**SHE HAS DONE A BEAUTIFUL THING FOR ME**

***Mark 14:1-14***

***“‘Leave her alone,’ said Jesus, ‘Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.’” (v. 6)***

At the end of last week’s message, we learned that Jesus would come in clouds with great power and glory to gather his elect. But throughout chapter 13, we get the message that God’s people need to keep watch through prayer and service to the Lord. In today’s passage, we will turn to a beautiful story of a woman who gave everything she could to Jesus. Her act of love and devotion moved Jesus’ heart. Let’s think about what moves Jesus’ heart. May the Spirit guide us to give what we can give to Jesus to move and please him.

1. **She has done a beautiful thing to me (vs. 1-9)**

The author Mark opens chapter 14 mentioning that the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread is only two days away. As we know, the Passover commemorated the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt started with nine plagues. And through each plague, Pharaoh’s heart became hardened, not letting Israel go. Then God sent the tenth, and last plague, on Egypt. It was the plague of death on the firstborn sons, from the firstborn of Pharaoh all the way down to the firstborn sons of slaves. The only way anyone either the Egyptians or Israelites could escape death was by the blood of the Passover lamb, which was spread on the doorframes of the houses who obeyed God’s life-saving message. This plague foreshadows God’s way of salvation for all human beings.

I thought about why did the author Mark make this connection between the Passover and the beautiful act of the woman. For one reason, the Passion week was upon Jesus. It marked the beginning of Jesus’ suffering. Jesus would ultimately be God’s sacrificial Lamb for the deliverance of His people. It would only be a matter of days in which Jesus would perform the ultimate act of redemption for all people by his death on the cross. Jesus is the true Passover Lamb. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus would be crucified in order to receive the full punishment for our sin on his body and shed his blood to the last drop. God’s world redemption required the full sacrifice of his body, mind and soul. Jesus was ready to pour out his life in obedience to the Father and out of love for His people. So Jesus would die on the day of the Passover. Through his sacrifice, Jesus would free people from sin and death forever. Through his sacrifice, Jesus would crush the grip of Satan over His people forever. The Passover would be the glorious day of liberation for all mankind on whom God’s favor rests. He offers us forgiveness and new life by his blood. When we put our faith in Jesus alone for our salvation, God’s judgment passes over us.

Another reason Mark relates the Passover to the story of the woman who anoints Jesus is that her beautiful act becomes his preparation for his burial. Now let’s think more about this beautiful act that this woman did for Jesus.

The author Mark makes a subtle chronological shift to connect this story with Jesus. That’s why verse three begins with ***“While he was in Bethany.”*** Now look at verse 3, ***“While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.”*** Here’s where the story begins. We are introduced to the woman who is the main character of this story. So, who is this woman? According to John, a dinner was served in Jesus’ honor, and Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead and Martha were also present (Jn 12:3). Without a doubt, the woman was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

While they were eating, Mary surprised everyone by anointing Jesus. She took an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard and poured it on Jesus’ head. An alabaster is a semi-translucent mineral quarried in Egypt and prized for its ability to keep perfumes and oils fresh. Nard is harvested from the Spikenard plant which only grows in the Himalayan Mountains of China, India and Nepal. Those few who could afford such an expensive, imported item would use it very sparingly, or keep it on a shelf as a symbol of wealth. Likely this alabaster jar of perfume was the most valuable thing the woman owned. In those days, a host used to anoint a very important guest with a few drops of expensive oil, but not with a whole jar of very expensive perfume. At a glance, people could calculate that this perfume was worth more than a year’s wages which is about $40,000 in contemporary terms. Jesus’ body was covered in perfume. Why did Mary do this?

Mary did this because she was motivated by her love for Jesus. Her love moved her to give all that she had the one who saved her and freed her from her old way of sinful life. We don’t know what kind of sinner she was, but like most of us, her sin left painful, gapping wounds in her soul. Furthermore, the guilt and shame of her lifestyle must have dragged and pulled her into a pit of despair and self-condemnation. Even worse, she could have felt the ticking timeclock of death waiting to sweep her away at any moment. But Jesus understood her. Jesus had great compassion on her. And in his unfailing love, never gave up on her. And as only God could, he treated her like a treasured possession, no matter who she had become or what she did. Jesus forgave and healed her. Jesus made her whole. In addition, Jesus loved and raised her brother Lazarus from the dead. Because of Jesus’ forgiveness and love, she loved him in return. Her giving everything she had was her expression of love for Jesus, who saved her from sin and death. When we know God’s love, we begin to know just how worthy our Lord Jesus is. He is worthy to be loved more than anything else in this world. He is worthy to give our lives to him. He is worthy of all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

