

A SUPPER IN BETHANY

John 12:1-8

According to Matthew and Mark, this supper which "*they*" made for Jesus, was in the house of Simon, who had been a leper, and may have been a united effort, with the two families, to do *honor* to Jesus and His disciples because of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and, perhaps, the healing of Simon. It took place six days before the Passover, which meant six days before His death and burial (*James Lee Smith*).

The supper must have been a blessed time. There was at least 17 persons in the house reclined at the table: Simon the Leper the host, Jesus the honoured, His 12 disciples, Martha who once again is seen serving, Mary her sister who once again is worshipping and the resurrected Lazarus, their brother, who sits as witness.

I. Mary, the Sacrificer. While others rejoice to sit at the table with Jesus, Mary, Martha's sister, takes a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume, kneels before Jesus, and pours it on Jesus' feet. And the house was *filled* with that fragrance of the perfume.

Mary seems to always have been at Jesus feet. She a deeply spiritual woman. Her love and devotion for the Lord is unsurpassed. Her sacrificial act of breaking the costly alabaster jar and letting the precious, sweet fragrant perfume anoint Jesus' feet, (Matthew tells us she also poured some on the His head) is a beautiful picture of a pious worshipper, who sacrifices her all. Humbly she wiped His feet with her hair. Her hair was her personal glory (1 Cor. 11:15), and she laid it all at the Lord's precious feet, as a sign of surrendered service to Him.

At Jesus' soon to be pierced feet, she took the place of slave and did what Jewish women would not do in public. Of course, with that kind of action, misunderstandings and criticism would arise. That always seems to happen when some one consecrates himself to the Lord. But let us remember, that a consecrated life has always a sweet aroma to Christ.

II. Judas, the Criticizer. Judas who was about to become the greatest betrayer that ever has walked on the face of the earth did not appreciate the holy act of Mary. The "scent of the perfume " poured upon the Son of God had no sweet aroma to him, "because he was a thief. "

His hypocritical objection was, that the oil might have been sold and the money given to the poor. Not that he cared for the poor. Lining his pockets was all he cared for. For 3 years he had been stealing from the disciple's money bag. His heart hadn't changed.

"What a waste!" he said. To unbelieving souls, everything that is given to Christ and His cause is a total waste in their eyes.

III. Jesus, the Justifier. "Then Jesus said, *"Leave her alone; for the day of My burial, she kept this. "* "The poor, " he said, *"always you have with you, but Me you have not always.* Mark tells us that Jesus said, *"Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work."*

For the Lord it was a work of love. The anointing of his head and feet with the costly ointment was an expression of the affection of her heart freely poured out on him. Of what value is our service and devotion if our hearts are not in it. The first commandment is: *"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.*

For the Lord it was a work of faith. He knew that she knew that He was going to endure suffering and death. She understood, when the Lord said the Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to give His life as a ransom for many.

It is significant that Mary of Bethany was not one of the women who went to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. In a sense, Mary was showing her devotion before it was too late. She was "giving the roses" while He was still alive and not bringing them at the funeral. I believe the fragrance poured out upon the Lord would remain upon the body of Jesus even on the cross and beyond into the tomb.

And finally, Jesus rewards her exceptional, wholehearted act of devotion. *Assuredly, 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.*

The fragrance of that self-sacrificing act has been felt all down through the ages.