

## Living A Life That Will Be Remembered

Matthew 26:6-13

We live in a world obsessed with leaving a mark. We build legacies, we take photos, we post to social media, hoping that something we do—something we *are*—will outlast our brief time here on earth. Yet, so much of what we pour our lives into is temporary. It fades, it breaks, or it is simply forgotten.

What have you ever done that will be remembered forever?

What good could you and I do that is remembered forever?

It's a great truth to realize that not everything's going to last. A thousand years from now, some of the things that you think are so important are not going to be so important. Is your work going to last?

There is a scene in the Gospels where a woman does something that Jesus guarantees will never be forgotten. Not a monument, not a book, not a business empire, but an act of love. While everyone else was focused on what they could *get* from Jesus, or how they could use Him for their own agendas, one woman was actually listening. Mary of Bethany knew what was coming—the cross. While others were unaware, she acted with prophetic understanding. She didn't just love Jesus; she honored Him for who He was, even before the victory was fully visible. She anointed Him for His burial. Jesus says this act will be remembered forever because it was an act that shows us how to properly recognize and worship our King.

As we move into Matthew 26, the Lord Jesus has completed His public ministry. In the first verse of this chapter we are told, “*When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ‘As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.’*” Matthew 26:1. He is referring in particular to chapters 24 and 25 where Jesus has told His disciples what to expect at the end of the age. He has now completed the public ministry of His teachings and His healings. His attention now is turned totally and completely to the moment for which He had come into the world. He is moving now to the cross. He is going to that place where He will lay down His life for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus gives us the time of His crucifixion. He tells us that it is going to be on the Feast of the Passover. The Passover was an annual Jewish feast. The cross, the focal point of human history, the central theme of all of the Bible. The cross was in the heart of God from all eternity. The cross is where a sinful person can meet a holy God and be forgiven of their sins.

The Passover Feast was a celebration of God's delivering the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. They were under the yoke of slavery in Egypt. They cried out to God for deliverance and God instructed Moses to have the people take a lamb, sacrifice that lamb, and apply the blood over the doorposts. If they did that, the night when the death angel came into the land of Egypt, when the death angel saw the blood, he would pass over that particular house. The Passover commemorated the night the death angel passed over the houses of the Israelites on the basis of the shedding of the Passover lamb.

Jesus Christ is moving toward the Feast of Passover. Jesus Christ Himself is going to be the fulfillment of the Passover. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, “*For even Christ our Passover is offered for us.*” Jesus is going to complete the symbolism of the Passover. In this instance, Jesus Himself is going to be the Passover lamb. When Jesus came to be baptized by John the Baptist, John saw Jesus coming and he declared, “*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” John 1:29

Jesus Christ is that precious lamb. Jesus Christ is the lamb without fault, without blemish. Jesus Christ is the lamb whose precious atoning blood was poured out at Calvary's cross, and there will never be another Passover celebration. And so Jesus said, “The time is going to be the Passover.”

Not only does Jesus share with us the time of His death, He also announces the tragedy of it. He says, “*The Son of Man is going to be betrayed to be crucified.*” Matthew 26:1. The word “betrayed” refers to Judas who had walked

with Jesus in the three years of His earthly ministry. He had seen His miracles, had heard His messages, had been close to the Lord Jesus Christ. Judas is going to move from a disciple to a betrayer so that he will go down in human history as one of the Lord's own who betrayed Him.

On this occasion, Jesus is in Bethany. It was His retreat place. Bethany was the place where Jesus would go when He wanted to get away and be in the presence of people who loved Him and cared for Him. He was in Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper. We don't know exactly who he was. Some people think he was the father of Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Other people think he was the husband of Mary or Martha. We really don't know.

He is referred to as Simon the Leper. He is no longer a leper because he had been healed of his leprosy. His life has been rescued by Jesus. He's having a gathering. Isn't this a beautiful thing? In just a matter of hours Jesus will be in hostile hands, and they will take Him to a cross and will kill Him, but in these hours before, He's in the presence of people who love and appreciate Him and are grateful for Him. You know that's what Jesus wants to do for every one of us.

