

## Extravagant Worship 3-26-06

Matthew 26:1-13 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, <sup>2</sup> "As you know, the Passover is two days away--and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."<sup>3</sup> Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, <sup>4</sup> and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. <sup>5</sup> "But not during the Feast," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."

<sup>6</sup> While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, <sup>7</sup> a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. <sup>8</sup> When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. <sup>9</sup> "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."<sup>10</sup> Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>11</sup> The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. <sup>12</sup> When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. <sup>13</sup> I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

What a contrast we have in these two paragraphs! What a difference in the hearts of those involved. <sup>1</sup> When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples... Jesus had just finished giving the Olivet Discourse. He had told the disciples how important it was to be watching, ready and faithful while He went away. (Matthew 25:13) Now He will tell them when He is leaving them.

<sup>2</sup> "As you know, the Passover is two days away--and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." Jesus continued to try to prepare the disciples for what was about to happen. (Matthew 20:18) No matter how many times or ways He told them, they were still in total shock when it came to pass. We must be careful not only to hear Him, but to apply the truth we have heard when it is most difficult to. That is when it is most crucial that we remember and apply His words. We recently heard a message on the goodness of God. Are you applying it in the midst of difficulties? That is when we need it the most. You have an advantage over these disciples. You have the Spirit of God within you to remind you of what He said. Listen to Him! (John 14:26)

Earlier, Jesus had warned the religious leaders that they would be held accountable for the spilled blood of all the prophets. (Matthew 23:35) It made no difference to them. Their consciences were so calloused that it doesn't appear they gave it a second thought. <sup>3</sup> Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, <sup>4</sup> and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. They were intent on seeing Him dead, and hopefully silencing Him forever. Notice they had to do it "in some sly way". They would have to do it under cover of darkness because they are children of the darkness. (Luke 22:53) They will not do it openly because the light would expose

**Commented [notes1]:** 13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. Matt 25:13 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** 18 "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death Matt 20:18 (NIV)

**Commented [notes3]:** 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:26 (NIV)

**Commented [notes4]:** 35 And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Matt 23:35 (NIV)

**Commented [notes5]:** 53 Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour--when darkness reigns." Luke 22:53 (NIV)

them. As Jesus said in John 3:20(NIV), "Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."

Though the crowds would soon be joining the chorus to have Him crucified, days earlier they had been shouting His praises. (Matthew 21:9) So the religious leaders said, <sup>5</sup> "But not during the Feast," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people." If you have to do something under the cover of darkness, you are probably trying to hide from God and man.

<sup>6</sup> While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper...We don't know anything about Simon the Leper. This story is often confused with Simon the Pharisee, (Luke 7:39-40) but the accounts are very different. Jesus' friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were from Bethany. (John 11:1) They also attended. (John 12:2-3) No doubt Simon had seen or heard of the resurrection of Lazarus. If Jesus and the disciples were his guest in his home, he would have had to have been healed of the leprosy. In that culture, leprosy could take a man from the top of society and put him at the bottom in a minute. It was against the religious law to go into a house with a leper. (Leviticus 13:45-46)

It is sheer speculation, but I would venture to guess that Simon was feeding Jesus and the disciples in gratitude for being healed by Him. Someday we can hear the whole story of Simon the Leper.

<sup>7</sup> a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. The Jews ate like the Greeks and Romans, lying down and leaning on the left arm while eating with the right. While in Israel, I observed some Arabs who were practicing the same custom. The woman in this story was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. Martha was helping to serve the meal, but Mary had something else on her mind and heart, something similar to the time when Martha complained about her not helping serve the meal. (Luke 10:39-40)

She had a singular vision, to get to Jesus and anoint His head and feet with this perfume. Something touched her very deeply. Certainly it was the resurrection of her brother, but we will see a little later that there was something more.

<sup>8</sup> When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. <sup>9</sup> "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." John tells us that it was Judas that stirred up this complaint. <sup>4</sup> But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, John 12:4 (NIV) Both Mark and John tell us that the value was equivalent to a year's wages. (Mark 14:5) That is a lot of money. Don't you think that is pretty extravagant? What if someone spent 50 or 60 thousand dollars on a onetime event because they loved Jesus? What if one of us offered up our new car to a needy soul. Would you join Judas in murmuring about it?

