

Offering Our Best to God

Text: Mark 14:3-9 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.⁴ And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? ⁵ For it might have been sold for more than *three hundred pence* (*note: modern equivalent = 300 denarius or 300 days wages*), and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. ⁶ And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.⁷ For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. ⁸ *She hath done what she could*: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. ⁹ Verily I say unto you, **Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.**

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Introduction: The story of the woman with an alabaster box anointing Jesus is found in all four gospels: **Matthew 26:6-13**; **Mark 14:3-9** (*our text*); **Luke 7:36-48**; and **John 12:1-7**. There has been much controversy among bible scholars, through the years, concerning contradictions found between the stories.

Matthew, Mark, and John tell the same basic story:

- *Matthew, Mark, and John* - the supper took place in Bethany.
- *Matthew and Mark* – the supper was at the house of Simon the Leper. *John* doesn't mention the owner, only that Martha served and Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.
- *Matthew, Mark, and John* - set the timing of the supper close to the Passover and the Crucifixion
- *John* names the woman as Mary of Bethany (*sister of Martha and Lazarus*). *Matthew and Mark* do not name the woman
- *Matthew, Mark, and John* - include the protest against the wastefulness of the ointment
- *Matthew and Mark* provide the statement Jesus made concerning the woman, “*Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*” *John* does not include this in his story.

The controversy is in Luke's account of the story:

- Luke timeline for the supper was just after the miracle of the raising of the widow of Nain's son – a long time before the end of Jesus' ministry.
- Luke names the owner of the house as Simon the Pharisee – not Simon the Leper
- Luke doesn't name the woman but states, she was a great sinner. Jesus doesn't dispute the fact that she had been a great sinner and told Simon the parable of the creditor with two debtors: (*500 & 50 pence*)
- Jesus said to the woman, “Thy sins are forgiven” and “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace”. *Matthew and Mark* state that Jesus told the woman, “*Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*”

Since Luke's account is so different, HOW DO WE FIT IT IN WITH THE OTHER STORIES?

This is where faith comes in: We simply believe the Scriptures to be True and without Error!

By faith, we believe: Luke's account is not the same event!

- The supper happened exactly as was stated in *Luke* but at an earlier time than the supper recorded in *Matthew, Mark, and John*.
- Simon the Leper is a different person from Simon the Pharisee: *It was extremely common to have the same name in first century Judea and Galilee. The top nine names made up roughly 40% of the population. The high concentration meant people often used qualifiers – like “of Nazareth” or “the son of” – to distinguish individuals. - Simon was the most common name for a man & Mary the most common name for a woman (ref.: Google AI).*

➤ The unnamed woman identifies as a “great sinner” in *Luke* was not Mary of Bethany. We know that Mary had been a disciple of Jesus for some time prior to this supper. (ref.: *Luke 10:38 and John 11*)

I. Why this story is still relevant and important today?

(1). *THIS STORY IS RELEVANT TODAY BECAUSE: WE ARE COMMANDED BY CHRIST TO TELL IT IN HONOR OF MARY.* Jesus commanded every minister and teacher, in every generation, to tell this story: **Mark 14:9** Verily I say unto you, *Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.*

IF THERE WASN'T ANY OTHER REASON, BUT TO OBEY THE COMMANDMENT OF CHRIST, IT WOULD BE ENOUGH OF A REASON TO TELL THIS STORY TO EVERY GENERATION!

(2). *THIS STORY IS RELEVANT TODAY BECAUSE: It illustrates to every generation HOW TO APPROACH GOD:*

○ *With Reverence and Worship: Psalms 96:11-12* Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. - MARY APPROACHED CHRIST WITH RECOGNITION OF WHO HE WAS – HER LORD AND SAVIOR!

○ *With Humility: Matthew 23:11-12* ...he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. MARY APPROACHED CHRIST WITH HUMILITY – SHE BOWED AT HIS FEET!

(3). *THIS STORY IS RELEVANT TODAY BECAUSE: It is a Powerful Lesson on FAITH: Obstacles Mary had to overcome to OBEY HER HEART:*

○ COST - the tremendous cost of the gift – almost a year’s worth of wages (*300 pence or 300 denarius*). Evidentially, she was not a rich lady. She was in Simon’s home. Did she own a home of her own?

○ FEAR - a room full of men – woman at that time were NOT thought of as an EQUAL to MEN

○ PRIDE – **John 12:3** Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, *and anointed the feet of Jesus,* and *wiped his feet with her hair:* and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

○ RIDICULE and SCORN – **Mark 14:4-5** And there were *some that had indignation within themselves,* and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and have been given to the poor. *And they murmured against her.*

(4). *THIS STORY IS RELEVANT TODAY BECAUSE: It shows us WHAT IT TAKES TO PLEASE CHRIST: CHRIST WAS PLEASED WHEN SHE HAD OFFERED HER BEST!*

Mark 14:8 *She hath done what she could:*

What is “our best” in the eyes of God?

❖ *1st let’s look at What God WILL NOT ACCEPT: HE WON’T ACCEPT JUST ANY OFFERING!* **Malachi 1: 8,10** And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts... I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

❖ *OUR BEST IS ACCORDING TO OUR INDIVIDUAL ABILITY:*

○ *The one with two talents – two talents - Matthew 25:22-23* He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

○ *The Poor Widow – two mites – Luke 21:3* And he (Jesus) said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:

- *The Rich Young Ruler* – THE COST - all of his possessions – **Luke 10:21** ...One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

(5). *THIS STORY IS RELEVANT TODAY BECAUSE: It illustrates **HOW THE GIFTS WE BRING TO CHRIST ARE RETURNED TO US MANY TIMES ABOVE THEIR ORIGINAL VALUE:***

Luke 7:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.

Mark 10:29-30 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

Malichi 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

II. WHO WAS THE WOMAN IN OUR STORY? MARY OF BETHANY– NOT MARY MAGDALENE

Things we know about Mary of Bethany:

- *Mary was - an ordinary woman of her times: Mary of Bethany, sister to Martha and Lazarus – she was not an apostle – not a Pharisee – not a scribe – not a bible scholar – NOT above any of us in any way!*
- *Mary was a devote follower of Christ – she, Martha, Lazarus were close friends of Jesus - AS ALL CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE!*
- *Mary had a spiritual hunger for the teachings of Christ – AS ALL CHRISTIANS SHOULD!*
- *Mary knew what it was like to kneel at the feet of Jesus – she had already been there before!*
- *Mary had a heart of love for Christ that touched Him and motivated her!*
- *Mary followed through – She did what she could! She obeyed the voice of the Spirit inside her!*

III. Closing: *To sum up my thoughts on this story.* I want to close-out with the other scripture of my TEXT: **Hebrews 11:6** *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

We see in this scripture a lot that helps us with the story of Mary and the alabaster box of ointment:

- Faith is the only way we can please God – in fact, its impossible to please God any other way!
Mary came by faith not caring what others thought about her or knowing how her gift would be accepted!
- Through Faith - we recognize that God is the One and Only God - we believe that He is!
Mary knelt before her Savior – She believed that Jesus was the Son of God!
- *Mary understood afterwards that Jesus was (is) – a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him!*

Mary was rewarded with a legacy of honor on earth that extends into every generation of Christians!

Mary was rewarded with an invitation to bow before her Savior throughout all eternity!

No one scoffs or ridicules her today when she enters into the throne room of heaven to see her Savior as he sits upon his throne in all of his splendor and glory!