

Waste!

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WASTE

Reading : Mark xiv. 3 - 9.

" Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her " (Mark xiv. 9).

THE Lord has ordained that the story of Mary anointing Him with that costly ointment should always accompany the story of the Gospel. What Mary has done should always be coupled with what the Lord has done. That is what He said Himself. I think we all know the story very well—how that Mary came into the house with a small alabaster flask containing some ointment—very costly ointment, nard—and how she broke the flask and anointed the head of the Lord. From the details given in connection with her brother's restoration to life (John xii. 1 - 8), we know that the family was not an especially wealthy one. The sisters had to work in the house themselves. One of these sisters, Mary, had an alabaster cruse with three hundred pence' worth of ointment in it, and she offered the whole thing to the Lord. With one stroke she broke it, and poured the whole contents upon the head of the Lord. Human reasoning said this was really too much ; it was giving the Lord too much. That is the reason why Judas took the

lead with the other disciples in complaining that Mary was wasting something.

Now we come to the word which I believe the Lord wants to emphasize at this time, the word "waste". What is waste? Waste simply means—amongst other things—giving too much. If a shilling will do, and you give a pound, it is a waste. If two ounces will do, and you give a kilogram, it is a waste. If one day will finish the work, and you take five days or a week, it is a waste. A waste means that you give something too much for something too little. A waste means that someone is receiving something, who is not worth so much. That is a waste. But we are dealing here with something which the Lord said had to go out with the Gospel, wherever the Gospel should be told. He wants the preaching of the Gospel to issue in something along the lines of the action of Mary here—that is, that people should come to Him and waste themselves on Him. That is what He is after.

THE REACTION OF JUDAS AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

We must look at this question of wasting on the Lord from two angles, one taken from Judas and the other from the other disciples. You know they all thought it a waste. To Judas, who had never called our Lord "the Lord", everything that was poured out upon Him was waste. Not only oint-

ment was waste, but even water would have been waste. To the world, the service of the Lord and our giving ourselves over to Him is a pure waste. He has never been loved, He has never had a place in the hearts of the world, so any giving over to Him is a waste. Many say, Such and such a man could make good in the world if he were not a Christian! People think that, because someone is serving the Lord and because that someone has some natural talent or something in the world, it is a waste for that one to be a Christian, to serve the Lord. They think such people are really too good for the Lord! They think it is a waste.

Let me give a personal instance. Many years ago I returned from Shanghai to my own home town. One day I was walking along the street, leaning on a stick—I was not very strong—and I met one of my old College professors on the street. He took me into a teashop where we sat down. He looked at me from head to foot and from foot to head, and then he said: "Now look here, during your college days we thought a good deal of you and we had great hopes for you. We thought you were going to be something, to be someone. Do you mean to say you are still like this?" Looking at me with piercing eyes, he asked that very pointed question. I must confess that, on hearing this, my first reaction was that I would almost like to cry, to weep. My health had gone, everything had gone, and here was my old professor, who taught me law

in the school, asking me, You are still like this? No progress, nothing. And the very next moment—I have to confess that in all my life it was the first time—I really knew what it meant to have the Spirit of Glory resting upon me. The Spirit of Glory, nothing short of the Spirit of Glory, was on me then. I could look up and say, “Lord, I praise Thee! This is the best thing and the best line I have ever chosen!” To the professor it was a total waste to serve the Lord; but that is what the Gospel is after—giving everything to the Lord.

Judas felt it was a waste. ‘We could manage better with the money by using it in some other way. There are a lot of poor people. We could give it for charity, we could do some social service, we could help people in a more practical way. Why pour it down at the feet of Jesus? Can you not find a better employment of your life? Can you not do something better with yourself?’ That is what Judas was thinking, and that is what the world is thinking. ‘It is too much to give yourself to the Lord’. But no: when once our eyes have been opened as to the worth of the Lord, nothing is too good for Him.

But I do not want to dwell too much on Judas’ reaction. I want to go on to see what the reaction of the other disciples was, because that affects us more than Judas. We do not greatly mind what the world is saying, but we do mind very much what the other disciples are saying, who ought to have

understood and yet who did not. They said the same thing as Judas, and they not only said it, they were moved with indignation, they were angry, they thought it a waste. They said, ‘You ought to have sold this ointment for three hundred pence and given it to the poor!’

