

Daily Devotional, April 8, 2020 Live The Gospel

Mark 14:3-9 New International Version
(NIV)

³ While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of 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. ⁴ Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? ⁵ It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. ⁶ "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. ⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

When Mary of Bethany broke her alabaster jar and anointed the head and feet of Jesus with her costly perfume, the disciples were indignant at her waste. Such valuable wares were now lost, they complained. These riches should have been sold and the money given to the poor, they protested. Over a year's wages would have gone a long way, they whined. And they rebuked her. They scolded her harshly for an act of love they judged too costly. What a waste! they cried. Imagine—too costly to be wasted on the King of Kings!

Jesus in turn rebuked His disciples and praised Mary. He will always applaud love shown to another, especially when it is a gift given at great sacrifice. We are told that it was very expensive. Mary must have counted the cost as quite insignificant when regarding the gift of life Jesus had given her brother, Lazarus, which was worth far more to her than this nard.

Much as the day Mary sat at Jesus' feet, basking in His every word, it would seem that Mary had again chosen what was better (Luke 10:38-42). In Jesus's evaluation, just as she had chosen the best use of her time, she had now chosen the best use of her assets. And in total approval of her act, Jesus said: "I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the whole world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Mary's story is well known and has been held in high regard among believers for centuries. And just as Jesus said, wherever the gospel is preached what she did will also be told.

As I mused over these words, I came to realize that it's not that the actual story of Mary's anointing of Jesus would be told when preaching the gospel, but that the anointing at Bethany **is** the gospel. That is, it is a picture of the gospel. When we hear that Mary's alabaster jar was broken, and its cherished substance poured out. We realize that Jesus' body was broken, as well, and His precious blood poured out. She did it for love. So did He.

The exposure of the complaint of waste now becomes surprisingly clear. No wonder Jesus rebuked the disciples. Although I'm certain that their objections were well intended, they had no idea what they were suggesting for they had no idea that Mary, through her act that night, was preaching Jesus' gospel. A gospel of great cost. A gospel of great sacrifice. A gospel of great love, hidden in plain view.

Forgetting herself, Mary broke her alabaster jar, symbolically showing that very soon the Master would do likewise. Because of His great love, Jesus' death was the breaking of an alabaster box for us. Shouldn't our lives be the same for Him?

Prayer: Thank you, Mary, for not only showing us the best use of our time and the best use of our treasures, but for forgetting yourself and showing us how to live the gospel. Through your costly sacrifice, we only begin to understand what true giving looks like. Jesus, help us to be more like Mary as we are compelled to not only honor you, but to show care and honor and love to those around us who go through life without. Grant us the courage and the empathy to reach out and care. Jesus, in your most holy name we pray, Amen.