

A Woman With a Message “People Worth Remembering”

Matthew 26:13

"Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

New American Standard has it, "Verily I say unto you, wherever 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."



When Anne Murray was asked, "Why don't you make more public appearances?" Her answer was, "What do I need with 80 million dollars; I have my children." As we look at the "acted out sermon" of this nameless woman today, we can sharpen our own understanding of what is God's work. Perhaps this woman can help us all recover the joy and simplicity of everyday Christianity and service; imagine the impact of being the "joyful mother of children." There is a joy of service that this woman helps us to recover.

The Biblical writers are the historians of the time of Christ; yet, they are strange historians. They leave out what secular historians would write, and write, instead, what secular historians pass over. What historian would have recorded the story of the widow giving two mites? Or the story of this woman who broke a box of perfume on the head of Christ? Nevertheless, it is recorded, for Jesus does not value things by their glitter and dazzle. The power that he saw in the world came from small things; they were things dictated by the heart. He saw the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Our big moves in ministry might be viewed as small to Christ, while the things we view as unimportant might be viewed as foundational. The Bible tells of *little things* that are, in reality, big.

We like to think of motherhood as mysterious and undefined; when in fact, mothering is the art of *giving and caring*. It is, in my view, why many men are all too happy to pass the job off to women, and patronize them with lavish ceremony or flowers --so long as they will continue with the service and sacrifice. You do the work; we'll be "in charge." How to follow Christ is a lesson that all of us may learn from the woman in our story. My prayer is that we would all be empowered with the same spirit as this woman when she broke the box of perfume on Jesus' head. There must be something wonderful about this story, for Christ linked it with the gospel. So long as the gospel exists, this story will be told alongside of it. She will be remembered.

First, let's look at this woman. *Second*, let's listen to what Jesus had to say about her. *Then*, let's each take a good look at ourselves.

First, let's look at this nameless woman. We like to give names; it is my opinion that Jesus did not give a name to this woman in order that she may serve to represent many people, from many places, in many ages, who have in the same manner served our Lord for the sake of love. Whether this was Mary, the sister of Martha the commentators do not say, nor will we.

Christ is sitting at the table of Simon the Leper. At an impulse of her heart, she went home, got her money, and bought a box of expensive perfume. She then, returned to Simon's house, and without communicating her intention, broke the alabaster vase, which was also of great value, and out flowed a stream of precious perfume with a refreshing fragrance. This, she poured on the head of Jesus.

The disciples murmured about it; yet, Jesus commended her. "But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, 'What is the point of this waste' (Matthew 26:8)?"

What made this thing so remarkable was that it was done from a loving heart. It is not always *what* we do, but *why*, –*why, why, why*? –that is the greatest treasure. Love is never a waste. The heart is often better than the head! After all, what great Bible knowledge do new converts have? What they do have is a love for Christ. The heart is the first affected; it is often swifter in its goings than the head.

We have the habit of calculating whether a thing is our duty or not. We often wonder if a kind deed is worth doing. Our heart says, "Go do such and such." Our head stops us to ask, "Is it my duty; will it pay off; will they appreciate it; shouldn't someone else do it?"

If we listened to our heart we would act at once. Instead, we stop and shake our head and begin to calculate, "Do I owe it?" This is a new kind of parenthood, "Do I owe it?" Instead of thinking of the cost, she thought of the love.

It was not her duty to take the box of perfume and pour it upon the head of Christ. She did not do it from a sense of obligation or obedience; she did it from a loftier motive. Is not this what makes a true Christian? There is an impulse in the heart that says, "Duty or not, I shall do it; I want to do it; I cannot stop from doing it." If she had pondered, and reckoned, and reasoned, she would never have accomplished it. This story is a story of the heart acting with great power and force. We must give our hearts room to act, rather than figure, "What will I get out of this; will it fill my needs?"

Every heart needs to grow *bigger*, rather than *harder*. You and I generally look to see if a thing has been done before. We look for a precedent. It would be better if we listened to the voice of the Spirit of God within our hearts. If we did listen to our hearts more often, what would be the result? The soft answers of the heart cultivated by the Holy Spirit of God could turn around a river of wrath and anger. We say people don't listen; no, they don't when they are being assaulted, lectured, or prosecuted. This act was beyond routine; it was a "stand-out." It is because of this that the woman deserves commendation!

