

The Hidden Secret in Doing Good

by Carl McMurray

In Mark 14 we are placed at an evening meal in Bethany two days before the Passover. Jesus was in the home of Simon the Leper, with his disciples, when a woman came in and anointed his head with pure nard perfume from an alabaster vial. Of course some of the observers were indignant, grumbling about the “waste” of the expensive perfume and scolding the woman. But, Jesus defended her actions. His response was 1) you can always do good for the poor, you have them always with you. 2) She has done a good thing and wherever the Gospel is preached she will be remembered. And, 3) She had anointed his body beforehand for the burial.

It is this last statement that catches our attention. Did the woman actually know Jesus was about to die and plan to anoint the Master? This doesn't seem reasonable since His own disciples had been taught that this very thing was going to happen and they didn't seem to have this understanding of coming, immediate events. No, it is more likely that she just took the opportunity to do a good thing for the Lord, and the timing was perfect, for a pre-burial anointing. Is there a lesson here for us?

Among the several lessons from this event one seems to stand clear. We cannot always know the good that is accomplished when we just do a good work for someone else. Do we always know how lonely a heart may be or how close to despair a person may be walking when we offer a kind and sincere word of appreciation or encouragement? What we think may be just pleasant conversation may actually be a lifeline pulling one back from giving into temptation or depression. We may never discover the good that was done in that moment, or at least not for a long while, yet good was done, and God was glorified in the obedient love of His children.

The next time you can compliment one, don't hold back, do it. Pass along that encouragement, that thanks, that appreciation, that noticing of effort on another's part. Who knows how badly it might be needed and how much good might really be done. I know that many will take advantage, so we must be careful stewards, but if someone needs financial help and you can help them, do it and don't hold back. You never know what that might mean to someone who is honestly at the end of their rope and anxious about how their needs are going to be met. Whenever you have the chance to break open your particular alabaster vial of perfume and pour it out, do so. Cast your bread upon the waters and it will return to you after many days. One simply cannot tell what hidden good, what unexpected result may be at hand if we don't worry about the personal cost or the grumbling observers and just humbly and simply do what we can in the Lord's name. Try a random act of kindness as you have opportunity.