

Episodes in Life of T/lord 04 the Supper at Bethany

by Robert Constable

The sermon explores the significance of the woman's act of anointing Jesus, emphasizing love and devotion over practicality in our service to Him.

Duration: 39:00

Scripture: Mark 14:3

Topics: "Bethany"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a specific episode in the life of Jesus as recorded in the Fourteenth Chapter of Mark. The speaker highlights the human nature of the author, Mark, and how he portrays Jesus' interactions with both men and women. The sermon focuses on a familiar scene where Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem and the crowds are growing. Despite the increasing popularity, Jesus shocks his disciples by telling them that he will be killed and rise from the dead. The speaker emphasizes the significance of a woman's act of love and affection towards Jesus, highlighting her willingness to do what she could.

Transcript

It was a great thing this morning to have the opportunity of being here with a group of men. They obviously are well acquainted with the Lord Jesus and knowing personally. Let me get this thing on right and then we'll finish with it.

You can always tell when you come into the presence of a group of men who have long time known the Savior. You know, they speak to him with a familiarity that only a life of walking with him can bring, and this is good. Most of the people that we've been considering in the episodes in the life of the Lord Jesus this week have been episodes that have to do with men, and you might get the idea, you know, that the Lord Jesus only associated with men.

Well, he was a man's man, and I'm glad for that. He was tender and gracious, but he was a man's man, and men delighted in his company, and so this group this morning were delighting in his company because we have a great Savior. But a little later this morning, a few women came in.

I turned around and saw the lady sitting behind me there, and suddenly the company seemed more gracious than it had been before somehow. You know, ladies add something to the company, and so in the episodes in the life of the Lord Jesus, many of them had to do with women, and so we learned something of his graciousness, and of his power, and of his love in his associations with women as well as with men. We have a great Savior.

He mixed with everybody, and he was to everybody what that particular person needed at the time, and this is a wonderful thing about him. Now this morning, I want to review with you, and I say this deliberately, I want to review with you an episode in the life of the Lord with which you are especially familiar. Now there's a danger in this, you know.

We get into these familiar scenes, and we sort of think, oh well, I know about that. I've been there before, but there's something for us, I think, in each such episode if we take the time to think about it, and this one is recorded for us in the 14th chapter of Mark. Mark chapter 14.

To me, the way Mark records these episodes in the life of the Lord Jesus is especially appealing. Mark was a person, you know, that realized something of his own frailty and his own disposition, perhaps not to stay on right on things. He had a problem, you remember, once with the Apostle Paul, and he couldn't maintain the pace, and he was sort of on the sidelines for a while, but God graciously brought him back, and there's something very human about this man in the record he gives us of the life of the Lord.

Now, Mark chapter 14, and let's begin to read at verse 3. And being in Bethany, this is the Lord Jesus, being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and she break 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? For it might have been sold for more than 300 pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her, and Jesus said, let her alone.

Why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me, for ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good. But me ye have not always. She hath done what she could.

She is come aforehand 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 say, this is an episode with which we are all very, very familiar, but one in which I think we can enter this morning with some freshness. This gathering was in the house of Simon the leper, and Lazarus was one of those that sat with him.

This must have been a very interesting assemblage, don't you think? He's on the way to Jerusalem. He's on the way to give himself up, a sacrifice for sin. He has come many, many miles from Galilee, and as he has come from Galilee, as he has walked that way, the crowds have been increasing, and he has had many conversations with his disciples about things, important things.

He has told them of the fact that when they get to Jerusalem, he's going to be killed, and they can't understand this. They can't believe this. Why? The evidence on every hand is that the closer he gets to Jerusalem, the more wonderful it is.

The crowds are getting bigger, the people are getting more enthusiastic about what he has to say. It's a continual growing favor that the Lord seems to have, and then he startles them. He not only tells them that

he's going to be killed, but he tells them that he's going to rise from the dead.

Now, there are people who say that I make them afraid. You know, they're sort of afraid of me. I can't imagine why, but they are, and I used to be bothered by this until I found out that this is true of the Lord Jesus too.

