

Pastor Don Long - Shepherds Ministries

www.shepherdsministries.org

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 May 2012

Preacher: Don Long

[0 : 00] And if you have a piece of paper and a pen, if you get those out as well, I'm going to give you some parallel texts. We're going to start, first of all, by turning in our Bibles to Mark chapter 14.

And in just a moment, I'm going to give you a couple parallel texts that we're not going to take time to look at this morning. But I want you to look at them in your own devotional time this evening or tomorrow sometime.

It will lend more insight into the text that we are going to look at. So we're going to start looking, first of all, at Mark chapter 14. That's where I'm going to read in just a few moments.

But let me give you the parallel texts. It looks like most of you have a pen and a paper out. And I'll read those a couple of times so you make sure you get it. And if not, see me afterwards and I'll be glad to give you that on the side.

The first parallel text is Matthew 26, 6 through 13. And the next one is John 12, 1 through 8.

[1 : 08] Once again, let me give them to you once again. Matthew 26, 6 through 13. And John 12, 1 through 8.

And then, if you will, turn your Bibles to Mark chapter 14. And we're going to start reading with verse number 3. Mark chapter 14, starting with verse number 3.

The Bible says this, And being in Bethany, the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at me, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spiced nard, very precious.

And she broke the box and poured it on his head. I want to pause here for a moment. I want to give you just one reason I gave you the parallel text. And you probably remember from your own Bible reading, John's account tells us that she poured it on his feet, and she wiped his feet with her hair.

You'll remember reading that. I will allude to that a little later, and you'll know just one reason I gave you the parallel text to look at as well. Okay? All right, let's continue reading then.

[2 : 16] Verse 4. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than 300 pence, and then given to the poor, and they murmured against her.

And Jesus said, Let her alone, why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good. But me ye have not always.

The next phrase is the title of the message. She hath done what she could. She has come aforehand, anoint my body to the bearing.

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. Shall we pray together?

Father, indeed, we are grateful for the opportunity to be in your house this morning, and as we open your word, we pray your Holy Spirit would illuminate our spiritual eyes. Open our eyes to the truth contained in your word.

[3 : 19] Challenge our lives. Convict us if that is needed. I pray, Father, that as we leave here this morning, we'll be a changed people for Jesus Christ.

So we pray that you would just give power in preaching, clarity in presentation. For I ask in Jesus' precious name, Amen. Back in 1999, my wife Sandy and I traveled to Shepherds.

I had been pastoring a church in western Michigan, and Shepherds and I were in contact talking about me becoming a church representative for them.

I told her before we tell them yes or no, we need to go over and see what the ministry is like. And on our trip over there, I said to her something like this, If Shepherds is not first class, we won't be interested.

I will not do it. Well, we arrived here and we saw a first class facility. We really did. We began meeting staff who were first class staff, and we began meeting residents.

[4 : 21] And then later we went over to our training. I spent two weeks on campus learning about the ministry and setting in various classes to learn about the ministry. But every evening we'd leave from our housing to go over to Lamb's Cottage, just one of our houses that houses all about 15 of our higher functioning men residents.

The first evening we went over there, one of the residents by the name of Walter walked up to me, reached in his back pocket, and pulled out a stack of gospel tracts about this thick.

And he looked at me and he said, Pastor, I think this is a good gospel tract. You ought to read it. And then he grabbed another and says, I think this is a good one too. Maybe you ought to read that too.

So I went back to my room that evening. I said to my wife, Sandy, I said, Walter gave me a couple gospel tracts, said I ought to read them, so I suppose I better read them because tomorrow evening when we go over to Lamb's Cottage to eat with the guys, he's allowed to ask me, did I read them?

And so I sat down and I read them that evening. The next evening we travel over to Lamb's Cottage. Here comes Walter right away. He's right away. Hey preacher, did you read that gospel tract I gave you? I said, yes, Walter.

[5 : 30] He said, well, what did you think of it? I said, I thought it was pretty good. He went to one of the residents and said, preacher said this is a good gospel tract, I guess you ought to read it too.

