

## Making History – Matthew 26:6-13

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Perfume*

1. One of the most closely guarded secrets in the fashion industry is the research & development of perfumes.
2. Labs for the major cosmetic corporations are under heavy security, nearly as tight as weapons research labs.
3. And the reason why is because there's a huge battle between cosmetic companies in the sale of scents.
4. In the US alone, over \$24 billion is spent annually on perfume & cologne! It's big business.
5. And the major manufacturers are constantly working to concoct the latest formula that will hook the consumer.

#### B. *Today*

1. Today, we're taking a look at a story about some precious perfume.
2. It's found in Matthew, Mark, and John's gospels.
3. Our text will be Matthew 26, but we'll be adding insights from the other two as well.

### II. TEXT

#### A. *Vs. 6-7*

**6 And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, <sup>7</sup> a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured *it* on His head as He sat *at the table*.**

1. What Matthew says here *actually* took place on the Friday *before* Palm Sunday, so a few days before the setting of ch. 26.
2. Matthew inserts this story *here* because it sets up what he has to say about Judas in the next section; vs. 14-16.
3. Look with me at vs. 1-5

**<sup>1</sup> Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, *that* He said to His disciples, <sup>2</sup> “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” <sup>3</sup> Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, <sup>4</sup> and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill *Him*. <sup>5</sup> But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”**

4. Now read vs. 14-16 –

**<sup>14</sup> Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup> and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him**

**to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup> So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.**

5. Matthew inserts vs. 6-13, which had happened a few days *before* all this, to explain *why* Judas turned on Jesus.
6. As we'll see, he's not at all happy with what he considers the terrible waste of this precious perfume.
7. Jesus and the disciples arrived at the little village of Bethany, on the Friday before Palm Sunday.
  - a. Bethany was just 2 miles east of Jerusalem and was a humble little village in which some of his closest friends lived; the sisters Mary & Martha, & their brother, Lazarus.
  - b. another man lived there named Simon who'd been a leper, but who'd been cured by Jesus.
  - c. John tells us that the people of the village threw a kind of feast to honor Jesus; it was held in Simon's home.
  - d. Martha, of course, was busy serving, and Mary, her sister, was once again at her usual station – Jesus' feet.
8. Mary had been paying close attention to Jesus and knew that things were drawing to an end.
9. His repeated warnings about coming to Jerusalem for the last time where He would be betrayed, condemned, and executed had moved her to a dramatic resolution.
10. And now, just a week before the Passover, sitting in Simon's house at Jesus' feet, she *seized* what could very well be her last opportunity to do something she'd decided she *had* to do.
11. It's *John* who tells us it was Mary who brought this alabaster flask.
  - a. Matthew leaves her nameless because when he composed his gospel, she was still alive and would have faced the hostility that at that time as being vented on the followers of Christ.
  - b. by the time John wrote, she was gone so he gives her name.
12. Mary came while Jesus was reclining at the table where the dinner was laid out.
  - a. with her she carried a costly bottle of perfume.
  - b. it was made of alabaster; a semi-transparent stone that was used for just such things.
  - c. if Mary's bottle was like others from this time then the body was a smooth cylinder, and the top was carved in the shape of a rosebud.
  - d. the stone walls of the flask would be thin enough to see light through.
  - e. alabaster was usually a tan stone with thin veins of brown, yellow and red.
  - f. the top of the bottle was made so that once sealed, it was permanent, the only way to open the bottle would be by breaking the top off the body.
13. As we read in the other gospels, the value of this bottle of perfume was 300 denarii, or nearly a full year's wages!
  - a. you see, this wasn't just a little vial of perfume; not like the bottles we keep in our medicine chest or bathroom counters to use daily.
  - b. this was more like a special storage container and this perfume wasn't something Mary dipped in to occasionally.

