

3-25-12

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER AND FROM OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST. The text is Mk 14:1-10 and I'll quote from it as we go.

If we never tell Christ, "My life for You!" then we don't know Him. Sooner or later, it's, "Lord, my life for You," if we know Him at all. But we'll never follow *through* at all, unless we do something else first. First, there's a BEAUTIFUL THING we've got to do for Him.

It was Tuesday. Two days before, on Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem like a king . And just the day before, Jesus had cleansed the Temple like a God – well, *yes*. His polls were way up. Now on Tuesday night, they're holding a dinner for Him just outside town in Bethany. And Jesus' disciples are there to celebrate how great the campaign's going.

They had no idea what He entered Jerusalem *for*. Christ had *told* them. He had *told* them, I'M GOING TO JERUSALEM TO *SUFFER ... MANY THINGS AND TO BE KILLED*. And Peter said, LORD, THAT'LL NEVER HAPPEN! They didn't believe Him. Partly, of course, they didn't want to see Him die, but also, there didn't seem to be any reason why He *should*. They knew they were sinners, but not so bad that anybody's going to get executed. They had a way of making their sin not *be* – in their minds. Want to hear some quotes? LORD, WE'VE GIVEN UP EVERYTHING FOR YOU. WHAT'LL WE GET? LORD, when You're king, can we sit on YOUR RIGHT AND LEFT? LORD,

everybody else may ABANDON YOU, BUT *I* NEVER WILL. LORD, I'LL GIVE UP MY LIFE FOR YOU. MY LIFE FOR YOU. But they didn't follow through on that. They loved Him. They just didn't believe Him.

They were glad that He wanted them *with* Him. They didn't believe how willing He was to *pay* for the privilege. No, at that dinner, they're all, "O Lord, they're going to *love* You in this town!" while Christ is a dead man walking. And, man, how wonderful the new administration is going to be, and how wonderful their *jobs* in the new administration are going to be! And then, right in the middle of the party, V. 3] Mary of Bethany CAME IN WITH AN ALABASTER JAR OF VERY EXPENSIVE PERFUME.

Alabaster itself is expensive, of course, but the perfume was PURE SPIKENARD, which was so much *more* expensive that it was sealed in the alabaster - the only way to open it was to break the neck of the jar. V. 4] SHE BROKE THE JAR OPEN AND Poured THE PERFUME ON JESUS' HEAD, a full pound of it, it says, running down His hair to His shoulders and down onto His feet. And it says the whole house was suddenly filled with this piercing fragrance – something like roses, but bitter. Picture her there, looking at Him, and Him at her.

And picture the disciples looking at Mary as if she were a total fool, VV. 4-5] SAYING *INDIGNANTLY* TO EACH OTHER, "WHY THIS WASTE OF PERFUME? IT COULD HAVE BEEN SOLD FOR MORE THAN A YEAR'S PAY AND THE MONEY GIVEN TO THE POOR." See, it's delicious to be self-righteous,

as if to say, “Mary, if you were only as spiritual as *we* are – if you knew Christ’s heart as *we* do, you’d have thought of people in need.” And it's also delicious to judge other people's motives – especially when it looks like they’re going overboard about Christ, you know, going to extremes. V. 5] **THEY STARTED SCOLDING HER**, as if she were what? Hyperemotional? Or maybe some kind of spiritual show-off, as if to say, “Look, Mary, we *all* love Him, but we don't grandstand about it.” They didn't understand her. Because they didn’t believe Him.

There are disciples now who don't understand her either. They don’t call what she did a **WASTE**. No. They watch her and they say, “Oh, yes, let us break our alabaster jars and pour out on Him the precious perfume of our love!” And, okay. I don’t know how precious and perfumed my love is, but where else *should* I pour it out? For sure, He deserves better, but He doesn’t deserve *less*. For sure, yes, pour your love on Him. But that's not what Mary was doing there. These disciples don’t understand her.

Jesus did. As He watched her walk into the dining room, as she interrupted the dinner and broke the jar and poured the **SPIKENARD** on Him, He understood perfectly. And when the others started complaining about her, Jesus said, **VV. 6 & 8] LEAVE HER ALONE! SHE’S DONE WHAT SHE COULD. SHE’S COME AHEAD OF TIME TO ANOINT MY BODY FOR BURIAL**. He means, “She has embalmed Me. You don't understand.”

Nobody understood her that night but Jesus. And that night, nobody understood *Jesus* but her. And there are modern disciples

who really don't understand Him either. They imagine that God came to earth so that we would bring Him glory: That He came so that we'd serve Him with our whole lives – and so we should. It's *criminal* not to; it's actually sub-human not to. But He told us, I DIDN'T COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE. If He was looking for *service*, He should have stayed in Heaven. If He came to get what He deserves – but He doesn't *get* that. Even people who really do *know* Him also know how to begrudge Him things. I know what it is to offer what I can spare. You know what it is to back off from going overboard, AKA doing for Him what you just don't *want* to do. That perfume was worth A YEAR'S PAY. And if you're talking about what He *deserves*, it's nothing, but still, what's your annual income? Does that sound like a *lot* to just POUR OUT on HIM, at one shot? It's not. It really ought to happen sometime: “Jesus, my life for You!” But still, people who think that God came to get our best: they don't understand Him.

