



The Fragrance of Easter

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Bethany, a hamlet conveniently located just two miles east of Jerusalem,

became a safe haven for Christ each Passover. After teaching in the Temple, the Lord often spent His evenings there as a guest of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.

The whole community had recently been stirred when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead—as He had previously healed Simon, a leading citizen, of leprosy¹. Just before Jesus' final Passover, the people of Bethany rolled out the red carpet, throwing a party to honor Jesus, their celebrated Hero.

In a moving gesture that demonstrated her deep devotion and gratitude, Mary opened her alabaster jar and poured a full pound of priceless nard, *nardostachys jatamansi*², on Christ's head and feet. Throughout the evening, the unmistakably sweet, spicy fragrance of this expensive perfume permeated Simon's home. Mary's extravagant act of service startled everyone present. The disciples viewed this as a wasteful display, but Jesus promptly rebuked them, "She has anointed My body for burial." Mary's sacrificial actions reveal that she, perhaps more than anyone else, discerned the fateful events that would take place in the week that lay ahead.

The very next day, as Jesus rode a donkey into the city, the aroma of *nardostachys jatamansi* floated on the breeze. Followers waved palm branches and proclaimed, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

Throughout that final week, this fragrance reminded Christ of the ominous task He had come to accomplish. On Monday, the sweet scent accompanied Jesus as He cleansed the Temple, denounced hypocrisy, praised a destitute widow, and told captivating parables. On Thursday, the aroma filled the upper room as Jesus washed the disciples' feet, shared His last meal, and encouraged them to remain faithful. On Friday, the Sanhedrin, Governor Pilate, King Herod, and even the soldiers who accompanied Christ to the cross may have noted the fragrance.

Then on Easter morning, it is altogether possible that the same aroma, *nardostachys jatamansi*, greeted the faithful women who first saw Jesus alive—victorious over the grave!

Indeed, every Easter Christians around the world remember Mary's bold step of faith. What can you do to make this Easter a sweet fragrance of Christ that those around you will never forget?

¹Though the Gospels do not specifically mention that Christ healed Simon of leprosy, the festive celebration in his home testifies that Simon's healing is highly certain. The entire account of this party is preserved in Matthew 26:1-13; Mark 14:1-9, and John 12:1-11.

²This costly, aromatic perfume is extracted from the roots of an East Indian herb. On their wedding night, King Solomon and his bride enjoyed the same delightful fragrance (Song of Songs 1:12, 4:13-14).