

Alabaster Box of Ointment

by Charles Anderson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of total devotion to Christ and doing what we can for him, rather than waiting for a future day or being influenced by the world's opinions.

Duration: 48:18

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 26:8, Mark 14:9, John 12:3, John 12:7, Acts 1:8, Acts 4:13

Topics: "Alabaster Box"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a man named Casey who was distributing leaflets about the blood of Jesus. Casey encountered a drunk man and explained to him how the blood of Jesus can cleanse his heart. This encounter deeply impacted Casey, leading him to seek the Lord and eventually become a missionary. The speaker then shares another story about a man named Mike who fell ill while working on a water supply project. Despite initially ignoring the signs, Mike's wife prayed for help and miraculously, two doctors arrived at their door. The sermon emphasizes the power of the blood of Jesus and the importance of trusting in God's guidance.

Transcript

There's been a fascinating group of people that gathered near the close of our Lord's ministry here on earth, in the village of Bethany, for a little celebration supper. I suspect that the main purpose of that supper was to celebrate the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead, and the Bible gives us the story of what happened at that feast or supper. And first of all, I'd like to remind you who was present.

The disciples were all there, and they tell us that it was in the house of Simon the leper. There was a story. There must have been quite a story.

Simon the leper? Does this mean that his leprosy had been healed miraculously, perhaps by the Lord Jesus? Quite likely so. And he had a story to tell, let me tell you, of his past desolate life, and now the exciting experience of being healed and restored now to fellowship with his family and contact with his friends. And then, Lazarus, what a story he had to tell of his experience in the grave.

What is it like to die, taste death, to go through the experience of the departure of soul from body, to be laid in the grave, and then to be raised from it all? Man, I'd like to have heard that testimony, and would like to have been there to have asked Lazarus some questions, too. But perhaps the most important guest who was present that night was the Lord Jesus Christ, this stranger from Galilee who had stirred up all the

city of Jerusalem, and who was even now entering into the shadows, those long dark shadows of the cross, and what was going to take place in the very near future. Even while they were meeting and enjoying their fellowship, we're told that the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might take him by craft and put him to death.

But they decided to postpone it because of the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. And while they were seated or reclining about that table, an incident occurred with which I know you're familiar, which brings into sharp relief again another biblical character. A woman burst through and into the room, and she took a box of ointment that she had and broke it and poured the ointment on the person of our Savior.

Let's let Mark tell the story. He was present. He ought to know what actually took place better than anybody else, and here's what he said in the fourteenth chapter of this gospel.

At the third verse we read it, and being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointments of spikenard, very precious, and she broke the box and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves and said, why was this waste of the ointment made when it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and had been given to the poor? And they murmured against her, and Jesus said, let her alone. Why trouble ye her? She has wrought a good work on me, for you have the poor with you always, and whensoever you will you may do them good, but me you have not always.

She hath done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." As I read that story, and then put beside it a little postscript that comes to us from another of the Gospels, I see three things to which I direct your attention tonight.

First of all, I want you to notice the reaction of the disciples to the action of this woman. How did they react? And then I'd like you to consider with me the remarks of the Savior, what Jesus said in the light of all that this woman did, and also in the light of what they said. And, in the third instance, when we add the postscript that comes to us from another of the Gospels, I want you to think to me about the release of the fragrance of that woman's deed in breaking the box of ointment on the person of our Savior.

There are some parts of this that are puzzling to me. I'm puzzled by the reaction of those disciples. I find it very hard to read verse 4, for instance, in the Gospel of Mark.

There were some that had indignation within themselves. Now, that's a strong word. I don't know how you read that.

But, in the public reading of the Word of God, you simply can't read that word without putting into it some pressure, some emphasis. It's a strong word. You can't just say there were some that had indignation among them and slur it over.

No way. And do it justice. You have to get the feeling of this thing.

They were indignant, these disciples. They were stirred up. Some may have been angry in their reaction.

They had indignation within themselves, and they said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? Now, I'll tell you why I have trouble with that verse, because what this lady did, what this woman did, was done

for and on the Savior. The Lord Jesus Christ, and how men who knew him could react so violently as this with indignation, and even use the word waste in connection with this deed, is a puzzler to me. Now, I think I know where they got their idea.

Somebody came up with the idea that this was a waste, because what this woman gave to Christ, what she did for him, was a very costly thing, and it could have been sold for, it indicates, 300 pence. A lot of money was a lot of money then, and then they facetiously covered it up by saying, and the money could have been given to the poor. Now, I don't know how you react to this, but let me tell you how I do.