When he talked to the disciples about being raised from the dead, it says they were afraid to ask him to explain this, and they just carried this along as a sort of something they could not understand at all, this business about his rising from the dead. And so, as he came toward Jerusalem, great crowds followed him. His disciples discussed many things with him.

He told them of his death, of his resurrection, and they didn't know quite what to make of it. Well, now they're almost to Jerusalem. They're in the town of Bethany, a little community just outside the city of Jerusalem.

You will walk out there in a little while and an hour easily out to Bethany from Jerusalem. A little community out there, one of the suburbs, and in this suburb there lived a family that the Lord Jesus loved very much, Martha and her sister Mary and their brother Lazarus. And when he came to Jerusalem, it would appear that he usually stayed in their house at Bethany as a guest.

Well, on this occasion, he was invited to another man's home, and it was the home of Simon the leper. Now, it doesn't say so, but I expect from the context that this is a leper whom the Lord had cleansed. Lepers don't give feasts, you know.

They're outsiders. They're touch-me-not. I'm unclean.

People didn't go into the home of lepers, but this man was Simon the leper. He had been a leper, and he had been healed, I think, by the Lord Jesus. He had been healed of leprosy, and another man at the table at this feast, this supper, was Lazarus.

Lazarus had been raised from the dead. What do you suppose was the subject of conversation at that meal? As those who sat around, do you ever get around the table with a few people that have really had an experience with the Lord and entered into the joy of, this is what he did for me, and oh, this was wonderful? Well, believe me, that's what went on at this party. Here was a man who had died, and he'd been dead three days, and Jesus had brought him back again.

What a story he'd have to tell. No wonder, people, it says of them that they came not just to hear Jesus, but because Lazarus was there who had been dead. This was a real extraordinary thing, to be in his company.

They like to hear what a man who had been dead three days had to say about it, wouldn't you? Well, you can believe it. If I knew that somebody here in Park of the Palms, in one of these cottages, was a person who had been dead three days and had been raised from the dead, I would want to call there and hear what this person had to say. This would be an interesting conversation.

Well, so was it interesting to hear what Simon the Leper had to say, and they'd be comparing notes, and everybody else would be listening to this fascinating conversation. A conversation that had to do with death and resurrection, all the potentials that are involved in that. And in the midst of the busy conversation that is going on at the table, in walks a woman who had not been invited.

She just walked into the house. It's easy to do in an eastern home. She just walked into the house, and she had a box of ointment of spikenard, very precious.

Chanel number five wasn't in it with this. Joy, tattoos joy, the best you can think of, the most expensive perfume you know about. That's what this was, ointment of spikenard, very precious.

And she broke this box over the head of the Lord Jesus as he was talking at the table, and instantly the fragrance of this was all over the house, and instantly everybody got indignant. What is going on here? What would you think if you'd been there? Wouldn't you sort of wonder what was going on too? I think we'd all at least wonder what was going on. We might not feel indignant, but some of these people felt pretty indignant about this whole thing.

It says some had indignation and said why this waste of it, waste of the ointment, what was the stuff made for anyway? That's what it was made for. This ointment at least came to the fulfillment of its purpose. Why this waste? Do you know who started all this conversation about the waste? Well let's read what John says about it.

Turn to John 12. He tells about this too, but he reveals something in his record of it that isn't in the record in Mark. Mark John chapter 12 and verse 4. You all have it? All right, John 12 verse 4. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, why was not this ointment sold for 300 pence and given to the poor? And John says this he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the bag and bear what was put therein.

It was Judas started all this indignation and this talk against this woman for what she was doing, and this talk about it being a waste. He showed his true character when he started this, but everybody picked it up, and the record in Mark says some had indignation. You know this is a very easy thing to do.

It is very easy to get caught up in criticism because somebody is critical. We want to go along with it, and we take a critical attitude about something that's done, and pretty soon we're all being critical. That's what happened here.

