

Extravagant Devotion

by C.J. Mahaney

The sermon emphasizes the transforming effect of the gospel, which is extravagant devotion to the Savior, as exemplified by Mary's act in Mark 14.

Duration: 1:05:48

Scripture: Mark 12:28-34, Mark 14:1-11

Topics: "Devotion"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the challenge of using superlatives effectively and genuinely in a culture that has trivialized profound words. He acknowledges that words like 'historic' and 'profound' have lost their meaning due to overuse and exaggeration. The preacher then turns to the Bible, specifically Mark 14:1-11, where Jesus makes a truly historic and profound statement. Jesus declares that wherever the gospel is proclaimed, the act of a woman anointing him with expensive perfume will be remembered. The preacher emphasizes the need for an eternal perspective and prays for the transformation of hearts through the preaching of God's word.

Transcript

It's a privilege. It's a joy. It's a joy to be here with my son, who brings me so much joy, and it's a joy to be here with you, because I derive much joy from the parents and youth of Covenant Life Church.

So thank you for this privilege, and this honor, and this joy, and thank you, Mr. Brewer, Mr. Maka, Mr. Malcolm, thank you for the leadership you men provide in making all this happen. Thank you for the countless hours you have devoted in private to making this public event possible, to making this public event happen. We are grateful.

I know it's appropriate at the end of an event like this to direct our gratefulness and appreciation to you. I think it's appropriate at the outset to do so as well, because of the countless hours you have invested. So thank you, men, for your example.

Thank you for your care. Thank you for your leadership. This is but one reflection of your care, example, and leadership, and everyone in this room is grateful to you men.

So thank you. Let's express our gratefulness to these three men. Thank you, Matt.

Turn in your Bibles to Mark chapter 14, and if you do not have a Bible, I want to request that you look on with someone nearby who does have a Bible. Mark chapter 14, verses 1 through 11 are going to occupy our attention this evening, and I trust, by the grace of God, capture our affection. Mark chapter 14, I will begin reading in verse 1. It was now two days before the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread, and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him.

For they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people. And while he, the Savior, was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than 300 denarii and given to the poor.

And they scolded her, but Jesus said, leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them, but you will not always have me.

She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for burial, and truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her. Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them, and when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money, and he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this gathering. Thank you for this time set apart by you, ultimately for you.

Thank you, Lord, that we can pull away from daily life and daily distractions, and in this context, together with those we love, devote to you our full attention. Now, Lord, I pray that you would draw near to us. Draw near to us, Lord.

Draw near to us, I pray, through the preaching of your word. Lord, I pray that we would this evening leave behind, in effect, all that is trivial, all that is superficial, and I pray, Lord, that eternity would break into our hearts. Draw near to us, Lord.

Provide by your spirit and through your word an eternal perspective as we contemplate your word. Lord, I will, by your grace, faithfully preach your word. I ask you to perform your word like only you can perform your word and transform hearts through the preaching of your word, I pray.

I pray that this evening and I pray throughout our time. I pray there would be much fruit, much enduring fruit from this retreat, Lord, all by your grace, all because of the cross, and all ultimately for your glory, I pray, and I thank you, Father. In Jesus' name, amen.

There are times while I'm reading that I come across an insightful observation in an unexpected place, and the following insight I came across while reading Sports Illustrated. The article is authored by one Steve Rushen, and though the article is dated, for it was written during the Clinton administration, the point of the article remains strikingly relevant. At the outset of the article, the author is bringing to our attention the appropriate response of the former president to an accident which took place.

An accident which took place in Italy. 20 people died when a U.S. military plane severed the cable on an Italian ski lift, and our president at the time appropriately responded by communicating his, quote, profound regret. In this article, Mr. Rushen reminds us that just a few months earlier that the president at

the time also communicated, quote, that he was profoundly saddened by a People Magazine puff piece that was written on his daughter.

And then Mr. Rushen remarks, if two events, one tragic and one trivial, evoke the same rhetoric of grief, he asks, is either statement meaningful? And then he writes, we live in an age of profound baloney. We live in an age of profound baloney. Listen, certain words have been turned upside down and had all meaning shaken from their pockets.