I say, Bosh! That sheer stupid nonsense. They had no concern for the poor. See, that was not the real reason why they felt as they did.

This is a facetious reason, illogical to say the least. But, nonetheless, there were those who interpreted this activity, this action, as waste. Now, where do they get this idea from? Well, we don't have to wonder too long, for there's a parallel account of all of this in the twelfth chapter of John's Gospel, and you'll discover that this idea arose with Judas Iscariot.

He's the one who suggested that what this woman did was a wasteful deed, and that it could have, this ointment could have been sold in the money given to the poor. He's the one who called it waste. Now, I want to draw a quick line of application here for just a moment.

Whenever there is an action, an act of utter devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ, commitment that's total, there's an abandonment of life, of all its purposes and plans to Him, it is bound to rouse people to sometimes drastic opinions. I see this in missionary conferences. All around this land, I have the great joy and privilege of participating in missionary conferences, and I tell you, I watch the reactions of people in some of these conferences.

Here comes a young couple, say, let me create a scenario. If they're sort of a decrepit-looking couple, he hasn't made much of a mark anywhere, and she's a little bit on the homely side, and so on, they might say, well, what else could they do but go to the mission field? We give our old worn-out garments to the missionaries, let's give our old worn-out people to them too. They can't, they couldn't do anything very important anyhow.

But, let's suppose that this fellow is a graduate from university with a five-bedder capacity glistening here on his vest. He's brilliant, he's made his mark, and he has potentiality beyond belief. It can be, he can make his mark in the world, and furthermore he's tall, and he's dark, and he's handsome.

He's not rich, I'm sorry to say, and had much money, but there he is a handsome specimen, and he's married to a lovely lady. She was Miss Campus in her day, chosen the queen of the campus. See, I'm picking out the best I know.

Beautiful, just beautiful, and as they stand on that platform, and they present themselves for missionary service, where are they going? Oh, they go to some remote area of New Guinea, maybe down to Borneo, or perhaps they even have volunteered to go to mainland China, or they're going down to South America to some jungle area. She's a beautiful girl, and folks are looking at them, and they're talking about how much they love the Savior, and they are willing to go anywhere he wishes them to go, and they want their lives to be spit out for Jesus Christ. There's going to be some bitty in the crowd, some fussy old woman who's going to be saying something like this, what a shame, and listen, to make it worse, if they have a

baby, a little baby in arms, you, you can imagine what you're going to take that little sweet little thing out to the jungles where there's no doctors, and no hospitals.

You're going to take them out to that remote area, and risk the very life of your precious little child? Now, the world thinks that's stupidity to do that thing. That's the dumbest thing any couple can do. And, they call this devotion, this commitment to the Savior, wait, and I can understand their point of view, and I don't get much ruffled by what they say.

What do we care what the world thinks about us, anyhow? They don't know any better. They're blind, and they're dumb as far as spiritual things are concerned. They don't understand eternal values at all.

So, don't be impressed, or upset, or troubled by what the world thinks about our devotion, and our total commitment to Jesus Christ. It wants religion, but it doesn't want too much of it. It doesn't mind that we are religious, but it's what disturbs us.

The the worldlings of our day is totality of commitment. That they can't stomach, that they can't accept, but that is not the disturbing element to me in this story. I can understand Judas's point of view.

What I cannot understand is that he influenced those disciples, so that that became their point of view, and they were the ones who said so plainly. There were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, why was this waste of the ointment made? When the saints react like the world reacts, we're in deep trouble. Some Christians can't understand it.

Some believers can't accept total commitment to Christ today, and total devotion. They don't mind if the woman should take some of the ointment out of the box, maybe most of it, but when she scraped it clean, and there was nothing left, not one smidgen, all of every single bit of it is devoted to the Savior. This became a disturbing thing to those disciples, and in effect really measured their own devotion to the Lord Jesus Himself.

So, the reaction here was violence, and it is difficult to accept it, and by today's standards, and in these days in which we live, we face sometimes the same reaction on the part of disciples when they come up against some examples of this kind of devotion to Christ. Now, let's notice what the Savior has to say to all of this. The remarks of the Savior.

The first thing he says, rather sternly, is, let her alone. Why trouble you her? Let me point out to you, he says, that the first thing that you must notice is that she has wrought a good work on me. Is anything we ever do for Jesus Christ a waste, or is it a good, does he consider it a good work when it's done for him? He says that what she did was a work done for him, and then he explains a little bit of her deed, because they didn't get it.

