

Your Sacrifice Is Not in Vain

Scripture: Mark 14: 3-9

³ While He was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head.

⁴ But some were there who said to one another in anger, “why was the ointment wasted in this way?”

⁵ “For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her.

⁶ But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me.

⁷ “For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish, but you will not always have me.

⁸ “She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial.

⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

I. Background To Mark 14:3-9 – verse 3 contains five (the number of grace) important elements to understand this prophetic act of sacrifice to the Lord

A. *Bethany* (verse 3)

1. Means in Greek from Hebrew “*house of figs*” – Beth = house;
2. Means “*house of affliction,*” “*house of distress,*” or “*house of depression*”

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3. Also written as *Bethabara* (bay – thab – ar – ah, also known as Bethany), the place where John the Baptist baptized (across the Jordan River) in John 1:28 – only used once
 - a. Means “*place of crossings*,” “*place where crossings are made*,” or “*place of fords*”
4. Metaphysical meaning – *wailing, lamentation, affliction*
 - a. John the Baptist (John 1:28)
 - b. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-44)
 - c. Mary and Martha affliction (John 11:1-44)
5. A town near Jerusalem and the home of Lazarus and his sisters (Mary and Martha)

B. *House of Simon the leper* (verse 3)

1. Home of Lazarus (John 12:1) – Simon lived with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus
2. First time “Simon the leper” is mentioned and can be inferred that he was healed of leprosy by the Lord
3. No one at this feast would have ate with a leper, so he had to be healed

C. *A woman* (verse 3)

1. Martha served (John 12:2)
2. Lazarus present at the table (John 12:2)
3. Mary is the woman (John 12:3)

D. *Alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard* (verse 3)

1. A pound of costly perfume (John 12:3)

E. *Poured the ointment on his head* (verse 3)

1. Anointed His feet and wiped them with her hair (John 12:3)

2. The head (Mark 14:3 and Matt. 26) and feet were anointed

II. The Sacrifice Produces Problems (verse 4-5)

A. But some were there who said (verse 4)

1. The disciples (Matt. 26:8-9)
2. Judas Iscariot (John 12:4)

B. Inferences from the problem

1. The main culprit happens to be a part of Jesus's inner circle
2. Even Jesus's followers can be deceived
 - a. Matt. 24:24 – “For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, **even the elect.**”
3. Jesus's followers deceived through rationale and intelligence
 - a. Spirit is filled with anger (overt and covert) – look at their facial expressions and body language and test the spirit through asking God
 - 1) 1 Cor. 2:14 – “those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned”
 - b. Initiation of anger through a contradiction (in the form of a question) – Mark 14:4 – “why was the ointment wasted in this way?”
 - c. Rational perspective and morality to cover ulterior motive – Mark 14:5 – “For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor”
 - 1) Correct – could be sold
 - 2) Correct – money given to the poor

- 3) John 12:6 – “(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)”

III. Jesus’s Rebuttal and Support for His Children (verses 6-9)

A. *Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me* (verse 6)

1. Jesus’s response is immediate and shuts down the culprit’s response
 - a. Hebrews 4:12 – “Indeed, the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
 - b. Jeremiah 23:29 – “Is not my Word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”
2. Jesus’s response does not feed into the culprit’s response just yet (requires wisdom)
 - a. Proverbs 29:11 – “A fool gives full vent to anger, but the wise quietly holds it back.”
3. Jesus’s response attacks the issue at-hand: the heart
4. Jesus’s response supports the actions of the believer (her service)
 - a. John 12:26 – “Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.”

B. *For you always have the poor with you...but you will not always have me* (verse 7)

5. Jesus’s response provides a different perspective to the culprit’s presentation
 - a. Poor is always present (multiple opportunities to minister)

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- b. Jesus is not always physically present (a rare occasion to be with Jesus, who you do not have all the time to minister or be ministered to physically)
- C. *She has anointed my body beforehand for its burial* (verse 8)
- 6. Jesus's response provides the purpose of her sacrifice
 - a. The culprit did not understand the meaning of the anointing
 - b. Fake Christians do not understand the anointing
 - c. Fake Christians do not care to understand sacrifice
- D. *What she has done will be told in remembrance of her* (verse 9)
- 7. Jesus's response also will attack the issue of the culprit's heart
 - a. Fake Christians desire fame first
 - b. Real Christians do not want fame, but become famous for their small acts
 - c. Matt. 20:16 – “So the last will be first, and the first will be last”
 - d. Contrast of the Fake and Real
 - 1) Gen. 11:4 – “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and **let us make a name for ourselves**; otherwise, we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”
 - 2) Gen.12:1-2 “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation and **I will bless you and make your name great**”

IV. Important Implications from this Passage

- A. Pay attention to your afflictions (physical, emotional, or spiritual)
 - 1. Frequency or rate (how often does your affliction occur?)

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2. Length (how long have you been in affliction?)

B. The best type of sacrifice is a broken heart

1. Psalm 51:17 – “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise”
 - a. God will show up rapidly and in greater fashion

C. The greatest suffering produces the greatest breakthrough

1. Mary did not have much
2. Mary was about to lose His Savior and friend to death
3. Mary was afflicted for her sacrifice

D. The Lord Jesus Christ will stand up for you in the presence of your enemies

1. Psalm 23:5 – “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”
2. Sometimes, you need to stand up for yourself (the Lord will when you do not have the strength)

E. Final Summation: whatever the sacrifice, expect human opposition and the Lord’s vindication