

GOSPEL OF JOHN

Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

Broken and Spilled Out

The Andre Crouch song, My Tribute, asks the question “How can I say thanks for the things you have done for me, things so undeserved, yet you give to prove your love for me. The voices of a million angels could not express my gratitude. How can I say thanks?” Today’s lesson concerns Mary of Bethany who chose to say ‘thank you’ to Jesus by lavishing on Him the most precious gift in her possession.

John’s story of the anointing of Jesus is also found in **Mark 14:3-9** and **Matthew 26:6-13**. Most scholars agree that Matthew, Mark and John’s accounts cover the same occasion. There is another very similar incident recorded in **Luke 7:36-50** that is different. These separate anointings are easily confused just as the two separate miracles of Jesus feeding 5,000 and also 4,000 people with just a little bread and fish are often confused. The biggest differences in the anointing of Jesus in the gospel of Luke from the other gospels is that Luke relates the story of a sinful woman who anointed the feet of Jesus. Mary of Bethany was never called a sinful woman. In fact, she is often remembered as being the one who chose *the good portion* while she sat learning at the feet of Jesus as her sister worked in the kitchen. I won’t take the time to go into the differences. If you are interested, you can read and study those passages for yourself.

Read John 12:1-3 (ESV) ¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. ³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Martha was cooking again – serving a meal to Jesus and His friends. In this family, we see what is required in every church. Martha’s serving is a picture of working for the Lord. Mary’s life is a picture of worshipping the Lord.

From Mary we see a specific act of worship. Nard or spikenard is a very valuable perfume oil that is taken from the root of a plant. Alabaster was a stone commonly found in Israel. It was a hard stone resembling white marble and is referred to as one of the precious stones used in the decoration of Solomon’s Temple. These alabaster boxes filled with perfumed oil were stored and used only for special occasions. Mary broke open her box which contained a pound of the essential oil. Today, you can purchase 16 oz. of spikenard for \$624 – so even today the oil is not cheap. Spikenard had a unique fragrance, and the presence of its aroma was an indication that the very best had been offered. It is mentioned in the Song of Solomon.

It has been speculated that this jar may have been Mary’s dowry or her inheritance. In other words, this jar of spikenard ointment may have been all she had of value, and she poured it out on Jesus. Her extravagant gift is a picture of the kind of offering expected of each of us. We are not told the circumstances of how

Mary came to possess the oil. I do not believe that the family was wealthy. I believe the oil was very precious to her. It would have required a year's wages from a common laborer to purchase the fragrant oil that Mary lavished on Jesus. Like David, Mary would not give to the Lord that which cost her nothing. David said in **2 Samuel 24:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ ... *I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.* "... The time of the dinner is recorded as being six days before the Passover. Jesus would soon be crucified and become the Passover Lamb who would be broken and spilled out in order to take away the sins of the world.

In Oriental fashion the men would have been reclining at a low table leaning on small couches or pillows with their feet extending behind them. This would place Mary behind the diners. Instead of as in a learner's position that she took previously at the feet of Jesus, Mary took a slave's position. The washing of feet was reserved for the lowest of servants and as Mary knelt at Jesus' feet, she didn't care what anyone thought. She considered it a privilege to anoint the feet of her Lord.

There is a Steve Green song about this event. The chorus says, Broken and spilled out – Just for love of you Jesus – My most precious treasure – Lavished on Thee – Broken and spilled out – And poured at Your feet In sweet abandon – Let me be spilled out – And used up for Thee. Follow the link to hear the song. An ad will pop up first which can be skipped. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aP2kZCigZKE>

The oil was broken and spilled and lavished on Jesus and Mary needed something to wipe His feet and all she had quickly available was her own hair and she used it in her worship of Jesus. She gave over her own self to the worship. She was not worrying about what others thought. She didn't care what she would look like later with oily hair. All she cared about was Jesus and the fragrance of her worship filled the room. **2 Corinthians 2:14-15 (ESV)** ¹⁴ *But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.* ¹⁵ *For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.* Mary lived out the picture of being the aroma of Christ.

Yes, Mary's worship was a sweet aroma to Jesus but to Judas Iscariot, the smell stank because Judas viewed Mary's gift as a waste of money.

Read John 12:4-8 (ESV) ⁴ *But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said,* ⁵ *"Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"* ⁶ *He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.* ⁷ *Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.* ⁸ *For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."*

Here again as so often found in scripture, we see the opposite responses to Jesus. Mary's loving response to Jesus was to worship Him. Judas' first response was to criticize Mary. In fact, the first recorded words of Judas in the gospels are criticism of Mary. Judas was a thief and he was in the habit of stealing from Jesus. It was easy because he was money keeper for the group.