‘USE’ AND ‘SERVICE’

Let me illustrate. Has someone been telling you that you are wasting your time by sitting still and not doing much? They say, Here are people who ought to go out in this kind of work and that kind of work. They could be used to help this group of people, and the other group of people! The whole idea is *use*. But no, brethren, that is not what the Lord is after. The Lord wants us to be used, yes. But what He is after is this, that you pour out all you have, yourself, unto Him, and if that is all, that is enough. It is not a question of whether the poor have been helped or not. The question is, Has the Lord been satisfied? It is not *working for* Him, my friends, it is *service to* Him, it is ministering *to* Him. Praise the Lord, that is what He is after—that I give Him my all, even though people say, ‘You are doing nothing!’ My service to the Lord is not on commercial lines. No, my service to the Lord is to please Him.

There is many a meeting we could go and take, many a convention where we could minister, many a conference we could lead, and many a campaign

in which we might have a share. It is not that you are not able to do it. You are able to do it; you could be used to the full. But the Lord is not concerned that you should be used that much, or that you have been used up to that much. That is not what He is after. It is not that my usefulness should be brought to the full. No, the Lord is after my position before His feet, and my anointing of His head. Whatever I have as an alabaster box—the most precious thing, the thing dear to me, my whole life, the inner working of the Cross and the outflow of a life that is produced by the Cross—I give that all up to the Lord. It seems as if it is a waste, but that is what He is after. Sometimes the giving to Him will be in tireless service, but sometimes He may suspend the service in order to discover whether it is it or Himself.

Have you ever given too much to the Lord? May I tell you something? One thing some of us have come to learn is this. In Divine service, the principle of waste is the principle of power. The principle of usefulness is the very principle of scattering. The real usefulness in the hand of God is waste. The more you think you could do, the more you employ your gifts up to the very limit—and some even over the limit—you will find that it is the principle of the world, it is not the principle of the Lord.

There are those who have been very concerned with some dear servants of the Lord, and think

they are not doing enough. They could do far more if they could get in somewhere and get in somehow, be used in a far greater way! I knew a sister in the Lord—she is now with the Lord—for quite a long time. I think she is the one by whom I have been helped the most. She was used of the Lord in a very real way during those years when I was associated with her. The one concern in my heart was this: She is not used! Constantly I said to myself, 'Why does she not get out and take some meetings, get somewhere, do something? It is a waste to live in that small village without anything happening!' Sometimes, when I went to see her, I almost shouted at her. I said, 'No one knows the Lord as you do. You know the Book in a most living way. Do you not see the need around? Why don't you do something? It is a waste of time, a waste of energy, a waste of money, a waste of everything, just sitting here and doing nothing!'

But that is the thing the Lord is after. It is not just to be moving about and doing everything up to the limit. No. It is that I be willing to give my all to the Lord and be satisfied with my service to Him, not merely to be concerned with work for Him. I do not mean to say that we are going to do nothing, but the first thing is Himself, not His work. So He said, 'She is doing this for Me.' Oh, friends, if our eyes could only be opened! The Lord is not after work, so-called. The Lord is after this, that we shall be for Him.

‘ANOINTING HIM BEFOREHAND’

So the Lord said, ‘Why do you trouble her? She has wrought a good work as to Me. The poor you will have always, but you cannot always have Me.’ Of course, we can have a new application of the whole thing here to-day. We all know that, during the Millennium, we shall be called to a greater work. We must not think that, during the Millennium, we shall have nothing to do. The Lord said, ‘Now in the least you have been faithful; then, in the Millennium, more will be entrusted to you.’ So there will be the greater work; so the work will go on, just as we have the poor always. But you cannot always have Him. I believe that during that Day we shall all love as we have never done now, but it will be blessed for those who have poured out their all upon the Lord to-day. When we see Him face to face, I trust that we shall all pour out and break everything for Him. But to-day—we have to do it to-day. Several days after Mary broke the alabaster box of ointment and poured it on His head, there were some women who went early in the morning to anoint the body of the Lord. Did they do it? Did they succeed on the resurrection morning? No, there was only one soul who succeeded in anointing the body of the Lord—Mary, who anointed Him beforehand. The others did not succeed in anointing His body. He had risen. The whole question is, What am I going to do to the Lord to-day?