Now, he says, first of all, let me talk about the poor, that issue that you've raised. You have them with you all the time, you'll always have the poor, and whensoever you will, whenever you decide to do something for the poor, you'll find there's opportunity to do so. You may do them good, but don't forget you don't always have me.

I'm here for just a short time, and you know that's true of your life and mine. I would, I dare say that some of us, as we sit here tonight, could look back over the path of life and say, I wish 20 years ago, 30 years ago, I had done more for Jesus Christ. I was always thinking about a future day.

Maybe I was waiting till I could retire. Listen, I live down in Boca Raton, and there's a lot of retirees down there, and they come down to play golf and count the coconuts, and that's all, and the only other subject that eats them up is where's the cheapest eating place, the latest restaurant. You can sit, if you've got long ears, you can hear them talking.

It's food, food, food, food, food, and they're stuffing themselves, and there are a lot of able-bodied men down in that part of the country who are doing very little with their lives for Christ. They may have been people who thought about some future day when they were going to do something for the Lord Jesus, and when they were free of business responsibilities, they would then get busy for the Lord. I heard about him, an old fellow at my stage of the game.

70 seems old, folks, but this guy was 70 years old, and he had been retired for a few years, and he got tired of retirement. He just, he didn't have anything to fill up his time, and he was a believer, and he got worried about it. So, one day he told the Lord, he said, Lord, I want to go to work for you.

I can work for you for nothing. Nobody has to support me. I got enough coming in, a little bit of saving, and Uncle Sam's paying most of my salary with social security, so I don't have to worry too much, and I'm going to go to work for you.

So, he put on a nice suit of clothes, and he filled his pocket with tracts, gospel tracts, and then he started on the street where he lived, and he knocked on the first door, and a lady, a lady came. He looked at her, and she couldn't turn him aside. He was a nice-looking old man, well-dressed, didn't look like he was a mugger or a robber, and so she was open to him, and he said, excuse me, madam, I'll not take much of your time, just a moment.

I am inquiring about this. Does Jesus Christ live in this house? That woman looked at him as though he had slapped her in the face. She backed up three or four steps, and she said, would you repeat that? He said, I just want to know, does Jesus Christ live in this house? And she fumbled, and she stumbled, and he recognized the fact, of course, that he didn't.

So, he said, would you kindly read this little piece of paper of when I'm gone? And he handed her a tract and said, thank you very much, and he left. Then he went to the next house. Again, a lady came.

Madam, I'll not take much of your time. I'm just going through the neighborhood asking a simple question. I'm looking for Jesus Christ.

Does he live in your house? And that woman really got disturbed, and that fellow, do you know what he's done? The last I heard, he had contacted 50,000 homes with that simple question. He wasn't concerned about arguing with him about anything. He had a pocket full of gospel tracts, and he was doing what he could for the Lord, just asking.

Now and again, he'd meet somebody who would say, why, yes, he does, and he'd say, isn't that a wonderful brother, sister? I'm so glad. Thank you for telling me that. Will you just remember me in prayer while I go and ask a few more people in the neighborhood about whether Jesus lives in their house, and he would go his way.

He's not tired of retirement anymore. Boy, he's so busy, he can't keep up with it. His life is counting.

One might think that that's not much, but it is something that's counting, and he's going to make the days that God has given to him count for God's glory the best he can. He knows what he can do, he knows what he can't do, so he's doing what he can do, and he's doing it as unto the Lord. This woman has done, she's performed a good work on me, and furthermore, he says, she has done what she could.

Do you know that's all the Lord asks of us? To do what you can. Are you doing what you can for Christ? Are you really? Listen, don't, don't, please don't be overcome by the philosophy that it's all over for you. If you can walk, you know, when I get out of bed in the morning, I put one leg out first, and I say, thank God that one works.

Now, I hope the other one does, too. So, I pull that one out, and I say, gee, that's two of them. Then, I stand up, say, hey, I can get up.

I know some dear, dear people who would give a fortune, half a fortune to be able to do that, but I stand up, and now I'm alive. I'm awake, and I move a few other parts of me, and I decide that I'm not in bad shape. I guess I can do something for God today.

It's wonderful to be able to do that. Alive in Christ, too. On top of all of this, I'm alive in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what can I do, Lord Jesus, to make this day count for thee? Yesterday is history. I can do nothing to change it, and I don't know whether I'll ever have it tomorrow, but I have now. What I do for you, I must do now.