- c. this was an *investment* she treasured.
  - 1) she may have bought this flask just for this occasion, using her *life savings* to purchase it.
  - 2) or more likely, it was the dowry gift her father had given her and she had treasured for years, waiting to give to the man she married.
- d. the point is – this was Mary’s earthly wealth, all of it.
- 14. Jewish women valued such perfumes in the same way modern women value jewelry.
- 15. This flask was Mary’s treasure. But there was something she put higher stock and value in, and He was now sitting in Simon’s house.
- 16. In light of what He’d been saying about what was soon to happen, she didn’t know if she’d have another chance to be with Him this way, so she seized the moment, and did what she decided she *had* to do – she took her earthly wealth, and *spent it on* her greatest Treasure.
- 17. She broke the flask, and poured the contents on Jesus.
- 18. Elsewhere we read the perfume was *pure spikenard*.
  - a. and while it’s called “oil” here, don’t think of this as a heavy oil like motor oil or vegetable oil.
  - b. this was the *essential oil* of the spikenard and was light, so light that it would evaporate in minutes once applied.
  - c. John tells us that when Mary broke the flask, the fragrance of the perfume *filled* the entire house.
- 19. Now, *we* read this story, and see it as a touching & precious scene of Mary’s love for & devotion to the Lord.
- 20. But that is *not* the way some of the disciples reacted . . .

## **B. Vs. 8-9**

**<sup>8</sup> But when His disciples saw *it*, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? <sup>9</sup> For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to *the poor*.”**

- 1. John tells us it was *Judas* who initiated this critique of Mary’s actions.
- 2. At his complaint, a few others joined in and they sat there huffing about such a tragic waste.
- 3. Why, this flask was a significant investment and rather than using it as an actual perfume, it was a commodity which could have been converted into cash and used to feed and cloth the needy.
- 4. Just think of it – 300 denarii, nearly a year’s wages!
- 5. And now it’s wasted as it flows down Jesus’ hair and drips onto His shoulders and freshens the air of the whole house! What WASTE!!!!!!!!!!!!
- 6. But John gives us an important insight about all this:
  - a. Judas said this, *not* because he cared for the poor.
  - b. he kept the communal purse for Jesus & the disciples; he was the group treasurer.
  - c. and he’d been skimming from it, embezzling funds to line his own pockets.
- 7. If Judas had known ahead of time what Mary planned, he would have pulled her aside and said,

- a. “Mary, think about what you’re doing! Don’t waste the perfume – it’s precious.”
  - b. “You know how much Jesus loves the poor. Why don’t you *donate* the bottle?”
  - c. “Yeah – give it to me and I’ll tell Jesus what you’ve done. Then I’ll sell it and use the money to help the needy.”
  - d. “Isn’t that a better use of your investment than to just waste it by using it as perfume?”
8. What really upset Judas was that he saw a means of adding to his own profits dripping away and this just *irked* him. So he masked his greed behind a pretense of concern for the poor.
  9. This sniping at Mary took place quietly among some of the disciples.
  10. But Jesus was aware of it and spoke up –

### **C. Vs. 10-12**

#### **10 But when Jesus was aware of *it*, He said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me.”**

1. Judas and a few of the disciples were critical of Mary and accusing her of nearly criminal waste.
2. Jesus defended her and said what she’d done was a “*good work*.”
  - a. and really, that doesn’t bring over into English the weight of these words.
  - b. Jesus said what Mary had done was an *excellent* thing!
  - c. no higher affirmation or praise could He express.
3. I love this; these self-appointed critics had given a collective thumbs-down on Mary’s service.
4. Jesus gave her two big thumbs-up! Then he said -

#### **11 For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always.**

5. The disciples thought a better use of the investment would have been to sell it and use the money to help the poor.
6. Jesus makes an important point, one His followers in every age need to heed.
7. There will always be poverty & the poor.
  - a. because we live in a fallen world, there will be endless opportunities to do good deeds of charity.
  - b. whether it’s feeding & clothing the poor, or working to right wrongs & injustice -
  - c. until Jesus comes again, the needs will be plentiful.
8. But at that moment, as Jesus sat in Simon’s house, the time was quickly running out and He would soon no longer be with them bodily.
9. Jesus is always with us in the Spirit, but His incarnation was a *unique period* of time, a specific moment in history, and that moment was about to end.
10. And Mary, seemingly alone of them all, grasped the truth of that.

