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SUNDAYSCHOOL LESSON
APRIL 19, 1908.
JESUS ANOINTED AT BETHANY.
John 12:1-11.
Commit v. 3.
GOLDEN TEXT:
"We love him because he first loved us."—John 4:19.
Time.—Friday evening, March 31,
30 A. D. Place.—House of Simon the
leper, Bethany.

EXPLANATIONS:
I. Mary of Bethany unjustly Criti-
cized by Jesus' Disciples, 1-6. We are
now within six days of Jesus' last
passover. It might appear from the
account in Matthew that this supper
was two days before the passover,
but Matthew and Mark bring this
feast in after mentioning the con-
spiracy of the chief priests and eld-
ers, because the incident of the feast
led Judas to his final determination
to sell the Master to his enemies and
is thus connected with the plot of the
Jewish leaders. This lesson throws
a holy light upon home life and the
way in which Christ regards it.
Jesus does not forget in these sup-
reme hours of his life the friends he
loved, Martha and Mary and Lazarus.
He will have for his own and
then joy and still more for the
confirmation of their faith, a few
more times of communion with them.
To bring them some further spiritual
gift he came to Bethany. There is
something inexpressibly touching in
those evenings at Bethany during the
last week of the Saviour's life on
earth. He came for another purpose
also, to nurture that flame of faith
that had been kindled in the hearts
of many by the resurrection of Lazarus.
We read in the beginning of
Jesus' ministry, how, having per-
formed his first miracle at Cana and
faith being awakened, he afterward
came back to Cana to quicken and
nourish and strengthen that faith
(ch. 4:54). So here Jesus comes
back to Bethany for a similar pur-
pose. Jesus did not awaken faith
and then leave it to languish and
die. But the principal purpose of this
visit was to command the faith of
Mary and Lazarus. Jesus Christ
while he was "very God of very
God," was also a very real man. He

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was our brother. The way in which
Bethany is spoken of by John is
worthy of note. "Where Lazarus
was, whom Jesus raised from the
dead." Bethany was a little village
but it had a title of dignity; there
was a resurrected man there. There
was no one else at the gathering who
brought such joy to the aching heart
of Jesus as did Mary. She above all
others had listened to him, under-
stood him, believed and loved. Out
of the wealth of her love she had
purchased at a cost of fifty-one dol-
lars (a large sum in those days, her
whole treasure) an alabaster cruse
of ointment and put it aside to use
the ointment when the proper moment
came. She had understood what none
of the rest had, that he was actual-
ly to die and be buried. She had not
sat at his feet in vain (Luke 10:39).
Mary had not stopped to calculate
the cost of the ointment and whether
she might not better save part of
her money for future needs. Love
never calculates, it gives all. Mary's
uncalculating love of Jesus proved a
safer guide to conduct than the cal-
culating prudence of Judas and the
rest of the disciples (cf. Matt. 26:8).
Mary's act was looked upon with
suspicion and some very wise criti-
cisms were made upon it. Judas
Iscaariot was the leader in the harsh
criticism. The Iscaariots usually are
the leaders in criticising the acts of
others. But the whole apostolic com-
pany were carried away by the bad
spirit of Judas. Consolious criticism
is more contagious than smallpox.
Every lay at the bottom of the criti-
cism. They could not understand
Mary's act, not because it was below
them, but because it was above them.
Mary was to have sufficient compensa-
tion for the criticism of the disci-
ples in the approval of the Master.
The disciples regarded this use of
the exceeding precious ointment as a
"waste." That speaks poorly for
their love for Jesus and their esti-
mation of him. But there are always
those who think money spent on
Jesus wasted.

II. Mary of Bethany Commended
by Jesus Himself, 7-11. Jesus praised
when his disciples criticized. He
told the critics that they had the
poor always with them and whoso-
ever they willed they could do them
good (Mark 14:7). There was a prick
in this for their consciences. He
told them further that what was to
be done for him must be done at once.
So it must be to-day. Upon Mary's
act he bestowed the highest possible
praise. "She hath done what she
could" (Mark 14:8). This is all
Christ asks of any one (2 Cor. 8:12).
Mary was not looking for fame when
she performed this act, but she got
fame immortal. Jesus bestowed such
commendation upon her as he be-
stowed upon no other, and his won-
derful prediction concerning her (Matt
26:13) has been literally fulfilled.
Mary just poured out her heart's
adoration, she worshipped. Martha
was in part taken up with her
service.

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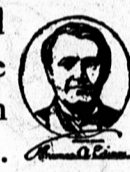
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