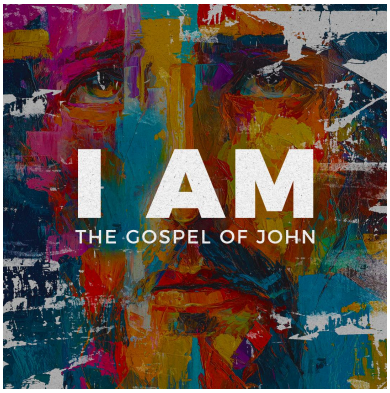
Title: The Delight of Devotion
Series: I Am
Speaker: Kevin Sneed
Date: November 15, 2026



Key Texts: John 12:1-19

Introduction: What compels someone to surrender everything? In John 12, just days before Jesus' death, Mary pours a year's wages of perfume on His feet and wipes them with her hair, filling the house with fragrance. The next day Jesus rides into Jerusalem, not on a war horse, but on a young donkey. This week, Kevin reminded us that an extraordinary King invites an extraordinary devotion, and that He reigns through extraordinary humility. Like the man who sold everything "in his joy" to buy the field when he found treasure in it (Matthew 13:44), we don't surrender because Jesus demands it, but because what He offers delights our hearts more than anything else. Joy precedes surrender.

Icebreaker: What is something you have loved or been so excited about that you gladly gave up time, money, or comfort for it (i.e., a hobby, a trip, a team, a person)? What made it feel worth it?

Discussion Questions

1. Read **John 12:1-8** aloud as a group. What details stand out to you from this scene? If you were in the room, what observations would you make? What would your internal reaction be to the scene unfolding in front of you?

2. The nard Mary pours out was worth about a year's wages, possibly the most valuable thing her family owned – likely a family heirloom and source of financial security. Judas objects that it should have been sold for the poor. Jesus is not dismissive of the poor; caring for them has always been on God's heart. However, with his death only a week away, Mary sees Him for who He is: an extraordinary King worthy of extraordinary devotion. How do you personally react to Mary's extravagance? Where do you notice what is "reasonable" or "practical" keeping your devotion to Jesus measured or conditional?

3. Kevin reminded us that devotion re-orients our security and relinquishes our control. He asked us two questions. First, where do you place your security, and is there something that you find hard for you to let go of? Secondly, where might you be holding on to control of your life? Which of these two questions stood out to you or resonated with you most this week? What might God's invitation to you this week be?

4. When Mary lets down her hair (**John 12:3**), this is a sign of immense intimacy. It reflects her deep love for Jesus, as well as Jesus' approachability and humility. Her devotion deepens her delight in Jesus, as she connects with Him as she would family - as a Father, brother, friend, and confidant. How does the idea of inviting Jesus into the deepest parts of you challenge you, or where might you feel discomfort with this idea? On the other hand, what do you find compelling about this? Are there ways you may be missing or even trying to earn His love, rather than resting in the love he has already freely poured out for you, His beloved?

5. In pairs or triads, spend some time sharing and praying for one another as you consider the following questions: Where have you been striving to earn Jesus' love, or even the right to approach Him? What might be hindering you from delight and intimacy with Jesus? On the other hand, where might you currently be experiencing delight and satisfaction in Jesus? Can you point to a time when He has shown you that what He offers delights and satisfies your heart more than anything else?

Key Takeaways

- **Joy precedes surrender.** Devotion is more about what we have found than what we give up. What Jesus offers satisfies our hearts more than anything we long for apart from Him.
- **An extraordinary King invites an extraordinary devotion.** Mary held nothing back. Jesus is worthy of the fullness of our devotion, while care for the poor remains, as Rodney Whitacre writes, "a sacred duty because it is the concern of God's own heart."
- **An extraordinary King reigns through extraordinary humility.** Jesus rides a donkey, not a war horse. He is an approachable and humble King whose kingdom comes through weakness made strong and through death that leads to life.
- **Devotion reorients our security, relinquishes our control, and deepens our delight.** We only have an illusion of control. Jesus invites us to hold loosely what we've been given, to yield to His leading, and to know Him as Father, brother, friend, and confidant.
- **We are the beloved**. We do not earn God's love; He has freely poured it out. Brennan Manning wrote that "being the beloved is our identity, the core of our existence." The more we delight in Jesus, the more freely we devote ourselves to Him.

Practice: Resting as the Beloved

This week, set aside 10 minutes each day to sit in the silence with Jesus without an agenda. You might also choose to go on a walk and use that as an opportunity to commune with Him if you find that to be helpful for you. Begin by slowly reading 1 John 4:16 or John 12:3, and picture yourself in the room in Bethany that is filled with the fragrance of the perfume. Then simply rest in the truth that "beloved" is the name by which God knows you and relates to you. Notice where you might still be trying to earn His love, and ask Him: How can I invite You into the deepest places of my heart? Where might I be missing your love? As you close, consider one thing you can hold more loosely this week as an offering of devotion.