3). Yes, this act of love and devotion fragrantly and beautifully filled the house. Little did she know at the time that this act of worship would be a blessing to believers around the world for centuries to come.

Listen, Family, while one served, one reclined, and one criticized, Mary enjoyed His presence. Last week, we talked about how we are invited to know God, His nature and His character. Today, I want you to know that we are invited to enjoy His presence! How wonderful is that--to truly experience and enjoy God, to be found in the grasp of grace and perfect love?! This act of love cost Mary about eleven months’ worth of wages. But, Family, when Christ is your treasure, He will be your pleasure. She could and we can behold Him for who He is. Mary comes before Him in love and humility and lays down her glory —her long hair—at the feet of the King of Glory. When Mary undid her hair, she violated social norms; Jewish women simply did not let down their hair in public. So, of course, she was criticized and misunderstood, but that often happens to believers when we give our best to our Lord.

Church, enjoying His presence motivates obedience—obedience that results in behaviors that draw criticism, but Christ Himself is our defender. Look at verse 7 of the passage from John: “‘Leave her alone,’ Jesus replied. ‘It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial’”(John 12). “Leave her alone”—I love that! Mary is loving while Judas is calculating. She surrenders in love while he sulks; she worships while he whines. Christian, let the world think what it wants. You enjoy His presence. Answer the invitation! Jeremiah 29:13 tells us unequivocally, ““You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Seek Him with everything you are. Paul told Timothy to “fan the flame of the gift of God” (2 Timothy 1:6). His presence, His anointing, His provision—seek Him! Glorifying our God for who He is. C. S. Lewis wrote, “In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.” The psalmist confirms, “You make known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand (Psalm 16:11). Our God is our source of life and joy. Family, His presence is a gift to you. This is a gift of great value, the pearl of great price, and our God the Giver is deserving of our undivided, unceasing devotion, depending upon Him and desiring His precious gift of His presence.

To enjoy His presence, Family, cannot involve a passive response or a half-hearted attitude. No, it is drinking from the cup of blessing, affirmed in our pace at His table, responding in humility and obedience while enjoying the provision of His grace and mercy, the provision of His forgiveness. And our response is worship, fanning into flame the gift of God’s presence, careful to maintain the intimacy of the abiding—satisfied to be His child. As His obedient, worshipping child, we enjoy the presence of the one who makes all things new. Family, when we enjoy the presence of God in our worship, work, and witness, we bring joy to our God. His is honored and glorified. We recognize His unequaled value, and we point to His messianic Kingship. Here, is He whom John the Baptist describes as the one from whom John was not fit to remove His sandals. Here now, this Jesus is having His feet anointed and dried by Mary with her hair. This Jesus is the one who will soon wash the feet of the disciples to teach them to love and serve. This Jesus is the same one who invites us into a relationship through repentance. He is the one who promises never to leave or to forsake us. This Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One, who invites us to enjoy His presence. This is the One, our Jesus, whom we remember today through the Holy Sacrament of Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-25\*).

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\*1 Corinthians 11:23-25

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,

24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Family, this sacrament for us reminds us of the New Covenant established when Jesus shed His blood on the cross. It compels us to look again at the price paid for our sin—that God has established and sealed His agreement of salvation with those who believe that His Son, this Jesus, died to set them free. And as we receive this gift, we proclaim our faith in the sufficiency of His death. In this celebration of Holy Communion, we give thanks for what has been done for us and thanks for the promise of His imminent return. Because we are found worthy through His blood to have a place at His table, we rejoice that we can enjoy His presence. With fulness of joy, we celebrate!

Passages in support of this message:

Isaiah 43:16-21

16 This is what the LORD says— he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters,

17 who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:

18 “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

20 The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen,

21 the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

John 12:1-11 Jesus Anointed at Bethany

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.”

9 Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

10 So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well,

11 for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.