

Mark 14:1-9 (NIV)

Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. ² “But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.”

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.”

1. We’re in the final week of our Lord’s life. The Cross is on Friday
 - a. Jesus entered the city riding on a donkey
 - b. He entered the temple and cleansed it
 - c. He taught, He preached, He healed
 - d. In Ch. 13, He spoke of the last days
 - e. Now He's having dinner in Bethany

2. The feast they’re celebrating is Passover
 - a. A monumental celebration feast where a couple of million people crowd Jerusalem

- b. A time remembering their freedom from Egypt
 - c. It marks that great day when the armies of the Egyptians were drowned into the sea as they walked on dry land
 - i. It began by a lamb being sacrificed and its blood used to cover the door of the house
3. The teachers of the law who knew the Old Testament have other plans
- a. They're not thinking of celebration
 - b. The Sanhedrin has every intent on killing Jesus and taking Him by trickery,
 - c. They didn't want to do it during Passover.
 - i. People consider Him to be a prophet
 - 1. A riot may start
 - 2. "Later would be better"
 - d. **It's amazing how we like to believe we have things under control**
 - i. We believe all of our plans are under our control
 - e. Hudson Taylor had definite convictions about how God's work should be done. We can make our best plans and try to carry them out in our own strength. Or we can make careful plans and ask God to bless them. "Yet another way of working is to begin with God; to ask His plans, and to offer ourselves to Him to carry out His purposes."

- f. God had a specific plan for Jesus to be the sacrificial lamb on Passover
- g. From the time of Moses till Christ (about 1400 years)
 - i. Every lamb was a picture of Christ who was to come
- h. **God's plan prevailed**
 - i. Judas offered to bring Jesus in quietly and they couldn't resist
 - ii. God's plan will always prevail

4. Jesus is now in Bethany (not far from Jerusalem)

- a. This is where Martha, Mary and Lazarus live
- b. He's in the home of Simon
 - i. A former leper who hosted Jesus to a dinner
- c. **Why is Jesus in the home of Simon the leper?**
- d. Jesus goes where He is invited
 - i. Many lepers were healed who took the healing and ran
 - ii. Others will take time to fellowship with Jesus after the healing
 - iii. It's not just a healing that we need, it's Jesus personally

➤ A beautiful thing

- I. A beautiful act of pure love
- II. A beautiful gesture of considerable sacrifice
- III. A beautiful gesture filled with meaning / burial
- IV. A beautiful model to follow

I. A beautiful act of pure love

1. As a jeweler places diamond against a black velvet the Holy Spirit and His human writer Mark skillfully highlight the radiance of a woman's love for our Lord between the dark plotting of the religious hierarchy and that of Judas (**MacDonald**)
2. Dinner is served to honor the Master
 - a. Meals lasted several hours
3. **Mary (Martha and Lazarus' sister) interrupts the dinner with a selfless expression of love**
4. It was not customary for women to join the men at the table except to serve
 - a. Mary didn't care about that
5. Her offering cost her criticism
 - a. Mary didn't care about that
6. This gift was not easy to replace

- a. Mary didn't care about that
7. She simply wanted to express her deep love, devotion to her Lord
- a. It was with total abandonment and disregard
8. When the Bible mentions Mary,
- a. She is at the feet of the Master
 - b. She is running toward the Master
 - c. She is pouring spikenard over the Master
 - i. Mary has a love for Jesus
 - ii. It's not that we love God, but that He loves us
 - iii. Her love is a reflection of His love for her
 - b. She probably caught this love while sitting at His feet
 - c. **Luke 10:38** Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."
41 And Jesus answered and said to her, "**Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.**"
 - d. Since love is an action, Mary had to express it somehow

II. A beautiful gesture of considerable sacrifice

1. The alabaster filled with oil an expensive and precious thing to have
2. Mary, offer Jesus a nice prayer,
 - a. a nice meal,
 - b. Give a few coins to the poor...
 - c. You're going to do what?
3. The perfume and bottle are for your wedding?
4. OK, you don't need to break the box, save it
 - a. The translucent box was not cheap
 - b. The ointment was imported and cost a year's wages
 - c. Brides use this as an investment or dowry for their spouse
 - d. Great investments because the boxes were small, and easy to sell
5. Mary, you will probably never be able to afford to replace it
6. **Why are you breaking the box?**
 - a. The contents and the container belong to Him
 - b. God loves broken vessels
7. Mary learned something sitting at Jesus' feet