When someone speaks negatively, there are always others that are ready to be drawn in. The old nature of man likes to complain and murmur. It likes to criticize

**Commented [notes6]:** 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!" Matt 21:9 (NIV)

**Commented [notes7]:** 39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. 40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. Luke 7:39-40 (KJV)

**Commented [notes8]:** Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. John 11:1 (NIV)

**Commented [notes9]:** 2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. John 12:2-3 (NIV)

**Commented [notes10]:** 45 "The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' 46 As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp. Lev 13:45-46 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" Luke 10:39-40 (NIV)

**Commented [notes12]:** 5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. Mark 14:5 (NIV)

others because it makes us feel superior. Watch out for that tendency! It is an evil one and can be extremely destructive. (James 3:5-6) Don't be afraid to stand out as different for the cause of righteousness. When someone starts to put someone down, either walk away, or gently remind the person that saying something nice about another person is more becoming than putting them down. (Philippians 2:3)

John went on to say of Judas that "6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it." John 12:6 (NIV) Self-interest, self-concern! Greed masked with cloak of righteousness! (Luke 12:15) Isn't that often the case? People created divisions and strife because they want something the way they want it, but they would never say that. Instead, they cloak it in some self-sacrificial language that sounds like they are only thinking of others. (Matthew 7:15)

Mary had just performed one of the most memorable acts of worship ever recorded. What a moment of to have observed. Have you ever seen someone give way beyond what was comfortable and been in awe of what God was doing in their heart? I know of only a few that have given that extravagantly. We are blessed to have few in this church. Every time I read Voice of the Martyrs, I'm always touched by people who choose to live in places of persecution to proclaim the Gospel. They are extravagant givers!

I think of the little man on the front row at an IEM worship service. Barefoot and scarred, his smile was radiant as he listened to the preaching translated into Malialum. When the songs were sung, he would sing as loud as he could, looking to heaven with tears running down his cheeks. After the service, I asked one of the leaders who he was. They asked if I had seen his bicycle outside, the one with the banged up speakers and twelve-volt battery. I had. The mission had given him that bike and sound system so that he could play recordings of salvation messages. His favorite place to do that was in front of Hindu temples and police stations. No one knows how many times he has been beaten and pelted by rocks. He just keeps doing it.

I imagine what happened in his heart was something like what happened in Mary's heart. The loving forgiveness of God became so real to him that he had to do something about it. When the Holy Spirit said, "Go!" he responded, "Wherever You lead me!" Extravagant worshippers never consider instruction from the Holy Spirit a sacrifice. They see every instruction as a privilege. The world looks on in abhorrence, because they can't imagine loving anything more than self. They fear that kind of fanaticism. The true church looks on in admiration, wondering if our hearts will ever be touched so deeply that we can let go of our comfort and security and become such extravagant worshippers. The tares will always whine about wasting our lives, putting our family at risk, or being careless with our finances. They have to complain because the actions of extravagant worshippers show the tares to be hypocrites.

Mohan Shazad was raised as a Christian in the brickyards of Pakistan. Some of the workers are Christians. It is the bottom wrung of Pakistan society. They are paid \$5

**Commented [notes13]:** 5 Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.

6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

James 3:5-6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes14]:** 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Phil 2:3 (NIV)

**Commented [notes15]:** 15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Luke 12:15 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** 15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

Matt 7:15 (NIV)

for six 12-hour days. After talking with his Pastor, he decided that he would distribute Christian literature to the workers, many of whom are Muslim. The owner of the brickyard told him to stop it, but he believed it was his call from God to continue. One day while riding home on his bicycle, two masked men stopped him. One held a gun while the other wielded an axe that severed his left arm. After a long recovery he said, "I have lost my one arm; even if they cut off my other body parts, I am ready for that. I will carry on with my work even if death is the result. Building the Lord's kingdom is the mission of my life." He did not choose to give his arm as an offering, but he is willing to give the one he has left. Mohan is an extravagant worshipper. You might join with the disciples and complain that he is giving more than is necessary. Maybe that is because we are embarrassed by how little we are willing to give in worship and love. (Mark 12:42-44)

<sup>10</sup> *Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. I love the way Jesus stands up for the innocent. "Back off boys, you are blind to what is really going on here." When you do what the Spirit of God leads you to do, people will criticize you. Remember, Satan is the Accuser of the Brethren. (Revelation 12:10) You have someone who will stand up for you! When Jesus is standing up for you, who else do you need? He is more than able to put anyone in their place.*

When someone offers something to the Lord sacrificially, you'd be wise to not bother them, or you may find yourself rebuked by the Lord. They are doing a beautiful thing to the Lord. What an expression, "*She has done a beautiful thing to me.*" Remember the previous message was about Jesus reminding the figurative sheep and goats that what they did to the least of the brothers, they did to the Lord. (Matthew 25:40) Do you feel led to do something extravagant for Jesus, then do it for the least of the brethren, to someone who can never pay you back. (Luke 14:13-14)

<sup>11</sup> *The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me.* You can do things for Jesus by helping the poor anytime. There will always be the poor in the earth. Jesus was only to be with them for two more days. This was Mary's last chance to show her love and appreciation to Him while physically present.

