

Title: She Has Worked a Good Work
Text: Matthew 26: 6-10
Date: September 2, 2012
Place: Grace Baptist Church Conference 2012

Matthew 26: 6: Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, 7: There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. 8: But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? 9: For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. 10: When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. 11: For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. 12: For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. 13: Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

This is the only place where the Lord Jesus Christ called a work which was done by a believer, a good work. **She hath wrought a good work upon me.**

The Lord even uses the word, “Verily”. Verse 13: **Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel [MY GOSPEL] shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.**

Christ commended her so highly because what she did, resembled so very much, what he did for her—and for all the elect of God. He connects his gospel with what Mary did for him because the gospel of Christ IS the Holy Commandment--“faith which worketh by love.”

1 Timothy 1: 5: Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:

Preaching the gospel of Christ is to preach Christ’s own faithfulness toward the Father and toward his brethren. Preaching the gospel of Christ is to preach the love of Christ for his Father and for his people. It was the faith of Christ working by his great love that accomplished the work of redemption, that declared God just and the justifier of all who believe.

Christ is not only the end of the law for righteousness because he fulfilled the law, but BECAUSE HE IS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

To be made a partaker of the divine nature, to have the laws of the new nature written on our heart, is to have Christ formed in you. When Christ is formed in a sinner, we believe God and serve him in love and gratitude for his great love wherewith he loved us.

Christ commended her with this high commendation because what she did for Christ so much exemplified what Christ had done for her and was about to accomplish for her by his death on the cross.

Title: She Has Worked a Good Work

Proposition: Faith which works by love is what Christ commends as a good work.

Divisions: 1. The Worker, 2. The Work, 3. The Reward

I. THE WORKER

Matthew 26: 6: Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, 7: There came unto him a woman...

A Fruitful House

The place was Bethany. It means “house of dates” or “house of fruit.” That is what Mary was—fruitful. Mary believed on Christ. Through faith in Christ the believer establishes the whole law of God perfectly because Christ established the whole law of God perfectly for us. And she did what she did because she loved him. The law believers are under is the law of grace—faith which worketh by love. But Mary did not have this fruit of faith and love in her by nature, nor do you and I.

Romans 7: 5: For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

She came unto Christ and performed this act of faith constrained only by his love for her because Christ first, in faithfulness and love, had come to her. Christ had made her a house of fruitfulness.

Philippians 1: 11: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

I picture all of the activity in this house at the time. It was a time of rejoicing for most everyone in the house. It was in the house of Simon the leper—he had been healed by Christ. Christ had just raised Lazarus from the dead—he sat at the table with Christ. Martha was serving—overjoyed with what the Lord had done for Lazarus. And there is no doubt Mary was very thankful what Christ had done for Lazarus as well.

But Mary had sat at Christ’s feet. She hung on his every word. And Mary appears to have been the only one in the house that day who clearly understood at the time how he must accomplish our redemption by his death as our Substitute. Not long after this Christ would say, “Now is my soul troubled.” Perhaps she detected something of it in Christ as he sat at meat. But she knew it was time.

I doubt anyone really noticed her. She did nothing to draw attention to herself. Even in that she was like the Master. Christ is God in human flesh. But he made himself of no reputation. He took upon him the form of servant. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Php 2)

This was an act of public worship. Scripture speaks of public worship as:

Hebrews 10: 25: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Mary, seeing the HOUR approaching, and having been exhorted—comforted, encouraged, strengthened—by her Savior, did what she could to comfort and strengthen her Redeemer. This act of faith showed Mary’s sincere love for her Savior.

Application: Our gathering together is not only for ourselves—it is to give Christ all the glory and for the comfort of other believers. Your presence is an encouragement and comfort to your fellow brethren and is needful.

The Heart of Stone Broken

Mary came unto Christ having an alabaster box of very precious ointment—spikenard very precious, very costly—and she broke open the box. It was the only way to get the ointment out. Alabaster was a stone

from Egypt. That is what her heart was by nature—a stone from this sin cursed Egypt. But this is God's promise concerning his elect

Ezekiel 36: 26: A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the STONY HEART out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27: And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

Like she poured out that ointment on his head, Christ had poured into her heart the precious ointment—the balm of Gilead. He had made her an epistle by writing this Holy Commandment—the law of faith and love on her heart.

2 Corinthians 3: 3: *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Now, we see one, who by his work of grace within her, believes on Christ. Now she served him in newness of Spirit—faith which worketh by love. The sinner born of God believes God and is constrained by the love of Christ for us. She is doing for him because he first did for her.

App. You have heard the gospel this week. Have you found yourself in need of mercy? Flee to Christ. Come owning your sin and even what you thought to be righteous to be sin. Come seeking mercy--all who seek mercy find it from Christ!

