

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/5/93 Outdoor Service at Pioneer Village  
Matthew 26:6-13 "The Proper Response to the Love of Christ"

**Intro:** Gary Richmond tells the following story in his book A View From the Zoo.  
Illust: (p. 89)

Did you know that there are times when sincerity is not enough? You've heard the old cliché, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Intentions just don't cut it. It's possible to do the wrong thing for the right reason. It's possible to be sincere, yet sincerely wrong.

With that in mind, I want you to ponder a question.

**Q:** What's the proper response to the love of Christ? What's the right way to respond to the love of Jesus Christ?

This afternoon, we're going to look at a true story answers that question for us. The story also illustrates the fact that sincerity is not always enough. The story is recorded in Matthew 26.

**Proposition: There are 3 scenes in the story found in Matthew 26:6-13.**

I. The Plot of the Story (6-7)

II. The People of the Story (8-12)

A. Some people do the wrong thing for the wrong reason: Judas.

B. Some people do the wrong thing for the right reason: The Other Disciples.

C. Some people do the right thing for the right reason: Mary.

III. The Point of the Story (13)

### **I. The Plot of the Story (6-7)**

V 6 "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper"

Stop there. Allow me to sketch the backdrop of the story. Jesus was in Bethany, just outside of Jerusalem. The occasion was solemn. In less than a week, Jesus, the God-man, the Creator of the universe, would be executed at the hands of wicked men. But His death was no accident. It was to die that He had been born.

He predicted His death--v 2 "Ye know...the Son of man is betrayed..."

Notice where Jesus went--"the house of Simon." Simon was a common name in Jesus' day. There are at least 10 Simons in the Bible. Which Simon is this?

The gospel writer simply says, "Simon the leper." The word "leper" means little to us. The closest I've ever come to seeing someone inflicted with leprosy was watching the movie Ben Hur. But leprosy is a terrible disease.

Simon was a former leper. He'd been healed, no doubt by Jesus. How do we know that? The law forbided a leper to have company in his contagious presence. He lost his disease, but he kept his nickname as a reminder of what Jesus had done for him.

The plot thickens in v 7.

V 7 "Then came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box..."

Matthew simply says "a woman" came. What was her name? Matthew doesn't tell us. John does in his parallel account--Jn 12:3 "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus..."

So the woman was Mary, Mary of Bethany. There were at least 17 people at Simon's house for dinner that day: Simon, Mary, her sister Martha, her brother Lazarus, Jesus, and the 12 disciples. Martha did the serving. Mary worshiped.

Mary is found only 3 times in the gospels. In each case she is at the feet of Jesus. Mary was a deeply spiritual woman.

Watch what she did in v 7. Mary brought an alabaster box to Jesus. Our Bible uses the word "box" but it was actually a thin-necked flask. Inside the flask was a very expensive perfume. John tells us it was spikenard, which was a costly luxury imported from India.

What did Mary do with the ointment?

V 7 "she poured it on His head as He was eating"

Mary took the most precious thing she had and poured it on Jesus. Think of that. Many women are very fond of sweet smelling perfumes. Mary was no exception. But she poured it all upon her beloved Savior.

But that wasn't all. The other gospel account reveals that she didn't stop with Jesus' head. She anointed His feet too. And then she reverently wiped His feet with her hair.

Q: Why did Mary do what she did?

A: She had listened to His Word. She knew He would soon die and be buried (Wiersbe). Instead of anointing His body AFTER death, she did so BEFORE death. No doubt, what Mary did was an act of love and devotion that brought sweet fragrance to the whole house.

Sadly, the sweetness didn't last long. A rotten egg soon hit the floor.

Tran: Scene 1, The Plot of the Story.

## **II. The People of the Story (8-12)**

V 8 "But when the disciples saw it, they had indignation..."

The disciples got upset. Isn't that the way it is? When we give Jesus Christ first place in our lives, we can expect someone to misunderstand and criticize us.

Illust:

Matthew remarks that the "disciples" were indignant when they saw what Mary did. And so they were. But there was a ringleader that caused the murmuring. Do you know who it was?

Turn again to Jn 12:4, "Then said one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot..."

A few minutes ago, I asked the question, "What's the proper response to the love of Christ?" I want you to think about that question again by looking at the people in this story. There are 3 different kinds of people revealed in this story: There's

Judas. There's the other disciples. And then there's Mary. These 3 illustrate 3 different kinds of people in the world today. Which are you?

A. Some people do the wrong thing for the wrong reason: Judas.

V 8 "To what purpose is this waste?"

To Mary, what she did was an act of worship. To the disciples, especially Judas, it was an act of waste.

Oh, Judas sounded so spiritual. Can't you hear Judas talking to the other 11? "Peter, you're a sensible man. And so are you John and Andrew. After all your years of backbreaking toil as fishermen, you know the value of a dollar. Just look at this frivolous woman! How are we ever going to meet the needs of common, hurting people if we tolerate this kind of extravagance! What a waste!"