No matter how advanced societies become, there will always be the poor among us. Jesus was addressing Judas' hypocritical excuse for being hard on Mary. Jesus wasn't denying the need to help the poor; He was just stating the fact that His time was up. If they wanted to do or say something to Him, that was the time to do it.

Then He revealed what was really going on in her heart and the purposes of the Holy Spirit. <sup>12</sup> *When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.* This was the real reason behind her actions. How did she know? Did Jesus tell her, or did the Holy Spirit reveal it to her? We don't know. However it happened, she believed and responded.

The amazing thing is that when Jesus died on the cross, they had to rush him to the grave and did not have time to properly wash and anoint the body because the

**Commented [notes17]:** 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.  
43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.  
44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on."  
Mark 12:42-44 (NIV)

**Commented [notes18]:** 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.  
Rev 12:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Matt 25:40 (NIV)

**Commented [notes20]:** 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,  
14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."  
Luke 14:13-14 (NIV)

Sabbath was about to begin. (Mark 15:42-46) Though John 19:40 tells us that they wound spices in with the burial cloth, it was apparently not sufficient, for three of the accounts of the women coming to the tomb on Sunday morning mention them bringing more spices. (Mark 16:1) Somehow, Mary knew this would be the case and anointed Him beforehand. The reason they anointed the body with spices was so that they could visit the body while it was decomposing. The spices would mask the smell of decomposition.

Jesus knew what was on her heart when she poured that perfume on Him. Notice that Jesus said on His "body". John wrote "feet", while the other Gospels say "head". By saying His "body", Jesus clears up the difference and shows that it was both. A full pint on the head alone would have it running down and wasted. Wherever Jesus went on those last days, from the Garden to the mock trials, to Pilate and Herod, to the cross, everyone that was near Him could smell the fragrance of nard. (Song of Songs 1:12) It was a beautiful thing that she did. The fragrance stood in contrast to the humiliation he was enduring. There was one thing she could do to lessen the ugliness of it all, and she did it, no matter the cost.

*<sup>13</sup> I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.*" And right here this morning in Arizona, half way around the world, the words of Jesus are being fulfilled. An extravagant act of worship and love from 2000 years ago is challenging us today to be more dedicated and committed. It is rebuffing our mediocrity. It is calling us to go deeper and to let the love of Christ so grip our hearts that no sacrifice will be too great. We are talking about Mary and wondering what it means to our lives and how we will respond to her example, or the example of the little old man in India, or of Mohan Shazad.

How do we get to that place that they arrived at where all that really matters is Jesus? It is not a secret. Most of you have heard it before. Repent and be baptized with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38) Die to self, and make Jesus the Lord of your life. (Matthew 16:24) It sounds so trite because we've gotten used to saying it without visualizing what it really means. These testimonies remind us of how far the call can take us. These people don't give like that everyday, but they are ready to everyday. Like the Apostle Paul, they die daily so that when the call comes, they are ready to answer. (1Corinthians 15:31) Is that where your heart is this morning? If not, you need to let go of things that hold you back. The things that keep you from being completely His, whether security, or comfort, or some worldly pleasure or treasure, need to be released into His loving hands, before you can be truly free to be an extravagant worshipper.

**Commented [notes21]:** 42 It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached,  
43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.  
44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died.  
45 When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph.  
46 So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.  
Mark 15:42-46 (NIV)

**Commented [notes22]:** 40 Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.  
John 19:40 (NIV)

**Commented [notes23]:** 1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.  
Mark 16:1 (NIV)

**Commented [notes24]:** 12 While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.  
Song 1:12 (KJV)

**Commented [notes25]:** 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."  
Acts 2:38 (NIV)

**Commented [notes26]:** 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."  
Matt 16:24 (NIV)

**Commented [notes27]:** 31 I die every day--I mean that, brothers--just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
1 Cor 15:31 (NIV)