Judas Iscariot, would you like to find yourself in the company of Judas Iscariot's attitude? Judas Iscariot, hypocrite, thief, betrayer of the Savior. He says why this waste, and everybody else joins in. You know in every group of people, there is somebody that is very alert and expert regarding material values and the other useful uses of the heart's outflow.

What I'm saying is that in every company of people, there are those practical minded people. You know they never do anything for the sake of the an overflow of love. It always has a practical side to it, and they usually pride themselves in the fact that they're practical people.

Well sometimes it's just as well not to be practical. Men don't be practical on Valentine's Day. That's no time for practical gifts.

Don't give your wife a carpet sweeper on Valentine's Day. There is a time to be totally impractical, to be ludicrous in the outflow, the just the overflow of love and of your heart. But there's some people who never can understand this, and that always say what a waste.

Don't worry about them, but they are there. What a waste. Some people say what a waste of time.

You know you want to go and spend a little time in prayer because you just feel like talking to the Lord Jesus. You want to spend a little time reading the word of God and enjoying his company. You want to spend a little time going and calling on one of his saints just to encourage and to bless.

You want to spend a little time taking someone out for a drive just to refresh them. You want to spend your time doing something that looks like a waste of time. You should quit wasting your time and get on with the business people say.

Don't worry about this. There's always these people that are afraid we're wasting our time or wasting our money. What do you give your money to that for? You know they say they can think of different things to put their money into that they consider much more practical than that.

What are you giving your money to that for they say? What a waste of your money is the implication. Just because the Lord has touched your heart about some aspect of his work perhaps, and you want to put some money into it. And there's always somebody around if they know about it that can say what are you doing that for? Or a matter of wasting your life.

I had a job with a standard register corporation of Dayton, Ohio, and I was the branch manager of the Chicago branch for this company when the Lord made it possible for me to go to Moody Bible Institute. And I quit my job at standard register company and I went to work at Moody Bible Institute. And later on, some years later, one of the women in the assembly said to me and to my wife, when you quit standard register company and went to work for Moody, I thought what a waste.

What a terrible thing to do. He's getting along fine at standard register, the possibilities are great there, and goes and goes to work for Moody Bible Institute. What is he ever going to get at Moody Bible Institute, you know? Or somebody wants to go to the mission field, and there's always somebody that can raise up and say, why he could make a pile of money at home here.

What's he going to throw his life away out there for? Always those people are around. They were around on this occasion. You may be sure they're around on every other occasion.

Always knowing how what better could be done than what we feel that we would like to do with what we possess for the Lord Jesus. Now, my wife doesn't exactly agree with me about this next little item here. I think that this is one time when the Lord Jesus' voice was sharp.

My wife says that isn't necessarily so, and I grant that. I don't think that's necessarily so, but I think the words carry a real rebuke in them when Jesus said to the people when they were getting so critical, let her alone, let her alone. Here this woman had come in uninvited.

There was a very interesting conversation going on at the table. She breaks in on the conversation, not by saying anything, but by breaking this box of alabaster over the head of the Lord Jesus. And then John tells us she went down to his feet, and she washed his feet.

This would be quite an interruption, wouldn't it? It'd be quite an interruption here in the meeting this morning if somebody came walking in the door here, and came down and started to broke something over Brother Anderson's head, and started to wash his head, wouldn't it? It would certainly take the attention away from everything I'm saying, I'm sure of that. Well, so it was at this dinner, you see, when he was talking, and they were talking, and this woman came in and broke this box, this box of perfume. It interrupted things, and people didn't like this interruption, and nobody likes to be interrupted, you know, we

like our rut.

My mother used to say that. I'd say to her something about, let's get out of a rut and do something different. She said, look, I like my rut.

And we all do like our rut, and so we instinctively react when somebody wants to break us out of our rut. And these people reacted when this woman came in and sort of upset the party, and so they began to criticize her, and she was uninvited, remember? It doesn't say so, but you may believe that somebody in the party began moving over toward her to let's get her out of here. We need her like we need a hole in the head.

