

“Wherever This Gospel Is Proclaimed...”

by Watchman Nee

Matthew 26:13 says, “Truly I say to you, Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her.” According to the Lord’s word here, *wherever the gospel is preached, this story should be told immediately afterwards*. If the gospel is preached, but this story is not told, there is a great lack. Therefore, we have to speak of this story today.

This portion of the Word in Matthew 26:6-13 is on the story of Mary. But in this Gospel, her name is not mentioned. In the other Gospels, her name is mentioned; therefore, we know that this woman is Mary. Why does Matthew mention her only as a woman? It shows us that what she did can be done by any ordinary woman; it was not something that could be done only by someone called Mary. The use of the word *woman* means that it does not refer to any person in particular. Moreover, the fact that she is only mentioned anonymously as a woman shows that the person does not mean much; it is the Lord who is worthy of our attention.

We know that Mary did not have a servant at home. There was no one else in her house except her sister, Martha, and her brother, Lazarus. She served the Lord personally. We also know that she did not have a rich family. But it is an amazing thing that she bought a pound of ointment of pure nard (we are told of this in the other Gospels), and the pure nard was “very valuable” (John 12:3). Hence, this ointment must have been very expensive. Perhaps one cannot even find such expensive ointment today. When she poured the ointment on Jesus’ head, she was criticized by many. They murmured that it was a waste of three hundred denarii to anoint the head of the Lord, and that the money could have been given to the poor and taken care of many people. But the Lord said, “Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole

world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her” (Matt. 26:13). Therefore, I believe that wherever the gospel is preached, the story of Mary is to be preached also. It would not be proper to preach the gospel without speaking about the story of Mary. As long as there is the gospel, there should be the story of Mary. In other words, after a man understands the gospel, he should also know the story of Mary. Unfortunately, the gospel is preached in many places, but the story of Mary is not preached.

Some wonder why three hundred denarii are so important. Since the Lord was sold for three hundred denarii, Mary’s three hundred denarii had a tremendous significance. (Do not misunderstand when I say that the gospel was worth three hundred denarii and the enemy’s valuation of the Lord Jesus was also three hundred denarii. The Lord was worth three hundred denarii only in the eyes of the enemy.) Since a flask of ointment was worth three hundred denarii, Mary sold herself for three hundred denarii worth of ointment. Putting it in another way, Mary was that flask of ointment; she put herself into that flask and sold herself to the Lord.

The story of Mary must be spoken of wherever the gospel is preached because every time the gospel is preached, there is the need of the story of Mary to maintain the balance of the truth. If there is a place which only preaches the gospel without mentioning the story of Mary, the truth is unbalanced. It is easy for men to preach the gospel without mentioning the story of Mary. It is possible for the gospel to be preached too much without having the proper balance. Preaching the gospel is easy today. The gospel preached among us and everywhere in the world is a gospel that satisfies men. A man believes in the gospel because he wants to profit, rejoice, live well, and gain something. If we profit, rejoice, live well, and

gain something, we feel satisfied. Many people believe in Christ only to be saved from death and hell and to receive eternal life and go to heaven. Many people have not believed in Christ to the extent that they give themselves to the Lord. Many preach the gospel by telling others that they can pass from death to life, and from judgment to eternal life and salvation. Men like to hear this kind of gospel. But if you tell them that after they have believed, they should offer themselves to God, obey God, and be His prisoners and slaves, they would refuse to accept. Many people see salvation only as deliverance from judgment; they have not seen that salvation is also deliverance from self. The salvation of many people is merely a salvation from hell; they have not seen that salvation is also a deliverance from the world. Many people only see that being saved is receiving eternal life and blessing; they have not seen that being saved is for the Lord to gain them. If they realized that salvation is a matter of putting oneself absolutely in the hand of the Lord, many would turn away.