II. THE WORK

Matthew 26: 7: [She] came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, [spikenard very precious; very costly, and she brake the box] and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

Christ Broken Like the Box of Alabaster

She did this because now she saw something of how Christ must be broken. The only way for Christ to bring forth that sweet smelling sacrifice—well-pleasing unto the Father was for Christ to willing give himself to be broken under the justice of God in place of his people.

Isaiah 52: 14: As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: 15: So shall he sprinkle many nations;...

To heal God's elect of our sin, Christ had to bear our sins in his own body on the tree.

Isaiah 53: 4: Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:

He bore the sins which causes our inward spiritual death. Sin causes our bodies to deteriorate, to become wrinkled. It is sin which causes leprosy and all other diseases. Scriptures speak of Christ's body literally broken in the same ways as sin affects our bodies.

Lamentations 3: 4: My flesh and my skin hath he made old;...v6: He hath set me in dark places, as *they that be* dead of old.

Psalms 38: 7: For my loins are filled with a loathsome *disease*: and *there is* no soundness in my flesh.

Isaiah 52: 14:...his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:...

Isaiah 53: 4...yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

It is the height of man's arrogance to think our hands can have anything to do with satisfying divine justice. At some point on that cross, the centurion and those who saw, recognized, we did not do this! We esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

It had to be so in order for Christ to create within us a new spirit in righteousness and true holiness. It had to be so in order for Christ to one day raise our bodies from the grave incorruptible, immortal into heaven's glory. Yet, this suffering was not for sins he committed but for the sins of his elect.

Isaiah 53: 5: But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Precious Ointment for Precious Blood

Mary came with the best for Christ. Matthew 26: 7 says she came unto him with "very precious ointment", very costly. The good news of the gospel is that salvation is all of grace!

- Free grace
- Free justification
- Free forgiveness
- Free pardon
- Not of debt, not of merit, not a work to be earned or that can be earned.

All is of Free God-given grace! But what a price was paid to give the child of grace that free salvation. The scriptures never speak of the redemption of God's elect as anything but the most costly.

- God gave his only begotten Son
- Christ gave his precious blood—PRECIOUS!
- Precious, rare for it was not shed for all men without exception and is not given to everyone
- Precious because it is sin-cleansing blood
- Precious because it is conscious purging blood
- Precious because it is keeping blood--PRECIOUS BLOOD!

So she came with the best. This ointment was "spice" nard meaning it was the very best kind of nard--genuinely, faithfully prepared like Christ faithfully performed and accomplished his work for her.

It was very costly—over 300 pence—almost a year's wages. As Christ gave all for her, she brought him all she could—the best of the best.

Christ said, "Against the day of my burying hath she kept this." Like as God the Father purposed from eternity to save her by his grace, as Christ diligently worked out righteousness for her in this earth, so she purposed this and diligently kept it for this very day.

She "poured it on his head." She did not merely sprinkle a few drops, she poured it out in abundance. She had been forgiven much, so she loved much. He had poured out grace in abundance upon her—she poured

out in abundance upon him. Christ has given us grace and forgiveness in “good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.”

Application: Brethren, God gave the best and Christ deserves the very best we have. Mary brought “ointment” that showed what great value she placed on her Savior—precious ointment for precious blood.

Illustration: David desired a place where he could worship God. Araunah would have given David the threshing floor. But David said, “Nay; but I will surely buy *it* of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.” (2Sa 24:24)

Illustration: True love replaces economics—have you ever had a sick child? Did you ever reach the point where you said, “Well, we better not spend any more?”

Mary wasn’t thinking of how she could divide up the ointment because her heart was not divided. Her heart was as single for Christ as her act of pouring this ointment upon her Savior was single for him only. Her faith was unfeigned faith opposite to double mindedness; it was sincere love opposite to dissimulation. What are willing to do for those we love in the earth? How much more willing ought we to be for the lover of our souls! His love for us is the essence of our love toward him.

- **Songwriter**—His love makes the songwriter seek out the best words to fit the best melody to describe this one who is altogether lovely.
- **Sweeper**—His love in purging us of every spot of sin makes the sweeper cover every inch of the floor to leave not one spot of dirt.
- **Carpenter**—His love in building us up as living stones in his temple gives the carpenter the motive for being precise in his measurements, to take no short cuts, but to strive to be a master craftsman like unto his Master.
- **Business man**—His love in being ever about his Father’s business is the motive which makes the business man not slothful, not a cheat, but honest in all his dealings with men.
- **Father and mother**—His love in caring for his children is the new motive for the father and mother to teach our children, to nurse the sick child, to raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

John says Mary “anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.” Christ came down from heavens glory to glorify his Father in saving her from her sins. She submitted to Christ down at his feet. The glory of the woman is her hair—she laid it down at his feet, wiped his feet with her hair, owning Christ to be her Head, her Husband, her King and High Priest.

