

CS – When It Matters Most

11/12/23

Matthew 26:6-17

Sunday AM

I don't know about you, but I'm not a fan of negative people who appear to have been weaned on pickle juice – people who are doom/gloom Eeyore's. Maybe it's b/c I'm more of a glass is ½ full vs ½ empty.

I'm reminded of the man visiting his barber who shared that he was going on a trip to Rome where he hoped to see the Pope. The barber, always negative said, "You don't want to go to Rome, it's the dirtiest city in the world. And don't fly United, their food is awful and the seats are cramped. And you'll never get w/in a mile of the Pope." A few weeks later, the man returned to the barber shop and told the barber he'd gone to Rome and had a great trip. He said, "You were wrong about flight. The food was good and the seats were comfortable. Rome was a beautiful/charming city. Also, not only did I see the Pope, he actually placed his hand on my head and spoke a personal word to me." The cynical barber asked, "What did he say?" The man said, "The Pope said, 'My son, you need a new barber – that's the worst haircut I've ever seen!'"

In our text today, we're going to witness the difference b/w a heart of criticism and a heart of worship. A heart divided by the world and a heart devoted to honoring God. I believe there are (4) lessons we can learn from Mary about having a heart of worship.

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman (Mary of Bethany) came to him w/ an alabaster jar of expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. They asked, "Why this waste?" This perfume could've been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Aware of this, Jesus said, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have w/ you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached thru-out the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her." Then one of the (12) – the one called Judas Iscariot – went to the chief priests and asked, 'What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?' So, they counted out for him (30) silver coins. From then on, Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. Matthew 26:6-16

What a moment! Can you imagine the scene? Can smell the worship permeating the room? Mary, who chose what was greater when she sat at the feet of Jesus, was moved by the H.S. to anoint Jesus in love.

I It is a **PASSIONATE** Expression of Love

This is one of those moments where I would've loved to have been a fly on the wall to witness what was going on, b/c I'm certain it was incredible.

SEE – from all appearances from the other Gospel accounts that the disciples, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and possibly others had gathered at the home of Simon the former leper for a dinner among friends.

I think the conversation began w/ Simon sharing his story that when he was a hopeless, untouchable outcast Jesus touched him and made him clean. Then, one at a time, they each shared about how Jesus changed their lives. James/John recalled when after taking in a haul of fish Jesus invited them to become fishers of men. Not to be outdone, Peter spoke of having walked on water w/ the Master – while Matthew shared how he went from a disliked Roman IRS agent to an agent of grace. One by one, they each remembered fondly the touch of Jesus.

Meanwhile, sitting in the shadows, Mary's heart is filled to overflowing. She's so overwhelmed by the moment, and by Jesus' love for her, that she slips out for a moment to return home to collect her most prized possession – an alabaster container of spikenard – so that she can personally express her love to Jesus.

DON'T MISS – Mary's motivation was pure and her devotion was certain. She wanted to fully express her love/gratitude to Jesus – and she didn't care about the cost or the criticism. Her love for Jesus was on full display – not for the disciples to see, but for Jesus to experience.

LISTEN – what we learn from Mary is that true worship is all that I AM, giving all that I HAVE or ever hope to be – to express to Jesus how much I love/appreciate Him for all that He's done for me!

Can I be honest? Too many of us are more concerned about what worship does FOR us than how it expresses our affection for God. That's why we get upset when our musical preferences aren't met – it's b/c we've made worship about US instead of about HIM!

Worship is never about me, but always about Him!

Mary reminds us that ***worship is a passionate expression of our love for God*** for *who He is, what He's done, what He's doing, and what He's going to do.*

II It is a **PUBLIC** Display of Affection

There are (2) aspects of worship – **private** worship – the time we spend alone w/ God *loving, honoring, and enthroning* Him in our lives – and **public** worship – the time we spend w/ others loving, honoring, and enthroning God. Both should incite the other.

Now I might stir the pot here but if you have a public worship problem, it's probably b/c you have a private worship problem. We see this expressed thru Mary. The reason she had no issue anointing Jesus in front of everyone (including God), is b/c she learned how to sit at the feet of Jesus to honor, learn, and love Him.

Sadly though – when it comes to worship, especially at church, I think too many of us are more concerned about what others think than we are about what God experiences from our hearts.

BTW – to be clear, when I speak of worship, I'm not just talking about singing songs. I'm talking about being present, listening/taking notes, engaging one another in uplifting conversation, and generously giving of our time, talents, and treasures to honor God.

Worship is giving God our mind's attention, heart's affection, will's ambition, and life's action fully to the Lord as an act of love unconcerned for what others say.

This is God's expectation/calling for His people in both private/public worship. This is why the O.T. offers (7) words for praise/worship. These imperative commands require personal engagement/intentionality if our lives are going to glorify/honor God.