Let's get her out of the place. She's interrupting things. And then Jesus said, let her alone, let her alone.

Why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. And the Lord Jesus begins to show his appreciation of what had been done. He called it a good work.

She hath wrought a good work on me. Then he answered their question. You've got the poor with you all the time, and anytime you want, anytime you want, you may do them good.

She hath done what she could. She couldn't do much, but she could show her love. She could show her affection.

That's all she could do, but she did that. And if there isn't anything else you can do for the Lord Jesus, you can show your love and show your affection. You know, I am reminded as I speak of this of Mephibosheth.

You remember that occasion when David was run out of the city by his son Absalom during one of the big rebellions before the battle there when Absalom tried to take over the kingdom? And a lot of David's friends went out of the city with him, but Mephibosheth didn't go because Mephibosheth was lame in both his feet, and his servant Zadok had deserted him. And when David came back into the city after the rebellion was put down, he said to Mephibosheth, how come you didn't come along, Mephibosheth? Well, he said, I couldn't do it. Zadok ran off, and I didn't have anybody to take me with him.

But ever since you left the city, I haven't washed, I haven't shaved, I've prayed for you. That was enough for David. Mephibosheth, by his manner of life, showed whose side he was on.

Life wasn't even worth washing his face when David was out of the city. There was nobody to shave for if David was gone. All he did was stay in the city and show by his manner of life how he felt about the whole thing.

And that's the case with this woman. She couldn't do much. She was no public speaker.

She couldn't go out and heal people the way the disciples were doing. She couldn't do much, but she could come uninvited and show the Lord Jesus. She didn't care about the crowd.

She could show the Lord Jesus how much she cared. She did what she could, and oh, how Jesus appreciated this. Now, this Mary was not at the tomb after the crucifixion.

She's not one of the women who was there on the first day of the week after the Sabbath. But she didn't come then. She came before time.

She has done what she could. She is come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Don't buy me flowers after I'm dead.

Give me a few bouquets while I'm alive, people say. And this is what the Lord Jesus says. She's come while I'm still alive, while I can tell her how much I appreciate it.

She's anointed my body. How much better this was. The other women never got to use their spices or their ointments, even on the dead Lord Jesus, for by then he was risen.

But this woman had the opportunity. She used hers. She was able to show her love before time.

Before what? Before his crucifixion. She believed what he said. The others didn't believe what he said.

The disciples never did believe until he actually was crucified, that it was actually going to happen to him. She believed, and so she anointed his body to the burying. You and I can't do anything for the Lord Jesus before he is crucified, can we? He's been crucified.

What do we have to do? How can we come and pour out our affection and show him how much we love him? Before what? Before he comes again. We can come a fourth time. Oh sure, we'll all have a glad hosanna when he comes and when we see him.

Sure. As you know, he appreciates it a great deal if we show how much we love him before then. Show him beforehand.

We can do this. It's one thing to rejoice in the company of the returning king. It's another thing to be found faithful to him and expressing our love and our devotion for him and taking our place with him in his rejection before he comes.

Then when he comes, we'll not be ashamed before him it is coming. Then when he comes, there will be a glad reunion. It's too late later on to do anything at all that compares with doing something for him while he's gone.

Well, the house is filled with the odor of the ointment, we're told. The testimony of her love. Everybody in that place knew about it.

Everybody in the place. And as she did leave that party, this witness clung to her everywhere she went. People knew about this.

Wouldn't it be a great thing to be the kind of person that wherever we went, people knew this one thing if they didn't know anything else about us, that we deeply love the Lord Jesus. They tell a story about two men who used to ride on the train together into the city every morning and one of them was a devout Christian brother and the other one was an attorney but he was no Christian and he used to like to needle the Christian fellow about his faith and every time they'd ride in together there'd be an argument between the two of them and of course the lawyer always won the argument because the other man wasn't really much of a talker and he just couldn't answer all the arguments that the lawyer brought up and this used to amuse the lawyer a great deal and he loved these conversations with this Christian man because he kind of put him on the spot and one day the Christian man wasn't having any any part of it and he got in the train and this man came and sat beside him and they started to talk and then this Christian fellow just wouldn't wouldn't argue with him.