It seems as if man will say it is too much to be given over to Him. Man will say that I am wasting my life, man will say this or that; but let us say, ‘Lord, nothing is too good for Thee.’ Someone once said to me, ‘Our giving over to the Lord shows how much we think that He is worth’. I believe that. If the Lord is worthy, then how can it be a waste? He is worthy to be so served. He is worthy for me to be His prisoner, He is worthy for me just to live for Him. He is worthy. What the world may say does not matter. The Lord says, ‘Do not trouble her.’ So let us not be troubled. Men may say anything they like, but we can stand on this ground, that the Lord said, ‘It is a good work. Every true work is not done on the poor; every true work is done to Me.’ The Lord will recognise that it is for Him; the Lord will say, ‘That is good.’ We do not mind the Judases and we do not mind the world.

Have our eyes been opened to see the preciousness of the One whom we are serving? Have we come to see that nothing less than the deepest, the most precious, and the costliest will satisfy Him? Have we come to see that working for the poor, working for the souls of men, working for the benefit of the world, working for the benefit of the eternal good of the sinner, can never be compared with our working done to the Lord? The Lord has to open our eyes to see His worth. If here is something very precious, and I pay one thousand,

ten thousand, a million pounds for it, can you say it is a waste? The idea of waste will only come when we under-estimate the Lord. The whole point is, how much is the Lord to us? When the Lord is really precious to our souls, nothing will be too good, nothing will be too costly; everything we have, the deepest, the most precious thing, we give to Him, and we will not say it is a shameful thing that we should give such a gift. But if we do not think much of Him, then anything will be a waste.

“WHAT SHE COULD”

Then the Lord said this: “She hath done what she could.” What does that mean? It means that Mary has given up her all. That is all she could do, no more, and she did it; and the Lord will not be satisfied with anything less than ‘we have done what we could’. I do not mean our energy in trying to do something. That is not the point here. The whole point is a life really laid at the feet of the Lord, and that in view of His death, His burial; in view of a future day. On that day His burial was in view. To-day it is the Crowning Day that is in view—the Lord Jesus in glory—that Day upon which He will be pronounced and declared to be the Christ of God, the Anointed One. But it is a precious thing, a far more precious thing to Him that we should anoint Him now—not with any

material oil, but with something deep. Everything outward is taken away; now comes the alabaster flask, the deepest—something you cherish like the alabaster flask, and you do not want to break it. It comes from the heart, from the very depth of your being. You come to the Lord with that, and pour it out and say, ‘Lord, here it is. It is all Yours, because You are worthy!’ May the Lord get anointing from us to-day.

THE LORD’S SATISFACTION

Then the Lord said, ‘Wherever the Gospel shall be preached, this story shall be told’. Why? Because the Gospel is meant to produce this. That is what the Gospel is after. The Gospel is not to satisfy sinners. Praise the Lord, sinners will be satisfied! But the Gospel is not preached so that sinners may be satisfied. The Gospel is preached so that the Lord may be satisfied. It is for His satisfaction. I am afraid we lay too much emphasis on the good of sinners and we have not seen enough of what the Lord is after. We have been thinking how the sinners will fare if there is no Gospel, but that is not the thing. Praise the Lord, the sinner has his part; God will give him something. But this is not the most important thing. The whole thing is this, that everything should be to the satisfaction of the Son of God; satisfaction to Him, and not to sinners. It is only when He is satisfied that

we shall be satisfied, I have never met a soul who has satisfied the Lord and has not been satisfied himself. It is impossible. We have to satisfy Him first, and He will never be satisfied without our wasting ourselves upon Him.

Once more let me repeat. The whole question before us is simply this. It seems as if I am giving too much for something too little. That is waste. To come down to practical issues: have you not felt that way? You say, I have given up a position, I have given up my ministry, I have given up a certain bright future, possibilities, and now I try to serve the Lord. Sometimes it seems that the Lord hears me, and sometimes I have no definite answer. I go on with the Lord—and then I compare myself with that other fellow who is in a certain big system. He has a very bright future, he has never given it up; he continues on and he serves the Lord; he has got souls saved, the Lord blesses his ministry. What do I get out of this? He is prosperous—I do not mean to say materially, but spiritually. He looks more like a Christian than I do, so happy, so satisfied. He has a good time, I have all the bad time. I have all sorts of complications coming to me! The other one loves the Lord just as I do. He has not gone this way, but he has got lots of things, so-called spiritual prosperity, which I have not got.

Now, am I not wasting my time? What is it? I have really given too much! Here is the problem.

