

Subject: *Do What You Can for Christ*

Scripture: *Mark 14:1-9*

This story takes place in the last week of Christ's earthly ministry. It is an amazing drama that plays out over just a few days time. In the unfolding events we see the actions of people and the actions of God. One thing is clear...the actions of God are in control and nothing is left to chance or accident. As we look at human actions, we find that some people in the story did the right things and some did the wrong things, but the woman in this story did the BEST thing. We know from John 12 that this woman was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. We find Mary in three Gospel stories: in Luke 10, she is a learner, sitting at Jesus' feet; in John 11, she is a mourner, falling down at Jesus' feet; and in John 12, she is a worshipper, again at Jesus' feet. She did something magnificent that day as she anointed Jesus body just days ahead of His death and burial. Jesus described her act of devotion in verse 8, "She has done what she could." I want us to dig into the story and understand what she did.

1. What she did was COSTLY

The box (vial, flask) itself was costly. It was made of alabaster, which got its name from a city where it was found, Alabastron. It was a translucent kind of marble. It contained ointment (perfume) of pure nard that probably came from India, and it was very expensive (300 pence or denarii was equal to a year's income). She broke the vial, probably at the neck and poured it all on Jesus. It was a lavish, extravagant gift.

2. What she did was CRITICIZED

Some thought it was waste (vs. 4) and the money should have been given to the poor. In the parallel text of John 12:6, the main one to speak out against it was Judas Iscariot, who was the treasurer and also a thief. Apparently when he voiced his criticism, he influence others to do the same.

3. What she did was COMMENDABLE

Jesus called it a "good work" and knew she had done it for His sake. If Jesus is pleased, nothing else matters.

- A. Christ said it was a *timely work* (vs. 7). He would soon be gone from earth.
- B. Christ said it was a *thoughtful work* (vs. 8). Jesus had spoken at times about His death and resurrection, but His words for the most part went in one ear and out the other. But with Mary it was different. She had listened to what He said and took it to heart.
- C. Christ said it was a *treasured work* (vs. 9). It would be remembered as a memorial.

What will you be remembered for? What do you remember about these men? Clark Hinkle, George McAfee, and Joe Perry? They are all in the NFL Hall of Fame. Do you remember anything about these guys...Horton Smith, Craig Wood, and Claude Harmon? They all won the Masters golf tournament. All these men were once famous, but now forgotten.

Some people are remembered for their wealth. Some are remembered for their work. Some are remembered for their words. Sadly, some are remembered for their wickedness. But

some like Mary are remembered for their worship. Her act of devotion captures the essence of worship.

- The *freedom* of her worship – No one coerced her or pressured her. She did it willingly and from the heart. Worship that is forced or compelled is not worship at all.
- The *focus* of her worship – Jesus said she had done a good work on Him. Others didn't like it, but He did.
- The *fullness* of her worship – She broke the container and poured it all on Him. We often sing our beloved hymns, but we don't really mean what we sing...

We sing "I Surrender All," but in fact we surrender some or very little.

We sing "Take My Life and Let It Be," but we mean "take my life and let me be."

We sing "Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold" and then we hold on to it with all our might.

We sing that great hymn by Isaac Watts, "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all."

- The *fragrance* of her worship – The account in John 12 tells us something about else about that event. When Mary anointed Jesus with the perfume, the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. When you do something special for Christ, others get a blessing too.
- The *faithfulness* of her worship – Jesus commended Mary: "She has done what she could." She did what she could when she could. That's what Christ deserves and what He expects.

There were two farmers, Bill and Bill, who were friends, but they weren't as close as they used to be. One day they were talking and Bill needed a little assurance as to how he stood with Bob, so he asked him: "Bob, if you had 20 cows, would you give me half of them? If you had 10 horses, would you give me half of them? If you had 2 hogs, would you give me 1 of them?" Bob said, "That ain't fair, you know I've got 2 hogs."

The Lord is not interested in what you would do with what you don't have. He wants to know what you're doing with what you've got.