

The Alabaster Box

by C.H. Mackintosh

The sermon emphasizes the importance of doing work for Christ's sake and seeking His approval, rather than seeking the approval of men.

Scripture: Matthew 6:1, John 12:3, 1 Corinthians 3:13, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Colossians 3:17

Topics: "Serving Christ", "Gods Approval"

Description

C.H. Mackintosh emphasizes the importance of connecting all our works and service with Christ, as God values things based on their connection with the Son of His love. He contrasts the value of works done for human praise versus those done for the glory of Jesus, highlighting that only the latter will stand approved and rewarded by God. Mackintosh urges believers to focus on serving Christ alone, seeking His approval above all else, just like the woman who poured precious ointment on Jesus, solely motivated by her love for Him.

Transcript

It is very needful to bear in mind, in this day of busy doing and restless activity, that God looks at everything from one stand point, measures everything by one rule, tries everything by one touchstone, and that touchstone, that rule, that standpoint is Christ. He values things just so far as they stand connected with the Son of His love, and no farther. Whatever is done to Christ, whatever is done for Him, is precious to God. All beside is valueless. A large amount of work may be done, and a great deal of praise drawn forth thereby, from human lips; but when God comes to examine it, He will simply look for one thing, and that is, the measure in which it stands connected with Christ. His great question will be, Has it been done in, and to the Name of Jesus? If it has, it will stand approved, and be rewarded; if not, it will be rejected and burnt up.

It does not matter in the least what men's thoughts may be about any particular piece of work. They may laud a person to the skies, for something he is doing; they may parade his name in the public journals of the day; they may make him the subject of discourse in their drawing room circle; he may have a great name as a preacher, a teacher, a writer, a moral reformer; but, if he cannot connect his work with the name of Jesus - if it is not done to Him and to His glory - if it is not the fruit of the constraining love of Christ, it will all be blown away like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and sunk into eternal oblivion.

On the contrary, a man may pursue a quiet, humble, lowly path of service, unknown and unnoticed. His name may never be heard, his work may never be thought of; but what has been done, has been done in

simple love to Christ. He has wrought, in obscurity, with his eye on his Master. The smile of his Lord has been quite enough for him. He has never thought, for one moment, of seeking man's approval; he has never sought to catch his smile or shun his frown; he has pursued the even tenor of his way, simply looking to Christ, and acting for Him. His work will stand. It will be remembered and rewarded, though he did not do it for remembrance or reward, but from simple love to Jesus. It is work of the right stamp - genuine coin which will abide the fire of the day of the Lord.

It is an unspeakable mercy to be delivered from the time-serving, men-pleasing spirit of the present day; and to be enabled to walk, ever and only before the Lord - to have "all our works begun, continued, and ended in Him." Let us look, for a few moments, at the lovely and most touching illustration of this, presented to us in "the house of Simon the leper, 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." Now, if we inquire as to this woman's object, as she bent her steps to Simon's house, what was it? Was it to display the exquisite perfume of her ointment, or the material and form of her alabaster box? Was it to obtain the praise of men for her act? Was it to get a name for extraordinary devotedness to Christ, in the midst of a little knot of personal friends of the Savior? No, reader, it was none of these things. How do we know? Because, the Most High God, the Creator of all things, who knows the deepest secrets of all hearts, and the true motive spring of every action - He was there in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

His holy and all-penetrating eye went right down into the very depths of this woman's soul. He knew, not only what she had done, but, how and why she had done it; and He declared, "She hath wrought a good work upon me." In a word, then, Christ Himself was the immediate object of this woman's soul; and it was this which gave value to her act, and sent the odor of her ointment straight up to the throne of God.

He not only vindicated her at the moment, but handed it down into the future. This was quite enough for the heart of this woman. Having the approval of her Lord, she could well afford to bear the "indignation" even of "the disciples," and to hear her act pronounced "waste." It was sufficient for her that His heart had been refreshed. All the rest might go for what it was worth. She had never thought of securing man's praise, or of avoiding his scorn. Her one undivided object, from first to last, was Christ. From the moment she laid her hand upon that alabaster box, until she broke it, and poured its contents upon His sacred Person, it was of Himself alone she thought. She had a kind of intuitive perception of what would be suitable and grateful to her Lord, in the solemn circumstances in which He was placed at the moment, and, with exquisite tact, she did that thing. She had never thought of what the ointment might fetch; or, if she had, she felt that He was worth ten thousand times as much. As to "the poor," they had their place, no doubt, and their claims also; but she felt that Jesus was more to her than all the poor in the world.

In short, the woman's heart was filled with Christ, and it was this that gave character to her action. Others might pronounce it "waste;" but we may rest assured that nothing is wasted which is spent for Christ. So the woman judged: and she was right. To put honor upon Him, at the very moment when earth and hell were rising up against Him, was the very highest act of service that man or angel could perform. He was going to be offered up. The shadows were lengthening, the gloom was deepening, the darkness thickening. The cross - with all its horrors - was at hand; and this woman anticipated it all, and came, beforehand, to anoint the body of her adorable Lord. And mark the result. See how immediately the blessed Lord enters upon her defense, and shields her from the indignation and scorn of those who ought to have known better. "When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? For she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily, I say unto you,

wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

See that you keep your eye directly upon the Master, in all you do. Make Jesus the immediate object of every little act of service, no matter what. Seek to do your every work so He may be able to say, "It is a good work upon me." Do not be occupied with the thoughts of men as to your path or as to your work. Do not mind their indignation or their misunderstanding, but pour your alabaster box of ointment upon the person of your Lord. See that your every act of service is the fruit of your heart's appreciation of Him; and be assured He will appreciate your work and vindicate you before assembled myriads.

Thus it was with the woman of whom we have been reading. She took her alabaster box, and made her way to the house of Simon the leper, with one goal in her heart, namely, Jesus and what was before Him. She was absorbed in Him. She thought of none beside, but poured her precious ointment on His head. And note the blessed issue. Her act has come down to us, in the gospel record, coupled with His blessed Name. No one can read the gospel without reading also the memorial of her personal devotedness.

Empires have risen, flourished, and passed away into the region of silence and oblivion. Monuments have been erected to commemorate human genius, greatness, - and these monuments have crumbled into dust; but the act of this woman still lives, and shall live forever. May we have grace to imitate her.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-mackintosh/the-alabaster-box/>

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