

Returning Extravagant Love



Extravagant Love (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we draw near to the close of another week. Today I'm going to continue and complete the theme we've been studying this week: Extravagant Love.

I do trust that my talks on this theme have been helpful to you. I've chosen that word "extravagant" to describe God's love for humanity. I deliberately chose a word that religious people don't often use in fact, some religious people would almost be offended by the word. But I want to get away from religious cliches and church talk, and try to show you face to fact the reality of the depths of the love of God.

I've suggested that the love of God for humanity can be measured by certain objective standards. First of all, by the price that God paid and that Jesus paid. And the price is stated in those two parables: The Treasure in the Field and The Pearl of Great Value. It was all He had. Jesus literally gave all He had. Finally, He gave His life blood. He poured out His soul, His life unto death in a sevenfold shedding of His blood. Second, God's love for us can be measured by the inheritance that He gives us in Christ. We are co-heirs with Christ, heirs of God, co-heirs with Jesus. That is the entire inheritance of God the Father and God the Son, becomes ours together with Jesus Christ. Think of the tremendous scope of God's love. The price He paid, the inheritance He offers.

In my talk today, I'm going to deal with the other side of the coin: how should we respond to God's extravagant love? Quite simply I want to suggest to you we should be extravagant also. To illustrate what I mean, I'm going to turn to the account of what one woman did for Jesus just about a week before He went to His death. The account is found in Mark 14:3-9:

> "While he [Jesus] was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, 'Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a

> year's wages and the money give to the poor.' And they rebuked her harshly. 'Leave her alone,' said Jesus. 'Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.'"

That's a tremendous statement that Jesus ends with. "Whatever she has done will be told in memory of her." I'd also like to read part of a parallel account read in John 12:3-6, because this brings out some aspects of what took place. It also identifies the woman.

> "Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it."

So, there's the story. And we found out in that second version that the name of the woman was Mary. Now, I want to comment briefly on three elements in this story that I've read. First, what Mary did, second, what Jesus did or said, and third, how the critics reacted.

First, let's look at what Mary did. The first thing I would say about her is that she was extravagant. She poured out ointment worth more than a year's wages. By contemporary standards in the United States, that would be, say $15,000 at a minimum. So she poured out one pint of ointment worth $15,000 and she had it in a beautiful alabaster jar, she had to break the jar. The jar could never be used again. It was totally gone in just a few moments. Wasn't that extravagant?

The second thing I want to say about Mary was she was totally devoted. She not only poured the ointment on His head, as we read in Mark, but in John we read she poured it on His feet and then she wiped His feet with her hair. Picture the woman, kneeling at the feet of Jesus, letting her long hair hang down, and wiping His feet. Wiping the ointment. Rubbing it in. Smoothing His feet.

Now let's look at what Jesus said. He said a number of very powerful things about this woman. He certainly did not take sides with the critics. First of all in Mark 14:6 He said of the woman, "...She has done a beautiful thing to me..." I'm so grateful for that particular translation, "...a beautiful thing..." Jesus saw in that act something that struck Him as beautiful. Extravagant love is beautiful.

Then, in Mark 14:8, Jesus said of the woman, "She did what she could..." That's so simple, but so important. God never asks us to more than we can. I've often heard people say, "I wish I could do more." And something in me always causes me to ask myself, "I wonder if they are really doing what they can." God will never require of you more than you can do, but if you do what you can, the attitude of Jesus will be just the same as it was to that woman.

And then He said in Mark 14:8, "...She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial." That's an amazing statement. None of the disciples really believed that Jesus was going to die and be buried at that time. And yet this woman, apparently of all the people, had the intuition, the revelation that He was to die and be buried. When He actually did die on the cross they never did have time to anoint His body. They just had to wrap Him in sheets and put some perfume on the body, but they couldn't do the real anointing. So they missed the opportunity. See, I think she was open to the Holy Spirit. That's my understanding. The Holy Spirit could tell her something, because He could speak to her heart, not necessarily her head. There's a saying they have in the French language: the heart has it's reasons of which reason knows nothing. I think the heart of that woman had some reasons that all the people that sat and reasoned just didn't understand.

