

## 16. A lavish display of love to the Lord

4/30/2006

Worshiping the Lord is more than just singing a few songs. True worship comes from the heart of the believer of Jesus Christ.

*John 4:23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.*

True worship to our Lord Jesus requires our lives, our devotions, even the money we are allowed to have from the Lord.

Among all the Bible characters, a few people stands head and shoulder above others when it comes to their devotions and worship to the Lord. King David, Daniel and Mary of Bethany.

The Bible doesn't record a whole lot about her, nor her own words. But whenever we see her, she can be found near by her Master Jesus Christ.

### A. A CONSPIRACY TO MURDER

*Mark 14:1-2 After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. 2 But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people."*

This event took place six days before Passover, which would put it on the Friday before the Triumphal Entry. In other words, these nine verses should be placed before chapter 11.

By placing this story between the accounts of the plot to arrest Jesus, Mark contrasted the treachery of Judas and the religious leaders with the love and loyalty of Mary. The ugliness of their sins makes the beauty of her sacrifice even more meaningful.

What the Fourth of July is to America, Passover was to ancient Israel, only more so. It was a time of celebration of God's deliverance from the slavery, of singing great Jewish songs and more. Every male Jew who lived within 15 miles of Jerusalem had to come to Jerusalem for Passover, but many more came from great distances. Many people who heard and saw Jesus in the region of Galilee were here, with great respect and great expectation regarding Jesus.

At this particular Passover, however, the mood of the inside of the temple was not so festive. Instead of celebrating, a few influential religious leaders were planning an execution of Jesus, just because He was a major threat to their power and position.

As the chief priests and the scribes conspire a murder of an innocent man, it shows that they do not fear God. Nevertheless, they do fear the people. They were more concerned about their own political and social position than doing what is right in the sight of God.

### B. A LAVISH DISPLAY OF LOVE

*Mark 14:3 And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head.*

Both friend and enemy are moving toward the cross but by different routes. Mary of Bethany is coming the way of light and love. Judas is moved by greed and dark motives. And, by the way, it is John who tells us that this woman was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus in John 12:3.

This isn't the same as when sinful woman brought the alabaster flask of ointment, broke it and anointed Jesus' feet in Luke 7. That occasion was precious, but it was different in that the woman was overwhelmed with her own sense of sinfulness and adoration to the Lord who forgave her sins.

Mary seems focused on Jesus alone, not even on her own forgiven sin. It is a great thing to love Jesus for all He has done for us. It can be greater still to love Him simply for who He is in all His wonder and majesty.

Mary gave lavishly and lovingly. She didn't dispense a few drops of the fragrant oil on His head. She easily could have and no one would blame for saving the rest for herself. But she broke the flask and didn't hold anything back for herself.

She was not ashamed to show her love for Christ openly. When we show our genuine love and worship toward our Savior Jesus, it brings mixed reactions from those who are around us.

### **C. GRUMBLES FROM OTHERS**

*Mark 14:4-5 But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? 5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply.*

Yes, it was an expensive offering that she gave to the Lord. Genuine fragrant oil was made from dried leaves of a rare and unique Himalayan plant. The particular alabaster flask she used, if it was like others used in that day to hold expensive ointment, was itself a thing of beauty and held twelve ounces—a Roman pound.

A denarius was equivalent to a day's wage. That means that the perfume would have been worth almost ten month salaries.

Just to see which one is the most expensive perfume in the world today, I got on internet. I found that this "Clive Christian" from Sax Fifth Avenue is selling at mere \$2,150 for 1 ounce. Ladies, tell your husbands that you want one of those.

The Gospel of John tells us that it was Judas who led the grumbles among the disciples. The pious suggestion that the proceeds be used for charitable purposes has covered up the real reason. Judas wanted it for his own selfish ends.

I asked you to underline the word 'wasted' in v4. It is the same word that mentioned 'perdition' in John 17:12 about Judas.

*John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name.*

*Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

Judas criticized Mary for "wasting money," but he wasted his entire life.