And, you mustn't succumb to the philosophy that it's all over, and God cannot use you anymore. I don't know what he may have for you. Only he and you can transact that piece of business.

He knows where you can fit in in a special way in his plan and purpose, but the main thing is, are you dead sure tonight that you're doing something for him? That's it. So that these days are not wasted days, but count their days that are counting for him. She has done what she could.

She has come beforehand to anoint my body to the burial. Now, the important word there is the word of forehand. It directs our thoughts to timing.

Timing. Time is important. It's vital.

What are we doing now for the Lord Jesus Christ? See, that's the important and vital question. Are you doing something for him? Now, I don't know what it is. I probably could suggest a few things.

Why should I? I might interfere with what the Holy Spirit is saying to you that you can do for him something that really counts. I was telling some of the friends the other night when we had some fellowship together about a man I heard about many years ago that inspired me very much. I'd never met this man, but he did inspire me when I thought of him.

He, his name was Casey Van Der Jack. Any of you who have Dutch background will recognize that's a good old Dutch name, and he comes or he came out of Grand Rapids. A lot of Dutch people out in Grand Rapids, and he was a truck driver, an ignorant, rough, tough truck driver.

His language was awful, but it got saved, wonderfully saved, and the Lord cleaned him up, cleaned up his tongue, made him a new creature in Christ Jesus, but he couldn't read or write, but he had a burning

desire to serve the Lord, to do something for Jesus in gratitude for what the Savior had done for him. So, he went down to Mel Trotter's mission, and he said to Mel Trotter, can I do something for Jesus? What's poor old Mel going to say to this guy? He can't read, he can't write, he's ignorant, but he's a big burly truck driver. So, Mel finally said, how would you like to give out tracts? Well, yeah, he'd do that, whatever it was.

And so, Mel Trotter had to take some tracts, and because this dear brother couldn't read, he divided them between the saved tracts that are written with Christians in view, and tracts that were written for the unsaved in view, and he said to old Casey, he said, now take these tracts that are written for Christians, and put them in your left pocket. See, that's the left pocket, that one there, and then you take the tracts that are written for the unconverted, and put them in your right pocket, that's this other pocket here, see? Put them there, and then you stand outside of our mission here, and when people come by, you ask them if they're a Christian, just that's all, just ask, are you a Christian? If they say yes, invite them into the mission, and give them one of these tracts for Christians. If they say no, then say, well, would you please take one of these pieces of paper? They're written for the non-Christians.

Oh, I thought that was great. So, night after night, for years, Casey VanderJack used to come down for the mission. Even when it rained, he'd find him out there, giving out his tracts, and he got to be sort of known by visitors who came to Grand Rapids, and there was a smart alley salesman for the Fleishman Yeast Company from Boston, and he heard about Casey VanderJack, so he came on a visit out there to Grand Rapids, and he got a handful of little folders, same size as gospel tracts, that advertised the old-fashioned yeast cakes.

You remember them? Little gold label on them, wrapped in silver paper, and this was, and these were advertisements. So, he went to Casey, and he handed him these, and he said, Casey, here's some brand new tracts for the unconverted. Stick them in your pocket for the unconverted, and give them out to people who aren't saved.

Casey looked at him and said, gee, they're pretty, ain't they? There's the gold there, and there's the red, and there's the white, and he already was starting to interpret that piece of paper, so he could talk to the people, put them in his pocket. The salesman went inside the mission, sat down for the service, and it was a very uncomfortable service for him. The Holy Spirit began to deal with him, and finally he said to himself, I am a wretch.

I am a dirty wretch. Look, here's this good old man out there doing his best for God, and I do nothing, and I pulled this dirty trick on him. I got to get up and go out and apologize, and get those leaflets back again.

He said when he steps outside, and he looks up both sides of the street, he couldn't see anybody, and then he his eye caught Casey over here in the doorway, and he had a drunk there. The drunk couldn't even stand up. He was sitting down, and Case had his big old paw right against his chest, so he couldn't move, couldn't get away, and in the other hand, he had a Fleischman's yeast advertisement, and he was saying, look brother, your heart's black as hell, but the blood, see that red? That's for the blood of Jesus.

