

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 10 am

What is Christ worth to you? (The woman with the alabaster jar)

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Welcome and any new coronavirus instructions.

Opening Scripture from Ps 113

Hymn mp 366 Jesus is king and I will extol him

Scripture Reading Psalm 138

Prayer

Communion CH 413

Reading Matthew 26:6-13, (See also Mark 14:1-11, John 12:1-11)

Hymn mp 633 Thank you Jesus

Sermon What is Christ worth to you?

Hymn mp 632 Thank you for the cross

Closing prayer 1 Thess 3:12

Close -----

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at [www.knbc.org](http://www.knbc.org).The audio file is [20\\_11\\_01.mp3](#)*Welcome, pray*

In 2010 Paul and Rachel Chandler were kidnapped by Somali pirates. They were held captive for 9 months while family and others raised money for their release. They were finally released after paying £600,000. If that was you, - or should I say not you - but someone in your family, - and you had to find the money would you pay? It might be much more than £600k, how much would you pay? I.e. how much do you value that person? Next to you

Today we look at a woman who valued Jesus highly. We can see this by her actions. What she does is a wonderful demonstration of her love for Jesus.

It shows what Christ was worth to her. So the question for you and I today is: What is Christ worth to me? - And what is he worth to you?

Let's go straight to the event and think about what Jesus is saying. The passage we read was Matthew 26:6-13, also Mark 14:1-11, & John 12:1-11

(Luke 7:36-50 in case you are wondering is not included as a parallel passage)

*Let's start with the 'what, when and where'.*

We are told it was **at Bethany**. Bethany was two miles from Jerusalem. It is **where Lazarus lived**. Jesus had finally gone there four days after hearing the news of Lazarus being sick and there Jesus raised him from the dead. With Lazarus alive we are told: **Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour**. Jn 12:2

It's at **the home of Simon the Leper**, was he one of the lepers healed?

And when did this happen? John says "1 **Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany**. So this is after Lazarus was raised from the dead, but only days before Jesus Himself would go to the cross, die, be buried & then raised again from the dead. Thus last days of Jesus before his death.

Mark goes on to say they were: **reclining at the table**. Picture them all, the disciples and others all around the table with Jesus too reclining /semi lying. During the meal a woman, who John says was Mary and the context points to Mary the sister of Lazarus, came up to Jesus **with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard**. (Nard, comes from a plant that grows in India and the east. It is sometimes translated spikenard because of the 'spikes' that grow out of its roots. This expensive import is a very costly ointment that gives off a sweet perfume. #So 1:12 4:13,14 Mr 14:3 Joh 12:3.

In most homes then there was little of value. What is the most valuable item you have at home? Do you have one or two things kept hidden away to be

passed on from generation to generation. Perhaps a rare bottle of wine kept for a special occasion. Or some gold jewelry, a gold brooch for that special granddaughter. You are keeping the best for the best (tB\_for\_tB)

This Nard, pure nard, is a valuable fragrance probably kept hidden away to anoint the body of a parent or key person in the family on their passing.

It was very expensive we are told, how expensive? Matthew says **high price**, John says **a year's wages** Mark says **more than a year's wages**. Or if you see the footnote in Mark the Greek reads **more than three hundred denarii**. The Denarii was in NT time the principal silver coin of the Roman empire. From the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, it would seem that a denarius was then the ordinary pay for a day's wages. Mt 20:2-13

A year's wages, how much is a year's wages today £? Who should we ask?

■ The average UK wage today £30,800 That's some bottle of wine!

So here it is, this **alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard**. pure; unadulterated ointment, perhaps kept unused for years, the most precious thing she possessed...

What did she do? **she poured it on Jesus' head as he was reclining at the table. she poured it on Jesus' head.** All used up, all gone, the best given for the best, he's worth it! That is a great demonstration of her love for Jesus. But there is more to this:

Elisha says to one of the prophets **Take the flask and pour the oil on his head and declare, 'This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king over Israel.'** 2Ki 9:3

✚ Oil was used to anoint a king

Again **The LORD said to Samuel, "Fill your horn with oil ...; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."** 1Sa 16:1

So Mary who had before sat at his feet has decided he really is the king after David, Jesus is her king, the king who will reign over an eternal kingdom.

How may here would say "Yes Jesus is king", the bible says he is the king. Yes, a good theological answer.