And then he grabbed me and said, maybe you ought to read that one too. And so anyways, then he looked me straight in the face and he said to me, hey, when's the last time you witnessed to somebody? I thought, wow.

I felt like St. Walter, do you know how much theological training I've had? Do you know I've been pastoring churches for 20 some years?

And then all of a sudden I realized something, folks. God had placed an individual with an intellectual disability in my path to challenge me.

And you know the verses, and I know the verses. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. I tell you what, I left there with a new zeal to hand out gospel tracts and look for opportunities to witness to people.

- [6 : 32] By the way, Walter works in our kitchen. Every delivery person that delivers something to the kitchen at Shepherds, Walter reaches his back pocket, he pulls out one of those tracts. Hey, this is something good, you ought to read it.
- He goes out, gospel team, stop at a restaurant. He reaches his back pocket, pulls out one. Hey, this is something good, you ought to read it. Everywhere he goes, a good, by the way, those are good gospel tracts that come out of your own tract rack.
- You know that, right? Those are good. I want to take one from another church and use it here. I mean, I want to make sure they were good ones. No, I'm just teasing you. And then in my training, I had to take two of our residents to the state of Iowa.
- And that's a little drive from Wisconsin to Iowa. And as we were traveling, I thought, when we get up in that platform of that church, these guys are just going to flop.
- I mean, they can't even carry on a good one-on-one conversation with me. What are they going to do when they get in front of all these people up in the platform? And the morning finally arrived, and David got up there and sang beautifully, what a friend we have in Jesus.
- [7 : 44] And then quoted entire chapter of Scripture flawlessly. Dug it up, and he gave his testimony of how he trusted in Christ as his Savior.
- And then he too memorized a whole chapter of Scripture he quoted before them. Now, no one asked me, but I asked myself a question. Hey, when's the last time you memorized a chapter of Scripture?
- And you know the verses, Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. And we're to meditate in the Word of God day and night. Well, shortly after there I got home, and a local church in our area called me up and said, Brother Long, we were wondering if you could take a Wednesday night Bible study.
- Our senior pastor retired, and this was their youth pastor at that time who became the senior pastor. He said, now I have all these other responsibilities yet of the youth.
- And so, can you help us out for a few weeks on Wednesday night doing the adult Bible study and prayer time? I said, sure, I'd be glad to do that. Well, the few weeks ended up to a few months, almost a year.
- [8 : 50] But it was great. And I said to those people when I first arrived, I said, you know, I've just been challenged by the Lord to memorize a chapter of Scripture. So we're going to study this specific chapter of Scripture.
- It's not one I've memorized before, but every week we're going to spend a couple minutes trying to learn this chapter of Scripture. At any rate, at the end of our study in that chapter, I will stand before you and I will quote that chapter of Scripture.
- That way, I'll have an accountability. I will do it. And so the day came and indeed, we'd studied through it and I quoted that chapter of Scripture.
- But I began asking myself some questions. Walter just on fire for the Lord witnessing. David and Doug memorizing Scripture after Scripture after Scripture.
- The last time I talked to David, his goal was to memorize the book of Psalms. By the way, he already knows the book of Philippians. I didn't say to him, David, do you know there are 150 Psalms?
- [10 : 01] David, did you know Psalm 119 has 176 verses? I wasn't going to try to discourage him. Hey, let him go. I don't know. Maybe he can memorize one. Maybe he can memorize five. Maybe he can memorize 35. I don't know how many he can do.
- And I thought of this text. The Bible says in verse 8, She hath done what she could. No, Walter and David and Douglass had never pastored churches, never been able to represent shepherds like I do, but they were doing what they could for the Lord.

And then as my week was coming to conclusion there with them at shepherds in this training process, another resident looked me up. I don't know how he knew it, but he knew I was leaving the next morning.

And as Gary came to me, there was tears in his eyes. And a broken voice. And he said to me something like this. Pastor, Pastor, Pastor Long, Pastor Long, you're going to be leaving us tomorrow, aren't you?

And I said, yes, Gary. And his countenance began to change. A smile even started across his face. He said, I know, and at that time, you're going to be our Michigan church representative, right?

