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Lent Day 35: The Anointing

3 minutes

Mark 14:3-9 (ESV)

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

"What a waste!" That is the complaint made regarding the woman's use of her expensive perfume to anoint Jesus. Jesus will have none of it. He finds a purely cost-benefit analysis of our actions to be inadequate and bankrupt. Even though the money from the sale of the perfume could have been used to do a lot of good things, Jesus considers her act to be completely appropriate.

Why? Because it is an act of worship. And he knows that life begins with what you worship.

Worship the wrong things and nothing else will come out quite right. But worship the living God who has given himself for us in the sacrifice of Jesus and you have a new sense of what matters and you will prioritize your life accordingly. Suddenly you find yourself “wasting” your life on Jesus by giving your life to his agenda rather than your own. That will include caring about justice for the poor.

Contrary to what is sometimes assumed, Jesus is not minimizing our responsibility to the poor in this passage. He actually is quoting from Deuteronomy 15, which encourages radical generosity to the poor. However, such generosity flows from worshipping God. First things first! Put God ahead of all else as the only one worthy of your worship and you will find you are pouring yourself out in all sorts of beautiful ways in service to the world.

Prayer

Lord, too often I worship the wrong things. Help me to see that my life is to be “wasted” on you and only then will it become something beautiful for you to use in your world. In Christ’s Name, Amen.

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