

“SHE HAS DONE A BEAUTIFUL THING TO ME”

Mark 14:1-11

Key Verse: 14:9

“I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

In today's passage, a woman comes to Jesus and shows her love for him in a very dramatic way. She pours a whole jar of perfume on his head. Some people criticized her for wasting so much money. But Jesus accepted her love. He said, “She has done a beautiful thing to me.” Let us think about this beautiful story so that we can also do beautiful things to Jesus.

I. HOW TO CELEBRATE THE PASSOVER (1-2)

Look at verses 1-2. *Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. “But not during the Feast,” they said, “or the people may riot.”* It was two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Israelites celebrated the Passover to commemorate the grace of God when the angel of the Lord passed over their homes while all the firstborn sons in Egypt were killed (Ex 12:13,23,27). The homes of the Israelites had the blood of a lamb smeared on their doorposts. The Feast of Unleavened Bread followed the Passover and lasted seven days (Ex 12:15-20). This feast reminded them of the hasty departure from Egypt. They baked their bread without yeast. These two feasts reminded them the grace of God who had set them free from the slavery in Egypt. All male Jews 12 and above living within 15 miles of Jerusalem were required to travel to the city and observe the festivals every year. So during these feasts, the population of Jerusalem swelled to several hundred thousands from about 50,000. The city bustled with people who were in a festive mood. We remember a story of the boy Jesus who traveled to the city with his parents. Now Jesus was in town to become the sacrificial Lamb for another Passover. He was going to die on the cross for the sins of the world. His precious blood would be spilled to save us from our sin and death.

Among the crowd were some people who were conspiring to kill Jesus. They were none other than the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They celebrated the Passover, but their hearts were far from God. They were only focused on their political agenda. They were like some people today who think more about making Christmas profits than the meaning of Jesus' birth. The religious leaders were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him (1). But they were afraid of the public opinion. “But not during the Feast,” they said, “or the people may riot.” In this kind of atmosphere Jesus was preparing for his upcoming crucifixion as the Lamb of God.

II. A WOMAN'S LOVE (3-5)

Look at verse 3. *While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on*

his head. Jesus was in Bethany located in the outskirts of Jerusalem. A very unusual event took place as Jesus was having a meal at Simon's home. A woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, broke the jar and poured it on Jesus' head. The Gospel of John tells us that this woman was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (Jn 12:3). Pure nard was a perfume made from the aromatic oil extracted from the root of a plant grown mainly in India. It was very expensive. The whole house was filled with its fragrance (Jn 12:3). Most likely the alabaster jar of pure nard was the most precious thing Mary possessed. We know that she was not from a rich family. It must have taken many years to save up enough money to buy the perfume. Perhaps she had been saving it for her wedding. So why did Mary pour the whole jar of perfume on Jesus when one or two drops would have been sufficient to make him smell good?

The only answer we can think of is that this was how she wanted to express her love towards Jesus. She was pouring out her love on Jesus when she poured the whole jar of perfume on him. She was so thankful to Jesus and she loved him so much that even the whole jar of perfume wasn't enough. She would have poured more if she had more. Why was Mary so thankful to Jesus? She had lived a sinful life, following her worldly desires before she met Jesus. She enjoyed some sinful pleasures here and there, but she was not happy. We know from the story of a Samaritan woman that a woman who seeks happiness in men is often disappointed. The Samaritan woman was thirsty and lonely, even after going through five marriages, until she met Jesus. But Jesus changed her life. She was so happy that she left behind her water jar at the well and ran to her people to give a life testimony. Likewise, Mary was unhappy until she met Jesus. Jesus gave her a new life. He did not condemn her but forgave her sins. Jesus came into her heart. Jesus became more precious to her than anything in this world. Life was worthy living because Jesus gave her a true meaning and purpose of life and a hope for eternal life. She no longer had to put on heavy makeup to please men. She became even prettier without any makeup as her heart was filled with joy and hope in Jesus. Now Mary brought her cherished perfume and anointed Jesus with it.

Knowing the grace of God is very important. There are two kinds of Christians. One is those who don't really appreciate the grace of God. They are blessed abundantly by God, but they don't thank God from their hearts. Rather, they complain a lot even when small things bother them. They have no peace and joy in them. The other is those who know the grace of God and express their gratitude to God. They remember the sacrifice of Jesus for their sins. They have a deep inner joy even as they go through many trials in life. This is what St. Paul did. As a missionary to the Gentile, Paul suffered a lot. He was often beaten and thrown into prison for preaching the gospel of Jesus. But he always remembered the grace of Jesus. Because he remembered how Jesus saved him from his sins, he would get up in the morning every day with a desire to serve him.

One missionary I know used to enjoy watching movies as a young man. As a medical student, he had to study hard most time and watched movies whenever he had any time left. Since Jesus came into his heart, however, he would not spend his time for himself only. Instead, he spent his time to serve the work of God. All his life, he served young students by sharing the word of God with them. Even when he got old and was working the long hours of the night shift at a hospital, he would study the Bible with students after work before he could find time to sleep. He was willing to participate in Jesus' suffering this way because he knew the grace of Jesus. Upon his retirement, he and his wife went to Uganda as silver missionaries. They continue to serve young people

there with the word of God. I am sure they want to spend time with their grandchildren. But in this way, they are bringing their fragrant hearts to Jesus.

