

“She Hath Done What She Could”

Introduction. In Mark 14:1-9, we see an interesting story of betrayal and love. In vss. 1-2, representatives of each order of the Sanhedrin were gathered together in a convened council of chief priests, scribes and elders to discuss ways of putting Jesus to death. For a long time the religious authorities had been looking for a way to put Jesus to death. There was no division of opinion now as to His imminent betrayal and death. The point now under consideration was the strategic, opportune, and safe time to give Jesus over to the Roman authorities. He was too popular with the people, for the Jewish leaders to hand Him over to Rome on the feast of the passover.

Mark contrasts this event between the hatred of the religious leaders and the betrayal of Judas. While the chief priests and scribes were seeking to take Jesus by trickery and put Him to death, there was a loving woman seeking a chance to honor Him by pouring the precious perfume upon His head. In the house of Simon the leper, along with the guests Lazarus and Martha, Mary found this opportunity, and she did what she could, and did it at a time and in a manner which showed her deep insight into the character and purposes of her Lord. Perhaps this great work is the result of her sitting at His feet and learning of Him (Luke 10:39). This proved to be a powerful testimony for the Lord.

I. ***The Work She Did***

A. It was a work of love.

1. The emptying of the liquid perfume upon the head of Jesus was an expression of the affection and devotion of her heart freely poured out on Him.
2. What is the value of our service to the Lord if our hearts are not in it (Matthew 22:37; Psalm 31:23)?

B. It was a work of sacrifice.

1. The perfume was extremely costly and pure or unadulterated. Its worth was three hundred denarii.
 - a) That would have been over a year's wage for the common laborer.
 - b) Edersheim suggests that the value of the perfume would have almost provided bread for 5,000 men and their families.
2. She did not give to Christ what cost her nothing (cf. 2 Samuel 24:24). She did not give Christ from out of her overflow. We have never really served God if our service has cost us nothing (2 Corinthians 9:6-8). Spare moments and unsacrificed giving are the expressions of a heartless, thankless soul.

C. It was a work of faith.

1. The Lord said, "She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying" (Mark 14:8). How did she know that He was so near His death and burial? She had doubtless believed that the Son of Man came not to be ministered to but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).
2. Within two days they would have their last meal together with the Lord. The disciples perhaps never realized just how near the end was, but Mary, in the deepest humility and anguish of heart, felt compelled to act. Truly this woman "walked by faith and not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

D. It was a work in season.

1. The Lord said in Mark 14:7, "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always." The Lord was not excusing us from helping the poor as we have opportunity, nor was He showing a lack of concern for them, but was commending Mary's faith and devotion because time with the Lord was running out. Our opportunities to help the poor will continue.
2. She embraced the present passing opportunity, and she will be eternally glad that she did so. We can honor Christ by serving Him, but the day of privilege will soon be past (Psalm 90:12). How sad it will be to meet the Lord without ever having made one single sacrifice for the glory of His Name (Colossians 4:5).

II. ***The Results She Received***

A. The indignation of the disciples.

1. Mark's account implies that some of the disciples were angered at the woman's sacrifice, while John's gospel states that it was Judas who was covetous over the money which he felt was wasted.
 - a) Judas probably expressed the most vigorous dissent because he was the treasurer of the apostles (John 12:6).
 - b) The mention of the poor was natural because it was the custom for the Jews to give gifts to the poor on the evening of the passover and also because these men were unaccustomed to luxury.
2. However, the language of Judas was the language of blind greed and self-interest. The light which the Lord cast upon this deed of faith love also cast a dark and foreboding shadow upon Judas.
 - a) He knew the nearness of Christ's betrayal and hated all the more; Mary knew of the nearness of His precious death and love all the more.

- b) Judas did not care for the poor. The money he claimed for the poor would have just been used on himself.
 - 3. The insensitivity of Jesus' disciples to this beautiful expression of love and devotion is amazing. In the eyes of such everything is wasted that is given to Christ and His cause, only that which is given to themselves is put to a proper use.
- B. The approval of Christ
- 1. He accepted her offering.
 - a) The Lord said, "She hath wrought a good work on me" (Mark 14:6) and "She hath done what she could" (Mark 14:8). The word for "good" here is not the usual New Testament word, but one which means, "a goodness seen on the outside as it strikes the eye" or a "beautiful, pleasing goodness."
 - b) This goodness possessed and reflected true moral beauty (2 Corinthians 13:7). When our service is truly dedicated and devoted for Christ, it will be accepted by Christ (Titus 2:14).
 - 2. He justified her before the disciples.
 - a) He told His disciples to "Let her alone." It is God who ultimately justifies our service or who condemns our mediocrity and indifference.
 - b) If we are zealous servants of God, He will be our defense in the time of trouble. He cares for us and wants us to serve Him well.
 - 3. He rewarded her good work.
 - a) Jesus said in Mark 14:9, "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." What a beautiful role model of conduct! The fragrance of that self-sacrificing act has been felt all down the ages.
 - b) Everything done for Christ in this type of attitude will have an enduring influence. When we have a union with Christ, we can have salvation for the sinner, sanctification for the saved and eternal reward for the self-sacrificing servant. This woman gained approval through her faith; she was repaid for her great sacrifice of ointment (Hebrews 11:6, 39).

Conclusion. How many of us could the Lord confidently state, "She has done what she could?" We all want to hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:23), but how hard are we actually willing to work? How ready are we to use our talents to the Master's service? Do we look down upon and despise what other zealous Christians are doing for God? I pray that by their example that each of us are inspired to great depths of love and devotion to God.