

The Memorial of Mary

Matthew 26:6-13

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Introduction: Why do we have a Memorial Day? It is “a legal holiday in the U.S., observed the last Monday in May, in memory of the dead servicemen of all wars” (Webster). A “memorial” is that which helps people to remember some person or event. The account of Mary anointing the head & feet of Jesus is found in the Gospels Matthew, Mark & John. Jesus says this story will be “*told for a memorial of her*” wherever the Gospel is preached. By comparing these 3 accounts, noting their similarities as well as their differences, we cannot but be impressed with Mary's generous act of devotion. This stands out in great contrast to the guileful desire of the Jewish leaders plotting Christ's death (:1-5), & in contrast to the greedy deceit of Judas, seeking to betray Christ (:14-16). The story takes place in the home of Simon the leper. He is probably one who had been healed by Christ yet still retains the name "Simon the leper" to distinguish him from other Simons. Note with me here the response of devotion, the reaction of indignation, & the reply of commendation. Consider the truth presented here: Mary was honored because Mary honored Christ. Genuine & generous devotion, though at times misunderstood or even criticized, is amply rewarded by Christ (see I Samuel 2:30).

I. Mary's response of **devotion** (:6-7) > Her worship results in **consecration**.

A. The **sacrifice** of Mary

1. The **container**:

- a. "*Alabaster*" - a fine textured translucent stone; marble quarried in Egypt, from which delicate containers were carved.
- b. "*Box*" - a cruise or flask used for preserving perfumes or fragrant oils.

2. The **contents**:

- a. "*Nard*" ("*spikenard*") - from the 'nard' plant of India; pure & unadulterated.
- b. Worth 300 "*pence*" (Mark 14:5), or about a year's wages of a common laborer.

3. The **conduct**:

- a. Her eagerness > Mary broke the neck of the flask (Mark 14:3).
- b. Her generosity > She quickly & completely emptied the contents.

B. The **sensitivity** of Mary

1. There is a **concern**: she realized that Christ was to die (though the disciples did not?).

2. There is a **contrast**: with her sister, Martha - see Luke 10:38-42 & John 12:2.

"The one (Martha) showing love by bustling activity, the other delighting in unpractical & delicate manifestation of affection" (Broadus).

3. There is a **consecration**: here is an act of faith & worship, as well as love & respect.

C. The **significance** of Mary's act of devotion

1. The **products**:

- a. The broken cruise speaks of His soon to be broken body.
- b. The ointment is for His soon to be buried body.

2. The **procedure**:

- a. Letting her hair down in public was itself an act of humility, since that was a mark of a woman of "loose" morals. Yet Mary was not concerned with public opinion.
- b. "To anoint the head was the more common service of friendship or honor, but Mary went further & anointed even His feet... an act of greater humility & profound respect" (Broadus). [Compare John 13:2ff, Jesus washing His disciples' feet]

3. The **pattern**:

- a. This was Mary's recognition of & submission to Christ as King.
- b. Have you recognized & submitted yourself to Him as your King?

Application: Does Christ receive the preeminence in your life? Do you render faithful obedience to Him each day? Can you sing, "King of my life I crown thee now...?"

Summary: “Her comparatively small act of sacrifice is symbolic of His much greater sacrifice; & she makes it to show that no gift is too great in response to such a love as His; which not only gives everything but is content to be unrequited (unrewarded)” (Tasker).

II. The disciples’ reaction of **indignation** (:8-9) > Her worship results in **criticism**.

A. Their **rebuke** of Mary (:8)

1. *"To what purpose is this waste?"* – a charge of extravagance

[Note: Though charged with “waste” – to Mary “...when Jesus is with them for the last time before His passion, nothing could be less wasteful than offering Him a sacramental token of loyalty, understanding & devotion, however costly that offering may be” (Tasker). Just as previously (Luke 10:38-40), when Jesus visited in her home “... every possible moment must be spent in His presence” (Tasker). Contrast the life of Judas, a life of wasted opportunity. Though with Christ for 3 & ½ years, his was a wasted life.]

2. *"They murmured against her"* - but dared not criticize Jesus for receiving the anointing.

B. Their **reasoning** (:9)

1. At the suggestion of Judas (John 12:6) but apparently approved & repeated by the others.
2. "One murmurer may infect a whole company." (Illustrate: No 'gripping' rule at BJU)

III. The Savior’s reply of **commendation** (:10-13) > Her worship results in **commendation**.

A. Christ's **rebuke** of the disciples (:10-11)

1. *"Why trouble ye the woman?"*
2. *"Let her alone..."* (Mark & John). [Were their comments making Mary anxious or embarrassed; causing her to question whether or not she should have done this?]
3. *"Ye have the poor always with you..."* - "Openings for ministry to the poor would never cease; while their opportunity for personal services to Him would soon be at an end" (Broadus). They are not to miss this opportunity to worship Him!

B. Christ's **recognition** of Mary (:10b, :12-13)

1. *"...For she hath wrought a good work upon Me."* - she was preparing His body for burial (:12).
2. *"She hath done what she could"* (Mark 14:8) [Illustrate: Fanny Crosby’s tombstone]
 "...She could not prevent His approaching death, but she could manifest devoted love for Him" (Broadus). “The essence of worshipping Christ is to regard Him with utmost love, respect, & devotion & to be willing to sacrifice to Him what is most precious” (Life Application Bible).
3. *"Be told for a memorial of her."* – a means of keeping alive a remembrance.
 What about our legacy? What will you leave behind as a memorial? See Proverbs 10:7,
 "The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot." (see Ecc. 7:1)

Conclusion: What can we learn from Mary's act of generous devotion? We must recognize that devotion is characterized by sacrifice & by sensitivity. Such devotion, though very significant, will sometimes be misunderstood & criticized. To be criticized does not mean that we are wrong. The disciples’ rebuke of Mary & their reasoning are shown to be what was really in error. Mary's act of devotion would remain to this day as a memorial of her. Hers is not a monument of stone, or sculpture, or building, but rather the promise of Christ. Wherever & whenever the Gospel would be preached, her devotion would also be proclaimed. Might we learn this lesson of humble, heart-filled worship: those who honor Christ will be honored. Genuine & generous devotion, though at times misunderstood or even criticized, is amply rewarded by Christ. May we purpose as a church to continually exalt our Lord & Savior, & therefore commit ourselves to consciously worship Him.