[11 : 27] I said, that's correct, Gary. He said, that means you're going to go to all the churches of Michigan and tell them about shepherds, right? I said, Gary, wait a minute, not quite all the churches.

Well, he said, I just want to know if there's anything I can pray with you about before you leave. I said, Gary, there are some things you can pray with me about.

After living in Parsonage just 20 some years, I'm going to have to move out. Gary, I don't know where this house is in Michigan, but somewhere in Michigan, I'm going to have to buy a house. And Gary, I don't know where the money is to buy that house either, so I need you to pray about that.

I thought, he's one of our residents. He'll probably forget to pray. But folks, six months later, I'm back on campus. I'm in the first building, the Wood Center, we ever built.

It has a real, real long hall. Probably about five times as long as the sanctuary here. Gary's at one end of the hall, I'm at the other end of the hall. He sees me.

[12 : 29] Our eyes lock. Gary takes off down that hall, running. I'm thinking, Gary, you shouldn't be running, but I'm not going to say anything yet. He gets to me, he starts slowing down, he starts to open up his arms, I think.

He's my buddy, he's my friend. He's going to give me a hug just because he hasn't seen me in all this time, but he doesn't. Remember, we haven't spoken in several months. These are the first words out of his mouth.

Brother Long, I'm still praying about your move. I said, wow. I said, Gary, I done moved, don't want to move again, you get that prayer request crossed off right now, brother. His next comment to me was, do you have another prayer request?

I email him prayer request because I know he will be praying for me. Now, my life had been challenged about witnessing. My life had been challenged about Bible study or Bible memorization.

My life now was challenged about my prayer life. The factual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. You know the verses. And again, the Lord used our resonance to challenge me in my walk with the Lord.

[13 : 32] The Bible tells us, in verse number three of our text, that there was a woman that had an alabaster box. I would like to identify that woman for you this morning.

The woman's name is Mary. But do not confuse the Marys of the Bible. There are many Marys. It's not Mary Magdalene. It's not Mary, the mother of James and Joseph. It's not Mary, the mother of our Lord.

The Mary in our text is Mary of Bethany. And the Bible tells us that she has a very costly ointment.

It tells us that she had an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard that was very precious. Verse number five tells us a little more specifically.

For it might have been sold for more than 300 pence. Now you're sitting there in a seat and saying, well how much is 300 pence?

[14 : 34] Or you may have a different translation that says, anyway, you want to know what it is. One pence was equivalent to a day's wages. All of a sudden we get a grasp of this, don't we?

300 pence or 300 days wages. Or we could safely say over a year's wages. So, to make it in modern times, how much for you?

You just think of all the money you make in a year. That will give you a little bit of comprehension of how costly this was. It indeed was a very, very costly ointment.

The Bible tells us it was a spikenard. And in my studies I came across that somebody said this, the nard plants are native to India, the source of the finest ointments.

And it was pure or genuine, unadulterated. And it was kept in this alabaster box. I wonder, what exactly is that? I was in a missionary's home in his 80s who was retired.

[15 : 41] Early on in my ministry for shepherds. And I was talking to him about this text. And I asked him if he could explain to me alabaster.

I respected this man for his knowledge. And he says, well, I can do better than explain it to you.

Go over my shelf and pick one up. So I did. He directed me to his shelf and on there was this kind of translucent kind of stone. And they would hollow it out.

And so the Bible says this ointment was in this alabaster box. And the Bible tells us that she break the box and poured it on his head.

And then John's account says on his feet. And the Bible says she began wiping his feet with her hair. Now, I'd like to illustrate something for you. If Mary is wiping the Lord's feet with her hair, she could not have done it like this, could she?

[16 : 44] No. She must have gotten down something like this, don't you suppose? Taking her hair and wiping his feet with her hair.

At any rate, Mary is at the feet of Jesus. She is worshiping him. She is loving him. She is honoring him. Nothing was too good for him. He was her master. She was loving him and serving him.

May I suggest you this? Every church needs some Mary's and how to get to the feet of Jesus and worship him. And every church needs some Martha's like her sister behind the scene working for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every church needs worshipers and workers. As she gives this devotion to the Lord, worshiping him, his feet with her hair, she is surrendering her glory to the Lord and worshiping him with his precious gift.