This distinction was present at the time of Jesus. It was recorded in the Gospel of Luke, which speaks of a man preparing a great feast and asking servants to invite the lame and crippled to come to the feast. This is the feast of the gospel, and many people came to the feast. The Lord spreads a feast before man, and whosoever will may come. Indeed men came. The Bible says that many people walked with Jesus. They thought that the gospel was wonderful because it was a word of grace out of the mouth of the Son of God. But the Lord told them that if they would not take up their cross to follow Him, they could not be His disciples, and that if they loved their parents more than they loved Him, they were not worthy to be His disciples, or if they would not leave behind everything in this world, they could not be His disciples. The Lord mentioned His relationship with us immediately after He preached the gospel. Many people consider salvation as merely a deliverance from judgment and hell; they do not have Christ's concept. Many believe in Christ, not because Christ is believable, but because He is one of the ways for them to be saved. Many believe in Christ, not because they realize that Christ is the goal, but because they think that through Christ they can go to God and heaven. The Lord Jesus says that He is the way, the truth, and the life. Many believe that Christ is the way, the method. But they do not see that Christ is the life. They think that they should trust in Christ because He is a wonderful way for them to be saved. Many people want to come to God, go to heaven, or be saved through Christ; but they have not seen that Christ is the life and the goal. Many people want to go to heaven, be delivered from punishment, and be saved, but they cannot do it on their own. Therefore, they ask Christ for help. Christ is the means and not the goal for them. In other words, Christ is the means of salvation through

which they reach their goal. The person, Christ, is not their goal. Believing in Christ and being saved are only means, not the goals, for them. They do not understand what Christ wants to accomplish. This is the danger of the gospel among us. This is why there is the need to speak of the story of Mary. It is not enough to hear and believe in the gospel; we must smell the aroma of the ointment. Salvation is not for ourselves but for Christ. This is what the story of Mary is all about.

In a Sunday School, a man asked a group of children once: "Who among you would want to be Lazarus? Who would want to be the rich man?" Some children said that they wanted to be Lazarus because they would enjoy the blessing in the future. Some said that they wanted to be the rich man because they did not know what would happen in the future anyway. One child said that he wanted to be the rich man when he was alive and Lazarus when he died. Many Christians think this way. They want to enjoy blessing while they live on earth, and enjoy blessing when they die. They want to come out ahead in both worlds.

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This is the way many Christians want to take today. But those who are like Mary are a Lazarus when they are alive and Lazarus when they are dead. They draw near to God after they die in the same way that they drew near to Him when they were alive. Just as they put the world aside when they die, they put the world aside while they are yet living. They are Lazarus when they die, and they are Lazarus when they are alive. This is what the story of Mary is all about.

We are not neglecting the preaching of the gospel. We know that we should pay attention to the preaching of the gospel. But the Lord Jesus said if there are thousands or tens of thousands of places where the gospel is preached, the story of Mary should be told also. A danger exists if one only preaches the gospel. This is why the story of Mary must be told. On the one hand, we have to preach the gospel, but on the other hand, we must offer up everything to the Lord. Paul said, "We have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died" (2 Cor. 5:14). This is the gospel. But it does not stop here. Following this, Paul said, "And He died for all that those

who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised" (v. 15). This was what Mary did. The Lord is the One who has died for us. The purpose of His death and resurrection for us is that we may live for Him. No Christian can just be saved, but not have to suffer tribulations. Paul said that we are not only appointed to believe in the Lord Jesus; we are also appointed to suffer for Him. We should know that we have been set apart to believe in the Lord and also set apart to suffer for Him. Many believe in the Lord Jesus only to the extent that they receive happiness from Him. They have not believed to the extent that they will suffer for His sake. Many people do not know what it is to believe in Christ. To believe in Christ is to believe in Him to the extent that we suffer for Him. But thank the Lord that this suffering is precious! Many have believed in the Lord Jesus only for the purpose of going to heaven; they have not believed to the extent that they go out of this world. They have believed only to the extent that they are accepted by God; they have not believed to the extent that they are rejected by men. But a perfected believer, one who belongs absolutely to Christ, is one who believes in the Lord to the extent that he is both accepted by God and rejected by men. This is why the story of Mary must follow the preaching of the gospel. We must speak of the story of Mary today. There are many who have believed in the gospel today, but there are not many who are like Mary. May there be not only those who believe in the gospel, but those who believe in the gospel as Mary did.