In sports, there have been enough historic moments, enough epic games, enough greatest players of all times to render those phrases empty. In conclusion, he writes, superlatives, even when appropriate, are bees that sting once and then die. Now, I believe Mr. Rushen's analysis of communication in our culture is an accurate analysis.

His concern is for, in effect, the degradation of words, the trivialization of profundity, and the exaltation of hype. And that is very relevant to us this evening, relevant to me in this preaching task. It presents, really, a unique challenge for those of us who have the responsibility and the privilege to preach and teach sacred scripture.

How can I teach you this about that which is truly profound in an age of profound baloney? How, this evening, can I use superlatives appropriately and effectively and genuinely if, in our culture, superlatives have become, in effect, bees that sting once and then die? How can I, this evening, bring your attention to a truly historic moment from sacred scripture when we have been conditioned as a culture to consider the Super Bowl each year as a truly historic moment? Well, obviously, this evening, I need divine assistance. I need the help of the Holy Spirit because this text, this text reveals a truly historic moment. This text, this text contains a truly profound announcement.

And if you haven't lost your ability to discern that which is truly historic and profound, then you you realize when we came to verse 9, a truly profound statement was made by the Savior when He said the following, and truly I say to you, wherever, wherever, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she, what she has just done will be told in memory of her. That is a truly historic moment, and that is a truly profound pronouncement. No other person has ever received this promise from the Savior.

Just her. Just her. This is truly historic.

This is truly profound. Just her. Wherever the gospel is preached, her story or this act will also be told.

Now we have to, we have to ask ourselves, why? Why her? Why now? Why her? Why now? Why her? Why this act? Well, this evening we are going to discover why her, so that by the grace of God we might be affected by her and hopefully emulate her example. Now, the passage begins, well, the passage begins with very disturbing news in verses 1 and 2. The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, and they are only restrained by the populace and the popularity of the Savior, for to arrest him at this point in time in the midst of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would no doubt lead to some form of an uproar, and therefore they are momentarily restrained, but their intent to kill him will ultimately not be denied. Its passage begins with very disturbing news and it ends, in effect, on a very ominous note when one Judas Iscariot approaches the chief priests and to their surprise commits himself to betray the Savior, and in verse 11, when they heard it, they were glad, and they promised to give him money, and he sought an opportunity to betray him.

So it begins with disturbing news, it ends on an ominous note, and in the middle, in the middle, in the middle there's a party taking place. In between this disturbing news and ominous note, beginning in verse 3 and concluding in verse 9, a party is taking place. We are informed that a party is taking place, and that party is taking place in Bethany.

So in between these verses which clearly communicate hostility toward the Savior, ultimately culminate with a betrayal of the Savior, there is a party taking place, and those invited to this party are those who are grateful to the Savior, grateful for the Savior, and this evening we, in effect, are invited to this party. What a delightful contrast we have in verses 3 through 9 to what we read in verses 1 and 2 and verses 10 and 11. Now, the host of this party is one Simon the Leper.

Simon the Leper is our host, and we can we can safely assume, we can certainly assume that Simon the Leper is a leper no more. For if, for if Simon's leprosy was active, then by law, Simon would be quarantined. He would be forbidden from having even casual contact, much less hosting a party.

So it would appear that Simon the Leper is a leper no more. Perhaps, perhaps he was one of the many lepers healed by the Savior. Perhaps he was one of the many lepers experiencing this dreaded disease for which there was no cure, quarantined, separated from family and friends, familiar with the humiliating assumption by the public that this was a sign of God's particular judgment upon them.

Simon the Leper is a leper no more, perhaps healed by the Savior himself. What a story he would have to tell. He's our host.

Try to imagine his facial expression as you arrive. No wonder he throws a party for the Savior. Now in John's account, we are informed of the guest list in more detail.

And in John's account, we are informed that Lazarus was also invited to the party. Lazarus, as we enter Simon's home, Simon the Leper, who's a leper no more, as we enter his home, we discover that Lazarus is reclining at table. Now that's significant because he's recently been raised from the dead.

Okay, so try to imagine, first of all, being greeted by Simon the Leper, who is a leper no more. And upon entering his home, there across the room, reclining at table is Lazarus, the recently raised from the dead Lazarus. How cool is that? See, there are times when I'm reading these passages where I think, I wish I'd been there.

