

LESSONS FROM MARY'S ALABASTER BOX

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January, 2012



One of the most beautiful accounts recorded in the New Testament is when Mary anointed Jesus for his burial. Jesus was so blessed with what Mary did that he promised to memorialize her actions: “Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.”

As a result, we have this account of Mary’s offering in each of the four Gospels. Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John all record this event, and give a record from various viewpoints.

God obviously thought so highly of Mary’s offering that he made sure it was known to all who would hear the preaching of the Gospel. That promise that we would hear of it means it is important to the Lord. So what lessons can we learn from what Mary did?

Below, you will find the four accounts. Let’s read them together to get a good reminder of what God wrote:

- 1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,
- 2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.
- 3 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

4 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.
5 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.
6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,
7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.
8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?
9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.
10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.
11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.
12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.
13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.
14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,
15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.
16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Matthew 26:1-16

1 After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.
2 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.
3 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 ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.
4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?
5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.
6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.
7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.
8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.
9 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.
10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.
11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

Mark 14:1-11

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.
37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

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.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Luke 7:36-50

1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

3 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 the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

John 12:1-11

Now we can proceed to gaining some insights from these passages. First note, that contrary to some commentaries, the four accounts found in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; all speak of the same event.

It is curious why some people would think the account in John is different, when anyone with common sense, a good New Testament, and an honest heart can easily see that the four evangelists record the same anointing, but with different views. In addition, Jesus promised that wherever the Gospel is preached, so would this memorial of Mary be spoken of (Matthew 26:13). Consequently, the four New Testament Gospels speak on this event.

Next, let's consider the scene:

The Place

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,
(Matthew 26:6)

The place where they met for supper was in the house of a Pharisee names Simon. It is likely this Pharisee was the father of Judas Iscariot (John 12:4; 13:2). Simon was a leper.

The laws for leprosy are found in Leviticus 13 and 14. Whether the leprosy was the type that spread or not, I do not know. However, if it was the type that spread, all things related to the house of Simon would have to destroyed (burned or broken) or cleansed.

Miriam, Naaman, Gehazi, Uzziah, and others all suffered from leprosy. They were to be pronounced unclean, and separated from the people.

But Jesus healed lepers (Matthew 11:5; Luke 17). Whether Simon was healed by Jesus or not, I do not know; but I know he was clean: for he could not entertain the supper if he was not.

As a Pharisee, the house was mainly used to entertain other Pharisees. It was not open to "*undesireables*" and sinners.

But this day, this Pharisee, desired Jesus to eat at his house. And Jesus obliged.

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

Luke 7:36

When Mary did her good work, the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

The People

Besides Pharisee Simon the leper and Jesus, Lazarus was there. Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus was a sort of celebrity, for many wanted to see him (John 12:9).

With Lazarus was his sister Martha. She served. It was her sister Mary who came and anointed Jesus head and feet, wiping his feet with her hair. The Bible makes the point that Jesus loved these three. Read this passage from John chapter 11:

1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

John 11:1-5

The disciples were also there (including Judas Iscariot), for the scriptures say they had indignation; thinking what Mary had done was a waste.

But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

Matthew 26:8

The Particular Timing

Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

Matthew 26:2

The timing was two days before the Passover. It was shortly before Jesus was to be crucified. This was likely the last opportunity Mary would have to be with Jesus. Bethany was less than two miles to Jerusalem, where Jesus was to be crucified.

Jesus made note that he would not always be available to them as he was that day:

For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

Mark 14:7

The Presence and Present of Mary

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Luke 7:37, 38

When Mary knew Jesus was at the house, she brought this gift for him. She was obviously in a very emotional state, for she was weeping. She showed her love and honour for the Saviour by kissing his feet.

She then breaks the alabaster box, and pours the contents on the Saviour's head.

There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

Matthew 26:7

The Bible says the ointment was very precious and very costly. It might have been sold for more than three hundred pence. That is a year's worth of twelve-hour work days. If a man earned an hundred dollars a day, that comes to \$30,000 worth of ointment that was poured out on the Saviour.