As she broke the alabaster flask and poured the ointment upon Jesus, Mary showed us about true worship:

### 1) True worship comes from brokenness.

When finally we're at our wits' end and broken, we can humble ourselves before the Lord and truly worship Him.

*Ps 34:18 The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*

### 2) True worship is often costly.

It cost Mary a lot. What does our worship cost you and me? Our stinking image. "There's no way I'm going to sing those songs. I'm too cool for that," or "I don't care if Scripture declares lifting hands is a sign of submission and adoration, but I'll never lift mine. People might think I'm weird," some say. When the worship leader ask the congregation to stand together in worship of the Lord with songs, some choose to remain seated with a rebellious attitude.

If that is the case, whom do you worship? If it is God, it really doesn't matter what the others think and even what you think. If it is people or your own image whom you care about, you have a major problem with God.

### 3) True worship is often misunderstood.

There will always be those in Judas' corner who say, "Quit trying to be so holy. Do something more practical." They will scrutinize your sincere motive of worship. Let them. But God loves your worship. However, if you are causing a lot of commotions and bringing attention to yourself instead of God, that is not worshipping the Lord.

### 4) True worship is always beneficial.

After Mary anointed her Lord Jesus, the people could smell the fragrance from all over the house. That's what worship does. When we're worshipping the Lord, we get to take on the fragrance of the Lord.

## D. THE DEFENSE OF JESUS FOR MARY

*Mark 14:6-8 But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. 7 For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. 8 She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial.*

Please note that Mary didn't defend herself to the grumblers for what she had done. She simply did what she felt led to do by the Spirit of God. In turn, Jesus Himself was defending her against these bozoes.

Please remember this: If you did what God told you to do according to His way, you don't have to defend yourself. You have the best attorney in the universe at your corner. Besides, He doesn't charge you \$200 per hour either.

No matter what others may say about our worship and service, the most important thing is that we please the Lord. The fact that others misunderstand and criticize us should not keep us from showing our love to Christ. Our concern should be His approval alone.

By the way, how in the world did Mary knew to anoint Jesus for His burial? Because each of the three times we see this Mary in the Bible, she is at the feet of Christ. Apparently, Mary listened and believed the teaching of Jesus while the disciples didn't. When He said that He would be delivered into the hands of wicked men and mocked and scourged and crucified, she believed it.

Here are a few things about Worship we should remember:

**1) Worship is not the mumbling of prayers or the mouthing of praise and worship songs with little thought and less heart.**

We need to celebrate our God when we join together earnestly in prayers and intensely in song.

**2) Worship is not begrudging the offering of money that we are allowed have from the Lord.**

We need to understand when we give our financial resources to Him with our gladness, He allows us to be a part of His master plan.

**3) Worship is not a distracted endurance of the sermon.**

We choose to hear God's guidance, encouragement, reproof, rebuke, correction and instruction to be more like His Son Jesus.

**4) Worship is not feeling like being forced to live an uncorrupted life.**

We not only live holy life for His glory, but also we become His extended hands and feet to touch the people who need Him desperately in their hearts.

## **E. IN REMEMBRANCE OF MARY**

*Mark 14:9 Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."*

If it were not for Mary, her village, Bethany, would probably have been forgotten. The account of her deed was a blessing to the early church that heard about it and, because of the records in three of the Gospels, Mary has been a blessing to the whole world – and still is! The Lord's prediction has certainly been fulfilled.

The disciples longed for fame and influence, but this woman is the one who finds an enduring memorial. She found it not by longing for a position, but simply by loving Jesus and serving Him.

I know what you ladies are thinking, "Girls are better than boys."

## **F. CHALLENGE**

**How pure, how deep, how lavish is your love for Christ? If it can be bottled, would it be sweet fragrance to our God or would it be a stench to Him because of our unwillingness and selfishness? Our worship and lives should be lavish displays of our love to Jesus, because He alone deserves it all.**

People of God, would you pour it all out as we worship Him this morning? Don't hold back. Don't worry about what others might think. Give Him all you've got, after all, He gave you His best Jesus Christ. Let your worship rise to the Throne of Grace and let Him enjoy our praise and worship.