That red will clean your heart up, and make it white. See the white there? That white, that's for the, how white the blood of Jesus can make your heart, and one day you can walk the streets of gold in heaven. That's what the gold's for, and here poor old Casey would find a lead of soul to Christ from a Fleischman's yeast advertisement, and the guy was half drunk.

Do you think the Lord overlooked that? I don't. I think that was pleasing to the heart of God. He was doing what he could when he could for the Lord Jesus.

There's a little touch here. Maybe I'm wrong in my interpretation of the scriptures at this point, but I'll give it to you nonetheless. That ninth verse, it says, Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Our normal interpretation of that verse says this, that whenever we refer to this incident, this happening, the story of this woman's devotion to Jesus, her breaking of her alabaster box of ointments, so precious, and pouring its contents wholly and totally upon the person of Jesus, that story will be told in company with the gospel story, and it will be a memorial to her. That's our normal interpretation of this verse, and I think that's all true, but I think there is something else here, something in addition to that. Did you notice that the Lord does not say, wheresoever the gospel is preached? He didn't use the definite article the.

He said this gospel. Now, I don't think I'm straining at a gnat for fear I shall swallow a camel in the process. I don't think so at all.

What does he mean by that? I think he means something like this, wherever the very heart of the gospel is exposed to men, and what should the gospel lead to? What should it lead to? It should lead to what Paul writes to the Corinthians when he says, Christ died for all that they which live should henceforth not live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them. The gospel calls for this kind of devotion, and if it doesn't call for this, it is an incomplete presentation of the gospel. The announcement of the good news is not merely for the forgiveness of our sins, it is that too, yes, but it is in addition to that.

It calls for those who are forgiven of their sins, and justified. It calls for them to devote themselves with utter devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. The book of Acts is the chronicle of what happened in the early church, in the days of the early church, when those disciples were totally committed to Jesus Christ, and were willing even to lay down their lives for his sake, and they shook the world of their day.

Men took knowledge of them, not that they had been in the great universities of the day, but that they had been with Jesus, and knew him. And what was it that shook the world of their day? Their total devotion to Jesus Christ. And our savior, I think, is saying, wheresoever this gospel, this kind of gospel, is announced in the world, it will produce the same kind of devotion to me as is exhibited in this woman's deed of utter surrender of all that's precious to her, to me.

True, it will include the story of what she does and did as a memorial to her. And then he reminded them that she understood some things that maybe some of them didn't quite yet grasp, and that was she had anointed him to the moment of his burying. Maybe this woman had already comprehended Calvary.

Maybe she already even had gone the step beyond the cross to the thought of the resurrection, and now she is anointing his body in preparation for that great event. It's a great deed. Now, will you turn to John 12 in conclusion tonight? John chapter 12.

This is the postscript to this story. John tells it thus, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, which had been dead. He raised from the dead, and there they made him a supper.

Martha served. Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.

And look at this comment, and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Her action released the fragrance of that ointment. The breaking led to the releasing of the fragrance, and that's what it takes.

It takes the breaking, the surrender of what we have in order to release the fragrance that is wrapped up in a redeemed life. We can leave all kinds of impressions for God. We can leave the impression that we're gifted, we're talented, or sweet, or great, or anything else, but we're not really here to preach.

We're here to make people hungry for God, thirsty for him, and when a life is devoted totally and wholly unto him, there is a relief of precious fragrance. It fills the whole church, fills the house of God, makes the saints glad, brings joy and gladness to the Savior. We were down in South Africa some years ago.

We're flying back into the hinterlands, and our pilot, who was a Christian pilot of course, he said we're going to have lunch way back there in the bush with a very unique couple. He's British, she's a Texan. She comes from Texas, and he said we'll have to buzz the field, and that was an interesting field.

Field was just a strip, a little gash in the jungle. He said we buzz that first to be sure there are no goats or any other animals on the strip so we can land. So, he said I'll go around a couple of times, and he said the first time around maybe they, that'll be the alert, and he said eventually if you look down you will see he is sitting in a wheelchair, and she'll be standing there beside him, and then he did his best to tell us a little bit of the story.

He had the piece what we got from him in the few moments we had before we landed, and what we learned later. This man's name is Mike Warburton, and Mike Warburton was an engineer for the British railways in South Africa, and he wasn't converted, but he saw in the lives of missionaries such devotion to Jesus Christ that he couldn't explain. He never run across people like them, and so being deeply impressed he sought the Lord, and the Lord was found of him, and he got saved, and he decided to quit his engineering career and become a missionary.