You know, she was very insightful. Do you realize she had greater faith than Jesus' own disciples? Because Mary is now anointing Jesus' body for the burial.

[18 : 01] Well, the crucifixion hasn't even taken place yet. She had greater insight than Jesus' own disciples. She believed with all her heart everything he had been teaching, so she is there worshiping him and anointing his body for the bearing which hadn't even taken place, the crucifixion hadn't even taken place yet.

Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, she heard his words, she recognized him as prophet, and when in her grief she felled his feet, recognizing him as a sympathizing high priest, and now she anoints him and knows him as the king of kings.

Jesus, it is significant that Mary of Bethany was not one of the women at the tomb. It is significant to note Mary the Lord's mother was at the cross, and Mary Magdalene was at the tomb, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph was at the cross, but not Mary of Bethany.

She had already anointed his body. And so as she gives this very costly gift, criticism arises. Maybe you found it out in your own Christian life, you've been on fire for the Lord, and all of a sudden you get bombarded with criticism, and you would think it was from outside of the walls of the church, but sometimes it comes from inside the church.

Sometimes it might be other Christians. In this case, the criticism came from Jesus' own disciples, and the ringleader was none other than Judas.

[19 : 28] And Judas is saying, look at all the good we could have done. If we would have sold this, look at all the good we could have done. Look at all the poor people we could have helped.

Judas wasn't interested in helping the poor folks. Why do I say that? The Bible tells us some other things about Judas as well, doesn't it? The Bible tells us that Judas was a thief.

Judas was probably more interested in lining his own pockets and helping the poor folks, but he wanted to sound religious and pious before that group that was gathered there said, look at all the good we could have done. Look at all those poor folks we could have helped.

So Mary gives this costly gift. Criticism arises from Jesus' own disciples and a ringleader being none other than Judas himself.

Jesus goes on to make his own comments. Look at what, let's back up to verse 5.

[20 : 42] The Bible says, and they murmured against her. That is in the imperfect tense and what it means to us. It was not confined, not confined to one simple utterance.

In other words, we could translate it, and they were murmuring against her. And the Bible tells us also back in verse 4, there were some that had indignation.

I've identified those people for you already. One word study book I consulted said this, and they were bristled. They were bristled with indignation.

And so with all this going on, her giving this costly gift, and then the disciples primarily Judas criticizing, Jesus comes back with his own comments.

And what does he say? Look in the next few verses, verse 6. Jesus said, let her alone. Why trouble ye her?

[21 : 42] She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye are the poor with you always, and whosoever ye will, ye may do them good. But me ye have not always. And then he goes on to say, verily in verse 9, I say unto you, whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Here we sit in May of 2012. It's still a memorial. It still reminds us. Centuries and centuries later, what transpired on this day.

Jesus says, you're always going to have the poor. Here we sit today. There are still poor folk. Nothing wrong with that. It's just a fact. There were poor folks in Jesus' day. You pick any date you like between Jesus' day and our day.

There's always been poor folk. Jesus said, you're always going to have the poor, but you will not always have me. What did he mean? He was about to be crucified. He would be buried. He would raise again. And then shortly thereafter, ascended the right hand of God the Father.

He would not always be here on earth, but the poor would still be here. You know, in one of my churches, I had a man come into my office weeping uncontrollably.

[23 : 03] He was pacing back and forth like this, and I'd never seen the guy before in my life, just crying uncontrollably back and forth. This went on for several minutes.

Finally, I got him in a chair and I said to him, sir, what is your problem? And this is what he said to me. I think they're going to take my children away from me.

My next question was, why? And this is what he said to me. We have no heat in our home, and we have no food on the table.

Nothing to feed my children. And this was in January in Michigan is cold and no heat. I went over to that home and indeed there was no heat.

And I could not find any food in the cupboards. We put food in that table, we put heat in that house, and led three little girls to Jesus Christ.

[24 : 12] And out of those three little girls, my entire ministry there, there was a maxi van load of boys and girls that came every Wednesday night to our children's program, and every Sunday morning to Sunday school and morning service.