How did the other’s respond? Look at verses 4 and 5, ***“Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wagesand the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.”*** Some were indignant and rebuked her harshly, thinking it was a waste (4-5a). From a pragmatic viewpoint they could be right. But they did not see her pure, sacrificial love for Jesus, nor did they see her sincerity or her gratitude. Moreover, they did not see that Jesus was worthy to receive such a lavish offering. They seemed to be concerned about the poor. But this just masked their greed. This mindset is not unusual. There are many who say nothing when others spend lavishly for their sinful desires, but become indignant at those who pour their money, time and energy on Jesus.

Mary and those present represent two different world views. In the case of Mary, she loved Jesus with all her heart and with all her soul and with all her strength. She did not think that it was too much. Rather she was full of thankfulness and joy because of how much Jesus loved her as she was, and forgave her of her sins. But the disciples and those present, especially Judas Iscariot, they saw what she did as an extravagant waste of money because they did not know the love and grace of Jesus.

Likewise, because of our different value systems with the world, we could be tempted be concerned about what other people may think about our devotion to Jesus. Instead, we should not concern ourselves with what others think, but how Jesus thinks about our actions. So, how did Jesus respond to this woman’s actions? In his response to this woman’s act of love and gratitude, we can get a glimpse of how Jesus see our acts of devotion and love.

First, Jesus see our devotion as a beautiful thing. Look at verse 6. ***“‘Leave her alone,’ said Jesus, ‘Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.’”*** Jesus fully understood her beautiful heart and called her extravagant action “a beautiful thing.” The word translated “beautiful” is more than just aesthetically pleasing. It means acceptable and appealing as well. Jesus accepted her act of love towards him. It was a winsome and lovely act with an untenable charm to it. When she poured the perfume on Jesus, she was pouring out her heart to Jesus. She gave to Jesus all she had. Jesus approves of our expressions of love for him that the world would never understand. In this way, Jesus revealed himself as God who is worthy of our love and devotion. We see that God sees our acts of love as a beautiful thing done to God. May the Spirit guide us not to restrain from giving our hearts to him because we know that he will see any of our devotion as a beautiful thing.

Second, Jesus is pleased with what we can do. Look at verse 8a, ***“She did what she could…”*** Jesus would not have said that if she had taken a spoonful of perfume out of her jar and dribbled that, in slow and half-hearted drops on His head and feet. Jesus was moved because she poured it all out. It’s not a question about how much she poured out, but could she have given more. This is the question we need to ask ourselves. Do I or could I have done or given more? It is our attitude towards Jesus. Our spiritual walk with the Lord can be measured by our self-sacrifice or our whole-hearted attitude. Our life principle towards Jesus should be “Give all you can!” John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural address, “And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” He urged Americans to find things they could do for their country. She did not know how Jesus would receive her act. But when she did her best, Jesus received it as the anointing for his body before burial. Likewise, when we do our best for Jesus, he will use it more greatly than we may imagine. I like to share a quote from one pastor, he said he knew a man who said, *"I'm only a man, but I am a man. I can't do everything, but I can do something. And what I can do I ought to do. And what I ought to do, I'm available to do."* What can we give to Jesus? May the Spirit guide us to give what we can give to Jesus with the right attitude to please him.

Third, Jesus remembers what we have done. Look at verses 8b-9, ***“She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”*** Mary probably did not know she was preparing for the burial of Jesus. She never thought about it. But Jesus gave a new meaning of her act of love. Her act of love and devotion pleased the Lord so much so that he would prepare for Jesus’ death. Jesus was going to be broken and pierced to pour out his blood as the Lamb of God. But no one cared for him before his crucifixion. When Mary anointed Jesus with the best, she could give Jesus the best comfort he needed at that time. Jesus was greatly encouraged to fulfill his gospel work on earth. In serving Jesus, timing is very important (7). People think that they can serve God whenever they want, perhaps after graduation, marriage and getting a good job. But in fact, it is harder to serve God as time passes by. The best time to serve God is now. We should use current time, money, youth and energy to serve God passionately.

