

## A Memorial

Harmony M.B.C., June 28, 2009 (Morning)

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

Mat. 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*.

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

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

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

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

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

Mat. 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.**

When the Lord first impressed this account upon my heart, I looked at His statement in verse 13 and it immediately came to my mind that He was saying plainly that He intended this historical event to become a memorial of this woman. A lot of expositors have tried to identify this woman, and I have noted that a lot of them want it to be Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus. There is no scripture here or elsewhere to support the idea and we notice that this event took place in the home of Simon the leper...although it did take place in Bethany the hometown of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They all three could have been here at this meal. We know also that Mary anointed His feet with some spikenard in John 12, and He said a similar thing about her act of worship and love. That took place in the house of Lazarus, six days before the Passover, according to John (12:1), while this event in our text took place two days before the Passover, according to Matthew (26:2). At any rate, I don't plan to try to identify the woman...in our text it was "a woman." And Jesus remarked concerning her that everywhere the gospel was preached that this account would also be preached as a memorial of her. Now, let me ask all of you...how many sermons have you heard which memorializes this woman and what she did. I don't remember ever hearing one, although I have heard her mentioned as part of a sermon from time to time.

What I feel that the Lord has impressed on me to do is to take this scripture and do exactly what He foreordained to happen. That is to preach the gospel in conjunction with this account and make it a memorial of her in a way that the Holy Spirit will direct the message. Now, what I believe about the Holy Spirit directing such a memorial message is that He will use the behavior of this woman to show things about our Lord through the things that unfolded in the event. I trust that the Holy Spirit will enlighten each of us and give us a blessing about our Savior from looking at what this woman did.

**I. This was an act out of character, and even out of step with popular opinion among those**

## present

- Note the criticism: vv. 8-9
- Illustrate what might have occurred with this woman before that moment of breaking the alabaster box as:
  - > She obviously acted out a spontaneous action of worship and love
    - (**Spontaneity** then and now is a precious commodity when worshipping and exalting the Lord; but it is the very thing that Christ commended in her, despite the criticism...or maybe because of it)
  - > She obviously discounted what public opinion about the action might be
    - Sometimes contemporary restraint in religion stifles the best spiritual responses by us as to what Christ means in our souls and lives
    - Even people saved by the blood of the Lamb are susceptible to patterns of thought that put conventional “religious” thought before true spiritual worship
      - “Standardized” patterns of religious services today has played a major role in stifling spiritual expressionism. It has also spawned a phony, artificial, or carnal expressionism among some religious practitioners in our society. Both results are bad and bring dishonor to Christ.
      - This act of this woman sparked the same kind of response as did the uncharacteristic yelling of those desperate blind men in Mat 20:29-31 And as they (Christ and His disciples) departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. 30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* son of David. 31 And the **multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace**: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, *thou* son of David.
      - The group in our text completely missed the spirit of adoration and worship which drove this woman to do the unconventional. They understood well enough the principle of doing good, providing for the poor, etc. But they missed the principle of doing something with one singular motive; that of doing something for Christ as a singular entity.
      - We hear a lot of humanitarian “racket” today. Lots of assistance to the downtrodden. But how often do we hear the basic message about this effort, as Jesus rehearsed in Mat. 25:40 “... **Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**”
      - This is what the woman did. I believe she would and probably did give to the poor, the homeless, the needy...but I believe this was an act that focused solely on Jesus as the object of the sacrifice...the giving. For that reason, I believe it stands as memorial of this woman’s awareness of how an offering, of whatever kind, should be given. I believe it stands for the purity of her offering. Our giving wherever, and however it is done should be in the same way...it should be an offering to Christ...a sacrifice for Christ.
- What else do we see in this woman’s act that memorializes her and memorializes the moment to the glory of Christ? We see the worth of the sacrifice.
  - > Some people give as long as it is comfortable
  - > Some even give what I call the parings of their things...peel the apple of money, talent,

time...eat the apple and give the peelings to Christ!

- > This woman gave what was undoubtedly the most expensive thing she owned. This very expensive ointment and the alabaster box thrown in.
  - Let us see in this the opening of the heart and free pouring out of our appreciation of the worth of our Lord
- The final thing then, we want to see about this woman's action which may have been out of step with these others: her act was an outward sermon of an internalized love and worship
  - > If your relationship with Christ is not a consciously internalized experience, everything in your relationship will tend to be shallow
  - > If the things you do outwardly as an expression of your acknowledgment of Christ does not first originate from an internalized adoration and worship it will be superficial.

## II. Christ's commendation of this woman's act

- Notice how He describes the response of the other disciples: "...**why trouble ye the woman?**"
  - > Genuine exhibitions of love to Christ should never be met with criticism coming from a body of Christians
  - > Drumming up criticism because it doesn't fit with our perception of how things should go is to discourage spontaneous worship of our Lord (obviously heretical religious practices should be exposed (see Paul's condemnation of the manner of taking the Lord's supper in 1Cor. 11 and God's correction of Peter's effort at memorializing that meeting on Mt. Tabor in Mat. 17:1-5)
  - > Notice how He characterizes the act completely opposite from what the rest of the audience must have been thinking: "...**she hath wrought a good work upon me.**"
    - Demonstrating how much you value Christ is a good work
    - Such demonstrations make Christ the focal point of the action ("upon me"); nobody can miss your motive nor who the target of your attention is
      - Illustrate the subtlety of chess as the opposite of this
        - ^ Describe handgun target practice as illustrative of the kind of focused adoration like this woman's
- Notice how Christ defines the meaningfulness of this woman's act: "...**she did it for my burial.**"
  - > What does this mean? It looks like this spontaneous act of this woman was simply that unrestrained action which testified to everyone that she loved and valued her Lord.
  - > But Christ saw something deeper in this, and it is possible, because of the way He said it, that she acted out something more than even she was aware of.
  - > But He was aware of it. And because He was aware of it, He provides yet another sermon about this kind of unrestrained honor shown by His followers:
    - I believe that lesson is this (at least): Our spontaneous acts of adoration of Jesus Christ memorializes His death a burial. Such acts are always a message that we recognize what that death and burial means to us personally.

III. What alabaster box of expensive ointment do you have? And what will you do with it?

There is precious ointment in the heart of every believer.

This ointment can be poured forth by spontaneous acknowledgment of the value of Christ to us

personally.

This breaking open of our hearts and anointing the death and burial of our Lord for what it means will bring honor to Him and His sacrifice for our sin. This glorifies Him above every name.