Is Jesus in your house? Have you opened up your house to Jesus Christ? Have you welcomed Christ into your home? It's not just enough to have Him in your heart. You need to have Him in your house. You need to make serving Jesus Christ a family matter. The whole family ought to be involved in living for Jesus and loving the Lord Jesus Christ.

In John chapter 12, we have a parallel account, and we're told specifically that this woman was Mary, the sister of Martha, who comes to anoint Jesus. There are three prominent Mary's in the Gospel. One is Mary, the mother of Jesus. There's Mary Magdalene. Jesus delivered her from demon possession, and her life was transformed. She was at the resurrection and was one of the eye witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. There is also Mary of Bethany. She lived in Bethany with her sister, Martha, and her brother Lazarus.

## 1. The Lesson of Worth: Who Is Jesus To You?

*“While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.” Matthew 26:6-7*

Bethany was a favorite place for Jesus to visit. They were close friends of Jesus and the disciples. We see this Mary, sister of Lazarus, three times in the Gospels, and every single time, she is at the feet of Jesus. We met her last week at Lazarus' death (John 11). She comes to Him with a burden. She's broken by the death of her brother and she pleads at Jesus' feet for the resurrection of her brother. There is another time when she is at the feet of Jesus while Martha is stirring about in the kitchen (Luke 10:40). Jesus said that Mary chooses the better place because she is listening to Him and learning from Him at His feet. Martha was stressed out like many people today and needed to take some time and sit at the feet of Jesus like Mary in the midst of all this stress.

The next time we see Mary at the feet of Jesus is in our text today. She comes the first time at the feet of Jesus for a blessing, to hear the words of Christ, to look into His eyes, to linger there and long for His presence. She came the second time with her burden of grief and sorrow. She comes in this passage of Scripture with her very best she can bring to Jesus. Each time at the feet of Jesus. We ought to offer our best at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. She has learned where a person ought to live. You ought to live at the feet of Jesus. She brings a box of perfume, precious ointment, and she pours it out at the feet of Jesus.

The story makes us ask the question, Do we take time to truly see Jesus and honor Him, or are we too busy with our own agendas?

Mary had sat at Jesus' feet before (Luke 10). She had listened while others worked. She saw what the religious leaders missed: Jesus wasn't just a teacher. He was the Resurrection and the Life. Lazarus, once dead, is sitting at the table. The greatest miracle of all the miracles of Jesus. And Mary and Martha and a few friends are now celebrating this new life that Lazarus has been given. They are celebrating at the home of a man named Simon, called Simon the leper. There's no doubt in my mind this was another man that Jesus had performed a miracle, had healed him of his leprosy.

They are all together celebrating the miracle that is Jesus. Jesus is reclining at the table. In the Middle Eastern fashion, they would recline over a low table and have a dinner.

Mary is worshiping and wondering, "What can I give to show the Lord just how much I love Him? What can I bring to show Jesus my devotion and adoration and worship of the Savior?" She must have prepared and brought it with her for this occasion, this perfume. It was in an alabaster box that was expensive.

She breaks the box and the seal opens it up. She pours out all of it on the head and the feet of Jesus. She pours out all the anointing on the Lord Jesus Christ. You couldn't put it back in. It was everything.

Anointing is not something we do in our culture, but in the New Testament as well as the Old Testament era, anointing was a common practice. And it was a very practical thing to anoint with perfume in a house because there weren't a lot of showers and bathtubs, so perfume would elevate the household smell.

She lavishly gives it, and that's when she's criticized, but Jesus commends her and says wherever the Gospel is preached, she will be a testimony because of her generosity and her extravagant love. What a beautiful story.

## 2. The Lesson of Waste: What Is Most Valuable To You?

*"When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. 'Why this waste?' they asked. 'This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.' Aware of this, Jesus said to them, 'Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me.'"* Matthew 26:8-11

The moment the oil hit the floor, the "calculators" started working. Judas Iscariot led the protest: *"Why was this perfume not sold... and the money given to the poor?"* (John 12:5).