Wish I'd been there. This is one of those times when I wish I'd been there. And had I been there, I would have made it a priority to, at some point, recline next to Lazarus.

Because it's not often you meet somebody who's died. Okay, the man has done death. And I've got a few questions for him.

Don't you have a few questions? I have a few questions. I want to ask Lazarus, what was death? Is it a bummer that you have to do it again? I want to ask him this. What was heaven like? Who'd you see? Who'd you meet? Did you meet Abraham? Did you talk to Moses? How are Adam and Eve doing? Who broke the news to you that you had to go back? Okay.

For Lazarus, it would have felt like he'd just arrived, in effect. Who broke the news to him that he couldn't stay? How did they break the news to him? Lazarus, Martha's crying. Mary's crying.

They won't stop crying. Now the Savior's crying. Lazarus, you're going back.

Okay, you're going back. And then what was it like when he went back? What was that like? Look, there are mornings when I awake that just for a moment I ask myself very simple questions. Where am I? I mean, just as I awaken, it is momentarily disorienting.

I don't know exactly what day it is, or necessarily where I am, or what city I am presently located. And so, there's a very quick, brief review of everything from who I am to where I am. Now, if it's disorienting for me to just occasionally wake up, okay, how disorienting would it be to be raised from the dead? To in one moment be in paradise, and then to have the Savior call you back and you awaken bound in the tomb? I would want to know from Lazarus, what were your first thoughts? And what were your first words? I would have had many questions for Lazarus.

You need to be grateful that I wasn't one of the twelve, or else your Bibles would be a lot larger. John also said, that this party had world-class catering because Martha was serving at this party. And of course, the guest of honor was none other than the Savior himself.

That was the reason for the party. That was the purpose of the party. This was one festive occasion that was taking place.

And it's apparent it was festive because no Pharisees were invited. No Pharisees were invited. It appears no Pharisees were allowed.

So, as you work through the different gospel accounts, wherever there's a Pharisee present, there is tension in the air. Well, there's no Pharisee present. Only those who are grateful save Judas.

And his opposition isn't apparent at this point. So, this is one festive occasion. And as you looked around, you would have noted that there weren't any Pharisees present.

Therefore, you would have been able to, in an unhindered way, entered into the joy of having the Savior present there in a room filled with those who love him and are grateful to him. Suddenly, unexpectedly, and without prior announcement, John informs us that Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, stands over the Savior and takes a very costly alabaster flask of perfume, not only breaks it open, Mark is very specific about detail, pours it over the Savior's head. And if you weren't observing her pouring this perfume over the Savior's head, no one present could escape the fragrance.

It would fill everyone's attention is on how she pours this perfume on. Now, it would appear, sadly, that once again, the disciples play the role of knuckleheads because some, and according to John, led by Judas, become indignant and they criticize her. And scripture is clear, they scold her or they rebuke her harshly.

They scold her publicly, not privately, and they do so harshly, not gently. And then, in the midst of their scolding, in the midst of their public, harsh rebuke, there is one voice heard, the voice like no other voice. It is the voice of the Savior himself.

And he says to them, leave her alone. This festification is suddenly interrupted by Mary's breaking open this flask of perfume and pouring it over the Savior, which is immediately followed by a scolding or harsh rebuke. So this festive atmosphere has suddenly become volatile and hostile.

And in the midst of this public scolding, one voice emerges and stands out. It's the Savior himself rebuking those who are scolding her, and he says, leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? And look at verse six with me.

I love this phrase. She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them, but you will not always have me.

She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for burial, and if the passage ended right there, we would be appropriately and sufficiently affected, but it doesn't end right there. And what he says at this point is truly profound.

For he says, I say to you, truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, look carefully, what she has just done will be told in memory of her. And one has to ask at the end of verse nine, why? Wasn't his previous commendation sufficient? Wasn't his rebuke of those criticizing her appropriate? And then wasn't his commendation that she has done a beautiful thing to me, wasn't that sufficient? That was a superlative sentence in and of itself. Why wasn't that sufficient? Why in verse nine does he promise that her act will be told wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world? Why? What provoked the Savior to make this profound promise to Mary, a promise that he made to no other? Why? Why should what she did in this moment be told wherever the gospel is preached throughout time, throughout the entire world? Here's why.

