

# Mary Did What She Could

Mr 14:3 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, 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. Mark 14:3-9

## Introduction:

1. A Christian businessman was traveling in Korea. In a field by the side of the road was a young man pulling a rude plow while an old man held the handles. The businessman was amused and took a snapshot of the scene. 'I suppose these people are very poor,' he said to the missionary who was interpreter and guide to the party. 'Yes,' was the quiet reply, 'those two men are Christians. When their church building was being built, they were eager to give something toward it, but they had no money. So they decided to sell their one and only ox and give the proceeds to the church. This spring they are pulling the plow themselves.' 'The businessman was silent for some moments. Then he said, 'That must have been a real sacrifice.' 'They did not call it that,' said the missionary. 'They thought themselves fortunate that they had an ox to sell!' When that businessman reached home, he took the picture to his pastor and told him all about it.

Then he added, 'I want to double my giving to the church and do some plow work. Up until now I have never given God anything that involved real sacrifice.'

2. Our text today is about that kind of sacrifice.

a. It's about the kind of sacrifice that is supposed to mark the life of every single believer.

b. It is the kind of sacrifice mentioned by Paul in Romans 12:1

Ro 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service.*

3. The Context.

a. Jesus is on His way to Calvary.

b. As He goes, a woman expresses the depths of her love and devotion to Him by a costly sacrifice.

c. Her labor of love is misunderstood by others, but it is commended by the Lord himself

d. He tells those around Him that she has done all she could do, and that her sacrifice will be remembered and rehearsed forever

e. I am fulfilling that prophecy today

4. I want us to look at this passage and consider the thought, Mary Did What She Could.

5. As we think about the sacrifice she made, we need to ask ourselves the question: Have we done what we could for Him?

## I. THE PARTICULARS IN THE ANOINTING - VS 3

3 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.

### A. *The Place*

1. The place of the anointing was a banquet at the house of Simon the leper
2. Jesus and the disciples were invited to this banquet
3. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were also invited
  - a) *Some attended the banquet to see Simon, who had been healed of leprosy by Jesus*
  - b) *Some attended the banquet because they wanted to talk to Lazarus who had been dead and was raised by Jesus*

## **B. The Person - "a woman"**

1. John's account tells us that it was Mary of Bethany who anointed Jesus
  - a) *She is mentioned 3x in Scripture and was always found at the feet of Jesus*
  - b) *Remember when Jesus was visiting in their house and Martha was cumbered with much serving*
2. Mary is the lady who anointed the Savior with this perfume
3. In Bible days many people would save their entire lives to be able to purchase this kind of ointment for their own burial someday
4. I suppose that Mary gave to Jesus the ointment that she had purchased and was saving for her own funeral

## **C. The Price**

1. The text tells us that this alabaster box of ointment was very expensive - very precious
2. Vs 5 says that this ointment was valued at 300 pence.
  - a) *A pence was the daily wage of the average worker.*
  - b) *This ointment was worth almost a year's wages*
3. The alabaster box had to be broken
  - a) *There was not a screw on cap*

- b) *One couldn't pour out some of the ointment and save the rest*
- c) *Once opened, all the ointment had to be used*

The Particulars in the Anointing....

## **II. THE PROTESTING OF THE ANOINTING - VS 4-5**

### **A. The Criticism - vs 4**

**4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?**

1. Mary's action broke the social rules of the day
  - a) *Women were to stay in the background*
  - b) *They were never to be the center of attention*
  - c) *What Mary did was so unusual and so out of the ordinary that people immediately began to murmur against her.*
2. Harrison's postulate - "For every action there is an equal and opposite criticism."
3. "Why was this expensive ointment wasted in anointing Jesus?"
4. John tells us that Judas was the main complainer along with some of the disciples
5. I guess that it did not occur to Judas and the other detractors that that the same criticism that they were leveling at Mary could also have been said about Simon the leper who had spent a great deal of money preparing the great, generous meal that they were about to eat
6. One of the greatest acts of worship was being called a waste by the disciples

### **B. The Suggestion - vs 5**

**5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.**

1. This ointment could have been sold and the money given to the poor
2. Jn 12:6 tells us that Judas Iscariot initiated the complaining and he

was the treasurer and stole from the money

Protesting in the Anointing....

### III. THE PRAISE FOR THE ANOINTING - VS 6-8

#### A. "Let Her Alone" - vs 6

6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

1. "Trouble" indicates that the criticism really got to Mary
2. It was harsh and cruel and really bothered Mary
3. Jesus said that Mary had done a good thing
4. In a week Jesus would be dead
  - a) *This banquet took place on the Friday before the triumphal entry*
  - b) *Jesus would be dead soon and it would happen so quickly that there would not be time to anoint the body of Jesus*
  - c) *Mary anointed Jesus' body before his death*
  - d) *If Mary had not anointed his body, it never would have been anointed*
  - e) *Remember on Resurrection Sunday that women went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, but they found the stone was rolled away and the body of Jesus was gone. He arose. They did not get to anoint the body of Christ.*

#### B. "She Has Done What She Could" - vs 7-8

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.

