



ANOINTED IN THE HOUSE

Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9;
and John 12:1–8

6And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, 7a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. 8But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? 9For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor.” 10But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. 11For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. 12For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. 13Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”

—Matthew 26:6–13

3And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. 4But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, “Why was this fragrant oil wasted? 5For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they criticized her sharply. 6But Jesus said, “Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. 7For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. 8She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. 9Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”

—Mark 14:3–9

1Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. 2There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. 3Then Mary

took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. ⁴But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, ⁵"Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" ⁶This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. ⁷But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. ⁸For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

—John 12:1–8

Read Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; and John 12:1–8

Have you ever been put off or hurt by the criticism of another Christian? It is only natural to expect everyone who professes Jesus to behave like Jesus. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. We tend to expect criticism from the world—after all, the world is rife with slander, criticism, and accusation. We read, hear, and see their vitriol on social media posts and in the news. Whereas the world is known for their contempt, Christians are to be known for their love: *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another* (John 13:35). Those who criticize other believers and invoke angry words, self-righteous piety, and accusation are not mirroring the image of Christ. It is always grievous to hear believers caught up in the same malicious allegations against each other as the world invokes. James, an early church father, sought to curtail this type of behavior when he wrote, *But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so* (James 3:8–10).

Harsh judgment, criticism, and accusation not only hurt, but they can distract us from worship and service to Christ. Worse yet, if we give too much attention to those judging,

criticizing, and accusing, we inadvertently begin to take on their ways and try to fight fire with fire. So, how can we victoriously deal with the pain inflicted by our brothers and sisters in Christ? By showing and demonstrating to them the way of divine love.

In our text this week, Mary demonstrates to us the best way to handle harsh judgment, criticism, and accusation. Mary kept her attention riveted on Jesus, ignored the vitriol in the room, continued ministering to Jesus, and looked to Him alone for her approval. When Mary did this, Jesus became her advocate and defense. Not only did Jesus rebuke the disciples, but He commended Mary in their midst when He conferred on her the highest honor: *wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her* (Matthew 26:13). What an amazing honor! Jesus forever associated Himself and His story with Mary and her sacrificial act of worship.

May the Spirit deepen your devotion to Jesus as you learn from the example of Mary.

1. According to Matthew 26:6–7 and Mark 14:3, what happened while Jesus was in Simon's house?

2. Use John 12:1–3 to add specific details to this occasion:
 - a. When did this take place?

 - b. Who was present when this took place?

 - c. Who was serving?

 - d. What was the woman's name who had the alabaster flask?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Nard was a red, sweet oil imported from India; it smelled like gladiolas. A pound is a very large amount of fragrant oil.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is interesting that the word translated “waste” in Mark 14:4 is translated “perdition” in John 17:12 and applied to Judas! Judas criticized Mary for “wasting money,” but he wasted his entire life! ²⁶

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Deuteronomy 15:11 shows us that it is impossible to eradicate poverty without full obedience of all people to God’s way.

- e. What was in the flask?
 - f. What filled the house?
3. Note the disciples’ reaction to Mary’s worship from the following verses:
 - a. Matthew 26:8
 - b. Mark 14:4–5
 4. According to John 12:4–6:
 - a. Who instigated the criticism?
 - b. What was his accusation against Mary?
 - c. What was his true motivation?
 5. Use Matthew 26:10–13, Mark 14:6–9, and John 12:7 to note and comment on the following:
 - a. Jesus’ defense of Mary

- b. Jesus' commendation of Mary

- c. Jesus' memorial to Mary

- 6. What is your greatest takeaway concerning Jesus' anointing in the house?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Corpses were perfumed in Jesus' day to mask the odor of decay.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The phrase "she has done what she could" is almost identical to what Jesus said about the poor widow's donation [see Mark 12:42–44]. The widow gave almost nothing of monetary value; this woman gave a wealthy gift, but Jesus commended both equally.²⁷