"A woman came to Him, having an alabaster flask of ointment of great value, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at table" (Matt. 26:7). According to Mark, she broke her alabaster flask and anointed the Lord's head. After she did this, Judas took the lead to condemn it as a reckless waste of God's gifts. She had wasted three hundred denarii. He thought this sum of money could be used for the poor. The ointment could have been sold for three hundred denarii. What kind of intention was this? What was the motive behind this? Mary poured the ointment on the Lord instead. What kind of intention was *this*? And what was the motive behind *this*?

What Mary Did

Let us consider Mary first. Her pouring of ointment on the Lord's head and body was for His burial. Mary thought: "I have seen my brother being raised from the dead, and He has stayed in our house many times. He comes frequently to Bethany. He is indeed my precious Savior. He has told His disciples four times that He will die (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:1-2), but the disciples did not understand what He meant. But I know that His death is for me. After He dies, men will surely anoint Him with ointments, frankincense, and myrrh. But

I do not want to wait until He dies. I will anoint Him with the ointment, the frankincense, and the myrrh before He dies. I will pour out everything on Him. What is the use of pouring out all these things on Him after He has died? It is better to pour them on Him while He is living!" An alabaster flask of ointment worth three hundred denarii was very expensive. Even now we cannot find ointment more expensive than this. Therefore, at that time, this must have been the most expensive ointment.

When did she do this? She did it while the Lord was reclining at the table. In other words, she did it secretly while the Lord was rejoicing and taking no notice of her. She did not tell the Lord ahead of time and did not let Him know what she was doing. She did it secretly to the Lord while nobody was watching. What does this mean? Many people want salvation, but they do not want the Savior. They treasure salvation, but do not treasure the Savior. Many people treasure Christianity, but they do not treasure Christ. Many treasure the work of redemption, but do not treasure the Redeemer. Many people love the cross of Christ, but do not love the Christ of the cross. The first thing many people ask is what profit they will receive if they believe in the Lord. They do not ask what kind of love they will have for the Lord if they believe in Him. But Mary knew, and this is where the difference lies. She knew that the Lord died for us and resurrected for us, and that we should offer Him our love and everything. Although she did not come from a wealthy family, she exchanged everything she had for the ointment of pure nard, and poured it on the Lord. Mary poured out all she had on the Lord. Only she understood the Lord's death. On the first day of the week, several women went to the Lord's grave to anoint His body with ointment and myrrh. But they were too late! Only this woman made it; all the other women missed it. Only she understood the Lord's death, and only she had the offering and sacrifice.

The Disciples' Attitude

The disciples thought that Mary's act was a waste and a throwaway. They thought that it was better to give the three hundred denarii to the poor. The same two principles exist in the church today. There is one group of people who, like Mary, give everything to Christ. They consider Christ to be worthy of everything, and their love for Christ prompts them to give everything to Him. Another group of people are more pragmatic. On the one hand, there are Marys, who are governed by their hearts. On the other hand, there are other ones, who are governed by their reason. On the one side, we have the ones who follow their hearts. On the other side, we have the ones who follow ways and methods. Objectively speaking, what Mary did was a waste and a throwaway. But we have to realize that not many believers are attracted by love. Not