1. They could give to the poor anytime. There will always be poor people to help
2. Mary did a good thing because she realized that Christ would not be around much longer

3. Mary did all that she could in the area of sacrifice
  - a) *Mary gave all that she had*
    - (1) Mary gave all she had to Jesus for His glory!
    - (2) I wonder have we broken the alabaster box of our lives and poured out ourselves, every drop for Him?
    - (3) This is the thought that occupied the mind of Paul as he faced his own death  
*2Ti 4:6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*
  - b) *Have we given all to Jesus?*
    - (1) We should look at our lives and ask ourselves if we have given everything we have and are to Him.
    - (2) You see, Mary's sacrifice was the ultimate expression of her love and worship of the Lord Jesus.
    - (3) She gave all that she had!
    - (4) Have we placed everything we are on the altar for Him?
    - (5) What have you given to Him and what have you help back for yourself or for another?
4. Mary did all that she could in the area of service
  - a) *There were many things Mary could not do for Jesus, but in anointing Him with that box of costly ointment, she was giving Him all she had.*
  - b) *Her service was absolute.*
  - c) *The critics started wagging their tongues*
  - d) *Jesus told them that Mary had responded to a once in a lifetime opportunity to serve the Lord – vs 7*
5. Mary did all that she could in the area of surrender
  - a) *Her act of love and worship made a big statement concerning Who she believed Jesus to be*

- b) *There were four classes of people who were anointed in Bible days*
- (1) Kings - 2 Kings 9:3
  - (2) Priests - Ex. 29:7
  - (3) Prophets - 1 Kings 19:16
  - (4) The dead - John 19:39-40; Luke 23:56; Mark 16:1
- c) *By her selfless act, Mary was acknowledging that Jesus was all of those things to her*
- d) *Certainly, Jesus is all of those things.*
- (1) He is the King of Kings - Rev. 19:16
  - (2) He is the Great High Priest - Heb. 3:1
  - (3) He is the Prophet - Matt. 13:31
  - (4) He was dead, but is alive forevermore - Rev. 1:18.
- e) *This is what Mary believed about Jesus and she demonstrated her surrender to Him as all those things by her act of love and worship*

### **c. She Will Be Remembered - vs 9**

9 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

1. Jesus promised that the praise for Mary's anointing would go on as long as the gospel was preached
2. Jesus would never forget this act of love by Mary and Jesus will never let us forget it either
3. Preachers have been preaching on Mary's sacrifice for over 2000 yrs

Conclusion:

1. What does it take to please the Lord?
  - a. How much service is necessary to please the Lord?
  - b. How many good works are needed to please the Lord?

- c. What does it take to be a good preacher, deacon, church member, Sunday school teacher, choir member etc?
2. Do what you can.
  - a. That is all that it took to please the Lord - “She has done what she could.”
  - b. Maybe you can no longer do what you used to be able to do - do what you can.
  - c. Maybe you can’t do as much as someone else, do what you can.
  - d. Love wants to do something - do what you can.
    1. She loved the Lord who saved her
    2. She looked over and saw her brother Lazarus and Mary and was so thankful that the Lord raised him - she had to do something - so she did what she could.
3. Do all you can
  - a. Mary broke the alabaster box
  - b. That meant that she had to use all the ointment.
  - c. She couldn’t use just a little and replace the lid and use the rest of the ointment for her own funeral.
  - d. There was not a drop left in the alabaster container - she gave all that she could
4. Mary gave the most valuable thing that she owned because of her love for the Lord
  - a. Have we ever expressed our love to the Lord for all that He has done for us?
  - b. “Lord I just want to tell you that I love you and I don’t know how else to do it, except to take the most valuable thing I have and give it to You.”
  - c. “So I offer you my life, Lord. It is yours to make into whatever you want it to be.”

5. John Gordon was a respected general for the South in the Civil War. After the war, he was running for the United States Senate, but a man who had served under him in the war, angry over some political incident, was determined to see him defeated. Everyone knew this man would fight Gordon's bid to become a senator.

During the convention, he angrily stomped down the aisle with his anti-Gordon vote in hand. As he saw Gordon sitting on the platform, he noticed how his once handsome face was disfigured with the scars of battle -- marks of his willingness to suffer and bleed for a cause he believed in.

The old soldier was stricken with remorse. Overcome with emotion, he exclaimed, "It's no use; I can't do it. Here's my vote for John Gordon." Then, turning to the general, he said, "Forgive me, General. I had forgotten the scars."

What a difference it makes in our lives when we remember the scars! With so many things to distract us, we don't often take time each day to reflect on what Jesus went through on the cross for us. But, when we are tempted to stray, it is a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice that has the power to draw us back to him.

May I encourage you this morning to take a moment to pause and "remember the scars"

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