For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

Mark 14:5

Overall, the alabaster box contained a pound of spikenard ointment.

2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

3 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 the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

John 12:2, 3

Spikenard was used as a precious perfume (Song of Solomon 1:12). Such ointment was it for a king. Only a small amount of the oil needed to be used at a time. Mary possibly used this in her work, or maybe this was her method of saving for the future.

Jesus said Mary anointed his body for death. From head to toe, the Saviour was covered with this precious ointment of spikenard.

She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

Mark 14:8

The Provocations

Indignation

Mary's actions provoked the disciples to have indignation. They considered what she had done to be a waste. Some thought it would have better to sell the ointment and distribute the money to the poor.

8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

Matthew 26:8, 9

Disdain

Simon the leper, forgetting how it was to be unclean, had disdain for this woman. Maybe had he been able, he would have prevented her from entering his house.

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.

Luke 7:39

Greed

Judas wanted to use the ointment for his own gain. Although he said it could be used for the poor, he was a thief, and wanted the money for himself.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

John 12:4-6

Betrayal

Upon Jesus' rebuke, Judas went forth to betray Jesus.

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Matthew 26:14-16

And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.

Mark 14:10

Doubt

When Jesus tells Mary her sins are forgiven, this provoked doubt among some present.

And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

Luke 7:49

The Preaching

Jesus' Defense and Explanation

The Lord defends Mary and claims what she did is a good work. He says she anointed his body for burial. He promises the world will hear of what she had done.

10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

Matthew 26

Jesus' Parable of Forgiveness and Love

The Lord speaks to the Pharisee to teach him an important lesson of love and appreciation.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

Luke 7:40-48

The Principles

What scriptural principles did Mary's actions show that moved Jesus to make sure it is known wherever the Gospel is preached? What lessons can we learn from the alabaster box? Below, I have tried to list a few.

1. *It shows great love toward the Saviour:*

God wants man to see their own sin the way God see it. He wants man to have a repentant heart toward sin and eschew evil. When the realization of how awful sin is comes to man, he then truly appreciates the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The ones who have much sin forgiven love the Lord much.

For God to make known to us how bad sin is, he showed us by cursing creation as a result of Adam's sin. This curse, much of which we endure today, came for simply transgressing one commandment.

From that time on, the blood of millions of lambs, bulls, and goats was shed for thousands of years. The altars of God flowed with blood continually because of sin. Spotless sacrifices had to give their lives in order to atone for man's sin. That blood evidenced how awful sin is.

And then came the Lamb of God: the spotless, perfect, Son of God. The sacrifice God made by giving his Son was more than human mind can comprehend. Sin is so bad that Jesus had to die because of it.

God knows sin is bad. And in turn, God is pleased when a man comes to the realization of how bad his sin is. For by man's knowledge of sin, he is provoked more to love and appreciate the Saviour. Mary showed this love and appreciation when she anointed the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's read a few passages showing that God want man to realize the error of his ways:

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

Luke 15:14-21

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed.

Ezekiel 20:43

Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Romans 7:13

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Proverbs 8:13

Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.

Psalms 97:10

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Luke 18:9-14

And until you see how *bad* your sin really is, you cannot see how *great* Jesus Christ is. Mary knew how bad she was. No one had to convince her. But, because Jesus forgave her of all her sin, she loved him very much.

2 ***It shows a change in what was valued in the heart of Mary:***

Mary, in offering that which was most precious to her, was showing her faith in action. She believed that the Lord is greater than all she had. She took advantage of the opportunity to show her appreciation.

It is as a man who finds a pearl of great price – Jesus – and sells all he has to obtain it. What was this alabaster box of spikenard worth – \$30,000? That is nothing compared to the worth of our Saviour. What shall we keep and not give to Jesus, who has saved our souls from hell fire and, in turn, given us an eternal inheritance? Should we gain the whole world and lose our soul, what profit is that?