On several occasions Jesus had spoken of His death to His followers. Judas chose to be the one who would betray Jesus. The other disciples denied or refused to see the day approaching when Jesus as Messiah would be crucified for the sins of the world until after He rose from the dead. But Mary had sat intently listening at the feet of Jesus and really heard what Jesus said and must have gained a special understanding of the mission and message of Jesus. Mary of Bethany is not included in the group of women who brought spices to the burial of Jesus. She anointed Him while He was still living.

Read John 12:9-11 (ESV) ⁹ *When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.* ¹⁰ *So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well,* ¹¹ *because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*

The chief priests wanted Lazarus dead simply because he was a living witness to Jesus' power. Is it any wonder that Jesus said of them in **Matthew 23:27 (ESV)** ²⁷ *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.*

Jesus said concerning the end times in **Mark 13:13 (ESV)** ¹³ *And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake...* Sometimes when we read these words we think they apply to someone else – to another time – but not to ourselves. However, in today’s environment we realize that being hated for our worship of Jesus is a very real possibility within our own country. It is quite probable for hatred of Christians to come to our state, our town, our church. Let’s be ready to stand firm to the end.

Jesus was now on His way to His destiny in Jerusalem where His heart would be broken on the cross and His blood spilled out for us. Steve Green aptly puts it this way: God's most precious treasure – Lavished on me – You were broken and spilled out – And poured at my feet – In sweet abandon Lord – You were spilled out and used up for Me.

Read John 12:12-16 (ESV) ¹² *The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.* ¹³ *So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”* ¹⁴ *And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,* ¹⁵ *“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”* ¹⁶ *His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.*

This passage is known as the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem on the Sunday prior to His crucifixion. Such an entry was prophesied long before in **Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

Due to the fact that palm branches were placed before Him, this day is often called “Palm Sunday.” A large crowd applauded Him, spreading the road with their garments and with branches, acknowledging Him as the son of David. The people cried out Hosanna which is a Hebrew or Aramaic word translated as a prayer

meaning “save now” or “O save.” It is part of a formula taken from *Psalm 118:25-26 (ESV)* ²⁵ *Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!* ²⁶ *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.*

The Triumphal Entry is of vital significance in understanding the messianic mission of Jesus. Prior to this moment, Jesus had refused to allow any public acknowledgement of His being the Messiah. By conducting His ministry outside Jerusalem, He had avoided further intensification of conflict with the Jewish religious leaders. Now, however, the appointed time had come. The opponents of Jesus understood the strong messianic implications of the manner of His entry into Jerusalem. The riding upon the colt, the garments and palm branches in the road, and the shouts of the multitude—all of this pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. Luke adds to the Entry by saying in *Luke 19:39-40 (ESV)* ³⁹ *And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.”* ⁴⁰ *He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”*

The Triumphal Entry was a public acceptance of Jesus being the Messiah and this presented a direct challenge to His enemies. On the other hand, the Triumphal Entry must have been a disappointment to many of His followers. Christ did not enter Jerusalem upon a war horse leading troops of conquest but instead rode upon a colt representing humility. The religious leaders demanded His crucifixion, while the multitudes indifferently turned away from Jesus’ public offer of Himself as their King.

John wrote this account many years later, and he admits that he didn't understand what Jesus was doing that day that is why he said: *but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.* The coming of the Holy Spirit would be instrumental in helping them to see the entire picture.

Read John 12:17-19 (ESV) ¹⁷ *The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.* ¹⁸ *The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.* ¹⁹ *So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”*

McGee comments: “Here is a situation loaded with dynamite. The crowd is enthusiastic because of His miracle; their interest is centered on Lazarus and not on the person of Christ. The Pharisees are out to kill Him. Jerusalem is crowded with people for the feast. Obviously, Jesus Christ could have had the crown without first going to the Cross. However, if He had gone directly to the crown, if He were the ruler today, you and I would never have been saved. He had to go to the Cross to save you and me”

This lesson is entitled Broken and Spilled Out and we think of the beautiful picture of Mary anointing Jesus. And yet, Broken and Spilled Out goes far beyond a bottle of Mary’s perfume. Those who love the Lord can say with Andre Crouch: Just let me live my life – Let it be pleasing, Lord to Thee – And if I gain any praise – Let it go to Calvary