Let us think about once again why Mary expressed her love for Jesus in such dramatic way. Since Jesus came into her heart, Jesus became her source of joy, because he set her free from her sin and death and gave a new life. Jesus meant everything to her now. She wanted to show her love for Jesus somehow. But she did not have much to give him. The only valuable possession she had was her cherished perfume. She brought it to him, broke the jar, and poured the whole jar on Jesus. She poured out her heart on Jesus. The Gospel of Luke says that she was weeping while she poured the perfume on Jesus. Her tears of joy and gratitude were raining down on Jesus' feet. She wiped his feet with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them (Lk 7:38). She expressed her love for Jesus in this way because she knew the grace of Jesus who saved her from her sins.

Again, it is very important for us to remember what Jesus has done for us. By the precious blood of Jesus we have been forgiven. Sadly we often forget this wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus. We are like some children who are delighted to get a toy present one day, but soon forget the person who gave them the gift. But Jesus wants us to be grateful for his grace. There is a reason why God wants us to be thankful. And it is for us more than for him. Ungrateful people are unhappy people. Do you know any really happy person who complains all the time?



Look at verses 4-5. *Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.* John tells us that it was Judas Iscariot who voiced this objection. From a human point of view, what Mary did was a waste. And helping the poor would certainly be consistent with what Jesus taught. But John also tells us that Judas Iscariot said this not because he cared about the poor but because he loved the money. Because of his materialistic mindset, he could not see beyond the spilled perfume. She loved Jesus so much that she gave everything she had to Jesus. She poured out her own heart on Jesus. But Judas was blind to the loving heart of the woman.

III. A BEAUTIFUL THING (6-9)

How did Jesus see this woman? Look at verse 6. *"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.* Jesus said that she had done a beautiful thing to him. Why? To Jesus, her pouring the expensive perfume on him was not a waste. It was an act of love. Jesus knew that Mary had brought her most cherished possession to him. She poured the expensive perfume on him as an expression of her love for him. It was out of her gratitude and love. Her love was genuine. She loved him so much that pouring one or two drops of the perfume was not enough. She refused to count the cost of the perfume. It was a beautiful act of love.

Jesus saw her heart. Judas saw only the money down the drain. But Jesus saw her beautiful heart offering. This is important for us to know. Our Lord Jesus sees our hearts. When the friends of a paralytic dug through the roof of a house, making a lot of mess, Jesus did not see their destructive behavior. Instead he saw their faith (Mk 2:5). He saw their compassionate heart towards their friend. People only see our actions, but Jesus sees our hearts. He sees our motives. There is no waste in our effort, time, and material that are offered to the Lord, if we offer them as an expression of our love for Jesus.

Look at verses 7-8. *The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.* Jesus not only accepted her act of love as a beautiful thing, but also gave a spiritual meaning that she didn't even realize. He accepted her offering and honored it as an anointing of his body for burial in his redemptive history. Look at verse 9. *I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.*" Wow. Jesus blessed this woman by including her act of love as a part of his gospel work.

Sometimes we wonder if what we are doing is a waste of time and effort. Especially after spending so much time trying to help one student and praying for him wholeheartedly and not seeing any noticeable change in him, we become frustrated. But we learn here that God accepts our heart's desire as long as our motive is pure. Jesus values not only the outcome but the heart. Therefore, we shouldn't lose heart after doing good work for Jesus. Let us pray that we may bring our most cherished thing to our Lord Jesus who has given us his life to save us. Let us think about how we can do a beautiful thing to our Lord Jesus.

IV. A BETRAYER (10-11)

Look at verses 10-11. *Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.* The author Mark juxtaposes one man's love of money with one woman's beautiful love of the Lord. Judas was the keeper of the money bag among the disciples. John says that he used to help himself what was put into it (Jn 12:6). Judas followed Jesus and witnessed the wonderful work of God. But he did not commit his life fully to Jesus because of one thing. He loved money more than Jesus. Money is useful, but the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1Ti 6:10). Judas followed Jesus, but he calculated again and again and used Jesus to satisfy the desires of his heart. When Jesus talked about the upcoming suffering and cross, he sensed that his desires weren't going to be fulfilled. He couldn't see his future with Jesus any more. He wanted to get out before it was too late. Finally, Satan entered into his uncommitted heart and led him to do the unthinkable--to betray the Lord. He became a prey of Satan (Lk 22:3; Jn 13:27). We learn that we must commit our hearts fully to the Lord and must not give room for the devil.

Like Mary, we must come to Jesus with our most valuable thing to express our love for him. May God help us to know the grace of God who sent Jesus to set us free from our sin and death! May God help us to have a true joy and happiness by remembering the grace of God and do beautiful things to please him!