John said, “and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.” Not just the room—the whole house. Those on the rooftop could smell it. This glorious gospel of our Redeemer has spread throughout this world like as that odour filled the house. His precious blood fills the believer. His sacrifice has the perfumed whole house of God. And as Christ’s offering is well-pleasing unto God making each and every believer complete in him, so the sacrifices made by believers in faith and love to Christ redounds back to God--“An odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”

III. THE REWARD

Her Reward from Men

Matthew 26: 8: But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? 9: For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

Judas did the talking--John 12: 6: This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

- She a worshipper; Judas was a thief.
- Her heart was pure; Judas sought to conceal the covetousness of his heart under the guise of benevolence.
- Mary drew the attention of all to the Lord; Judas would turn away the thoughts of all from Christ to 'the poor.'

That is exactly what false religion does. And the carnal heart loves it. Christ said do not pray to be seen of men, do not do your alms to be seen of men. In our day, churches do just the opposite. They advertise their prayer meetings, their humanitarian works to attract sinners to join their church. Christ Jesus said that they have their reward.

But sadly, Judas led true believers to murmur against her as well.

Application: Brethren, there is an old man of sin in us. That old fleshly man is cold, self-serving, miserly and no good to anybody. Remember that about one another.

Leave the Results to God

Notice they said, "To what purpose is this?" They could not see what results would come of this. Never measure service to Christ or success by results.

Illustration: Don came to Taylor when I was 17. He went up to New Jersey around 10 years ago. I listened to tapes of his for years. The saints in New Jersey listened to a radio broadcast. Those things cost lots of money. Now here we are together! Sister Judy Estes helped pay for that by her support of the work here at Danville. She never lived to see the results, nor could she have ever imagined what God purposed to do in all that. Yet, the Lord worked the results he intended though sister Judy never saw it!

The point is whatever the cost, nothing is wasted which is done from the motive of glorifying Christ. The success of our ministry is not measured by bigger, better, faster. If the truth is set forth, if Christ is glorified then it has been a success whether God saves a multitude or none, whether he does it in our day or generations from now.

Application: Notice that even the indignation she received bears a likeness to the indignation Christ bore for our sakes, brethren. "The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." Believer, you are the light of the world. A light set on a hill cannot be hidden. A candle is not lit to be hidden. But don't expect this world to receive you any differently than this world received Christ.

John 15: 20: Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

The Believers Reward is Christ

Matthew 26: 10: When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. 11: For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

Christ is our Defender and Commender. She gave Christ the Preeminence. Our Savior honors those who honor him. He said, **“Let her alone.”** Her accusers talked and Christ talked but Mary did not say a word. Even in this we see a likeness of Christ.

2 Peter 2: 20: For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 21: For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

Application: Brethren, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous—he shall defend us from the accuser of the brethren.

Revelation 12: 10: And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

It may cause us great grief to bear the wrath of men. But by this wrath of Judas, see how Christ’s glory is shown, see how the Lord has shown us the faithfulness and love of Mary toward him—**the wrath of man shall praise him.** He will defend us so we can hold our tongue.

Not only did Christ defend her, Christ also commended her—**she hath done what she could. Matthew 26: 12: For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.**

They had no idea that this work Mary performed was a literal fulfillment of the Song of Solomon

Song of Solomon 1: 12: While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

Application: In that, remember the next time we see one of our brethren zealous for the glory of Christ, you and I have no idea what God is doing. The works are ordained which each believer shall walk in. God has a purpose in it which we do not see and may never know. Let us be an encouragement to one another, not a discouragement.

Faith worketh by love. Why did she give so much to her Savior? Because Christ gave so much for her. What do you have that you did not receive! In time, in eternity, all is the free gift of God’s grace. She did what she he could because she could! Christ had given her a willing heart. And where God has given the willingness he gives the substance so that we can truly do what we can.

2 Corinthians 9: 8, 11: God is able to make all grace abound toward you that ye always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work.

- In arranging our life around the worship of God
- In endeavoring to walk in a way which adorns the gospel
- In ministering to the needs of our brethren
- In bearing witness of Christ to needy sinners
- In giving of our money and time for the furtherance of the gospel

2 Corinthians 9: 8, 11: God is able to make all grace abound toward you that ye always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work.

Does that mean if I give more, I will have a nicer car and a nicer home? Paul gave more than anyone in the new testament. He ended up in prison. Christ will provide for us in temporal things, but he gives us peace and contentment in the heart to trust him and that is worth more than all lesser things he gives.

Philippians 4: 11: Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12: I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

You can't put a price on the peace of God which passeth all understanding!

Philippians 4: 17: Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18: But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an ODOUR OF A SWEET SMELL, A SACRIFICE ACCEPTABLE, WELLPLEASING TO GOD. 19: But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Christ honors those who honor him. He highly honored her then and she is with him now.

Matthew 26: 13: Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, *there* shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

Amen!