God didn't come so that we'd offer up everything for Him, but to offer up everything for us. Not to get expensive perfume poured on Him, but to pour out His expensive blood slowly and in great quantity. He didn't come to get what He deserves. No. In order to give us what we never deserved, He came to *get* what *He* never deserved.

And when His *disciples* saw *that* really happening, when His disciples saw them come for Him TWO DAYS later and Him *going* without a struggle, they abandoned Him. On Calvary, that ALABASTER JAR was nothing like as precious as His body when He BROKE and POURED OUT His life – while all His disciples were saying, “WHY THIS WASTE?”

But Mary of Bethany understood that it wasn't a WASTE, not to Him. Because she believed Him. I see the two of them there, that Tuesday night, and her knowing, and Him knowing that she knew. Because she believed Him, she understood: "Lord, NOT THAT WE LOVE You, BUT THAT You LOVE US, You, WHO KNOW NO SIN, WILL BE MADE SIN FOR US. You will carry OUR SINS IN Your OWN BODY. That's why she embalmed Him.

Before God came here human, when a sinner offered a sacrifice to atone for his sin, first, he laid his hands on the animal's head and symbolically transferred his sin to the lamb. Not that a lamb could really atone for you; it was just a really powerful picture. But that night in Bethany, Mary did it for real. Jesus said, V. 8] SHE'S DONE WHAT SHE COULD. And He was right. She couldn't stop Him from doing what He came for. She couldn't make it *not* have to be this way. She couldn't make sin not *be*. She couldn't stop Him from answering for what she'd done. She couldn't stop Him from loving her. So she ANOINTED Him FOR BURIAL.

She Poured her PERFUME ON HIS HEAD and her sins ON HIS HEAD and her death ON HIS HEAD. She couldn't stop Him from being FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH. So she said, "Then *do* it, Lord. Do it." SHE BROKE THE JAR OPEN AND Poured THE embalming PERFUME ON HIS HEAD, something like roses, but bitter; more like myrrh. And Jesus said, V. 6] SHE'S DONE A BEAUTIFUL THING FOR ME. *She has believed how I love her.*

We've got to do what she did. Jesus has DIED ONCE FOR ALL. You can't do anything about that. But you can *consent* to His death for you, and you've got to. HE DIED FOR ALL, but each one of us by faith has got to lay our hands on His head, and say, "Yes, Lord; for me." *Then*, yes, then comes, "Lord, my life for You!" *Then*, we do turn from sin to serve Him. FAITH WITHOUT WORKS is just unbelief. But it's only when we've *believed* Him – LORD, INCREASE OUR FAITH! When you've believed His love for you, you'll give Him your best. But first, first, first, *give Him your worst*.

What is it that it's just not fair to lay on Him? Is it the way you've been pouring your love on something else more than Him? Is it the way you've held back from going overboard for Him? What is it that it's just not right to lay the blame for on Him? What haunting sin? What continual failure? Come. With your eyes on Him and His eyes on you, pour it all on Him, until there's nothing left. Tell Him, "Lord, You carried *my SIN IN Your OWN BODY*. So be it. You *DIDN'T* COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO GIVE YOUR LIFE IN RANSOM FOR me. NOT THAT I LOVE You, BUT THAT You LOVE me." And He says, "You HAVE DONE A BEAUTIFUL THING FOR ME."

It's absolutely true that we were made to love Him, but we'll never follow through on that at all unless we do the BEAUTIFUL THING for Him. And the BEAUTIFUL THING, He says, is to hear Him say, "My *life for you*," and to answer, "Jesus, I believe You." Amen.

The words of God from the Gospels are written in the Gospel according to St. Mark, beginning in the 14th chapter at the 1st verse:

Passover and the feast of unleavened bread were only two days away. The chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. "But," they said, "not during the Feast, or the people might riot."

Jesus was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the house of a man called "Simon the Leper", and a woman [that's Mary of Bethany] came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure spikenard. She broke the jar open and poured the perfume on his head. Some of them there were saying indignantly to each other, "why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's pay and the money given to the poor." And they started scolding her.

"Leave her alone!" Jesus said, "why are you upsetting her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. You'll always have poor people with you, and you can do them good any time you want. but you won't always have Me. She's done what she could: She's come ahead of time to anoint my body for burial. I tell you the truth: Wherever the good news is preached in the whole world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them.

This is the word of the Lord.