Moreover, Jesus would remember Mary’s devotion by handing her story down generation to generation through the word of God. What a great and true blessing to be remembered by God. She acted out of love for her Lord and sowed a great blessing of being remembered. Likewise, we have an opportunity to sow great things that can be remembered and retold in God’s history. But, we have to sow what we can into the field. Who can tell what the harvest is going to be? We know nothing about the great futures that may suddenly bear fruit from the small deeds that we do. We do our part and Jesus will do his. I believe when we offer our love and best to the Lord, we will be surprised with the outcome that Jesus will bring. The result will be beyond our imagination. This woman was shocked when Jesus translated her act into something much higher than she had thought. Sometimes we do not know what we are doing. We do not know the meaning of our service of love to Jesus. But Jesus makes our service to him permanent as well as significant by declaring that ***“wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” (9)*** If the perfume was reserved for only her own personal benefit, we would never have heard of this woman’s inspirational act of love. But when she poured it on Jesus, her act of love smells sweet and her fragrance fills our heart even today.

This story of the woman’s extravagant expression of love to Jesus points to Jesus himself. Jesus was about to break his body on the cross for us and pour out his very life blood on us to wash away all our sins. Jesus was about to make the most extravagant and lavish statement of love in the history of the world by giving his life on the cross for sinners like us. Jesus gave himself for us, though we do not deserve it at all. The gospel is a love story of God. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Jesus, the Son of God, was going to break the jar of his very own life and pour his life out for his people. And there was a woman who broke her alabaster jar and poured herself out to Jesus. This is the love relationship God seeks from his people. This is the love story God wants to make with his people. Jesus was happy, so happy, not because of the fragrance of the perfume, but because of her love. So what is your alabaster jar that you can give to Jesus?

Through history God has used men and women of love to advance the gospel and honored the beautiful things they did for Him. Abraham loved God more than his only son Isaac and did not spare Isaac in obedience to God. His act of love moved the heart of God that God promised Christ through whom all nations on earth would be blessed (Ge 22:18). As we learned before, the widow’s offering was so beautiful to our Lord Jesus. What about Apostle Peter? He was so confident in himself, but utterly failed when he denied Jesus three times. But after he met the risen Jesus and received his love of forgiveness and reinstatement, he came to know the grace of Jesus. Then he gave himself to feeding Jesus’ sheep until he followed Jesus to the point of death on a cross. Apostle Paul once persecuted the church of Christ in his pride and ignorance. But he met the risen Jesus on the way to Damascus and received forgiveness of his sin. Since then he lived for Jesus’ name only until he poured out his life as a drink offering. What they all had in common was that they knew the love and grace of Christ and broke their own alabaster jars of life for him. This also reminds me of resent missionaries like David Livingstone, Adoniram Judson and Hudson Taylor. These men encountered disease, sickness, imprisonment, animal attacks, unsafe travel, wives and children dying for the sake of serving and giving all that they had to serve Jesus without reservation. The lives of these men and women of God were not a waste, but the most beautiful things that served the most precious work of our Lord Jesus.

1. **Judas’ betrayal (vs. 10-11)**

Mark sharply contrasts this woman with Judas Iscariot. Judas went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. The woman sacrificed for Christ. But Judas wanted to gain at Jesus’ expense. The woman loved Jesus. But Judas loved himself and money. The woman repented of her sins and accepted the love of Christ. But Judas, even though he was loved by Christ and was with Christ, did not understand and experience the love and grace of Christ. After betraying Jesus, Judas ultimately killed himself and left shame on him, while the woman left a beautiful act for Jesus forever.

Through this passage, I learned that loving God is giving my best that I can. I recently thought that whatever I have done was a waste because I haven’t seen any visible fruit. But through this passage, I learned that I shouldn’t look at things that way. Rather, I should see how I have loved God and given him the best. I have asked myself, “Should I or could I have given more. In some cases, yes. In others no. I did my best. The best examples of that is my relationship with Duane. I have studied with Duane for about 8 years now. I have done by best. I have shared my life, my home, my food and my family with Duane, sparing nothing for him. I have not seen any waste in my efforts for him. I have genuinely loved and cared for him as a brother and friend. Through this passage, I believe that God has seen the beautiful thing I have done. May the Spirit guide me to continue to give my love and my best to Jesus as he has loved me without reservation!

Through this passage, we learned that the heart of this woman was given to Jesus because of her gratitude and love for her Lord and Savior Jesus. And out of that precious love, she gave all she had to Jesus. Although many thought of it as a waste, Jesus did not. Instead, Jesus remembered and would share one of the greatest love stories for generations to come. May the Spirit help us remember what Jesus has done for us and lead us to love Jesus all the more so that we can give him our best. May the Spirit lead us to give our lives as a fragrant offering, so our lives may be a sweet aroma for our Lord, our community, our church and to the world.