Don't we often sing these words, "*Jesus is king and I will extol him, Give Him the glory, and honour His name* - do you? Do you?"

When the government speaks are you quick to obey?, to the letter: the masks, the hand washing on the way in, etc. etc., and so we should. But how much more when the true King speaks! When he says: "honour each other

above yourselves, do not repay wrong for wrong. Give yourself fully to the work of the Lord". Is that fully obeyed? Or only half-heartedly - at best.

■ If a letter came from the Queen beckoning you to the palace you would think of nothing else all week! (Card folded into three to fit in the letterbox)

Mary is saying "he's my King, and this is the kingdom I want to be in!"

Jesus described the Kingdom of God as one to be sought and found. Like a treasure found in a field that the man **in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field** to make it his own. Or the pearl of great price where the man **sold everything he had** that it should be his Mt 13:44-46

Forrest Fenn hid a treasure of gold in the Rocky Mountains 100s searching

Jesus is declaring the Kingdom of God to be of the highest value. Mary in pouring this oil on Jesus is saying I have found that treasure. He's my King, am I have entered this – His eternal kingdom. Have you too entered?

There's another aspect to this....

The priests were anointed with fragrant oil for they were to be most holy. The Lord says to Moses **Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil.** Ex 30:25

Anointing priests set them apart as Holy so they could approach God in all his Holiness. They brought the offering on behalf of the people so their sins could be forgiven - and that this Holy God would receive them.

The pouring of this ointment on the head of Christ showed she saw Him as the priest who bought her forgiveness through the sacrifice of himself. She knew that, and that sacrifice was for her. – and how grateful she was for it.

✚ In gratitude she gave - her best for the best.

*Feet*

Matt & Mark say she **poured the perfume on his head**. John says **she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair**. Was it the head? or the feet?

There is no doubt that anointments were not poured on the *feet*; but because there was such an amount John to explain informs us that Christ's very *feet* were moistened with the oil. i.e. it flowed down to his *feet*.

Ps 133:2 says **It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.**

Jesus says doesn't he v12 **she poured this perfume on my body**, Matt 26:12

And we know why – for **Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.** Mary not being there to anoint the body on that resurrection Sunday morning.

### *broke*

Mark relates, that **she broke the alabaster-box, and poured** the whole of the ointment on *his head*; she breaks the seal not the jar for that would make it difficult to pour - and poured the perfume on his head.

That seal which had kept the ointment safe and intact was broken. When a seal is broken it is final, this was not unscrewing a pouring a little, just a little out. Is not this breaking a picture of herself broken and given over - Is this not the essence of true worship and adoration. **Broken and contrite heart**

David said **"I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."** 2Sa 24:24 What about your worship is it costly? Or is it cheap?

Like Zoom sofa worship – Worship is costly; visiting, helping, serving is costly

### *Public*

Note also this adoration is not private but public. Mary in pouring this fragrant oil on Jesus is saying to all in the room – and beyond - "I have found the One and Only", Here he is. Her action filled the room as this ointment did with its fragrant smell and strong odour. So much so that John recalls: **the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.**

- It smelt like it does as you walk through the cosmetics department of Selfridges or House of Fraser. 10 times over

Everyone knows, smells, all eyes are on her and her act of devotion to Jesus

✚ She is not ashamed. All can see this is not a sham act.

Beware - don't try to copy the act! – Beware of falling into the trap of constructing expensive visual displays of worshipping God, such as costumes, rituals, candles, coloured lights, flags, loud music and similar man centered pompous exhibitions as if Christ was pleased with all this. No. What Christ was pleased with was the love behind this humble anointing by Mary.

She did not do this because she had to, that the Bible said so, or that others thought this normal no it was so abnormal - a clear prompting of the heart.

..... Do you remember the Christmas Carol – *In the bleak mid winter*

*What can I give Him, Poor as I am? — If I were a Shepherd I would bring a lamb; If I were a Wise Man I would do my part, Yet what I can I give Him, Give my heart.*

What is the best I can bring? What is most important to me? And for you?

**In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.** Ro 12:1

Jesus was worth so much that in her love for Christ she will hold nothing back, nothing is too good to be kept from bestowing on him.

Maybe you are thinking of things? But is it my own 'ego', or is it people who get in between me and my love for Christ. Jesus challenges us to search our hearts is there anything or anyone you put up as more important than the God who gives you life and breath? Didn't Jesus say.....