What she has done must be told, must be told wherever the gospel is preached, because Mary exemplifies the transforming effect of the gospel. That's why. What she has done must be told, because she exemplifies, she personifies the transforming effect of the gospel.

What is the transforming effect of the gospel? What is this transforming effect? What is the transforming effect of the gospel? The transforming effect of the gospel is extravagant devotion to the Savior. Extravagant devotion to the Savior is the transforming effect of the gospel, and Mary's example of extravagant devotion to the Savior is in this moment and forever memorialized by the Savior. This is the difference the gospel makes.

This is the transformation the gospel effects. She was, in effect, to become an example to the church universal. The Puritan Matthew Henry said of Mary in this account that the Savior recommended this piece of heroic piety to the applause of the church in all ages.

This heroic piety, this piece of heroic piety was recommended by the Savior to the applause of the church in all ages. You see, her story illustrates the transforming effect of the gospel. Her story demonstrates the transforming effect of the gospel.

Her story is told so that we might evaluate this evening whether or not we have been genuinely transformed by the gospel. This wasn't simply for the applause of the church. This was for application by the church as well.

The transforming effect of the gospel is extravagant devotion to the Savior. Two points I want to make in application of this profound passage to our lives. Extravagant devotion is, number one, an evidence of genuine conversion.

Extravagant devotion, as exemplified and personified by Mary in this passage, is an evidence of genuine conversion. An evidence of genuine conversion. Please understand this about Mark's gospel.

You can approach Mark's gospel with this assumption. Mark's gospel was written with evangelistic intent throughout. Actually, just quickly turn to chapter 12, if you would, please.

Chapter 12 of Mark's gospel. I want to draw your attention to this passage just to help you understand not only Mark's evangelistic intention but the effect and illustration of Mary as we come to it in chapter 14. In chapter 12 of Mark's gospel, look with me in verse 28 where we read, and one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another and seeing that he, the Savior, answered them, the Sadducees well, asked him, which commandment is the most important of all? And Jesus answered, the most important is O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. Listen, and the scribe said to him, you are right, teacher.

You have truly said that he is one and that there is no other besides him and to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And look, look at the next verse, look at the surprised Savior. And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, you, you are not far from the kingdom of God.

Now, please understand there is no other time in any of the gospels where the Savior makes this statement to any other religious leader. This guy and this guy only is commended. You are not far from the kingdom of God.

You're not far. Now listen, that is both a commendation and a warning. You're not far.

Commendation. Implicit warning. You're not in.

You're near. You're not far. You're near.

I commend you. You're near, but I want you to be aware. You're not in.

Boys and girls, Mary is in. Mary's not near. Mary is in.

Mary is what in, being in, looks like. Extravagant devotion is an evidence of genuine conversion. So where someone has genuinely turned from their sins and trusted in the Savior, there will be in that person's life the evidence of conversion grace.

There will be the evidence of transforming grace. Now, please do not misunderstand. There will not be a perfection of evidences in the life of someone genuinely converted.

They will not be flawless. They will not be sinless, but they will be definitively transformed, changed. Obvious to even a casual observer, something by the grace of God will be distinctively different in their lives.

There will be in their hearts, however immature in its expression, a genuine affection for the Savior. Whereas prior to conversion, they would have been hostile to the Savior or, at best, apparently indifferent to the Savior, upon conversion, there will be genuine affection for the Savior. So someone who is genuinely converted cannot see these words, cannot sing these words, without being affected by these words.

And I surely will not confine this simply to the act of worship tonight. This extends to obedience. Where there is a genuinely converted individual, there will be some definite degree of obedience in their lives.

Again, not the absence of sin, but the definitive presence of obedience to the Savior in numerous forms. There will be serving, and there will be witnessing, there will be giving, there will be a transformed life, because that is the effect of the gospel. Where the gospel has been received, there is transformation that is evident even to the casual observer.

And listen carefully. Where there is a profession of faith without some degree of affection for the Savior and obedience to the Savior, well that profession should be evaluated for its authenticity and genuineness. We do not serve someone by ignoring a profession that lacks heart transformation and some daily expression of affection for the Savior and obedience to the Savior.

But I, first of all, I want to commend the pastors for the way they have crafted the content of this retreat. It's an expression of their gift of leadership. It's also an expression of their care for you.

