

Lent 4; March 15 & 16, 2015
Mark 14:1-9

^{14:1} Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. ² "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot." ³ While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as 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 I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

What would you do if you suddenly received \$20,000? You can spend it any way you want. Be honest with yourself. Go ahead and make a list of where it would go. So, what would you do with it? Given that I asked you in the context of a sermon, maybe you said you'd give some of it to the church – student loans, mortgage payments, nice vacation, bills, some savings. But probably not blow it completely on Jesus and on the floor. Even those of us who are *slightly conservative* with our money would gasp at a \$20,000 bottle of perfume being poured out on the floor. Maybe a few drops, but the whole bottle? What was Mary doing?

Whose side would you be on? Mary? Or Judas? If we are honest, I think we might lean more to the side of Judas. Imagine what could have been done with all that money? This was one expensive jar of perfume – a year's wages. Many of those who were there that night thought the same way – **"Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.**

Picture for yourself the scene that night. There was a party, a celebration of sorts, happening at Simon's house that night. We don't really know anything about this man Simon – other than it appears that Jesus had healed him of leprosy. Imagine how grateful this man has to have been. The story of Simon must have been well known. So, well known that he is known as **"Simon the Leper."** Jesus was there with his disciples. There were other big names there that night – Mary, Martha, Lazarus – who had just been raised from the dead. As you looked around the room – Simon and Lazarus would remind people of Jesus' power. The presence of all these people drew a lot of attention.

You might not even have noticed Mary enter the room with her bottle of perfume. But once she opened it and began to pour it out on Jesus' head, the room got silent. All eyes were on Jesus and Mary. You couldn't miss what was happening now. In an instant, the smell of food, warm bread, olive oil was replaced with the smell of perfume.

Why would Mary do this? She knew the value of the perfume. Was Jesus worth it? In Mary's eyes, he was more than worth. As she had previously sat at Jesus' feet, she had learned the one thing needful. She had heard Jesus talk about his upcoming death. She must have learned that his death was soon approaching. She just needed to express her love for her Savior. Would we have done it? Or would we have squirmed just as much as the people in Simon's house that night? Is Jesus worth it? Is he worth all our time? Our money? Our sacrifice? Yes, he is!

Jesus could see in her heart. His words broke the silence and the soft complaining that was going on in that room. **"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.**

Mary had a new heart. She was guided by her love for Jesus. She knew her Savior. She had seen his power. He saw Jesus raise her brother from the dead. Did she know that in just a few days, she would be using perfumes and spices to wrap Jesus' body in the grave? Regardless of how well Mary understood the details of the future, she knew that Jesus was THE SAVIOR.

She trusted the words that Jesus spoke to a man Nicodemus earlier – **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** It was that love of God that moved her to express her love for her Savior. It is that love that moved Jesus to say: **“I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”**

This was expensive perfume that Mary used. One would only need a few drops to be noticed. No doubt that this much perfume would have not only filled the room, it filled the house and very possibly into the streets. There would be no doubt of Mary’s fruits of faith. Isn’t it amazing that Mary doesn’t say anything in these verses. She didn’t need to say anything. Judas saw a loss of revenue. The other disciples saw an extravagant waste of good money. Jesus saw her act of love! Jesus sees our acts of love as well.

Go to the cross. Stand there and look at YOUR Savior. See the price he pays for sin. Marvel at his forgiveness. Then you will see love! Then it is easy for us to show acts of love to Jesus and to each other. What would you do with \$20,000? Pour it all on Jesus, which no doubt ran all over the floor? I can’t answer that question for you? But I do know how Jesus answered it for the people in Simon’s house that night: **“She has done a beautiful thing.... I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”** May we reflect that same love for OUR Lord. Amen.