8. When you truly love someone, you give them your very best
 - c. All you have
9. When you've seen love in the eyes of the Master for you, you're not thinking how you can offer Him the very least
 - a. You want to give Him everything
10. Someone asks, what should I offer to Jesus?
 - a. What's my alabaster box?
 - b. God is not demanding anything from you
 - c. A true love relationship doesn't demand anything
 - d. No one told Mary to get an alabaster box & break it before Jesus
 - e. Its beauty was in the spontaneous act coming from a heart of love for the Master and only for Him
 - f. No one can tell me what to offer Jesus
 - g. It must be an expression of my love back to Him
11. The secret is what is precious to me?
12. I'm to offer whatever that most precious thing is to me
 - a. My family
 - b. My career

- c. My investments
 - i. All of it belongs to Jesus

III. A beautiful gesture filled with meaning / burial

1. Mary understood what the disciples missed
2. Jesus told them that He would be killed, buried and rise from the grave
 - a. Mary got that message
3. She didn't go to the cross or to the tomb
 - a. We find other people there
 - b. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early to see the body on Sunday morning
 - i. This Mary of Bethany simply believed what Jesus said
4. Worshipers have certain insight that others miss
5. Elisha heard the cry of his servant
 - a. Master, the army is all around us
 - b. Lord, open his eyes
6. The disciples were busy with Jesus
 - a. They were busy with the ministry that they forgot to spend time at His feet like Mary did
7. I believe she was a worshiper because she learned to sit at His feet and look into His face.

8. His face is filled with kindness
 - a. His face is filled with compassion
 - b. Filled with tenderness
 - c. Filled with acceptance
 - d. Filled with Joy

9. We don't know what kind of revelation she received
 - a. Perhaps it was on Exodus 12

 - b. Perhaps it was of the two birds killed (Lev 14)

 - c. Perhaps it was from the Song of Soliman 1
 - i. For your love is better than wine.
3 Because of the fragrance of your good ointments,
Your name is ointment poured forth;
 - ii. Vs. 12 While the king is at his table, My spikenard
sends forth its fragrance.

10. **Worship to her was not an obligation**
 - a. It was a natural response to what she saw in our Lord

 - b. You cannot spend time with our Lord and looking into His
goodness and walk away empty

11. We cannot spend time at His feet and our hearts remain
unchanged

12. Mary simply could not hold her emotions any longer and said, I've
been saving this investment for quite some time

- a. I'm going to offer my very best to the One who deserves the very best
 - b. A spontaneous gift of joy
13. So she was able to see and believe what everyone else missed
14. May God teach us to sit at His feet and look into His face
- a. To worship out of response to His goodness
15. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, it's a precious and holy place

IV. A beautiful model to follow

1. **What can we learn from her story?**

a. **She has done what she could**

- i. When I do all I know to do for God, He accepts it graciously
- ii. God doesn't size up my gift or compare my gift with others
- iii. If it's an expression from my heart, its accepted

b. **She didn't say a word**

- iii. Worship in its truest form is without words
- iv. It goes beyond what our limited language can express

- v. "If we could all do more and talk less it might be a blessing to ourselves at least, perhaps to others. Let us labor in our service for the Lord to be more and more hidden; as much as the proud desire to catch the eye of man, let us endeavor to avoid it." (**Spurgeon**)
- vi. When Mary was finished, she didn't look to the disciples and ask their opinion of what she did. "You should rise above such idle dependence upon man's opinion; what matters it to you what your fellow-servant thinks? To your own Master you stand or fall. If you have done a good thing do it again.
- vii. She simply gazed at the Master
- viii. Thors Walden - made a life size granite statue of Jesus, can't see His face
- ix. **sign:** If you want to see the face of Jesus, you must sit at his feet

c. **Genuine worship costs you something**

- i. It costs you your dignity / pride
- ii. It may cost you your reputation
- iii. It may cost you your friends
- iv. Just as Mary didn't care, we should not care either
- v. Typically, what is honored in the eyes of God is despised in the eyes of man...

2. I'm not sure where Mary learned to love like this

- a. Perhaps she heard about another person who interrupted our Lord's dinner some time ago
3. Luke chapter 7:36 - 50 has a story about another woman in another place on another occasion anointing Jesus' feet.
 - a. That event occurred in the house ... of a Pharisee also by the name of Simon.
 - b. That was a sinful woman.
 - c. That is a different story on a different occasion. (**McArthur**)
4. She allowed the Lord to defend her actions about giving to the poor
 - a. She felt no need to stand up to Judas and justify her actions
5. **Why is this expression of worship so honored by Jesus**
 - a. **Wherever this gospel is preached...**
6. Why is that act to be remembered when the gospel is preached?
 - a. The gospel is based on love
 - b. Mary offered an expression of that love back to Jesus
 - i. Fulfilling God's desire:**
 - ii. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength
 - c. **Psalm 136:1** Give thanks to the Lord because he is good. God's faithful love lasts forever!