And so I am representing them tonight and coming to you with this weight upon my soul for those who are present who are not converted and those who are present who possibly have arrived professing faith. But if one was to inspect your life, one would have difficulty discerning a changed life. It's those two categories at this point in this sermon that I am most concerned about.

Now, large group, so I am going to assume, I think wisely assume, that there are those present this evening who are not converted. And I want to say to you, we're just thrilled you're here. Thank you for coming.

Thank you for coming to this retreat. There are many things you could be doing and it makes a loud statement, I think, of your humility that you would be here and come. So I am glad you are here and in just a moment I'm going to share the gospel with you because there is there's no more effective way I could serve you than to inform you of your state at present before God, apart from the gospel, and then to inform you of the hope of the gospel.

There's a second group though, and again given the size of this group, I would assume that there are some who have professed faith, but if one was to study your life, there is a distinct absence of affection for the Savior and obedience to the Savior. Now, here's my concern as I address both groups. I don't want to unsettle anyone who is genuinely converted.

Matter of fact, I want all who are genuinely converted, and by the grace of God, that would be the majority present. I want all of you who are genuinely converted actually to receive fresh assurance through this message. Because if in your heart there is affection for the Savior, if in your life there is to some degree obedience to the Savior, well then that should be fresh assurance to you that you by the grace of God have been transformed by the gospel, for there is no other explanation for that affection and obedience than the gospel.

So I actually want this passage, this passage can be a means of you freshly receiving assurance. So I don't want anybody unsettled who's genuinely converted. I want you to receive fresh assurance, but I do want to talk just for a moment to those who are not converted or those who possibly have received false assurance.

Those who are converted, you can listen in. Here's what I want to say to those who are converted or not converted and those who possibly have received false assurance. Here is where I pray that eternity breaks into your soul.

By the grace of God, Holy Scripture reveals God as holy and righteous and just. Perfect in holiness, righteousness, and justice as an expression of His holiness and righteousness. Scripture also reveals, and certainly our experience confirms, that we have all sinned.

All have sinned. All have sinned against the Holy and Righteous One. And the Holy and Righteous One, in order to be consistent with His holiness and righteousness, must, must, must punish all sin.

Sin must be punished, for He is holy and He is righteous and He is just. Sin must be punished, consistent with His holiness and His righteousness and His justice. All we have sinned.

All we like sheep have gone astray. We have all sinned against Him. We have all offended the Holy and Righteous and Just One.

And our sin, your sin, my sin, it must be punished. Must be! Now in, in the mystery of His mercy, and mercy is truly mysterious. Listen, whether you're aware of it or not, God has been merciful to you.

I can assure you God has been merciful to you, for you are alive. The very breath you take at this moment is an expression of God's mercy to you. The fact that we have arrived here safely is an expression of God's mercy.

The fact that we drove over bridges that didn't collapse is an expression of God's mercy. And in the mystery of His mercy, He not only brought you here safely, but on a hill called Calvary, He sent and sacrificed and crushed His only innocent Son with the full fury of His holiness and righteousness, satisfying in the substitutionary sacrifice of His Son, His righteous, furious wrath against all our sin. And for all sin, to those who turn from their sin and trust in the Savior's sacrifice for their sin.

In the mystery of His mercy, He determined in eternity past that He would punish sin by placing that punishment upon His Son. So that all who turn from their sin and trusted in the Son's sacrifice for their sin might experience the transforming effect of the Gospel in the form of forgiveness of sin and freedom from fear of future wrath. And for those who do not humbly turn from their sin and trust in the Savior for the forgiveness of sin, their sin will be punished.

It will be punished on the day of judgment. It will be punished by a holy and righteous God eternally. That eternal punishment will take place in hell.

And brothers and sisters, boys and girls, there isn't a more frightening reality at this moment, nor will there ever be, than the wrath of God. I was reading an article recently about a show called Myth Busters, if I remember accurately. I haven't seen the show, but it was just detailing different myths this show was obviously busting.

And it went through a list that actually it's a myth that a corked bat is an advantage. A ball does not travel farther if one uses a corked bat. Another myth, if my memory serves me, was that if you use your cell phone at a gas station, you are not vulnerable to an explosion.

