

Scripture: Matthew 26:6-13

Sermon Title: A Beautiful Thing
for Jesus

Text: Matthew 26:10b & 13: "For she has done a beautiful thing to me." --- "...wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Proposition: It is important for an individual (you) to give of himself and his possessions to Jesus, to do a beautiful thing for Jesus, for in so doing are built permanent personal values, as well as some values for mankind (society) as a whole.

Dates written: October 25-29, 1971.

Dates and Places ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ used;

OAKLAND PARK, FL - Nov. 5, 1971

Reference: KATHOLIC 22-23-24

From: The
For Jesus

Text: "I have a beautiful thing to tell you."
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Proposition: It is important for an
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himself (associates) as a whole.

Date written: October 22-23, 1971.

Text and phrase written used:

See also page 22-23-24

Introduction:

1. Back during World War I German submarines, or U Boats, were mutilating Allied shipping. The humorist Will Rogers suggested getting rid of the U Boats by heating the ocean to 212 degrees. Then as the boats surfaced, battleships could pick them off. Someone asked him how he intended to heat the ocean. "That's a detail," Rogers quipped, "and I don't deal in details. I only establish policy."

(Quote, Oct. 10, 1971)

The Scripture which we read today establishes some pretty good policy ~~for~~ for those who would be good Christians. ~~But~~ Before we look at it, we perhaps ought to know something of

I. The details of the Scripture and its background.

1. This particular incident that is related in today's Scripture, the story of the woman who anointed Jesus with expensive ointment, or nard, is found in all four gospels, but the details are a bit different.

a. In Matthew and Mark the woman made her costly gesture of love to Jesus during his last week

on earth, ~~and~~ just before the Pass-over feast which Jesus had with his disciples, which turned out to be "The Last Supper," or the beginning of the Holy Communion. In Luke, the account is presented as happening fairly early in his ministry, and is presented with other stories and accounts of his teachings and parables. In John the woman brings her extraordinarily nice gift to Jesus just before he went from Bethany into Jerusalem to begin the last week of his life. These differences of timing as presented by the gospel writers are not important but they do illustrate again that you must be careful not to claim that "every word" of the Bible is accurate when every word wasn't meant to be so. The main point, the teaching in each case, is the important thing.

b. Another difference which shows up in the gospels ~~is as to how~~ the anointing was done. Our Scripture of today has the woman pouring "expensive ointment" "on his head as he sat at table." Mark tells it this way too, but calls the substance "pure nard", which is what John also

an earth, and just before the Passover feast which Jesus had with his disciples, which turned out to be "The Last Supper", for the Institution of the Holy Communion. In Luke, the account is presented as a warning, and is repeated with other stories and accounts of his teachings and miracles. In John the Gospel begins with an extraordinarily rich gift to Jesus just before he went from Bethany into Jerusalem to begin the last week of his life. These differences of timing are reasons why the Gospel writers are not identical but they illustrate a main theme: you must be careful not to claim that "every word" of the Bible is accurate when every word wasn't meant to be so. The main point, however, is in each case, is the important thing.

b. Another difference which shows up in the Gospels is as to how the annihilating religions. For John, Jesus has the woman pouring perfume on him. "Don't do it," he says to the disciples. "Let her," Jesus says. "For she has done a good thing for me." But in the other Gospels, Jesus is not so concerned. In Matthew, for example, Jesus says, "Let her alone; she has done a good thing for me." In Mark, Jesus says, "Let her alone; she has done a good thing for me." In Luke, Jesus says, "Let her alone; she has done a good thing for me." In John, Jesus says, "Let her alone; she has done a good thing for me." In the other Gospels, Jesus is not so concerned.

calls~~it~~ it. Nard is short for spikenard which is a bearded grass that grows in India from which a fragrant oil ~~xxx~~ is extracted, that is very expensive. All the gospel writers except John have the woman ~~bringing~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ the perfumed substance ~~xx~~ in an alabaster flask. Alabaster was and is an expensive substance, which further emphasizes the cost and value of the act. Mark presents her as breaking the jar, but the others have her simply pouring the ointment. ~~xxxx~~ Luke and John have the woman anointing Jesus' feet, not his head, and washing them with her tears and wiping them with her hair.

c. In Matthew ^{and Mark} it is simply a woman ^{Luke} who came to do this thing. In ~~Mark~~ it is a "woman who ~~xxxx~~ was a sinner," while in John it was Mary, the sister of Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. All of the Gospel writers ~~except~~ ~~Luke~~ have the woman doing this thing simply because they loved Jesus and wanted to, but Luke adds the comment from Jesus that the "woman who was a sinner" now has her sins forgiven.

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the correct thing John 12:3
"who on the way a sinner" that was
for this forgiveness.

d. Matthew, Mark and John have the disciples expressing the thought ~~expressed~~ that the expensive ointment could have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor. John alone of these three has Judas saying this, and tells that Judas didn't really care about the poor because he was a thief, the insinuation being that he would have been able to steal the money if this had been done. Luke, ~~who~~ presents the gift as brought by the woman who was a sinner. ^{He} alone makes the point that her gift was so great because her forgiven sin was so great, and that she had given much because she loved much.

e. There are some other differences too, but these are the most easily noted ones. All of the gospels carry the idea, ~~however~~, that this expensively beautiful gesture by a woman to show her love to Jesus was a good and beautiful thing, ~~and~~ to be commended, ^{AND} not condemned.

2. You might raise the question that if there are these differences in the story presentation in the various gospels, perhaps they relate different events, and are not all various ways of retelling the same event. That is a pos.

ibility, of course, but not considered seriously by any full-time informed Bible scholars of whom I am aware.

Whether all four gospel writers, ~~xxx~~ ~~talking~~ each in his own peculiar way and according to the variations of his memory, are telling the same story or not, the point is the same. ~~xxx~~ It is that point that we wish to pursue now.

is the first thought leading to the main idea
II. It is natural to complain about waste or extravagance, as the disciples did. This is one of the sub-points, you might say, which leads up to the main things we need to consider.

1. A policeman pulled up to a lady who had stopped at the side of the road when he turned on his blue light and siren behind her car. "I saw you going around that corner," he said, "and I said to myself, '65 at least.'"

The lady replied calmly, "I always look older in this hat."

(Quote, Oct. 10, 1971)

She missed the point, that she had been speeding.

2. Often when we complain about extravagance and waste we do miss the point.

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(Note, Vol. 50, 1977)
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After now we complain about
xxx xxx xxx we miss the
point.

a. Throughout much of the western world the Roman Catholic church building will stand out as the huge main architectural attraction in village after village, town after town, city after city, ^{often} surrounded by poverty-stricken people living in hovel-like homes. We lived in a town of south central Colorado on the headwaters of the Rio Grande River, where this was true for a long time. The massive Catholic church was directly across the street from our modest parsonage, and we were accustomed to complaining about its richness of interior and massive social hall and school layout. A relative who visited us made a point to go over and spend some time in the Catholic church, just sitting and viewing the altar and statues and paraments and windows and other works of beauty and art. Then she came back and in a later discussion pointed out that many of the plain and simple, poverty-stricken people who worshipped in this massive church probably found ^{there} the only exposure to good art and lavish beauty in their whole lives; that the seeming

extravagance might be the most economical way of bringing into their lives some uplift of spirit and mind which only beauty can do; that the money and gifts it took to build and maintain the church probably would lift the economic welfare of the poor very little if spread ~~out~~ throughout the area; that the beautiful church enriched no individual to the detriment of others, and was there for generation after generation to worship in and be inspired by.

b. Often when we complain about extravagance in our own churches, we might consider such an argument. I'll admit that a sore point with me is that we all too often have the attitude that only the least expensive furnishings and structures are needed by the church. Second-hand but still usable stuff is what we ^{usually} consider giving to the church. That really says what we think about the place ^{which} we say is God's house, doesn't it?

c. We need to be alert to the fact that

II. To be extravagant may not deprive needy people of help.

1. A mother took her young son to a very formal dinner party, where she wanted him to be on his very best polite behavior. She was horrified when the boy reached all the way across the table to get the butter. "What's the matter with you?" she hissed at him under her breath, "Don't you have a tongue?"

"Sure," muttered the lad to his mom, "but it isn't as long as my arm!"

APPLY TRANSITION (Quote, Oct. 10, 1971)

To have fancy, formal, beautiful affairs doesn't wipe out our humanity, although there may well be some waste in the process, some extravagance, if you want to look at it that way.

2. The point Jesus was making was not that you should be unaware of and unconcerned about the poor and needy, but that self-sacrificing giving of one's best to do a thing of beauty ^{in honor of God (CHRIST)} is very worthwhile. Indeed, ~~that~~ such acts very often might be of service to poor. After all, the person inspired by beauty and by loyalty to ~~his~~ God might very well be far more generous to his needy brother-man than when he has no such sense of awe, loyalty and gratitude toward God. That this is true

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his under the table. "Don't you have
any butter?"

"What's the matter with the butter?"
"It's just as long as my arm!"
"What's the matter with you?"
"I'm just as long as my arm!"
To have a son, formal, beautiful
refined, but not our humanity,
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is attested to by the fact that from churches and lodges where beauty is ~~emphasized~~ ~~for~~ ~~have~~ come the people and the funds that ~~have~~ established our earliest homes for orphans and old people, hospitals, schools for the underprivileged, and so on. Only as the churches demonstrated ~~good~~ good to society as a whole did governments move in on the field with their more-massive and more-far-reaching establishment of such facilities.

This is ~~all~~ to point out that

III. What seems to be extravagance
xxxx for development of personal and
social values may be very worthwhile,
especially when done for love of Jesus.

1. The president of a company was showing a friend through his offices. They went past a series of small private rooms in which young men were busily hammering away at typewriters.

"These are some of our junior executives," said the company president.

"But they're typing letters," said his friend.

"Sure," replied the president. "I'm not so dumb. I can get junior executives today for half the price I'd have to pay stenographers!"

That boss knew how to make his company's dollars stretch, anyway, and at the same time to make it appear as if his was really a prospering firm, with all those junior executives.

2. Devotion to Jesus may appear to be unduly costly at times. That seems to be one of the main objections many people have to churches and to Christian causes, that they suggest or ask for so much, for some costly sacrifices on the part of their members. But Jesus said, "Where your heart is there is your treasure also," an insight into life that is very true. Which is why giving to the brotherhood of believers in Christ -- that's what a church is -- should never be thought of as "dues," but rather as gifts. ^{Ideally} Gifts reflect what you do lovingly and voluntarily to the best of your ability to show your regard to and devotion for the one to whom the gifts are presented. When you give out with all your heart, with no resentment and reservations, then you are the one who is helped the most. Your "uptight" feelings are lessened and your personality glows with love and warmth and satisfaction.

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Lord, Jesus Christ, "feelings are
labeled and your personality lives
with it, and your self-satisfaction.

3. Especially is this true when you've really exerted yourself to be generous and loving toward Christ, through the means available in the church and society. Love to Christ reduces guilt, brings forgiveness, as to the woman who was a sinner in our story. It speaks of a devotion which gives life a center, and which makes a wonderfully happy eternity a matter of unshakeable faith in the future.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus said about the woman who brought the ointment in the alabaster jar, "wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." Not because she sought memory was this true, but because she loved her Lord and tried to serve him with her absolute best.

2. He also said of the woman's gift "For she has done a beautiful thing to me." When have you, when have I, done a beautiful thing for Jesus? The answer to that question is nowhere near as important as the answer to the question "What beautiful thing for Jesus will I do next?", and "When can I do it?"

...especially in this time when
...yourself to be
...and loving family
...the words available in the
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...the woman who was a saint in our
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Conclusion:

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...first, but because she loved him, and
...and tried to serve him with her whole
...heart.

2. We also said of the woman's gift
..."You are a beautiful thing
...to me." "How have you, how have I
...and a beautiful thing for Jesus?
...the answer to that question is nowhere
...but as the story of the woman to the
...wonderful thing for
...Jesus will be 'yes', and 'yes' can
...I do it."

3. It IS important to you and to me, to any individual, to give of himself and his possessions to Jesus, to do "a beautiful thing" for Jesus, for in so doing are built permanent personal and social values.

3. To find values to which to
the, to the individual, to the of di-
self and his associates to focus, to
and "a down right thing" for today, or
is so doing are quite important points
and social values.