many consider love as their life, destiny, and everything. For those who love Him, three hundred denarii are nothing. Even three thousand or three million denarii are nothing. The question is not how much something itself is worth, but how much the person to whom it is directed is worth. The issue is not the thing, but the person. Man treasures only the things he loves. The worth of the thing he offers to the Lord speaks of the worth of the Lord to him. When many people offer money to the Lord, they carefully calculate over and over again. Actually, they are not calculating the amount they should offer; they are calculating the worth of the Lord. The amount you offer to the Lord speaks of the amount that He is worth to you. If you cannot give Him very much, it means that He is not worth very much to you. One alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard tells us of the worth of the Lord. This flask of ointment does not speak of Mary's consecration, but of God's worth and Christ's worth. A person's sacrifice to the Lord tells us not of his generosity, but of Christ's worth. A martyr is able to sacrifice his body because the Lord is worth more than his life, not because he is able to renounce everything. Every suffering and consecrated believer tells us the worth of Christ, and every person who is willing to offer up his time to the Lord tells us how much the Lord is to him. The only reason a Christian is willing to sacrifice everything is that Christ is worth everything.

Let me illustrate this further by considering the price of a piece of merchandise. The amount you are willing to pay for a piece of merchandise is the worth of that piece of merchandise to you. The price always matches the worth. The price one pays is the worth of the goods that one receives. If a watch is worth five dollars, you will not want to spend six dollars on it; you will pay only five dollars and no more. Therefore, the fact that you have spent five dollars on the watch means that the watch is worth five dollars. The five dollars you put out equals the five dollars the watch is worth. The price always matches the worth. The price of an article determines its worth. The price you are willing to pay for the Lord determines the Lord's worth to you.

The disciples thought that the three hundred denarii could be given to the poor; that amount could have helped many poor ones survive for a few months. To do that would be the pragmatic and practical approach. There are these two groups of people in the church today. One group sees the love of the Lord and considers it worthwhile to offer everything to the Lord and give Him everything. They are not concerned about right or wrong, gain or loss, success or failure; they care only for the Lord's pleasure. They are willing to make the most uneconomical move. Another group considers it more appropriate to put everything in the most profitable area. They invest in areas that are profitable and generate

results. "If you do this, you will save more souls, and if you do that, you can help more people. If you do such and such, your work will expand." Friends, this kind of pragmatism is actually the principle of Judas!

"Why this waste? For this could have been sold for much and given to the poor" (vv. 8-9). Judas was the first to say this, and the disciples followed and echoed his words. The record about Judas in the Gospel of John is not found in the other Gospels. Judas was a true economist. Whenever economy enters our heart, love leaves. If the relationship between Christ and us becomes a matter of economy, love is gone. The concern of many people today is, "What result will I get if I do this? Will I be of greater use if I will do that?" But the Lord's question is, "Was this done for My sake?" He is telling us one thing: "For the poor you have with you always, but you do not always have Me." This is a very serious word. In other words, He is telling us that there will be much time for us to work, but the opportunity to love Him is only here while the Lord is living. Today is the only time for us to express our

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love to Him. In the millennium, there will be plenty of opportunity for us to work. Matthew 25 tells us that if a man is faithful in the small things, the Lord will entrust great things to him. The kingdom is the time when we will do great things. Many poor people are with us, and there are many works waiting for us. But where is our love for the Lord? I am not saying that we will not love the Lord in eternity anymore, but I am saying that the opportunity to demonstrate our love to Him is today. In that day, it will not be a thing of surprise for us to see the Lord and love Him. What is precious is for us to love Him today without seeing Him. We have not seen the Lord, yet we believe in Him, and we love Him. How wonderful this is! In the eyes of love, nothing that we do is too much if we are doing it for the Lord; nothing that we sacrifice or spend is a waste. In the eyes of the world, it was impractical, wasteful, and foolish for Mary to throw away three hundred denarii in an instant. Judas was more down-to-earth, practical, wise, and thoughtful about humanity. But the Lord would rather see the church filled with foolish Marys than see one wise Judas. Once and for all the Lord laid down the rule of judgment for the

church. Should the principle of the church life be one of loving Christ or one of pragmatism?