I guess that has become recently a myth. It was going through all these different myths. One that I found particularly relevant was that electronic equipment being used on a plane does not have the potential to in any way hinder the pilot from communicating with the flight tower, etc.

So there really is no need for them to tell you to turn it all off. So they were going through these different myths and exposing these myths. And as I was reading the article, I was thinking, well, I can't help but think about the words of Dr. R.C. Sproul when he said, the greatest myth of the 20th century is that there is no wrath in God.

That's the greatest myth. I doubt this show will ever take on the greatest myth. I'm not concerned about the show.

I'm concerned about your soul. It's not a popular topic, the wrath of God. Too often, too many pastors are reluctant to speak of the wrath of God.

Or those who do speak, speak sadly in an arrogant, angry and self-righteous way about the wrath of God, rather than carefully and fearfully aware that if they are no longer the objects of that wrath, it is purely and completely the mercy of God. I pray that my attitude and tone of voice pleases God. It's not, listen to those of you who are converted or have received false assurance, I'm very familiar now as I look back in my life with being an object of the wrath of God.

I speak of that which I know. The writers of scripture are not reluctant to speak of the wrath of God. They consistently warn of the wrath of God.

Look, it would be cowardly of me to avoid this topic tonight. Cowardly. It is compassionate for me to bring this to your attention.

How aware are you of the wrath of God? If one refuses to receive the son's substitutionary sacrifice for one's sin, then the punishment for their sin will be the wrath of God upon them and their sin for an eternity. I don't think there's been a more eloquent communicator of this topic, certainly in American history, than Jonathan Edwards. And I was pondering a portion of a sermon that he compassionately communicated to his church in Northampton many years ago.

And I was affected by it, reduced to tears as I read it, and thought it would be appropriate for us in this moment to contemplate Mr. Edwards' description of the wrath of God and appeal to his congregation that they flee this wrath. He said, it is everlasting wrath. And I believe I've provided this quote, so whoever is serving in that capacity, if possible, can this be placed on the screen? I want everybody to observe it, listen as I read it, and feel the full effect of it.

If you don't have it, that's fine. I just can't see because of the lights. I'm sorry, I can't see.

Okay, listen carefully. It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment, but you must suffer it to all eternity.

There will be no end to this exquisite, horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, boundless duration before you which will swallow up your thoughts and amaze your soul, and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all. You will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty, merciless vengeance.

And then, when you have done so, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains, so that your punishment will indeed be infinite. Oh, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is? All that we can possibly say about it gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it. It is inexpressible and inconceivable, for who knows the power of God's anger? That is a caring pastor pleading with those not converted in his congregation, pleading with those who might have been the recipient of false assurance in his congregation to flee, to flee, to flee this frightening reality, to flee this frightening, fast-approaching reality, and to flee, flee this moment.

Do not let this evening conclude without genuine fleeing to the hill called Calvary, where the eternal punishment that we deserved for our sins, the righteous and furious wrath of God, was instead poured out on His only innocent Son, so that sinners like us, on evenings like this, could flee to the cross and find their forgiveness of sins and freedom from fear of future wrath, so that sinners like us could experience the transforming effect of the Gospel and emulate of extravagant devotion to the One who suffered in our place, so that we might not suffer, but instead eternal. Extravagant devotion is an evidence of genuine conversion. Where there is not simply a profession, but a genuine conversion, there you will find to some degree, however immature in its form and expression, affection to the Savior and obedience to the Savior, just like Mary.

You see, in God's kindness, He has not only commanded the preaching of the Gospel, He has provided the example of Mary, so that all of us could look at the Gospel, look at Mary, and evaluate, have we been transformed by this Gospel? And if not, let us respond immediately and appropriately, turn from our sins and trust in the Savior. Extravagant devotion is an evidence of genuine conversion. And then secondly and finally, extravagant devotion is the increasing experience of those who are converted.

Extravagant devotion is the increasing experience of those who are genuinely converted. And with these remarks, I direct myself and these remarks to the majority of those who are present in this room. What should have happened that evening? Here's what should have happened.

Here's what should have taken place. As everyone turned their attention to Mary, as she broke this alabaster flask, as she poured out this perfume on the Savior's head as an expression of her affection to the Savior, what should have happened was everyone present should have, in effect, formed a line behind her. This is what should have happened.