Judas was convincing. He persuaded the other disciples to join his harping.

Q: Do you know the real reason Judas objected to Mary's gift?

Jn 12:6 "This he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag (money bag--he was the treasurer), and bore what was in it."

Judas did the wrong thing for the wrong reason. He did the wrong thing by criticizing Mary. And he did it for the wrong reason, merely because of his self-centered greed.

What a tragic figure is Judas! He followed Jesus for 3 years. He saw the Love of Christ firsthand. But he refused to allow it to melt his heart.

Judas' life is a warning to all of us. He criticized Mary for wasting. But he's the one who wasted. He wasted dozens of opportunities to soften His heart to Christ. Judas wasted the most important thing of all. He wasted his soul.

Illust:

Tran: Some people, like Judas, do the wrong thing for the wrong reason.

B. Some people do the wrong thing for the right reason: The Other Disciples.

What do we mean by doing the wrong thing for the "right reason"?

Notice something. What objection did the disciples raise?

Vv 8b-9 "To what purpose is this waste? This...might have been sold...to the poor."

Was that a legitimate complaint? Aren't there a lot of poor people in the world who need help? Certainly. Without doubt there were literally thousands of really poor people within walking distance of Simon's house.

And their point was valid that Mary's perfume could have been sold for a lot of money, which in turn could have been used as a benevolent fund. John's gospel records that Mary's ointment was worth 300 denarii. Well, one denarius was the amount of money the average worker made for a day's work. If you had 300 denarii you had nearly a year's wages.

Or think of it this way. When Jesus was with multitude of 5000, He and his disciples discussed how to feed so great a crowd. Philip spoke up and said that 200

denarii would scarcely be enough to feed the crowd. So a flask of perfume worth 300 denarii would easily have been sufficient to use to buy food for at least 5000 people.

Just think of that. The disciples presented a good case. Jesus Himself loved the poor. Surely He wouldn't condone this waste!

Listen. The issue in the story is not how we treat the poor. The issue is how we treat Jesus. The disciples were preoccupied with noble things. But Mary was preoccupied with the right thing, and that was Jesus Himself.

The disciples did the wrong thing for the right reason. Their values were distorted. They had a problem with their priorities. How do we know that?

Listen to what Jesus said to them.

Vv 10-12 "Why trouble ye the woman? For she has wrought a good work..."

Tran: Some people, like Judas, do the wrong thing for the wrong reason. Others, like the disciples, do the wrong thing for what they think is the right reason.

C. Some people do the right thing for the right reason: Mary.

Q: What motivated Mary to do what she did?

A: Her love for the Person of Jesus.

v 10 "upon ME"

v 11 "ME you have not always"

v 12 "MY body...MY burial"

Mary seemed to be one of the few that grasped Jesus' prediction of his impending execution.

Just think about what Mary did. She did the right thing for the right reason. Her act revealed great sacrifice, great selflessness, and great love. She took the most important thing she possessed in life, and gave it to her Lord.

William Barclay said this about Mary's deed (330), "Love never calculates. Love never thinks how little it can decently give. Love's one desire is to give to the uttermost limits. And when it has given all it has to give, it still thinks the gift too little."

Listen. There are times when commonsense doesn't make sense. What appeared to be a waste to the disciples was heart-felt worship to Mary.

Someone put it this way (Barclay, 330), "A gift is never really a gift when we can easily afford it. A gift truly becomes a gift only when there is sacrifice behind it..."

Mary did the right thing for the right reason. Mary loved Jesus with an extravagant love. And never forget this. Nothing given to Jesus in love is ever wasted.

Illust:

Tran: Now we come to scene 3. The Plot, the People, and the Point.

### III. The Point of the Story (13)

Q: What's the point?

V 13 "Verily I say unto you...a memorial"

Here's the point. There are 3 types of people here this afternoon. Some people here resemble Judas. Oh, you will never betray Christ like Judas did. But nonetheless, like him, you are preoccupied with the wrong things. You are refusing to open up your life to your need for Christ.

Some of us here are like the other disciples. We're preoccupied with noble things instead of Jesus. Noble things like our families, or Christian service, or religious activity, or community involvement.

There's only one acceptable way to respond to the love of Christ. That's the way Mary did. Mary was preoccupied, not with the wrong things nor with noble things, but with the right thing. Her sole aim was to please and honor Jesus Christ with her life.

Because of that, Jesus commended her. He announced that her act of worship would be a living memorial in her honor.

Q: What kind of legacy will you leave behind?

Will people say of you, "He was a great businessman. He had a real knack for making money." Or, "She was a great cook." Or, "What a super athlete!"

Or will people be able to say of you what they could say of Mary, "There was nothing or noone more important to her than Jesus Christ. She gave all that she could for Him."

Illust: