

## No Waste for Jesus

Mark 14:3-9 New American Standard Bible

<sup>3</sup> While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the Leper, He was reclining at the table, and a woman came with an alabaster vial of very expensive perfume of pure nard. She broke the vial and poured the perfume over His head. <sup>4</sup> But there were some indignantly remarking to one another, **“Why has this perfume been wasted?”** <sup>5</sup> For this perfume could have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they were scolding her. <sup>6</sup> But Jesus said, “Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a good deed for Me. <sup>7</sup> For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. <sup>8</sup> She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. <sup>9</sup> Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the entire world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her.”

## Introduction

### The Clash of Convictions

It was the week before Jesus was crucified. He was staying at a house in Bethany, a couple of miles southeast of Jerusalem. He was with His 12 disciples at the time. Then, a woman came in and broke a jar of very expensive perfume made of ‘pure nard’ and poured it over Jesus’ head.

Background information on the value of nard: “Horace (the Roman poet—kc) offered to send Virgil (another Roman poet—kc) a whole barrel of his best wine in exchange for a phial of nard. Though nard is now rare on the shelves of the western perfumer, its name stood for centuries as an evocation of the perfume of the lost Garden of Eden.”

[<http://www.biblefragrances.net/nard.html>]

When the disciples saw what was happening before their eyes, a spark of anger flared in their minds. Soon, a clash of convictions and an argument on waste ensued among the lady (the giver), Jesus (the recipient) and the disciples (the onlookers).

## Content

“Why has this perfume been wasted? (v. 4)”--- the disciples cried out. Actually, the literal translation would be “Why the hell has this perfume been wasted?” “An utter waste!” “I can’t believe this!” Sure, it was a really expensive perfume: 300 denarii (v. 5) whose worth in today’s dollars is \$50,000.

The disciples surely got upset, because their conviction was violated. Outside, they seemed to deeply care about the poor. However, the true reason for their indignation was this: none of them believed that Jesus deserved such an ‘expensive’ devotion and honor. *Yes, He deserves honor, but not that much!* He is worthy to be treated with respect, but *not that much*. Maybe, He is worth of a drop or two of the perfume, but *not the entire bottle!*

### **Not about Waste but about Worship**

The disciples raised their voices and harshly scolded the lady, although, to be honest, it was none of their business. They angrily disapproved the way she used her own precious possession. They would have had no problem, had she used it for her dowry or even for her own burial but not for Jesus. “What a waste!” they exclaimed in public. “It could’ve been sold and used to help the poor!” They truly shamed the lady a big time.

“Leave her alone,” Jesus intervened (v. 6). “Why are you bothering her? She has done a good deed for Me.” He made it clear to everybody that it was not a waste at all. Actually, it was a good deed for Him. Jesus heartily approved her action of love. He also affirmed that it was a beautiful thing she did for Him for His burial ahead of time. Although Jesus implied that in a week He would be buried in the tomb, the disciples didn’t get it. Indeed, none of them had a chance to embalm their Master’s body, because they all ran away. Only this lady did.

Now, if we only focus on the words such as ‘waste’ or ‘helping the poor’ we may miss the whole point in today’s story. Here, Jesus is least concerned about the waste or the best ways to spend money. Nor is He discouraging us from helping the poor. Don’t think that Jesus didn’t care about the poor, either. In fact, He was a champion of the poor. He was the one who cared the most for the poor that He opened His Sermon on the Mount saying the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the poor (Luke 6:20). He proclaimed the Gospel to the poor. He served them with healing and His teaching.

By the way, when it comes down to waste, Jesus was the one who practiced no waste of God’s given resources. Remember His feeding 5000 people with five loaves and two fish? After everyone was satisfied, Jesus commanded to collect the leftover so that the food would not go wasted (Matthew 14:20). He surely knows what waste is and what is not.

### **Worship Jesus**

So, what’s the point in today’s story, then? It is about worship. It is about the worship of Jesus. In today’s story, Jesus reveals who He truly is. He is more than a good

moral teacher. He is more than a master who deserves our respect. He is God incarnate. He is equal to God. He is eternal. He is the object of our worship and adoration. He is one of the triune God whom we worship and serve: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Unlike any other human beings, Jesus is sinless. He has the authority to forgive sins in the world. He is our Lord and Savior. Therefore, He is worthy of our adoration, praise, and worship. That's what's happening here. That's what the lady shows us here: Jesus is the object of our worship and nothing is too precious to give to Him.

### **True Worship Can Cause Criticism**

When we worship the Lord with all our hearts and minds, some people who don't get it, who don't know the Lord, may criticize and scold us as the disciples did with the woman.

People don't change much, do they? They still get angry with the true worshipers even today. When someone enthusiastically worships the Lord, the onlookers of worship can give him/her a hard time, shame them, or even kick them out of the church.

When you worship, don't be afraid of offending people. Only fix your eyes on Jesus. Only focus on pleasing the Lord. Only worship the Lord in spirit and truth. That's what it really counts before the Lord.

### **Fragrance to the World**

Finally, true worship overflows to the world outside. In today's story, I almost smell the fragrance of the perfume. Whoever came into the room would not miss the sweet smell. I bet the same fragrance that filled the room (John 12:3) also lingered on everyone's garment for some time. That day, wherever the lady went afterward, people would've asked her where she had been. *You smell nice!* She would reply, "Today I have met Jesus and worshiped Him."

You are that smell. God calls us to be the fragrance of Christ: *For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing* (2 Corinthians 2:15). We are Christ's fragrance, and we carry it to the world. How are we doing? Do we smell nice to the world? Like the perfume that filled the room that day? Or do we stink? Remember: those who worship the Lord Jesus with all their hearts and minds would carry the fragrance of Jesus to the world and everyone would know it and say, "Christ is good!"

### **Conclusion**

When we encounter Jesus the God-incarnate, we worship Him. That day, the woman demonstrated the true nature of worship through her example: give all you have and worship Jesus. It's never a waste. Nothing is too expensive for Jesus. Her example was so great that Jesus commanded His disciples to spread her story along with the gospel—the story of worship and adoration. The message of worship Jesus and the message of His saving grace go hand in hand. Worship Jesus. Whatever you give to the Lord, no matter how expensive it is, it is never waste for Him. Remember the woman. Be like her. Amen.