

Giving with Purpose
Mark 14:3-9
November 6, 2011

I believe it was Wednesday morning this past week, that I was working in the office at the computer and I got a phone call. Caller I.D. said it was a Dyersburg number but one I didn't recognize. When I answered, the elderly woman on the line sounded like she might have some type of mental health issue and had a very raspy voice. I thought, "Man I am just getting started on some work and she probably wants help with food or rent money. She doesn't live in Newbern so I am mostly likely will have to decline helping her." All these assumptions were going through my mind until she asked if she could send our church a gift in honor of Dr. Bryant? She said, "I don't know where to send my gift, but he was very kind to me." Man did I feel bad for what I had been thinking. I felt like a scene from Honey I Shrank the Kids. It was like a voice from heaven said, "Gus you are so busted."

So we began to talk and she spoke very proudly how Doradeen, Dr. Bryant's sister came and checked on this woman's mother and she herself got to have dinner with Doradeen. So I assured her if she wanted to send her gift onto us we would send it onto the Bryant family. She wasn't the caller I would have expected to want to pass along a gift. The scripture we are about to read is about a woman in the Bible unexpectedly who wanted to pass along a gift. Hers was a gift of purpose that can teach us much.

Read Mark 14:3-9

She gave something costly, she knew she had sacrificed: v.3

Giving something costly demonstrates our love and trust of Jesus of God. It was certainly demonstrated in the life of this woman. Because it very well could be that the woman who brought this jar of special perfume was a woman who made her livelihood working

as a prostitute. But Jesus changed her life. Her life would turn 180 degrees in direction because of him. Her costly perfume became an expression of her faith and trust in him.

The Bible tells us and New Testament scholars teach us the amount of perfume she gave equaled about one year's wages for that day and time. She gave something costly and **she gave to the point of sacrifice.**

As Christians, her story is reminder as it has always been demonstrated throughout both Old and New Testament, that those who will be faithfully obedient to God will give a sacrifice.

Giving that is sacrificial has at least two attributes.

Number one, when we give, we know we have given something, we'll notice. If it's money we give, we'll notice and have to adjust our budget a little bit. I bet that woman who called, probably didn't have a lot to spare. I bet she could use whatever she was going to give in honor of Dr. Bryant.

If its giving our time, we'll have to protect our calendars because we have promised God and others our time.

If its our skills or talents we know we might have to tell others no or at least not right now because we're serving the Lord.

Secondly, sacrificial giving gives with no strings attached, no hidden agenda, no expecting anything in return. It is given to Lord and then released. When it is given to the church then it is given trusting that the leadership will use it well, but it is not used to manipulate or hold the ministry of the church back in anyway. Sacrificial giving lets go of the gift once it is offered to the Lord because it is no longer ours; it's the Lord's.

Her giving risked ridicule: v.4-5

Mark's gospel tells us that were some there who questioned her gift. It wasn't just Judas like some think, Judas had company. They questioned whether her giving could be better used.

There will always be opposition to the desire to give. And let me say there is nothing wrong with respectful questions and discussion especially when church seeks to pool together financial resources for the ministry of the church.

Illustration: I saw an associated press article about the reaction of members of the famous Crystal Cathedral Church founded by Dr. Robert Schuller. Members of his church are upset because the church asked for meal donations to be brought to the church for Schuller's family because Mrs. Schuller is ill. The problem is the church was hiring a limousine service to transport the meals to the Schuller's home and the church has already been in bankruptcy. If the article is accurate people ought to question how money and resources are being used. But we are never to let questioning of others stop us of from giving to what we believe and trust God wants us to do.

In a way maybe these guys who questioned her had a point. A year's salary could have helped a lot of poor people. But that was their question; not hers.

When your heart says I really need to give of my self in time or abilities or yes even finances then follow the passion of your heart and the principles within scripture; but don't let the doubt or questions of someone else derail you. This anonymous woman didn't get in argument with her critics. She chose to demonstrate and not debate what she believed and felt.

Her giving demonstrated discernment/consecrated:v.8

Her giving demonstrated real discernment. **Jesus was the object of her giving and nothing else. She wanted her gift to go to Jesus. She wanted her gift to honor and love him. It was solely** focused on him. Dan Smith asked me recently in regards to our Consecration Sunday emphasis what the word consecration means. I said that anything set aside for the purposes of God, dedicated only for God's will, God's mission is something consecrated.

Your time can be consecrated when you serve God.

Your prayer life can be consecrated to God.

Your talents and skills can be consecrated.

Books like Romans 12, and 1 Corinthians 12 teach that each person has been given some type of gift or talent by God. Not everyone has the same gift. Not everyone should do all the same responsibilities. But all of us have some way to use who we are for the Lord, to live a life that is consecrated to him.

Giving is not to save face. Keep whatever your were going to give to the Lord in any way if it is just to build you up. Giving is not to rid ourselves of guilt, you don't have that much time, money or skills, that takes God's grace.

The story of a woman whose name we do not even know teaches that all giving needs to flow out of giving for God's purpose. All giving is consecrated to the Lord.

The broken jar symbolized a life that would never be the same because of Jesus Christ:

Mark's gospel states that this woman broke the jar of perfume in her act of giving. I believe it meant something when she broke that jar.

New Testament scholar William Barclay said that when a body was prepared for burial, after the perfume was emptied from the jar and used to anoint the body for burial, the jar was broken and placed with the deceased, never to be used again. Maybe that is why she broke the jar.

I believe there is even a greater message connected to the breaking of the jar. After Jesus tells her critics to stop, he said wherever the gospel is preached, her story will be told.

Her story is that Jesus helped her break away from her past. Her story is that Jesus gave more to her than she could ever give back with 10 years worth of wages.

- Breaking the jar of perfume meant the love and power of Jesus

was going to help her break free from whatever she was before she met Jesus.

- She experienced a totally changed life because of him. Jesus came to this world to transform lives; not just gives us a little assurance toward our fear of dying.

Many have seen the movie the Blind Side. It is a true story about a affluent white family in Memphis that took in a poor high school age black kid. There is a great scene where the woman who invited that young man into their home discusses with her wealthy friends the impact of the decision. Take a look.

Scene from Blind Side

She would never be the same.

The Bible teaches that Jesus comes to us full of grace and truth, and when Christ comes into our lives we are a new creature and all things in life become new. Jesus said himself that we are to be born from above. Meaning the power of God who spoke the universe into being, will be in you and there is no way we can ever be the same. That is why that woman broke the jar, there was no way she could go back to her old life. If God can take nothing and make the universe, then his power in us can take our something and make something even greater.

That woman who walked into the room of men to offer the gift perfume knew, the same thing the family found out who helped a poor black kid from the projects, or the lady who called wanting to give a gift in honor of Dr. Bryant; they had received more than they gave and they would never be the same.

If in all honesty you cannot name the difference and change God is bringing to you, then it may be better for you not give; but start seeking what you still need to receive from the Lord.

Today is Communion Sunday. When people come through the line

to receive the bread, usually the server will say, “the body of Christ broken for you.” Jesus laid it all down and gave up everything, like that broken jar for us for God’s plan. His giving was for the purpose of transformed lives. Our response needs to allow God to use us to be givers with purpose in many ways because Christ is in us.