So, he applied to a missionary agency, and they appointed him as a missionary, and he went out to the field. Now, Mike was a huge man, physically endowed, great muscles, and a man who could do almost anything, and a hard, hard worker. He drove himself merciless.

Well, they were back there in the bush. They'd established a fine station there, and he was trying to build a dam to assure a water supply for the station compound, and on this very hot afternoon he labored just a bit longer than usual, and then he had developed a headache, a terrible headache. This one he recognized immediately was a little different than anything he'd ever had before.

He went back to the house and told his wife, who happened to be a nurse, that he had a bad headache. She gave him the usual medications that they had out there. Now, mark you, they were nearly 500 miles away from any medical care.

They were back in the deep bush, and as the afternoon wore on, his headache became worse. He took his temperature, and it rose and rose and rose until it was up around the 102, 103 mark, and dangerously rising. She was almost frantic, what to do, what to do, and that evening, while he was in delirium, that evening God did some a wonderful thing.

Two excellent medical doctors, missionary doctors, were driving from one point in South Africa to another, and they came within 40 miles of Mike's station. One of those doctors, a man whom I know very well, this man said to his doctor friend, you know, I have a feeling we ought to call on Mike. Just drop into the

station.

His friend said, but look at the hour. It was late in the evening, maybe close to 11 or 12 o'clock, and beside, I would rather drive all night to get through. I have such a load of work tomorrow.

No, let's go. So, they drove another 40 miles, but the impression was so deep upon this first doctor that he said, no, we've got to turn around and go back, which they did, and by the time they got back, this woman, Fran, was at the point of utter desperation. She threw herself upon the Lord.

God, what shall I do? When there came a knock on their door, she opened the door, and two excellent medical doctors stood there. Talk about a miracle. Isn't that thrilling? They examined him, and they said, Fran, we've got trouble, deep trouble.

He is desperately ill, and we've got to get him to a hospital, but she said, there's no way. We've got to wait till morning when we can use the radio and ask for a plane to come, which they eventually did, and so they got him to a hospital. They said, he's developed meningitis, and he's already paralyzed from the hip down.

Well, the story I can shorten by telling you that he became utterly paralyzed, and he went back to England. They're examining there the best medical authorities. They said, this man will never walk again.

He insisted on being brought to America and taken to the Mayo Clinic. Maybe they would have some new approach to his problem and could help. They had the same verdict, and so here he was, now totally paralyzed, couldn't walk at all.

And this big giant of a man became as helpless as a baby. He insisted that they send him back to Africa. The board wrestled with it, fought with it, and finally, most reluctantly, agreed to let him go back to South Africa as a missionary.

But, the thing that turned the whole thing around and influenced them on their decision, in their decision, was a letter which I read from a little black man out there in South Africa. Just a little man, very short, slight. I doubt if he weighed more than 130 to 140 pounds.

Skinny as a rail. And this letter was written to Mike Warburton, and it said something like this, Dear Guana, we hear that you are sick in your legs, and you can't walk, but we need you. We love you.

Will you come back? And if you come back, Guana, I promise you, till the day I die, I will be your legs. I'll take you wherever you want to go. I'll carry you.

A man that's paralyzed is a dead weight. I don't know what Mike weighed at that time, well over 225 pounds. How could this little man do that? But, we stood in, I stood in Africa, and I saw this little black man reach in a van, and lift that big heavy man out, put him in his wheelchair, take him where he was going, lift him again, and put him back.

And, you know, for a dozen years, that little black man became Mike Warburton's legs. And you want to know something? The fragrance. I still smell it.

Way over here, I smell the fragrance of a box of ointment that was broken, and every ounce of it, every bit of it, poured out on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord is looking for that kind of devotion from us. Some of us have been reluctant to let him have it all.

It may take some, but we're hesitant. What will it cost if I let him have it all? I don't know, but I do know this, the fragrance of your need will fill the whole house of God. Let's pray.

Gracious Savior, how can we give thee less? Thou didst not hesitate on that old rugged cross. Thou didst pour out thyself, holding nothing back. Thou didst give thyself up totally as a burnt offering, as a sacrifice for our sins.

Thou didst go all the way down into the deep, dark valley, into the point where from its depths thou didst cry, My God, oh my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And all this thou didst do for us. Why should it be so hard, our Savior, to give thee back the whole box of ointment? Help us tonight, if we have any reserves, to give it without question to thee. Be thou pleased by what we do.

For thy name's sake, for thy glory, we pray it. Amen.

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