And finally the tremendous reward of that woman in Mark 14:9:

> "I tell you the truth [Jesus said], wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

And this broadcast is fulfilling that because this broadcast is going to go, ultimately, right around the world. So this is just one fulfillment out of many.

Finally, I want to look for a moment at how the critics reacted. I would say three things about them. First, they were stingy, as religious people often are. Do you know the phrase, poor as a church mouse? There's an awful give-away in that phrase because the world views church mice as poorer than

even other mice. In other words, the world thinks of the world as pretty poor, stingy group of people. And a lot of Christians give them good reason to think that way. But it was the critics who were stingy, not Jesus and not Mary.

Second, those critics were hypocrites. They suddenly got very concerned about the poor when they saw the ointment being poured out. But I question whether they had been doing much for the poor up to that moment, or whether they had been doing much for the poor from that moment onwards.

Third, and this is typical of critics, they were miserable. They didn't even enjoy the perfume. The whole house was filled with this fragrant, beautiful perfume, and they were so busy getting angry and critical that they couldn't even enjoy it.

Now, as I close this series of messages, and this particular message today on how should we respond to the extravagant love of God? I just want to ask you a rather personal question. Don't be offended. Has the Holy Spirit every touched your heart to be extravagant in your devotion to Jesus? You can't do anything directly for Jesus, Himself. He's in heaven. But, like Mary, you can do something for His body, His people on earth. This message you are listening to is being broadcast, or will be broadcast to many remote areas of the earth, to China, India, parts of Africa, Central and South America, the Islands of the Sea. Many of those, perhaps most of those who will hear it, are by our standards extremely poor. Most of them probably have not sheets on their bed. In fact, many of them probably don't even have a bed. They probably sleep on a mat in a hut. Many of them have no shoes on their feet. Most of them probably have not choice of food to eat. We're so used to thinking whether we'll eat this or that, we don't realize that the world is filled with people that never have that choice. Some of them don't have any food at all.

Now, this is what I want to say to you. If you will help me to reach these people, you're doing something for Christ's body on earth. And so I want to ask you this question, if the Holy Spirit touches your heart, will you be like Mary? Will you dare to be extravagant? Will you dare to do something out of the ordinary? The religious people may criticize, but remember Jesus will praise you.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be sharing with you on another rich and exciting theme from the Word of God.

My special offer this week is my book The Grace of Yielding. This book contains the key to a secret door. If you use the key and enter the door, you will begin to experience God's love in a new dimension. That title again: The Grace of Yielding.

Also, my complete series of talks this week on Extravagant Love is available in a single, carefully edited cassette.

Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

Transcript: TS-R123-105-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

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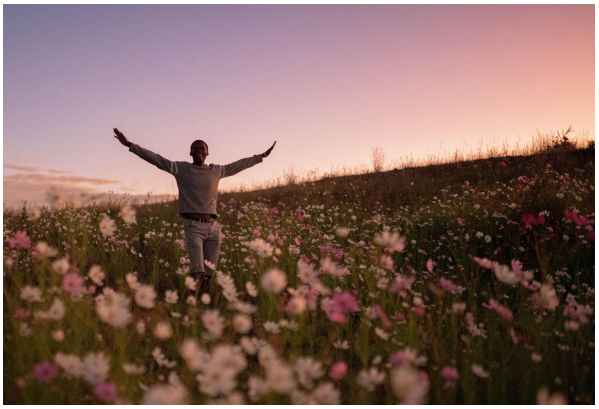

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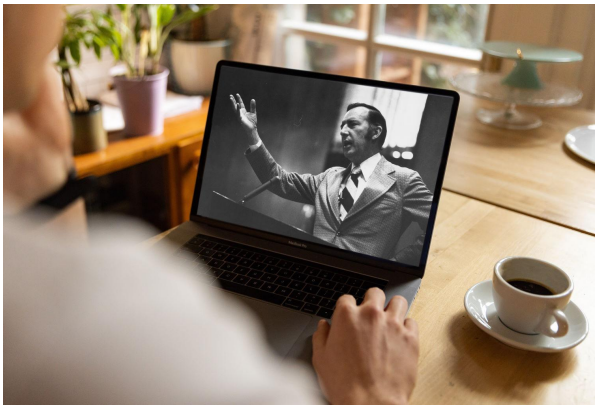

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