To the pragmatic mind, Mary's act was a Waste. It was "lost" money. It was gone in a moment, evaporated into the air, leaving nothing but a smell. The world (and sometimes the church) measures everything by efficiency. "Is this practical? Does it yield a measurable return?"

- The question of Worth: Do we live for temporal things or eternal things?

Do we live to please man, or do we live to please Jesus? Do we live for the applause of people or the approval of God? Most of the time we have to decide, because you can't have both. If you choose to follow Jesus and give your all to Jesus, you will feel and hear the disapproval of the world, maybe even members of your own family. The culture will cancel us if they can. But we remain faithful, seeking the approval of God, ignoring the criticism of others.

Paul said in Galatians 1:10: *"For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Or am I trying to please man. If I'm still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ."* We must choose, like Mary chose to ignore the criticism that surrounded her and to please Jesus.

It is in this act of devotion and dedication that we see how to celebrate. Mary's gift was expensive. It was extravagant, and it had eternal impact. Her legacy lives on. She didn't hold back. She didn't just drop a few drops from the jar. She poured it all out. What she did was an act of pure, precious devotion to God. What she gave was extremely valuable. It was a personal treasure.

Some suggest it was part of her hope chest or a wedding dowery. The question has remained, "How would she have come into possession of this precious ointment that was so valuable?" But she gave it, and she gave it all, and she gave it in a timely way.

Not everyone in that room appreciated Mary's selfless act of love. Some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was this ointment wasted like that?"

*“When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. ‘Why this waste?’ they asked. ‘This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.’”* Matthew 26:8-9

Why the waste? Wasted! They called the lavish act this woman poured on the Lord Jesus Christ "waste." What a word. Now it's interesting who led the charge of criticism that day in the room. There are 15 or 20 people in the room. John tells us Judas led the opposition, *"But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples (he who was about to betray Him), said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?' (He said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it)."* John 12:4-6

If it was the Pharisees who criticized her worship, I would not be too surprised. That was par for the course for the Pharisees. Anything that was ever done for the Lord Jesus Christ the Pharisees found fault with it and criticized and made fun and all that. The disciples are the ones who were supposed to love Jesus! I mean these were the ones who understood who Jesus was and how wonderful Jesus is! And yet it says when His disciples saw it, it made them mad. You would think that, of all the people, they would have recognized and appreciated this as the act of loving worship that it was.

Behind the scenes, it was Judas stirring it up. It's amazing how people allow themselves to be influenced by the criticisms and fault-findings of others. Sometimes people are critical about that which they do not understand, and sometimes people have opinions on matters of which they do not have the whole story, and they are influenced by a man named Judas who is saying, *"Why this waste?"*

Judas is typical of so many today who harshly judge what other people do for Jesus. So many people want to do the bare minimum for the Lord. Just a little bit. Not everything, but something. After all, people are now too busy to go to church or too tired to get to worship every week. We tip God less than we pay a waitress to serve us a meal in a restaurant. Judas had a problem. It wasn't Mary that had a problem. It was Judas. And you can't make yourself sick in order to make them well.

Jesus asked, *“Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me.”* Matthew 26:10

The word “beautiful” means “noble.” What they called wasteful, Jesus called beautiful. Jesus never looks upon anything that's done in His name as wasted.

They condemned her, but not one time in the New Testament does Jesus ever condemn a woman. He commends many women.

- The Canaanite Woman (Matthew 15:21–28): Praised for persistent, "great faith" when asking for her daughter's demon-possession to be healed.
- The Woman with the Alabaster Jar (Matthew 26:10-13): Commended for her act of devotion in anointing Jesus for His burial, with Jesus stating her action would be remembered wherever the gospel is preached.
- The Poor Widow (Mark 12:41-44): Commended for giving more than the rich, as she gave all she had, representing total devotion.

In the conversations that He had with women —whether a woman taken in the act of adultery or a woman who was married multiple times at the well at Samaria, or any of the Mary's, even Mary Magdalene filled with demons— He doesn't condemn them, not one time.