**If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.** Lu 14:26

Of course no-one is to hate his mother or father, rather we are to love them, but how much more then should I love Jesus Christ, the God who made me!

✚ In her actions she is saying he is worth it, how about you?

### *Reaction*

Some don't like this devotion. If you were there, how would you react?

When you see the devotion of others to Christ it will stir you heart - the question is will it produce love? Or will prompt indignation?

When David danced before the Lord Michal looked with indignation/ hatred There we see the Pharisees, there is Judas there are the disciples.

In the passage before: 3 **Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled ....., and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him.**

They had again and again seen the wonderful healings Jesus had brought to the sick - but instead of rejoicing at God's goodness - they tried to kill Him.

Then there are the disciples - and one in particular, 4 **one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,** 5 **"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor?"**

What a pious comment, did he really want to give to the poor? Was he a giver? John says 6 **He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.**

Judas the thief is not a giver – he's a taker. Here is a man who said to the temple leaders **What will you give me** matt 26:15 **What will you give me**

Despite all his outward conformity and praise to Jesus we can see what he really thought of Jesus. How much was Jesus worth to Judas? We know don't we - 30 silver coins – the price of a slave.

One persons lack of love affects others. This bitter root had grown up in their midst and the weak lukewarm love of others was chilled. **Attitude is contagious**, the disciples are affected and led to join in. Mark recalls 4 **Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor."** Beware, - watch out - guard your heart.

They have caught it, the words of Judas are like a torch igniting discontent and *murmurings*. Watch out for that devious tongue. How easily it affects those around. **When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?"** Matt 8 **"Why this waste?"**

Never, never call anything a *waste* when it is a mark of love. Nothing is a waste which is bestowed upon the Lord Jesus, either by others or by ourselves. Time spend in the service of Christ - is never time wasted, money given to the Lord's work is never money wasted.

✚ **How serious it is to hinder the love of others.** Harold here at KNBC

Show your love for Christ, and those you think are with you may not be so. Here some of those present looked at Mary and **rebuked her harshly**. Mark

***"Jesus' defends her act of love"***

6 **"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.**

No acts of love towards God is ever wasted, gone un-noticed or forgotten by Christ. He describes it as **a beautiful thing**

As for that excuse Jesus says 7 **The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want.** You want to help them go ahead there will always be opportunity!

✚ **You want to help the poor? Really? then lift up Christ, proclaim Christ, bring the saving life changing message of Christ to them!**

**But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.**

✚ **She saw who she was, bared her heart and seized the moment.**

Love for God is what counts. That ointment need not now be kept for that special person, for that special person has come, that special person is here.

**Do you love God? – you do only as much as you love His Son Jesus Christ.**

***A personal event made known to the world***

9 **I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."**

✚ **It's all on record. It's engraved, kept, forever in the records of heaven.**

Today 2000 years later she stands out in contrast to those gathered round. What will we remember? Surely her act of love from her heart. God the creator receiving admiration and love from his creation.

That is the gospel, not just salvation from sin, important though that is, - not just the hope of heaven important though that is - but a heart changed into a heart of love, love for God. That is what the gospel does. Has he done that for you? If you know your heart is not a loving heart then go to Christ. **CROSS**

Mary Slessor a Missionary to the Calabar in the Cameroon had disadvantages and obstacles that few have to encounter. Yet it was by surrender, dedication, and unwearied devotion that she grew into a powerful woman of God. All can adventure on the same path. It was love for Christ that made her what she was, and there is no limit set in that direction. Such opportunity as she had, lies before the lowliest disciples; even out of the commonplace Love can carve heroines. "There is nothing small or trivial," she once said, "for God is ready to take every act and motive and work through them to the formation of character and the development of holy and useful lives that will convey grace of God to the world," It was so in her case, and what an example she became.

She spoke of the example of others When in the 1870s she considered being a missionary she said that: "argument and theory had no effect in arousing my interest in missionary enterprise; the only means of setting the heart on fire was the magnetism of the Holy example of others."

Will you be that 'other', the one who by your love for Christ spurs on others

**How much is Jesus worth to you?** Mary (both Marys) gave their lives over as a living sacrifice to their Lord. How much do you love God? Will you do the same and give your *best for the best*? If you will - how honoured Christ is - and yes what a witness and spur to others. \_\_\_\_\_END