

Mark 14:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

Analysis

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper—The location is significant: Bethany (בֵּית־אָבִיה, "house of affliction") was Jesus's retreat during Passion Week, home to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Simon the leper (Σίμων ὁ λεπρός) was likely healed by Jesus—he would not be hosting a meal otherwise—demonstrating Christ's power over ritual uncleanness.

An alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious (ἀλάβαστρον μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτελοῦς)—John's parallel account identifies this woman as Mary of Bethany. Nardos pistikē ("pure nard") was imported from the Himalayas, worth 300 denarii—nearly a year's wages. **She brake the box**—She didn't just open it but shattered the flask, making the gift irrevocable and total. This extravagant act was prophetic anointing for burial (v. 8), foreshadowing the spices the women would bring to the tomb. While Judas criticized the "waste" (John 12:4-5), Jesus praised her understanding: He would soon be gone, and no sacrifice for Him is wasted.

Historical Context

This anointing occurred during Passion Week (likely Tuesday evening, two days before Passover) in the village of Bethany, about two miles east of Jerusalem on the

Mount of Olives. Mark places this account between the Jewish leaders' plot to kill Jesus and Judas's agreement to betray Him—the contrast between Mary's worship and Judas's treachery is deliberate. Anointing a guest's feet was customary hospitality; anointing the head was reserved for kings and priests (1 Samuel 10:1, Psalm 23:5).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does Mary's breaking of the alabaster box teach about wholehearted, irrevocable devotion to Christ?
2. How does this account challenge the way you calculate "waste" versus "worship" in your service to Jesus?

Interlinear Text

Καὶ ὄντος αὐτοῦ ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ Σίμωνος
And G5607 as he in Bethany in G3588 the house of Simon
G2532 G846 G1722 G963 G1722 G3614 G4613

τοῦ λεπροῦ κατακειμένου αὐτοῦ ἦλθεν γυνὴ ἔχουσα
G3588 the leper sat at meat as he there came a woman having
G3015 G2621 G846 G2064 G1135 G2192

ἀλάβαστρον μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτελοῦς Καὶ
an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard G4101 very precious And
G211 G3464 G3487 G4185 G2532

συντρίψασα τό ἀλάβαστρον κατέχεεν αὐτοῦ κατὰ τῆς
she brake G3588 an alabaster box and poured as he it on G3588
G4937 G211 G2708 G846 G2596

κεφαλῆς
head
G2776

Additional Cross-References

John 11:2 (Parallel theme): (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

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