

Anointed for Burial

“There came a woman with an alabaster vial of costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head... Jesus said, ‘She has anointed My body beforehand for burial. Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken in memory of her.’” Mark 14:3-10

What is the meaning of this story that Jesus said should be told wherever the gospel is preached? The details of this event, which occurred just before the Lord’s crucifixion, can also be found in Matthew 26:6-13 and John 12:1-8. From these accounts, we read that Mary, whose brother Lazarus had been raised from the dead by Jesus, poured a vessel of costly ointment, worth nearly a year’s wages, on the Lord’s head. Some disciples considered this extravagant and Judas led them in complaining that her actions were a waste. “The disciples were indignant when they saw this and said, ‘Why this waste?’ For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor (Matthew 26:8-9).” But Jesus said, “Leave her alone... she has done what she could. She has anointed My body beforehand for burial (Mark 14:6-8).”

This story reveals the cost of the gospel and the worth of Christ. Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his soul-life will lose it, but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it (Mark 8:34-35). In other words, the gospel of Christ will cost us our whole life. The goal of the gospel is not just to save sinners. Salvation is just the beginning and not the end of God’s purpose. This is why God included us in His Son’s death so that His risen Son might sovereignly live in us. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized (*immersed*) into Christ Jesus have been baptized (*immersed*) into His death (Romans 6:3)?” Just as Jesus was anointed for burial so that, by His death, He might bear much fruit, He has also chosen us and

included us in His death, anointing us with His Spirit so that we too might bear much fruit. The Bible says, “We have been buried with Him through baptism into death (Romans 6:4).”

How do we produce this fruit? Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his soul-life loses it, and he who hates his soul-life in this world will keep it to life eternal (John 12:24-25).” We must take up our cross and lose our soul-life to bear fruit. “For if you are living according to the flesh (*the unconverted soul-life*), you will die; but if by the Spirit, you are putting to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live... all those who belong to Christ Jesus have put to death on the cross the flesh (*the unconverted soul-life*) with its passions and desires (Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:24).” The only possible way we can carry our cross and lose our soul-life *by the Spirit* is to believe we have died with Christ. Why is this? The Bible says when Christ died, our sinful nature died with Him and was removed from us (Romans 6:6; Colossians 2:11). So when we take up our cross, we identify by faith with Christ’s death so that His death becomes our death. Paul testified, “I have been put to death on the cross with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me and the life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God (Galatians 2:20).”

Exercising faith in this Biblical fact enables us to overcome the power of sin and produce fruit. When we give ourselves wholeheartedly to Christ’s sovereignty in this way, some may say we are wasting our life and we could do so much more with our talent. To the carnal-minded, losing our soul-life for the sake of the gospel is a terrible waste. However, you only entertain the idea of waste when you underestimate the Lord’s worth. Jesus is the “Pearl of Great Price” worth selling everything for, so that we might know Him (Matthew 13:46). When God opens our eyes to see His Son’s worth, we will gladly lose our soul-life for Him. “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom

and strength and honor and glory and praise! (Revelation 5:12).” Paul said, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so I may gain Christ (Philippines 3:8).” God has always intended that the preaching of the gospel would produce a people wholly devoted to His Son, a people rich in good works (1 Timothy 6:18), which spring from faith in the truth that believers are “dead to sin but alive to God (Romans 6:11). By including us in His Son’s death, God has also intended that His risen Son would sovereignly rule in our lives. This means we become bondslaves of the Lord in everything we think and do. This is the fruit of the gospel that God has, from the beginning of time, desired to express through us, which is the fruit of our sanctification to Him (Romans 6:22).

The end of the age is almost upon us. Many true believers will be poured out as a sacrificial offering for the sake of Christ and His gospel (Philippians 2:17; 2 Timothy 4:6). Jesus Christ has already anointed us for burial by including us in His death and giving us His Holy Spirit. Let us pray that the fragrance of this anointing will be poured out through our lives. As Paul shared, “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body (2 Corinthians 4:10-11).” Therefore, knowing that we have died with Christ and we have been anointed for burial by the Holy Spirit, let us proclaim the Lord’s worth to all heaven and earth by “wasting” our lives on Him!

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.” 2 Corinthians 2:14-16