

True Devotion

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! That is, our Lord Jesus, by stealth and kill him.

For they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people. And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.

There were some who said to themselves indignantly, why was this an ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than 300 denarii and given to the poor.

And they scolded her. But Jesus said, leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.

[1 : 34] For you always have the poor with you. And whenever you want, you can do good to them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could.

She has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.

Verse 10. Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money.

And he sought an opportunity to betray him. Heaven will pass away. Heaven will pass away. My words will never pass away is what our Lord says.

May God bless the preaching and the hearing of his word. In the 1830s, the famous French writer Alexis de Tocqueville came to America to study and to see how democracy worked.

[2 : 53] When he went home, he wrote a very influential book to explain what he found and help establish democracy in France. Near the end of the book, he wrote, Now that I am, now this is quite a, this is page 576.

Now that I am drawing to the close of this work, in which I have spoken of so many important things done by the Americans, if asked to what the singular prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed.

What's the secret sauce to America? He's saying, I should reply, the superiority of their women. We all said amen.

Isn't that great? I just love that. The decisive factor of making democracy a success in America is not our founders, not our constitution, our system of checks and balances, but our women.

In another place later on, he says, Nowhere have I seen women occupying a loftier position than in America. The land of the free, the home of the brave.

[4 : 01] Interestingly, a first century reader of the New Testament would have been similarly struck by the lofty position the New Testament places women in.

In a patriarchal society in which men were educated, very different than America, by the way, men were educated, held power, led in politics, owned property, and had the right to marry and divorce as they pleased.

Jesus repeatedly treats women in startling, unculturally appropriate ways. Jesus continually treats women, shows women compassion and kindness, dignity and respect.

Jesus doesn't look down on them in the least. Jesus calls women to occupy important places in his plan of redemption.

It's not hard to think of a list of these types of women. Bathsheba, Ruth, his mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, Phoebe, Priscilla, Lydia, and more. But even more interesting for us this morning, it's

often not men who model faith in Mark's gospel, but women.

[5 : 11] Of course, you remember the unclean, disease-ravaged woman who reaches out to touch Jesus' cloak and is the model of faith for the religious leader, Jairus.

Or perhaps the outcast Syrophenician woman who asks Jesus for a few crumbs from the table and models faith for those who don't belong, for those who have a past, for those who feel like they were born on the wrong side of the tracks.

Or do you remember the poor widow who gave everything she had, and it was a mere two pennies, and Jesus commends her. So, too, the model of faith this morning is not a man.

But a woman. Our text begins on Wednesday of the last day of the week of our Lord Jesus Christ. And our text is a shift as all the attention immediately shifts to his death. The next 48 hours for Jesus Christ will be excruciating as he takes up the cross.

[6 : 21] The next 48 hours will be disastrous for his disciples as their devotion is tested and all fall away.

Strikingly, bracketing this final section, the section focused on Jesus' passion, are pictures of women whose faith remains strong when it really matters.

We have the woman here. We have the women at the tomb in Mark 16. But before we can learn from this woman, we have to work it through in the way Mark presents it.

Mark presents us with another one of his famous sandwiches. Now, I like sandwiches, but that's not the type of sandwich I'm talking about. But he sandwiches his story in a striking, compelling way. So he begins with this plot about the chief priests and scribes. He begins talking about what they're trying to do to Jesus. And then he inserts this story that happened the same day but somewhere else.

[7 : 28] An anointing by this woman. And then he returns to the plot. So it's very striking. And we have to take it in that context because the sinner has something to say about the rest.

The meat enhances the bun's taste. And the same thing goes on in this. So we're just going to work through the... We're going to work it through. And then we're going to land on what we need to take away.

So the first point is the death of Jesus plotted. Death of Jesus plotted.

After Jesus' teaching on the Mount of Olives, all about the future, all about the end, all that juicy details we love that left behind is on and all those things. Mark turns our attention back to Jerusalem and on to the present for Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 1. He said, It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is, as I said, Wednesday. It's two days before the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.

[8 : 26] The Passover was a time when the people celebrated how God passed over the houses of Israel when he struck down all the firstborn of Egypt. And they ran out of Egypt so fast their bread didn't rise.

The Lord said, Don't put leaven in the bread. But it didn't have time to rise because they were running for their lives. So each year, many Jews would journey to Jerusalem to offer a Passover lamb.

That was the beginning of the feast. That's why they're mentioned together. And spend seven days celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And so they journey there.

Jerusalem was the only place you could rightly celebrate Passover, the place where the Holy City. And so they go there. And during the feast, Jerusalem is overrun with people. Jerusalem's population is about 100,000 in those days.

But three to four times that number would come in. So you can just imagine, I don't know, 45,000 people. More than that, 75,000 people descending on Athens.

[9 : 32] It would be, you know, it's bigger than Pumpkin Town. You know, it would get quite the news, you know. It would get, you know, we'd start selling lots of sandwiches and things like that. But they came in to celebrate.

So it was a bustling time. But it was a particularly nervous time for the high priest. And we see a lot of that throughout these chapters. The chance of uproar and an uprising was always a concern.