I think that if I just follow this one's steps—if I only just consecrate myself enough for the blessing, but not enough for the trouble; if I just consecrate myself enough for the Lord to use me, to be a useful one, but not consecrate myself enough for the Lord to shut me up—it will be perfectly all right. But the principle of waste is a principle that satisfies the heart of the Lord Jesus. You can be used, and in fact you can make of your consecration this and that, but real satisfaction to the heart of the Son of God can only be when we are really, as people would think, 'wasting' ourselves upon Him. It seems as if you are giving too much and getting nothing—and that is the secret of pleasing God.

Oh, friends, what are we after? Are we after 'usefulness', as those disciples were? They wanted to make every penny of that three hundred pence go to its full length. The whole question was 'usefulness' to God. The Lord waits to hear us say, 'Lord, I do not mind that. If I can only please Thee, that is enough.'

"THE HOUSE WAS FILLED WITH THE ODOUR"

That breaking of the alabaster flask, and that anointing of the Lord, filled the house with the sweetest odour. Everyone could smell it. Whenever you meet someone who has really suffered, been

limited, gone through things for the Lord ; not trying to come up to the surface to be used, so to speak, but willing to be imprisoned by the Lord, willing just to be satisfied with the Lord and nothing else ; immediately you smell something, you scent out something. There is a savour of the Lord. Something has been crushed there, something has been broken there, so you smell the odour. The odour that filled the house that day still finds the Church to-day ; Mary's fragrance never passes. It needed but one stroke to break the flask for the Lord ; but that breaking and that anointing abides.

We have been talking about what we are, not what we do, not what we preach. Some of us may have been asking the Lord for a long time that He will be pleased to use us in such a way as to be able to impart impressions of Himself to others ; not exactly preaching or teaching, but to be able, during our touch with others, to impart God, to impart the presence of God, the sense of God. Friends, we cannot produce the impressions of God upon others without having the breaking of everything, even the most precious thing, at the feet of the Lord Jesus. If you have that, you may not be used in an outward way, but people will scent you out. The most delicate saint in the Body could find you out ; they would sense, ' That is one who has gone with the Lord, who has suffered, who has not moved freely, who knows how to be willing to let go everything for the Lord.' That creates

impressions, and impressions create hunger, and hunger provokes to go on seeking and have revelation and be brought into fulness of life. The Lord does not set us here first of all to preach, or to do any work for Him. The first thing for which He sets us here is to create hunger in others. No true work will ever begin without a sense of need being created. We cannot inject that into others ; we cannot drive people to be hungry. That hunger has to be created, and that hunger can be created only by those who carry the impressions of God.

I always like to think of that woman speaking of the prophet. She did not know him very well, but she said, ' I can see he is a man of God ! ' It was not what the prophet said ; she could *see*. What are people sensing about us ? We may leave many impressions ; we may leave the impression that we are clever, that we are this or that. But no, that one left the impression that he was a man of God.

This leaving of an impression upon others is based on this, that there is a definite working of the Cross with regard to the pleasure of the heart of God. I seek the pleasure of the Lord ; I seek to please Him, and I do not mind how much it costs me. I knew a sister once, who was having a little difficulty with the Lord, and she prayed like this. ' Lord, please do not give in. I confess I cannot give in—but please don't You give in. Just wait, Lord—I will give in.' She did not want the Lord to

give in. Once I prayed with her, and she said, 'Lord, I am breaking my heart so that I can please Thy heart', and it was true.

There must be something—a breaking, a willingness to give over—and that something will produce a sense of need in other lives to bring them further on to know the Lord. What I feel in my own heart is this. The Gospel has one object in view, that is, to produce in us a condition that will please the Lord. And, in order to please the Lord, we come to Him with all that we have, that we are, even the deepest, the most cherished things in our hearts, and we make known to Him: 'Lord, I am willing to let go all these things for Your sake—not for Your work, or anything else, but for Yourself!'

Oh, to be wasted! It is a blessed thing to be wasted. So many who have been prominent in the Christian world know nothing about being wasted for the Lord. Many have been used too much, have been used to the full, but they do not know what it means to be wasted for the Lord. We like to be always on the go. The Lord would like us sometimes to be in the prison. We would like always to be on apostolic journeys—but apostles have their chains.

The Lord grant us grace, so that we may learn how to please Him. If we make that our supreme aim, then the Gospel has achieved its end.

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