

CrossRoads Baptist Church
September 27, 2006 6:30 pm
Luke 7: 36-50, Mark 14: 3-9
Worship Series #9

“The Power of Worship”

The story before us today, I believe, may be one of the greatest stories about worship in the New Testament. I could preach a month on these truths. All four gospels tell the story of a woman breaking an alabaster box over the body of Jesus and washing his feet with her tears and hair. Luke is the only one who records this early in the ministry of Jesus; the other three gospels record it as happening in the last few days of Jesus’ life. Whether it is two experiences or one, the impact is just as powerful. Thus I have titled the message “The Power of Worship.”

The two passages I have read speak of our Lord memorializing the act of worship in the house of Simon, the leper, of Bethany. Jesus said in Mark 14: 9 that “wherever the gospel is preached throughout the whole world, what this woman did will also be spoken of as a memorial to her.” That is powerful. Why was her worship so powerful that it is memorialized?

I. The Power of the Focus of Her Worship

Her focus was single – Jesus. Her focus was not on a preacher, a fellow follower of Jesus, singers, teachers. It was Jesus. And I’ve always said that none of the disciples ever believed that Jesus would die and rise again, but I believe one person got it – Mary. I believe she understood it because of this experience.

She knew that Jesus was going to die. She was able to accept His approaching death when Peter had said in response to Jesus’ death, “Be it far from thee, Lord; this will not happen to you.”

She also understood the resurrection. You normally never bring spices for a burial until a person has died. But I believe Mary brought them early because she knew that she would not need them afterwards.

She also brought an alabaster box which was a white vessel which I believe spoke of the purity of the moral life of Jesus. She did not bring a brown vessel but a white one for a sinless Savior.

She brought pure nard. No mixture but pure. This nard came only from India and was very unique and exclusive. This spoke of the person of Christ to her. Jesus came from one place – the heart of God. And he was very unique and exclusive. Like no other. As John 3:16 says, “the only begotten son...” He was the only one – he was God as if he was not man and He was man as if He was not God. Pure God and pure man.

Where did she learn this? Where did she get revelation like this? At the feet of Jesus. Her heart was so absorbed with the person and His teachings that she sat at his feet to hear him teach and she believed what He taught.

In John 20 on the day of the resurrection, Jesus appears to Mary outside the tomb. Mary did not recognize Him because He was in His resurrected body clothed with the glory of God. But then Jesus called her by name and then had to verbally restrain her from touching him because He knew that she would most likely plunge for His feet.

You will never learn to worship sitting in a pew or standing on a platform. You will only learn to worship on bended knee and face to the ground at the feet of Jesus.

Charles Spurgeon said of those who lead others in worship, “Those who lead others to the throne must have spent a long time there themselves.”

Mary did. Her single focus was Jesus.

II. The Power of the Humility of Her Worship

I am also highly impressed with the humility of Mary. You see the polite expression of hospitality was when guests entered your house to wash their feet because their feet were tired and dusty from the sandals and dusty roads. Here was Simon, the owner, who must have been cleansed as a leper and the disciples present, but no one provided for Jesus.

The last group of people ever that would have been permitted to do this was a woman. But her she comes in the midst of all these men. But she didn’t care what others thought for her reputation and manners were secondary to her love and passion for Jesus.

She breaks the alabaster box. A beautiful, white vessel. Was anyone else doing it? No. Was she following the lead of someone else? No. And note, Jesus didn't break it, she did.

We come Sunday after Sunday with our vessels, boxes. We come and sit in long rows with our beautiful vessels. But does anybody recognize that Jesus is in the house and will anybody break his alabaster box to let the fragrance of worship out into the building?

She breaks at the feet of Jesus. Get me to His feet for worship. I ask you, do you ever get to the feet of Jesus. Do you bring your alabaster box to His feet? To get to His feet speaks of servant hood and obedience. I am your servant here wanting to hear your word of command that I may obey you.

She is weeping so that she has water to wash his feet. Since she doesn't have a towel to wipe them, she takes her hair down. Her hair is her crown of glory. But she lowers her glory – she drops her glory – for the glory of God the Son. Her hair, her body, her worship, her life is for His glory, His desire.

This was also an act of humility because women did not take their hair down or uncover their head in public unless someone thought they were a prostitute. But she didn't care because she was worshiping her Savior.

What humility? What keeps you today from breaking your alabaster box? Pride? What others think of you? Your own sense of wanting your desire or glory?

III. The Power of the Purity and Passion of Her Worship

What would drive such a person? She's acting almost like a mad woman. What caused her to do this?

Luke 7 tells us. She gives the parable, which comes down to saying that a person who has been forgiven much will love more. This woman knew of what she had been forgiven so she loved Jesus more.

There sat Simon who may be had been healed of leprosy but he didn't even do the curorist thing of proving water to wash his feet. The disciples sat there who had been following Jesus but they didn't do anything. One, Judas, even spoke up and wanted to know why this was not sold and given to the

poor. Jesus' response is a classic – did you see it in Mark 14:7. There is a time to give to the poor but do what you can now in worship to me.

Oh what passion she had. Oh the purity of her motivation in making such a scene.

IV. The Power of the Influence of Her Worship

The whole room was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. It got all over their clothes. I bet it stayed in the couches and the drapes for days and days. When those disciples went home the wives smelt of them and said, "Where have you been? Who were you with?" That day they didn't leave church the same.

Oh today, we sit in long rows with other alabaster boxes and nothing happens. No one is passionate enough to break their box and let out their fragrance of praise and worship. So, we sit and look pretty and then go out and repeat the ritual next week and next week unless they get bored and quit.

Oh that somebody would break their box. Oh that somebody would do it so that others will leave her with a smell of Jesus on them. A smell you can't get anywhere else.

Conclusion: The picture of the Alabaster box is really a type of Christ for He would be broken and spilled out but because of His brokenness, He will "bring many sons to glory."