In addition, what this woman did was done purely for Christ. "Why didn't you sell the perfume and give the money to the poor?" So, said the disciples. "Yes, I love the poor and I love the hungry, but I want to

do something for Jesus." I do not think that any other disciple ever had that thought or experience --to do something just for Jesus. This woman did. Even in preaching, our service is divided between people and Christ. Preaching is for the benefit of people. Our mission work is of great benefit to people, as well as service to Christ. Our relief of suffering, benefits people, as well as Christ. We do all of these things not only because we love Christ, but because we are concerned for people.

Now, any time a person does something purely for Christ they are likely to hear something like, "What is the point of this waste?" People say, "If we help, will the Church get ahead? Can we be guaranteed a profit in growth? Is it going to be worth it? How much does a convert cost?" That is the bottom line.

Well, Mom and Dad, I want to help you answer that question so far as your children go. It costs everything. It costs everything you are and everything you have. And, no, it's not a waste. It is exactly how much it cost Jesus. It cost him everything.

When I look at how Christ has worked in our hearts, I have to say, "No, it's not a waste." The cost of loving is everything that you've got; the cost of hate is higher. You don't have enough to pay for it. The price of Bosnia is the cost of hate; it is higher than any dollar figure you may give. The price of the Middle East Conflict is the cost of hate; no accountant can count that high. The price of war is the cost of pride and hate --it goes beyond any dollar figure you can give. You can say with war, "whatever it takes" --and you will discover that you don't have that much. When we look at the millions and millions of dollars of effort, struggle, and frustration we put into children, we have to know that it is not a waste. It is a waste that we don't put more into them. Nothing is worth more than the children God has given us to care for and to love. Nothing will do more for them than our care and our love.

We must serve the Lord out of loftier motives than, "What am I going to get? Is this going to pay off?" The beauty of this woman's act lay in this: She did it for the Lord. Couldn't we go back to that in our parenting? I believe in the infinite worth of the individual --the infinite worth of the soul. But I believe in the worth of giving ourselves for our children. I believe our human worth reaches its true dimensions only when we *give* ourselves rather than *serve* ourselves. I believe in motherhood and fatherhood in terms of the cross. The selfishness of many modern parents should not be marketed as a gleaming, new kind of self-worth. When God gives us His children to care for, we must not for a moment think that there is a grander cause in which to invest ourselves.

Then, what this woman did was extraordinary. She wasn't doing what other people thought she should have been doing. When Robert Raikes decided to teach the dirty, ragged little boys and girls in London's slum, all the Christians said he had gone mad --it couldn't be done, they said. But, Robert Raikes was willing to do something extraordinary; he started teaching children. I think that this is a time in which you can serve Christ in an extraordinary way by being a mother, a father, a teacher. Christ deserves to be served in an extraordinary manner. We must bring Christ the sweet fragrance of our children. That is what mothers do!

I shall add one more thing; she also broke the box. The pragmatic and mercenary might well be upset. It was not enough that she poured out the perfume, she broke the container also. I believe this must take us

back to that teaching in 2 Corinthians 4:7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." As the love pours out from our lives, the body does not escape damage. Those things we do out of love make our bodies tired; but more, they actually, year by year, late night by late night, dish by dish, shovel full by shovel full, saw cut by saw cut, worry by worry, **use up our bodies**. We must be willing to let the container break as a natural consequence of giving ourselves away in love.

Look at what the Lord thought about this. He was not angry. *First*, he said, "She has done a good deed to me." *Second*, he said, "Do not trouble her; do not reflect upon what might have been done for the poor, for you always have the poor with you, but you won't always have me. You can do good for the poor whenever you please." And here is the sense: "You only get one chance at this." Now, go ahead, I do expect you to help the poor. The disciples would have made good politicians in this case --rather than give credit for the good that is accomplished, you can always criticize folk for the good they didn't accomplish. Or, you can criticize them for the cost of doing good. Who's going to be against the idea of giving to the poor? Some people are twisted enough to support and promote good things --but, only to accomplish their selfish, twisted ambitions.

Finally, I appeal to you personally, what will you bring to Christ?

Do you want to bring something precious to the Lord? Then, pour out yourself in order to buy children for Christ. "Little children, little children, who love their Redeemer, are the jewels, precious jewels, His loved and His own: Like the stars of the morning, His bright crown adorning, They shall shine in their beauty --Bright gems for His crown."

People who love are worth remembering. We are to follow in their paths.