

Answer: Let's go back to the Scripture...

John 12:3-5

"Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said,

'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?'"

"Nard" comes from a small plant known scientifically as Nardostachys. This plant produces small pink flowers (see picture

above) and tiny black fruits. From these, an essential oil nard oil is extracted. It was used in making natural medicines and very costly perfumes, more expensive than most others.

Perfume made from nard was considered extremely precious in biblical times, and it still remains expensive today because of the difficulty in sourcing the plant.

Nardostachys grows in the Himalayan mountain ranges, particularly in Nepal, parts of India, and China. It grows at elevations between 3,000 to 5,000 meters above sea level (5,000 meters is close to the height of Mount Kilimanjaro). Because it grows only in such high and limited areas, it is very rare, which explains why nard ointment was so valuable.

From this, we understand that the ointment Mary used to anoint the Lord had been imported from far away (outside Israel) and was extremely costly. The value three hundred denarii was roughly equivalent to about six million Tanzanian shillings today.

Other passages that mention nard include Song of Solomon 1:12 and Song of Solomon 4:13-14.

To learn more about what we can gain from the woman breaking her alabaster jar and pouring it on the Lord's head, see here:
"She broke the jar and poured it on His head."

May the Lord bless you.

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