Jesus and the followers of Jesus have elevated women more than any other movement in all of human history. Jesus did that! And so that's all for free in this sermon. It just stunned me when I saw it, I said, but it's true. He got after the men pretty good sometimes. That's because He needs to.

Do Christians really need to give? Do Christians really need to tithe? Christians should give the first tenth of their income to the Lord. Not the leftovers, not the last, not the least! Why wouldn't we bring the first and the best that we have to the Lord? Jesus said we were to tithe. Giving is not a religious duty; it is an act of devoted obedience, an act of loving obedience to God.

Jesus defends her. He calls it a "beautiful thing." Why? Because love isn't about utility; it's about expression. To the world, spending an hour in "unproductive" prayer is a waste. Giving a large portion of your income is a waste. Turning down a promotion in order to have time to serve is a waste.

What the world calls "waste," Heaven calls "investment." Nothing is ever lost when it is poured out at the feet of the King.

If the world (or even your own logic) never calls your devotion "extreme" or "unnecessary," you might not be loving Him with Mary's intensity. True devotion looks like "waste" to those who don't know the Master.

Jesus commended her and said, "*She has done a beautiful thing for me*"—a meaningful thing, a worshipful thing for me. "*Wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.*" Jesus said, "Whenever you want, you can do good for them."

That prophecy of Jesus is fulfilled in your very ears today, because we are talking about the living and lasting legacy of this lady who did what she could 2,000 years ago. She did all that she could, and she did it when she could in bringing her very best to the Lord.

### 3. The Lesson of Worship: Who Has Your Heart?

*"When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."* Matthew 26:6-13

True Worship is the act of "breaking and pouring." Mary didn't just pour the oil; she broke the jar. She didn't just use a cloth; she used her hair—her glory—to wipe His feet. This was total abandonment of her resources and her reputation.

In those days, it was customary when a friend came into your home to take a few drops of perfume and anoint their head. It was an act of friendship. It was an expression of honoring that individual. Mary is overwhelmed with feelings of thankfulness. She's overwhelmed at what Jesus has meant to her, and her thankfulness causes her to empty the entire contents of an expensive perfume on Jesus. She must have just thought about what Jesus had meant in her life and what Jesus had meant to her family. Maybe she was thinking about how Jesus had raised her brother, Lazarus, from the dead. You know, the very thought of what Jesus has done for us ought to fill our hearts with a great deal of thankfulness.

We often ask, "How much do I *have* to give?" Mary asked, "How much *can* I give?" When you realize that Jesus is the Pearl of Great Price, you don't haggle over the cost of the field. If your prayer life is dry or your generosity is tight, check your values.

Everything we give to God is a direct reflection of what we think He is worth. Mary's gift was an imported, expensive oil that represented her life's savings or perhaps her family's dowry. To the other guests, it was a commodity. To Mary, it was a tool to express the incomparable worth of the Man sitting before her.

John tells us "*the house was filled with the fragrance.*" When someone truly worships, everyone in the room is affected. You cannot be in the presence of a life poured out for Jesus and remain neutral. It either provokes you to indignation (like Judas) or invites you to adoration.

Jesus reveals the deeper meaning: "*It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.*" Mary was the only one who truly accepted that Jesus was going to die. Her worship was a prophetic response to His ultimate sacrifice.

Worship is not a song we sing. It is the fragrance of a life that has been broken for His sake. It is the moment we stop asking, "What will I get?" and start asking, "What can I give?"

She is just an ordinary woman. She wasn't super talented like her sister Martha, but she did something that she could do. She brought the alabaster box and poured out her love for the Lord.

Why did Mary do this at the time that she did it? She had been listening to Jesus talking about His death. Jesus is on the road to Calvary to die for the sins of the world. This is why He was born. This is why He came on this mission of salvation.

Jesus is just a few days from the reason that He came to earth, to die on the cross and to rise again on the third day. The others either weren't paying attention or didn't want to believe it, but Mary believed it. She knew that Jesus was going to die in Jerusalem. She didn't know how; she didn't know what would happen, but because she had been learning and listening at His feet. She anointed His body for the burial.