The attorney said to him what's the matter you don't feel good today I feel fine oh come on he said what's the matter let's have an argument no the Christian man said I'm sick of arguing with you you always win the argument this one thing I know you may win the arguments but I love the Lord Jesus and the attorney said you win today I can't beat that argument you know this is true we we we're so concerned about arguing people into heaven or convincing them of the truth of what we believe this isn't important the way to win the argument is to show that we love him there's no answer to that there was a man in the old testament of whom this was true a very interesting thing is said of Elisha he used to go day by day down a certain street in a small town and there was a woman who watched him

go down the street day after day after day and one day she said of him to her husband she hadn't said anything to Elisha but she said to her husband I perceive this is a holy man of God and then they decided they would invite him in to stay at their house wouldn't this be great if as we walked on the streets people said I perceive this is a person who loved the Lord Jesus that's the kind of person Elisha was and this is the kind of person this Mary was the apostle Paul says that it's a great thing to walk in the triumph of Christ thanks be unto God who always causeth us to walk in the triumph of Christ and what Paul has in mind there of course is a triumph as they knew them a triumphal parade in Rome and in this triumphal parade as the general returned to the capital city to receive

honors for victories won in the field one of the things that characterized these parades is the burning of incense and as this incense was burned and as it was carried before the parade the fragrance of this incense would come back over all the participants in the parade and would get in their clothes and everybody would know all day that they had been in the triumph they had been of those who were honored that day by the nation this is the way Mary was this is the way the Lord Jesus would appreciate it if we were marked all the day by the fragrance of the knowledge of himself that we find the knowledge of the Lord Jesus so good so wonderful to us that this begins to characterize us in our contacts with other people everywhere and they know that we have been with him and they are

reminded of him and of his graciousness and of his love and this will be as Paul says a savor of life unto life that is to say all the Christians that we come in contact will be reminded of how good it really is isn't it great and this forms a wonderful bond and fellowship between Christians a savor of life unto life if I manifest the fragrance of the Lord Jesus and come into your presence you respond and we have fellowship together life with life and the savor of death unto death wherever we go in the world amongst the unsaved they'll notice the difference and they'll notice the fragrance of death about themselves as so many have come to the people of God and said what is it that you have that I don't have what is it they will feel condemned in their own hearts they will know there's

something missing that they have lost out on and they will come and say what is it and you and I have the opportunity then to share Christ with them because our love for the Lord Jesus has made them realize they needed this and they don't possess it in their lives this is the way it works so let's not be afraid I think the lesson of this morning episode is this let's not be afraid of letting it be known how much we love the Savior he loved it he appreciates it how much he said of this woman wherever the gospel is preached this is in Europe in Africa in India in China in the islands of the sea and among the Eskimos in the north everywhere over the face of the earth people know this Mary isn't that amazing they don't know any of the socialites of the day they don't know any of the bigwigs

of the day they may know very little indeed about some of the most famous names in history how much do we know about Margaret of Sweden how much do we really know of Victoria of England they're just

names to us but what do we know about Mary of Bethany ah the most important thing in her life that she loved the Lord Jesus she was just a peasant woman in Palestine that lived 2,000 years ago and still today over the face of the whole earth men remember that she loved the Savior and if God is able to do that from her life what could he do from the fact that you and I show our love for the Savior today shall we pray Lord Jesus we thank thee for this this little story of what went on in thy life one day in Bethany we thank thee for these who love thee we thank thee for Mary and for what she did

and we thank thee that the record of this has been preserved for us and has been the inspiration down the centuries for many to show their love to not be afraid to show their love for thee so we pray our heavenly father that we might learn the lesson of this episode today help us we pray thee not to be ashamed of the fact that we love thee but to rejoice in any opportunity invited or not that comes to us whereby we may show out of the fullness of our hearts that we love thee we pray in thine own dear name amen

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