#### **12 For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial.**

11. Jesus makes Mary’s motive known – she did it in preparation for Jesus’ burial.
12. Mary was far more sensitive to Jesus than the disciples were.
  - a. several times He’d told them He was soon to be crucified and buried.

- b. this trip to Jerusalem was the last and it would all be over in a few days.
  - c. as Mary saw Jesus sitting in Simon's house, she realized this might very well be the last time she'd have such access to Jesus before the end,
  - d. and when the end came, she didn't know if she'd be able to perform the service of anointing Him for entombment.
  - e. so she seized this moment to do what in her heart she'd resolved to do –
  - f. take her earthly wealth and invest it, pour it – *literally*, on her greatest Treasure!
13. Oh friends, we can be sure this was no *impetuous act*, no *momentary decision*; this was a *firm resolution* Mary had come to only after much thought.
14. For she was taking her life's savings, in all likelihood, her wedding dowry, and lavishing it on Jesus!
- a. she was saying, in one extravagant act, "My life, my fate, my future is tied to Jesus."
  - b. "The dowry I was planning to give to my husband on our wedding day, I now give to Him – for there is no other man for me."
- 
15. I'm struck by Mary's *sensitivity* to Jesus.
- a. Jesus revealed her motive – she was preparing Him for burial by her act of pouring the perfume on Him.
  - b. she knew what would soon take place – she understood His death was imminent -- while the disciples, Jesus' *official* followers, were *clueless*!
16. I've pondered over the difference between Mary and the disciples; how could she know and they be so oblivious?
- a. I think it's because while the disciples related to Jesus as their *Teacher & Master*, Mary saw Him as *Friend*.
  - b. the disciples were following Jesus because of their hope that He was the Messiah & would make them important officials in His Kingdom.
  - c. Mary followed Jesus simply because *she loved Him*.
  - d. when Jesus spoke, the disciples heard *yet another lesson*.
  - e. Mary heard His heart and adored the beauty there.
  - f. they had ears of *cold analysis*, hers were ears of *passionate love*.
17. Because Mary was so in love with and so attentive to the heart of Jesus, she was aware of and sensitive to the moment and how it lay in God's plan.
18. This was the moment for her to do what she did, and she moved faithfully to perform what her heart had already decided. And Jesus called it **EXCELLENT!**
19. This yields an interesting insight – It's those who are *closest* to Jesus *personally*, who are most in love with Him and most in tune with His heart who receive the greatest revelations of God's divine timetable and plan for history.
- a. we see it here with Mary.
  - b. we see it in the prophet Daniel who's called the *beloved* of God. Of all the OT prophets, Daniel received the greatest visions of the future and most clearly understood the importance of the moment in which He lived.
  - c. in the NT we have the Apostle John, who's called the *beloved of the Lord*. It was John who was given the visions of Revelation, which map out the