This was not just an extravagant act for nothing. He would be anointed and prepared for His burial. When the women get to the empty tomb on Easter Sunday, His body is gone. Had Mary not done what she did when she did it, then the proper preparation for His burial would not have happened. But Mary knew.

Have you heard about quiet quitting? It is the practice of performing only the essential duties of a job description and refusing to go "above and beyond." It is not about actually resigning, but rather a mental and behavioral shift toward rejecting "hustle culture" in favor of a strictly defined work-life balance. Just not working as hard, not doing as much; just quiet quitting. It's a problem in the business community. It's also a problem in the church as some have just quietly quit, stopped serving, stopped giving, stopped witnessing, stopped attending.

How can we quit on the One who never quits on us? How can we quit on the One who refused to quit on the cross and gave it all? Who laid down His life. Jesus didn't save anything. And we ought to live so that our lives are expressions of that love and devotion, that's willing to extravagantly, expensively, extensively give what we have! The early church turned the world upside down because they were willing to be bold for Christ! Why wouldn't we be bold?

Acts 15:26 says, "*We all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" They risked their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "risk" can also be translated, "They gambled their lives for the Gospel." They were willing to throw it all on the table. Mary's love for Jesus was to show her love for Him, and no sacrifice was too great. She said, "I will do what I can, I will do all that I can, and I will do it when I can." Jesus commended this woman.

Now's the time to serve and express our love to our family and to our friends. She did what she could, when she could. Do it now. Say it now. Dead noses smell no roses. There's someone you love, what a wonderful time to say it, to show it, to write that personal note or send a text. Has someone discipled you? Has someone mentored you? Has someone shepherded you? Has someone taught you? Now would be a good time to show that appreciation and love before it's too late! Live without regrets. Mary did. Mary again was paying attention, so she didn't care about the waste as others thought about it. She cared about the worth of Jesus.

Talk about a waste! It was Judas who threw his life away. He kissed life goodbye when he betrayed the Lord. Somebody may say, "You Christians! You're just throwing your life away. You're throwing your time away. You're throwing your treasure away. You're giving your money away. Why are you doing that? Don't spend your time serving Jesus or worshipping Jesus."

I've noticed over the years that the people who complain the most give the least, and the people who give the most complain the least. Judas was not being virtuous or discerning. He was being self-righteous and critical in his condemnation. Mary was loving and lavish and fully devoted as a follower of Jesus. Give your all.

When you add it up at the end of life, you will be commended. Let's just add it all up when we get to the end, especially when we stand before God, and every person is going to be standing before God one day. And let's find out what's worth it and what's not worth it then.

*“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”* Romans 14:12

Jim Elliot was a martyred missionary said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

In Luke 7:36–50, Jesus is invited to dine at the home of a Pharisee named Simon. During the meal, a woman known in the city as a "sinner" (often traditionally identified as a prostitute, though the text does not specify) enters the house and performs an extravagant act of devotion.

*“When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.” Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said. “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.” You have judged correctly,” Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”* Luke 7:36-50

Jesus declares that the woman's "many sins" have been forgiven, as evidenced by her "great love". He tells Simon that "he who is forgiven little, loves little". Finally, he addresses the woman directly, saying, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace".

Notice Mary didn't respond to the critics because she wasn't listening to the critics. Mary ignored all the critics because she was focused on Jesus. She just kept leaning in and looking to the Lord and listening to Him.

What's going to last is what Mary did. Jesus said it. What she did in her act of sacrificial devotion to Me, will be spoken of wherever the Gospel is preached. The perfume that filled the room that day so long ago fills this room today.

The story ends with a stark contrast. Mary poured out her oil for Jesus; a few verses later, Judas would sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. One saw Worth; the other saw a Waste.

Today, Jesus is still at the table. He is still the Resurrection and the Life. He is still heading toward a Cross to be "poured out" for us.

Will you keep your "jar" sealed and safe, or will you break it open and let the fragrance of your life fill the room for the only One who is truly worthy?