

EXTRAVAGANT LOVE Sunday School- February 28, 2010

Unifying Topic: ANOINTED BY A WOMAN IN BETHANY

Lesson Text

I. The Messiah Anointed For Death (Matthew 26:6-7)

III. Mary Is Criticized For Her Sacrifice (Matthew 26:8-9)

III. Jesus Reprimands The Disciples (Matthew 26:10-13)

The Main Thought: Verily I say unto you, 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. (Matthew 26:13, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Persons who truly love find ways to demonstrate that love. Can we ever give too much love? Jesus commended a woman who gave extravagantly out of her love for Jesus as Messiah.

Lesson Aim: Mary anointed Jesus' feet in Bethany, which was a sacrificial act of divine love. Christians who love Jesus can find many ways to demonstrate their love to others in a similar manner.

Life aim: Christians should find different ways to demonstrate their love through giving.

26:6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

26:7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

26:8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

26:9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

26:10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

26:11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

26:12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

26:13 Verily I say unto you, 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.

HISTORY:

Matthew 26:1-5 - ¹Jesus tells His disciples that He will be crucified in 2 days at the Passover Feast.

It was a lamb that was killed at the first Passover when God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt. A perfect lamb was killed and its blood was applied to the sides and the top of the wood of the door frame, forming a cross. And when the death angel approached he would "*pass over*" those homes where he saw the blood applied.

Every year thereafter the Jews would celebrate Passover and sacrifice another spotless lamb...but this year it would be the sinless, spotless, perfect Lamb of God, Who came to take away the sins of the world. He would voluntarily die giving His life for the world. No one would take His life from Him, and even death would not be able to hold His life!

Two scenes are pictured:

1. Jesus was intensely preparing His disciples for His death
2. And the religionists were behind closed doors demonically plotting His death.

Perhaps 2-3 million had gathered in Jerusalem for the feast, and many were fans of Jesus. Many were from Galilee where He was very popular. Many of these had lined the streets just a few days before singing His praises as He rode into town. So these religious leaders said, let's not cause an uproar, let's wait 'til after the Passover when all these people go home. But you can't foil the plans of God. He's still in full control even when circumstances seem they couldn't be any worse. And God is orchestrating everything according to His plan; and indeed, Jesus is right, He's going to be crucified at Passover in 2 days.

Preparing His Disciples:

There was the very possibility that the disciples could lose their faith when they saw Jesus being put to death by

¹ <http://www.gbcdecatur.org/sermons/GettingReadyForTheCross.html>

the hands of mere men. It could appear as though He was being forsaken by God! Jesus had to do everything He could to prepare them. There were four basic facts about His death that would help tremendously.

1. *Christ's death was tied to the Passover.* He was foretelling the disciples the exact day He was to be killed, and it was to be the very same day the Passover Lamb was to be sacrificed. As John the Baptist had proclaimed earlier. *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" Jh. 1:29, 36.*
2. *Christ's death was the son of Man Himself dying.* "Son of Man" means that He perfectly identified with man in human flesh and that He is the Ideal Man, the Man who lived a perfect and sinless life. It is the son of man who knows our trials and hurts, pain and suffering; who secured a perfect righteousness. Because He was the Ideal Man, His death can cover all men who call upon Him.
3. *Christ's death was caused by betrayal.* The betrayal was certain, immediate, staring Him right in the face.
4. *Christ's death was to be by crucifixion.*

Jesus did all He could to prepare His disciples for the great trial they were to face in witnessing His death.

Plot of Jesus' Death:

- Jesus' death was plotted by all the leaders: the chief priests, the Scribes, and the elders. They met deceptively in the home (palace) of the high priest, not in the official court. It was a secret plot to be kept quiet until the right moment for the arrest and murder. Caiaphas, the high priest himself took the lead; the very person who was supposed to be the spiritual leader of the people.
- Jesus' death was wrought by deception and lies. He was arrested on false charges and arrested quietly. Judas was able to show them where Jesus was and to quietly identify Him.

Notice how even the most religious can be gripped by the fear of losing position, power, recognition, esteem, and security. How worldly, how attached to the things of the world even the most religious become! They feared an uproar, so they waited until after the feast was over and until all the people had all left the city to arrest Jesus. The "feast day" refers to all eight days of the feast. There was the danger that the people might rally to support Jesus if they saw Him arrested.

LESSON:

Matthew 26:6-7: The Messiah Anointed For Death

Jesus was in the house of Simon the leper. Little is known about Simon. He was probably a leper who had been healed by Jesus. Tradition says he was the husband of Martha. **Six days before the Passover**, on the evening after the Sabbath, all Bethany and Bethphage joined in celebrating the arrival of Jesus by a public banquet at the home of Simon. This supper was in honor of both Jesus and Lazarus. Martha directed the serving of the food; her sister Mary was among the women onlookers as it was against the custom of the Jews for a woman to sit at a public banquet. The agents of the Sanhedrin were present, but they feared to apprehend Jesus in the midst of His friends. The banquet went along in a very cheerful and normal manner.

Mary, who was always sitting at Jesus' feet, sat there again, gazing into His eyes. As she gazed, she sensed a foreboding of trouble surrounding Him. She saw within His eyes a weight so heavy that she was drawn to express the most profound faith and appreciation in Him possible. She wanted to encourage Him, to show Him that she cared for and loved Him, so she arose to get the most precious thing she had to give Him. And she gave it in the most precious way she knew.