Mary understood the true value of Jesus. Compared to him, that box of alabaster was nothing. It was probably her most valuable possession, but she *willingly* gave it all to her Saviour.

3 ***It showed Mary’s heart to serve God:***

Mary showed she was willing to give all to the Lord. Her most valuable physical possession she gave to the Lord. The most valuable spiritual possession we have is our soul. We should give that to the Lord in order not to lose it.

In respect to earthly, material things, it is accepted according to what a man hath. The widow gave two mites. The lad gave five loaves and two fishes, with which Jesus fed the five thousand. It is not the *quantity* of what we give to God, but the *portion*. We should give all to the Lord. As one man said, “If you give the Lord your life, he has your wallet also.” If you are going to serve God, serve him with all you have.

4 ***It shows what she thought of her past life:***

How do you suppose Mary earned the money to purchase that ointment? It was costly. She was a *sinner*. I take that to mean she was a harlot. How many men did that box represent? How many experiences were in that box? How many abuses did she endure in order to purchase that ointment?

She *brake* the box. She did not plan for it to be used again after the Saviour had his use.

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 ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

Mark 14:3

As some have commented, that alabaster box was meant to preserve the ointment for as long as needed. A woman could drill a tiny hole in it in order to pour out a few drops for perfume. It was intended to be used sparingly and for special occasions. But to get it all out, she had to break it. No longer would the box be used.

5 *It showed we only have a small window of time to serve the Lord:*

“Only one life, soon it will pass; only what is done for Christ, will last.” Shortly, Jesus was to be arrested and crucified. If Mary was to do what she purposed, it would have to be done now.

Knowing Jesus was in Bethany, she came to Simon’s house. I expect she knew she was not highly thought of by the host, but she still was determined to bless the Lord – regardless of who was watching and what they thought. She saw her opportunity and took advantage of it.

Too many people wait for everything to be perfect, instead of marching forward and doing what God has put in their heart. And one preacher said that when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we will have only one of two thoughts: “I wish I did,” or, “I am glad I did.” Dear friend, let’s be of those who say, “I am glad I did.”

6 *It shows Jesus values what we do from the heart for him:*

It is not a waste to pour the ointment on the Saviour, as some in the room had said. A life dedicated to serving God is the greatest use of your time on this earth. Using your earthly possessions for the work of the Lord is the greatest investment you can make.

Some hide their pound in a napkin, but some occupy till Jesus comes. Let’s read Luke:

- 1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.
- 2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.
- 3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.
- 4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.
- 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.
- 6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.
- 7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.
- 8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.
- 9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.
- 10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

Luke 19:1-27

You might answer, but I have no valuables. Mary had an alabaster box, but I have very little. Jesus tells us to use whatever we have; and to be faithful in the least:

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Luke 16:1-15

Ultimately, it comes down to your having a willing mind. God accepts what you purpose to do in your mind, and then many times those intents will come to fruition:

11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

2 Corinthians 8:11, 12

If you don't tithe on ten dollars, you will not tithe on a million. If you don't serve the few people around you, you won't serve a large congregation. Jesus put it this way: "She hath done what she could" (Mark 14:8).

7 *It shows when you do something for Jesus; you should not be surprised if others murmur. Even a "leper" could find fault:*

I suppose it is human nature that provokes people to be critics. We have a tendency to find fault with others, having "beams" in our own eyes, and trying to remove "motes" from the eyes of others (Matthew 7:3-5). This is hypocrisy.

Mary was doing something she thought would bless the Lord. She knew the Lord was worthy. She was sacrificing a material thing to show her love for God.

The onlookers had no stake in this. It cost them nothing. However, they could not help but be critical and give bad advice.

Did the Pharisee, a leper, think he was better than Mary? Did he not think of how Jesus forgave his sins? Jesus had to teach him about love and forgiveness.

The disciples, also – people who were trying to follow God – had indignation. Oh, what a waste it was, they thought, to pour the ointment on Jesus. The poor are more worthy, they thought.