There is another thing that we should consider. We should be careful not to exercise our soulish power or fleshly energy. We should restrict and control ourselves, not working according to our own wisdom or strength in order to expand or prosper our work. Many people are doing things that are seemingly for the Lord, but are actually not. It seems that their work is for the hastening of Christ's kingdom; actually, it is not. It is a pity that many such works are done in the principle of selling the ointment to give to the poor. What use is it if we can give to fifty, five hundred, five thousand, or even fifty thousand poor, but the Lord's head remains without the ointment? Men today like to care for the poor (the sinners, the church, the work, etc.) and are negligent of the ointment on the Lord's head. How much of our work is done to please the Lord? How much of our work is done because of need? There is a lack of talented ones who are being wasted on the Lord. Thank the Lord that since the time of the Lord Jesus until now, there have been many who are willing to waste themselves. Paul was one. He reached prominence in Judaism at a very young age. He would surely have gone down in Jewish history as a bright star of Judaism. But he ended up being a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. Was that not a waste? He was taught by Gamaliel and well educated in philosophy. He could have studied more philosophy, and could very well have become one of the most famous philosophers. Yet he chose to become a disciple of a Galilean carpenter. Was that not a waste? We find many men like him throughout the history of the church. If we had put these talented, knowledgeable, eloquent, and thoughtful people into politics, literary work, commerce, philosophy, and science, they would surely have become outstanding people. But they did what the world considered as a waste. Thank the Lord that Christ is worthy of all their waste! These people are just flasks of ointment poured out on the Lord's head. The world says that these people have been wasted, and some in the church also consider them as wasted.

It is possible to be in the so-called churches today and be a person who is not "wasted." Many people have introduced pragmatism into the church. They calculate cost and talk about profit. Their thoughts are on the work and not on the Lord. Their concern is the need and not the Lord's heart. Their eyes are on the result, the number of souls saved, the number of people helped, and not on strict obedience to the will of the Lord. The Lord has to open our eyes to see that pragmatism is something the Lord rejects. Thank the Lord that while we are living today, we do not have to be concerned with the poor or everything represented by the poor; all we have to be concerned about is the Lord's pleasure. Otherwise, it would be hard for those who are not wise and calculating.

The great danger of pragmatism is that it replaces the Lord's pleasure. It is a little better than the unclean things of the world, but it falls short of the Lord's desire. Ignorant ones can easily be led to believe that pragmatism is a philosophy that pleases the Lord.

The concern among the churches today is how great can a work become, how much work can be shown in a report, and whether or not there are substantial benefits. In the eyes of worldly economics, Judas was better than Mary. In their eyes, Judas's way would take care of the poor, help them survive for months, and bring profit to many. Judas was for pragmatism, and he was better than Mary. But the goal of salvation is not that we would go to heaven, but that we would be brought into a proper relationship with Christ. It does not concern our earthly relationships, but our relationship with Christ. It is possible for a man to save many souls, give much to the poor, and render help to many, yet be rebuked by the Lord as having lost the first love. A man can have work, labor, and good conduct yet, at the same time, lose out on one thing, which is love.

Suppose a wife is busy all day long for her husband and submissive to him, yet at the same time, she loves another man. Would you want to have such a wife? You would probably rather have a wife who is slower and sloppier at her work but who is fully for you. You will not be pleased if she works for you while her heart is for someone else. Similarly, God is not pleased with our giving money to thirty or fifty poor ones. He is not pleased with our great works and numerous services to the Lord. God only wants us to pour out our hearts to the Lord. We should realize these two great principles: one involves the highest joy of those who pour out everything, heart and soul, to the Lord; the other involves those who say that they are for the Lord, but whose hearts are for the work and their "usefulness." Today men want to be "useful"; they are afraid that they will lose their "usefulness." Thank the Lord that there are some on earth today who are not "useful." Thank the Lord that some have wasted their "usefulness" so that Christ would gain something in them.