Even more – they require active participation. IOW – church was never intended to be a spectator sport.

Yadah – to worship w/ outstretched, held-out hands.

Halal – to boast, celebrate, clamor foolishly

Zamar – to make music and celebrate in song

Towdah – to lift hands in gratitude

Barak – to kneel as an act of adoration

Tehillah – to laud w/ song – to break out into song

Shabach – to shout in triumph and to glorify

Let me show you what worship should not look like.

Mouth Shut | Arms Folded | Disinterested | Annoyed

III It is a **PERSONAL** Investment of Surrender

Possibly the greatest truth of this story is that worship is not coming to God to **GET** something – it's going to God to **GIVE**/surrender something as an outpouring of our love/gratitude for what He poured out for us.

The perfume Mary poured out on Jesus was her most expensive, prized possession – but when you truly love someone, we seldom consider how much something costs to express our love for them.

It reminds me of the man who stopped by a perfume counter to buy perfume for his wife's birthday. The sales lady showed him a bottle that cost \$100. He said, "Can you show me something a little less expensive?" So, she showed him a bottle that cost \$75. He said, "Maybe something a little cheaper." So, the sales lady brought out a \$50 bottle of perfume. Still, the man asked for something a little cheaper. So, she brought out a tiny bottle of perfume that cost \$25. The man said, "Yeah, now we're getting close." But can you show me something even cheaper?" The sales lady said, "I sure can." – and she handed him a mirror.

True worship is never cheap – it's extravagant. It's not giving God our least/leftovers but our 1st and best.

We see this truth thru-out the Bible. Whether it was Cain/Abel, Abraham/Isaac, or Jesus for sin – the greatest expressions of worship require giving sacrificially and not just out of our excess.

Just how much of a sacrifice are we talking? John's account says the perfume was worth 300 denarii (or a year's wages). So, add up your annual salary, and you can begin to have an idea about how expensive this gift was that she poured out on Jesus in an act of worship.

LISTEN – to Mary, no expense was too great! She would spare nothing to express her love for Jesus. Like the parable of the pearl or the treasure found in the field – the value of knowing Jesus is priceless. In a way, breaking that alabaster bottle, and pouring all of it out, symbolized her brokenness before the Lord.

And this is true worship – ***giving our everything to God as an offering to be used as He sees fit.***

I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual form of worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – His good, pleasing, and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2

There's only one thing you can dedicate to God – only one; and this is your right to yourself. *Chambers*

IV It is a **PRICELESS** Declaration of Truth

DYK that when you prioritize worshiping God, not only are you aligning your life under Him allowing Him to sit on the throne of your life, but you're also declaring to the world the reality of His love for them.

You might think everyone would applaud such an act of worship, but like w/ Mary and the (12), sometimes the opposite happens. Instead of hearing, "Bravo. Way to go." We only hear criticism. That's what happened to Mary. The disciples said, "What a waste!" Yet Jesus said, "What an investment!" They said, "How foolish!" But Jesus said, "How beautiful!" Do you know why? ***It's b/c the disciples could only see the cost, while Jesus saw the value.***

LISTEN – there will always be people who criticize your worship/affection for God – and sadly, it might even be friendly fire from w/in the church – yet you can never allow that to detour your trust/worship of God b/c you are light – a city on a hill – helping others to discover the amazing love God has for them.

So, we can't let criticism/ignorance dissuade us b/c eternity is at stake. Yes, right now there are people driving by our campus seeing the parked cars likely thinking, "What a waste!" These people are giving up their Sunday to sing songs and study an ancient book. Wasting their time, energy, and money. But true worship is never a waste. It's a testimony to the truth and reality of God and His love for us all.

The simple truth is following Jesus and seeking 1st His Kingdom/righteousness will never make sense to the lost world. AND – it'll never make sense to the worldly Christian. But for those who've abandoned themselves to honor the King of Kings and Lord of Lords w/ every fiber of their being... there is no greater purpose/joy – b/c worshiping God is priceless.

I'm reminded of a silly story that unfortunately could be true. A church was having a business meeting where a committee recommended the church purchase a chandelier. An older man in the church who typically was very critical about everything stood in opposition. He said, "I'm against this recommendation for (3) reasons. (1) I've heard chandeliers are very expensive, and I think we can use the Lord's money for something more practical. (2) If we bought one, we don't have anyone who knows how to play a chandelier. And (3) what this church really needs is some lights!"

No matter the opposition, when you begin to worship God in Spirit/truth, your worship can never be denied b/c it is (1) a *passionate* expression of love; (2) a *public* display of affection; (3) a *personal* investment of sacrifice; and (4) a *priceless* declaration of truth.