You may as well accept this fact: when you do something for God, most people will comment. Your family may say it is a waste of time. A pastor may hear from the church that a certain work is a waste of money. Fellow believers may think it is a waste of material possessions if you give them to the needy. There will be people “who do nothing but criticize” (and the ones who do nothing are usually the ones who criticize).

Then there will be people who think you are unworthy to do such and such for the Lord. Because you had been guilty, they say it disqualifies you from serving God. This was Simon’s problem. He did not think Mary was worthy to touch the Lord. But he knew nobody touched a leper – should not his past experience lead him to have compassion?

Thank God our brethren are not our judge. Paul wrote this:

1 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

1 Corinthians 4:3-5

My brethren, do what God would have you to do, and know that he is your Judge and Rewarder. When you give to God, let go of it. Give with a willing heart. God loves a *cheerful* giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). Be careful if you think the church wastes money. Is it to the glory of the Saviour? Does it bless the Lord? Keep your eye off other servants and do what Jesus says. Follow him (John 21:22).

8. *It shows you can give your best to the Lord:*

No one today knows for sure, but I expect that alabaster box of ointment was the most valuable thing Mary possessed. Even today, how many things do we have in our houses that take a year’s labor of 12-hour days to purchase (without credit)?

Mary shows here that she gave her best to the Lord. Nothing was too good for her God.

How many people give new stuff to the church? How many times have you given the best you have to the Lord’s work? Here’s the likely scenario: Someone gets a brand new

vacuum cleaner. Oh, what to do with the old one I don't want any longer? I know, I will give it to the church! "Junk for Jesus, good stuff for me!"; seems to be all too common in the Lord's work. People don't murmur about that. But let someone give their most valuable possession to the Lord – as Mary did – and you will hear about it.

Remember, the Lord deserves the best. God asked Abraham to offer his son (Genesis 22). He was willing. Abraham was rich and had all he could want, but God wanted to know if Abraham would give that which was closest to his heart – his son Isaac. Abraham showed the Lord there was nothing between himself and the Saviour. And God blessed him.

There is nothing too good for the Lord. In Acts 4 the Jerusalem disciples sold possessions and laid the money at the apostles' feet, to be distributed to those in need. A widow put her all (two mites) into the treasury and Jesus made mention of it (Mark 12:42).

In your life, be willing to give the best to God. God keeps track. God knows your heart. As one man said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, in order to gain what he cannot lose."

9. *It shows Jesus has no respect of persons.*

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Who in this world is better than his brother? I know some think they are, but in God's scale we are all under condemnation until we believe (John 3:16-18).

No one can say he is better or more worthy than another person is to have access to Jesus. There is no respect of persons with God (Acts 10:23; Romans 2:11; Colossians 3:25). That is why the Lord said, *whosoever*. Paul tells us to condescend to men of low estate:

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Romans 12:16

In addition, James commands us to behave accordingly in the church:

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

James 2:1-9

So, there it is: Mary had equal access to the Saviour. So do you. Whether lost in sin, or a wayward prodigal; you can come to the Lord and he will receive you. A contrite heart he does not despise (Psalm 34:18; 51:17). I invite you now to come to Jesus. Be born again. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved (Acts 16:31).

10. *It shows Jesus will reward our service to him:*

Whether it was a memorial to Mary – a mention of her in his word, connected to the Gospel that endures forever; or cities as promised in Luke 19; or crowns of gold, silver, and precious stones; Jesus will reward us openly for our service to him. We will reign with Christ as kings and priests (Revelation 1:5, 6), and dwell with him in the mansions he has prepared for us (John 14).

The Apostle Paul told us to be, “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Every man shall receive a reward for his labour (1 Corinthians 3:8). So be diligent my brethren. Have a heart toward God. Be willing to give him your all. And when Jesus returns, we *will* be rewarded. Mary indeed was blessed for an offering she made that took less than a few minutes. Imagine if we were to be faithful for the time we have here on earth. Let’s learn from Mary’s alabaster box.

The end.