I have mentioned Miss M. E. Barber many times. To me, no one living on earth today is as much like Mary as she was. She indeed wasted herself. When she was carried to the grave at her burial, one brother spoke on the story of Mary and said that Miss Barber, like Mary, had done all that she could. I agree with that brother. She was indeed a Mary. I know of very few people in this world like her. While she was still alive, I asked her once, "What is the qualification to work?" She answered, "The qualification to work is to be willing to *not* work for the Lord." When a man is willing to be "shut behind doors," to be insignificant for the Lord's sake, he is worthy to work for the Lord.

“She has done a noble deed to Me” (Matt. 26:10). “She has done what she could” (Mark 14:8). In other words, Mary laid down all that she had. We need to calculate the cost and spend everything on Christ. In other words, we should waste everything on Him. If we have not wasted ourselves completely on Him, we have not done enough yet. Thank the Lord that many people could have been very useful if they had not wasted themselves on the Lord. They could have become a famous writer, scientist, or doctor. But they wasted themselves totally on Christ. God is calling men to waste themselves on Christ! Friends, have you done all that you can do? The Lord said that Mary had done what she could! Have you done what you can? Wherever the gospel is proclaimed, the waste is also proclaimed. Wherever the gospel is proclaimed, many useful and great works of men will be stripped away for the Lord’s sake, and the desire for result and fruit will be lost. Wherever the gospel is proclaimed, everything is poured on Christ. Whatever is poured on Christ is not a waste, but will bring genuine fruit. Thank the Lord that

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the poor and works count little. The point is not how much the poor will benefit or how much society and the nation will benefit, but what the Lord will gain. Today in the church, men ask what the poor, the society, and the nation will gain. But we should ask what the Lord will also gain. May the gospel be preached here and the story of Mary also be preached here, and may more Marys be raised up here. **AF**

Footnotes from the Recovery Version of the Bible

“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the **leper**, a woman came to Him, having an alabaster flask of ointment of great value, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at table. But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, Why this **waste**? For this could have been sold for much and given to the poor. But Jesus, knowing it, said to them, Why do you trouble the woman? She has done a noble deed to Me. For the poor you have with you always, but you do not always have Me. For in pouring out this ointment on My body, she has done it **for** My burial. Truly I say to you, Wherever **this** gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, **what** this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her. **At** that time one of the twelve, the one called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests” (Matt. 26:6-14).

leper: A leper signifies a sinner... Simon, a leper, must have been healed by the Lord. Being grateful to the Lord and loving Him, he spread a feast (v. 7) in his house for the Lord and His disciples in order to enjoy His presence. A saved sinner would always do this.

waste: The disciples considered Mary’s love offering to the Lord a waste. Throughout the past twenty centuries thousands of precious lives, heart treasures, high positions, and golden futures have been “wasted” upon the Lord Jesus. To those who love Him in such a way He is altogether lovely and worthy of their offering. What they have poured upon Him is not a waste but a fragrant testimony of His sweetness.

for: Mary received the revelation of the Lord’s death through the Lord’s words in 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; and v. 2 of this chapter. Hence, she grasped the opportunity to pour upon the Lord the best that she had. To love the Lord with our best requires a revelation concerning Him.

this: In the foregoing verse the Lord spoke of His burial, implying His death and resurrection, accomplished for our redemption. Hence, in this verse He called the gospel “this gospel,” referring to the gospel of His death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

what: The story of the gospel is that the Lord loved us, and the story of Mary is that she loved the Lord. We must preach both—the Lord’s loving us and our loving the Lord. One is for our salvation, and the other is for our consecration.

At: *At that time* indicates that while one of the disciples was expressing her love to the Lord, loving Him to the uttermost, another was about to betray Him. One was treasuring the Lord, and at the same time another was delivering Him up.