Jesus said, you're always going to have poor. There were some poor. We look around, we don't have to look very far to find poor folk. And not always can we, not always should we, but many times there's opportunity to meet a need.

So Jesus said, you're always going to have the poor, but you will not always have me. You know, I think about that, the residents of shepherds challenging me in my walk with the Lord, many times they challenge us over and over and over again.

How much they can accomplish, how much more might we be able to accomplish in our prayer life, in our Bible study, our Bible memorization, in our witnessing.

Mary, she hath done what she could. What are they going to say about you and I? One day when we meet the Lord. Have we done what we can do for the Lord?

[25 : 35] Shall we pray together? Father, indeed, we are thankful for the opportunity we've had today to hear about the ministry of shepherds, but more importantly, to hear what you have to say from your word.

Now, I pray that you would take it and work in hearts and lives. As our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed, I'd like to ask a couple questions. There could be somebody here this morning, if you were to die, you don't know you'd go to heaven.

If that's true, I want you to know Jesus loves you. He died for you. He wants to save you. The Bible is clear that the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is clear that every one of us are sinners, for all have sinned and come sure of the glory of God, and there is none righteous, no, not one. But God loved us, the Bible tells us, but God commends his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And so this is an invitation to you. Maybe you're here without Jesus Christ and you would just lift your hand up, say, preacher, pray for me.

[26 : 48] If I were to die, I do not know that I would go to heaven. You just lift your hand up that I could pray for you. If you were to die, you do not know that you go to heaven.

Anybody like that this morning? Then Christian, thank you, I see that hand, thank you. You put it back down. A little bit later this morning is going to be an opportunity for you to respond to that.

Pastor, be glad to take the Bible and show you how you can have eternal life in and through Jesus Christ. I'd be glad to take the Bible and show you how you can have this life with Jesus Christ.

So we count it a privilege to be able to talk to you afterwards. Please see one of us at the end of the service. People can wait to ask questions, either one of us, we'd be glad to take the time, as long as it takes, to share from the Bible how you can have everlasting life.

And then, Christian, I want to talk to you for a minute. Maybe God has spoken to you about your witnessing. Maybe he's talked to you about your Bible memorization.

[27 : 55] Maybe he's spoken to you about your prayer life. At any rate, you're a Christian, but you have been challenged this morning. And you're going to slip your hand up and say, I'm making a commitment to the Lord.

Pray that I be faithful. I've been challenged. Would you slip your hands up that I can pray for you as well before we close? Thank you. I see that hand. Put it back down. Thank you. Anybody else? Thank you. Thank you.

Father, as we come before you this morning, I pray especially for that one individual who raised their hand about not knowing that they go to heaven when they die.

Give them boldness to step out, to speak to pastor, speak to me, somebody else in the church who will take the Bible and show them how they can know that they will have eternal life.

Oh, Father, I pray that you give them that boldness, convict them of sin, and may they seek you before it's everlastingly too late. I pray that before this hour is over they would come to know Jesus Christ.

[29 : 03] And I pray for your people who raised their hand. Many have made decisions. You have spoken to their hearts about one or more area in their life. First of all, I pray, Father, that you forgive every one of us for the many times we have failed you.

And then I pray, Father, for those who are making the decisions, that as they make this decision that they will be faithful. And I pray you bless them because of for asking Jesus' name.

Amen. Pastor. Father, we're so grateful for the message that we've heard, for the truth it contains, and for the manner in which it is spoken to each and every heart here.

thank you of the privilege of having a financial opportunity to have a stake in what's happening at Shepherds. We pray that each of us will be willing to give generously and in accordance with not only our desire but with our ability and with your blessing.

Thank you again for the morning and for the opportunity for us. In Christ's name, amen. I want to emphasize in addition to what Mr. Long has said, if you raised your hand and you're interested in talking to someone about Christ, we want to assure you that both of us are at your disposal.

[30 : 16] And please feel free to approach either of us after the service concludes. We'll take however much time you want to take to get your questions answered and to give you the assurance that you are entitled to as one made in the image and likeness of God.

Thank you.