Everyone present should have gotten up, approached Mary and said, Mary, Mary, Mary, could you save some for me to pour out? Can I, can I please pour out some of that perfume for he has healed me of leprosy? Mary, Mary, could I, Mary, could I please participate? Because he said to me, your sins are forgiven. That's what should have happened. Instead, those, some closest to the Savior, began to criticize.

Oh, listen, to my shame, there are too many times when I resemble more those criticizing Mary than Mary herself. So, how can we emulate her example? I want to be like her. I want to be like Mary.

I'm not sure after communicating the Gospel, I don't know that there's a more effective way to open this retreat than to say we've invited Mary to challenge us and to provoke us. I want to be like her. How can I emulate her example? Just one point I want to make.

I think we can emulate her example simply by reviewing and reflecting upon the Gospel. Actually, if you have time, just study this passage and note the Savior's intentional use of Gospel in this particular

passage. The transforming effect of the Gospel is extravagant devotion to the Savior.

So, where extravagant devotion is absent or diminished in my life, what normally that means is I've neglected the Gospel. And for extravagant devotion to be restored, I, by the grace of God, must review and reflect upon the Gospel. So, at those times in my life when I'm aware that extravagant devotion, affection, obedience is diminished, I know exactly what to do and where to go.

Extravagant devotion is the transforming effect of the Gospel. Therefore, where that is absent or diminished, I must review and reflect upon the Gospel. And that devotion will be restored to my soul.

And no sermon I preach is appropriately finished until we hear from Mr. Spurgeon. So, I want to call upon him right now to address us all. And I think if he were present, he might say these words.

The words that are written in Morning and Evening, March the 30th. Mr. Spurgeon said, Are you content to follow Jesus from a distance? Oh, let me affectionately warn you, for it is a grievous thing when we can live contentedly without the present enjoyment of the Savior's face. Let us work to feel what an evil thing this is.

Little love to our own dying Savior. Little joy in our precious Jesus. Little fellowship with the beloved.

Hold a true lent in your soul while you sorrow over your hardness of heart. Listen, but don't stop at sorrow. That's exactly right.

Listen, sorrow or conviction of sin is a gift from God. But don't stop at sorrow. Remember where you first receive salvation and go at once to the cross.

There and there only can you get your spirit aroused. No matter how hard, how insensible, how dead we may have become, let's go again. Let's go again in all the rags and poverty and defilement of our natural condition.

Let's clasp that cross. Let's look. Let's look into those languid eyes.

Let's bathe in that fountain filled with blood. This will bring us back to our first love. This will restore the simplicity of our faith and the tenderness of our hearts.

And I love this phrase. The more we dwell where the cries of Calvary can be heard, the more we dwell where the cries of Calvary can be heard, the more noble our lives will become. Nothing, nothing puts life into men like a dying Savior.

Oh, the more we dwell where the cries of Calvary can be heard, the more we will experience extravagant devotion created in our hearts and cultivated in and through our lives. So here's my final question for application. How often do you dwell where the cries of Calvary can be heard? How often? How often do you dwell where the cries of Calvary can be heard? Listen, let's just let's just dwell there for less than a minute.

I want you to close your eyes for the purpose of concentration. We're just going to dwell less than a minute. We're going to dwell where the cries of Calvary can be heard.

Listen, listen again for the very first time to the cries of Calvary. Father, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. I tell you the truth.

This day, you will be with me in paradise. Dear woman, here is your son. My God, why have you forsaken me? I am thirsty.

It is finished. Father, into your hands I commit my. Every one of those cries was necessary for our sin.

Every one of those cries was necessary because of our sin. And listen, better news doesn't exist. Every one of those cries was sufficient for all of our sin.

So if as you arrive, you would say, my affection for the Savior isn't what it once was. You find yourself this evening thinking that there was a time in the past when I was more affectionate for him, more zealous about him. I want to encourage you to follow the example of Mary and to review and reflect upon the Gospel, to dwell where the cries of Calvary can be heard.

For as we dwell there, he shall be freshly amazed by grace. Those who are aware of wrath appreciate grace. Those who are aware of wrath are amazed by grace.

Those who contemplate the punishment the Son received on their behalf are filled with extravagant devotion to him. Let's pray.

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