

## PERFUMED LESSONS IN LIVING

by Carl McMurray

*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." Mark 14:3-9, ESV.*

The passage above teaches us some interesting and important things that we might note in this short article. For example...

It says that good works can often be viewed from different logical perspectives. One side thought this was a waste of money that could be better spent elsewhere. (Who has not heard that judgment before?) The other viewpoint was that of our Lord who viewed this expensive and indulgent anointing as appropriate for the occasion and a beautiful expression of love for Him. Although both judgments carried weight, which attitude would you have preferred hearing if it was you on your knees before Jesus? Which would you have preferred to hear coming out of *your* mouth in the Lord's presence?

Another thing to note here is that although good works stand on their own as being worthwhile, they also can have unexpected results. I'm sure that the woman did not do this to receive Jesus' praise, but she got it anyway. How sweet is that, to have the Lord come to your defense! I also don't believe that she understood that Jesus was about to die, yet the Lord says she was preparing Him, fulfilling a noble purpose, in anointing Him for death. What great timing.

Third and lastly, we notice the lesson that Jesus taught them about having the poor with them always, but NOT having Him always. That isn't a put-down to the poor as much as it is a setting of priorities. We need to learn to not let the constant pull of the important drown out the immediate need in front of us. I speak from experience. It is easy to get busy doing important things and miss the vital need in front of us. God help us to see and know the difference so that we can be of more value to His work.