Nothing out of the ordinary happened until near the close of the feasting when Mary, the sister of Lazarus stepped forward from among the group of women onlookers and, going up to where Jesus reclined as the guest of honor, proceeded to open a large alabaster cruse of very rare and costly ointment. She anointed her Lord, even as David and all the kings of Israel had been anointed in the past. She anointed Him not from any official position, but from her heart. As told in *John 12:3*, after anointing the Master's head, she began to pour it upon his feet as she took down her hair and wiped them with it. The whole house became filled with the odor of the ointment, and everybody present was amazed at what Mary had done. It is for this reason that she lives in the memory of all as a memorial. Mary's love for Jesus was a most unusual love. The anointing was an act

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

of love and faith in the Lord Jesus.

Matthew 26:8-9: Mary Is Criticized For Her Sacrifice

Lazarus said nothing, but when the disciples murmured, showing indignation that so costly an ointment should be thus used, they say, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" This perfume filled the whole house. However, it was the cost that made it such a big deal; valued at approximately a year's wage. And perfume was a precious item to Eastern women. The disciples questioned the act. They considered it a waste. After all, if she wished to anoint Jesus, she could have used a less expensive perfume. If you are spending time with the Lord and sitting at His feet, some people will say, what a waste! You go to prayer and teacher's meeting and then also to bible study? People will say what a waste! When you give your best to Jesus, there will be some people who criticize your motives and they'll criticize your methods. Jesus is really saying that anything done for Him is not a waste. There's a lot of ways in today's world to waste time and money, but when it comes to giving time or treasure to God, it's nothing but a good investment!

POINT:

What they and the world fail to see is that true love has to be expressed in a personal way. Love is never known unless it is experienced and shared by the believer.

Matthew 26:10-13: Jesus Reprimands The Disciples

Jesus, knowing what they thought and hearing what they said, Jesus said: *"Let her alone, every one of you. Why do you trouble her about this, seeing that she has done a good thing in her heart? To you who murmur and say that this ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor, let me say that you have the poor always with you so that you may minister to them at any time it seems good to you; but I shall not always be with you; I go soon to my Father. This woman has long saved this ointment for my body at its burial, and now that it has seemed good to her to make this anointing in anticipation of my death, she shall not be denied such satisfaction. In the doing of this, Mary has reproved all of you in that by this act she evinces faith in what I have said about my death and ascension to my Father in heaven. This woman shall not be reproved for that which she has this night done; rather do I say to you that in the ages to come, wherever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, what she has done will be spoken of in memory of her."*

It may be because of this rebuke, which Judas Iscariot took as a personal reproof, that he finally made up his mind to seek revenge for his hurt feelings. Many times had he entertained such ideas subconsciously, but now he dared to think such wicked thoughts in his open and conscious mind. And many others encouraged him in this attitude since the cost of this ointment* was a sum equal to the earnings of one man for one year -- enough to provide bread for five thousand persons. But Mary loved Jesus; she had provided this precious ointment with which to embalm his body in death, for she believed His words when He forewarned them that He must die, and it was not to be denied her if she changed her mind and chose to bestow this offering upon the Master while he yet lived.

NOTE:

* The costly perfume is identified as nard, the aromatic oil extracted from a root native to India. To retain the fragrance of nard, enough ointment for one application was sealed in small alabaster flasks. The long neck of the flask had to be broken to release the aroma. The value of the perfume, and its identification as nard, suggests that it was a family heirloom that was passed on from one generation to another, from mother to daughter. This ointment was often used for anointing the body at burial. Jesus expected to be executed as a criminal and therefore he would be buried without being anointed.

POINT:

Jesus praises the woman's deed and motivation and does not want to have it limited to those present. He assures her that her deed will be related in remembrance of her wherever the Gospel

is preached, as an example to others. A reminder of a righteous person is a blessing for others. God's message of salvation and man's response in thankfulness may never be separated.

SUMMARY:

The first two verses of Matthew 26 contain our Lord's declarations regarding His imminent death. Jesus tells His disciples that He will be crucified in just two days, during Passover. No reaction from the disciples is recorded. Mary takes this occasion to worship and adore her Lord by anointing Him with an expensive fragrance. The disciples are incensed, protesting that this money could have been put to better use. Who is more worthy of this extravagance than Jesus? And yet the disciples are angry with her for being wasteful. Jesus sees more than just an act of adoration in what this woman has done; He sees preparation for His burial. She sees this, perhaps, as her final act of devotion to Jesus. Matthew's focus is on Mary at this moment. Mary seemed to have been listening more intently at Jesus' prediction of the manner and timing of His death (just two days away), than the disciples. It seemed to have little impact on the disciples. Perhaps it just went over their heads. However, **she** was preparing Him for His burial, and Jesus commended her worship as such.

When we come to the account of this anointing in John's Gospel, we find that it was Judas who protested regarding this "*waste*" of the precious substance. How befitting that it was Judas who objected. He believed that Jesus was not worthy of such extravagant worship. But here in Matthew, we have the disciples protesting. The disciples seemed to have foolishly joined with Judas in this protest. Yet, there is Mary with this expensive oil recognizing Jesus was about to leave her; about to die. The supreme value of what Jesus was doing for all people, rich and poor alike was not recognized by all.

There was no price that could be put on the oil, when you look at the ultimate price Christ was about to pay. There is no waste poured upon the head of the Messiah, the only Anointed One who gave His life for all. Mary's act of extravagant love toward the One who taught her, who comforted her, who gave hope, and who shared a life of wisdom every time they met, was her heart's response from the resource she had. Lip service was not enough. It came from the heart which is true worship! "*God looks at the heart, man looks outwardly*" *1Sam. 16:7*. And that's why she is to be recognized as a memorial—her true and unselfish devotion to Jesus extended right before His death!

APPLICATION:

How do we show our love and faith in/for Christ? Imagine how difficult it was for Mary to do what she did in the presence of so many. She set aside pride and shyness in order to demonstrate her love and faith in/for Him. How far are we willing to go in order to show our love and faith in/for Christ?