- entire scope of history from that day until the end.
- 
20. As we've seen in other studies, women were accounted little importance by the men of that day.
- a. they certainly were not valued for their *spiritual insight* or accorded any honor as able to achieve any kind of *spiritual depth*.
  - b. yet here, it was a woman who had the keenest spiritual insight while the men who were supposed to be the most in-tune with these things were out of touch.
- 
- c. Judas had nothing but contempt for Mary's loving service of Jesus.
  - d. what she did was an act of the purest worship, and it was a sweet fragrance that filled the entire house with its beauty.
  - e. but the cold, calculating mind of Judas had nothing but scorn for it.
  - f. when Mary opened her precious flask of fragrant perfume, he uncorked his vile mouth and released the stench of heartless criticism.
21. Mary & Judas live on in the Church today.
- a. there are those, like Mary, who follow Jesus because they love Him with all their hearts.
    - 1) and they are not ashamed to worship Him,
    - 2) expressing that worship in ways some call extravagant, fanatical, or wasteful.
    - 3) but they care nothing about the nay-saying of the critics because they know the heart of God
    - 4) and they hear His approval and delight in their strong worship.
    - 5) they know His good pleasure in their complete devotion to Him.
    - 6) when they pour themselves out so completely, as Mary did, they hear what Mary heard – "This is an excellent thing you are doing!"
  - b. and then there are the Judases, the critics who reduce everything to a formula and want to know what the bottom line is.
    - 1) they're uncomfortable with the worship of Mary because, well, it might drive off some of the people who are more like they are.
    - 2) they ask what the cost-effectiveness ratio of worship is.
    - 3) "If we do this, how much will it increase attendance and giving?"
22. Mary is concerned with one thing – That God is loved and glorified.
23. Judas' concern is – Have we maximized our profits?
24. Judas has nothing but disdain for Mary's unrealistic, "head-in-the-clouds" approach to life.
25. Mary's heart breaks for Judas' failure to realize the moment and seize it to do the only thing that really matters – love and worship Jesus.

#### **D. V. 13**

1. Jesus ends with -  
**13 Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.**
2. Mary's worship, her act of total devotion was *so excellent*, Jesus said wherever the story of His life went, her story would be told as well, because by

- worshipping Him, her story had become a part of His!
3. This act would become a memorial of what true worship looks like, and a testimony to what blesses the heart of God.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *Real History*

1. There are two chronicles of history that are being written;
  - a. one on earth by men,
  - b. the other by God in heaven.
2. The History that will endure, is the heavenly Chronicle.
3. And what God counts as newsworthy stands in stark contrast to what the world notices.
4. The *Bethany Herald Examiner* did not contain an article on Saturday morning of the events at Simon's house the night before.
  - a. no mention was ever made of Mary's little stunt with the perfume bottle.
  - b. the paper that day carried stories about the events in Jerusalem.
    - 1) there were articles about the decisions of the priests and the latest controversy brewing between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.
    - 2) news of a famine in Egypt was on page two, along with an article about the latest developments in Rome.
  - c. but there was not a word about the Mary and her perfume.
  - d. such a thing is inconsequential in the eyes of the world. Who cares?
5. God! God cares! He saw and took note and directed the recording angel to mark it down. It was the headline that night in the *Heavenly Gazette* and the hosts of heaven read a detailed account of the whole thing.

#### B. *Making History*

1. Friends, history, *real history*, is not what we read in our news-papers or in a textbook in school. It's not the reports we hear on the radio and see on TV.
2. Real history is the eternal record God is keeping.
3. And Jesus makes it clear here in v. 13 that what God notes and memorializes is our whole-hearted surrender to and worship of Him.
4. When we take all we have and all we are & lay it at His feet, pouring it out in heart-felt & sincere worship, He takes note and puts His affirmation of acceptance on it. He calls it "Excellent!"
5. Listen to the words of Malachi 3:16-17  
**16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. 17 "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them My jewels."**
6. As Jesus said in v. 11, there are endless opportunities for us to do good in this world.
7. But the *greatest good*, and one that must be seized at every opportunity that presents itself, is to worship the Lord *unabashedly*, with an *unashamed*,

*extravagant* love.

8. Have you seen that commercial with the couple standing in some European square; they're celebrating their anniversary, and he says – "There's something I have to do." Then he screams out at the top of his lungs for everyone to hear, "I love this woman!"
  - a. she gets all embarrassed and hushes him.
  - b. then he gives her a gorgeous diamond ring and she whispers in his ear, "I love this man!"
9. Let's not be afraid or ashamed to declare our love for God, and to give to Him the excellent ring of sincere worship.
10. Know that as we do, He does not shush us.
11. No – He shouts back His love for us!