And they had this kind of strange semi-autonomous. I know that's not a helpful way to describe it. But they had some freedom under Roman rule in Israel with the puppet king in Herod. So they had some freedom and able to do their thing a little bit.

But if it got out of hand, the Romans would crack down. And so these high priests are very worried about this surge in population causing problems in Jerusalem.

So as the feast began, the chief priests and scribes plot what to do about Jesus. Look in verse 1. B, he says, and the chief priests and scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him.

[10:33] For they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people. So the chief priests and scribes have been angry with Jesus from day one.

He has rejected their rule, challenged their authority. But now all their anger and all their desires are to stop him. They're seeking for a time. That word is, they're seeking to control him and to contain him and to stop him by killing him.

Their motives are very clear here. Now, their plot and their plotting is not a surprise to us. Three times Jesus said he must suffer at their hands.

Look in verse Mark 8, 31. He says, and he began to teach him that the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and by the chief priests and the priests and all the religious leaders.

And he said, those are the ones that are going to come for him. So their plot is not a surprise, but it should be. These are the most religious men in the land.

[11:38] Look at the way James Edwards says it. He says, it's not humanity at its worst that will crucify the son of God, but humanity at its absolute best.

The death of Jesus will not be the result of a momentary lapse or an aberration, an error in their, of human nature, but rather the result of careful deliberations from respected religious leaders who will justify their actions by the highest standards of law and morality.

Jesus will not be taken over, overtaken by a couple drunks looking for a good time. Nor a couple former inmates looking to blow off some steam.

Jesus will be overtaken by the good guys. The ones with the highest standards. Now it's worth noting in passing that Christians are often persecuted most often by those who appear to be followers of Christ.

That's what happened to Jesus. That's what happened to the apostles. That's what happens today. Now the world doesn't care what you do with your life, but people who appear to be followers of Christ often slander you and oppose you because you don't do what they do.

[12:59] You dance when they don't. You play cards when they don't. You go to movies when they don't. You wear what they don't wear, or you don't wear what they wear, or we can just keep going down the list.

And when you don't do what they do, you make their rules seem ridiculous. So watch out. I've had more trouble with religious people than anyone else. But they can't kill him now.

You see them say, not now, not during the feast. It's too risky. There's too many people in Jerusalem. Jesus is too popular with the people. We've seen this. If the people rebel and revolt at them arresting Jesus, the Romans are sure to crack down and mess up the whole arrangement. So they decide to wait. Point two, the anointing of Jesus accomplished. The anointing of Jesus accomplished.

Mark interrupts that story, interrupts the plotting and scheming, and takes us outside Jerusalem to Bethany. Jesus is at the house of Simon the leper.

[14:02] Now, this is the first time we've heard of this guy. Who is Simon the leper? Why does Mark include Simon the leper? Well, Mark wants to make sure we know this is not Simon Peter's house.

So this is not Simon Peter's house where he is. Rather, Mark wants to make sure that we know that this is Simon the leper's house. And as we'll soon see in mentioning that he's a leper, Mark is beginning to make a point for us.

The only thing we know about this Simon is that he used to be a leprosy. Now, in those days, leprosy didn't just refer to Hansen's disease. It refers to many different skin infections, range of skin conditions, some of which would never go away.

And if you had a skin condition, according to law, as long as you had that condition, no one could touch you. No one could eat with you. No one could enter your house.

But Simon had been healed because they were in his house. Most likely by Jesus. And like so many new believers, after receiving so much, he longs to give.

[15 : 11] I just love that little picture. It's a wonderful little picture of a new believer. He cleans his house and invites Jesus and his disciples to come over and rest. But while Jesus is reclining at the table, among friends, a woman interrupts, and everyone turns to see what she does.

Look in verse 3. While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he's reclining at the table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.

Now, the only women present are those to serve in this context. But this woman does not come to serve.

This woman does not even come to listen quietly. This woman throws off all etiquette. You know, I know some of you may have been raised with etiquette, which fork to use, and that neat, what do you got, a little red book, a little black book, raised to eat in certain ways.

My daughter was telling me there's five different ways to use a napkin, you know, and tucking it in the front of your shirt. It's not one of them. But this woman, the etiquette of the day, the cultural standards of the day, she throws them all off.

[16 : 29] This is not a cute act. This is a repulsive act, and she throws herself at the feet of Jesus. But she doesn't throw herself at his feet to listen or even to plead with him for something.

No, immediately all the attention goes not just to her throwing herself, but to what is in her hands. She is holding this alabaster flask of ointment, a pure nard, a very expensive oil, and she takes it and she breaks it, a little flask.

She breaks it and empties it all out on Jesus' head. Now, everyone in the room didn't just see her, they smelled her.

The whole room filled with this strong odor of ointment that she had poured. Now, this is what we call a show stopper.

There's no pass the bread after this. You know, this is an interruption that you have to deal with. And it's an interruption that immediately confronted the sincerity of every person in that room.

[17 : 40] Some of the disciples became angry. What is she doing? What a waste. This ointment could have been sold and given to the poor, and yet she just throws it out on Jesus.

What does he need a head washing for? And so they scold her. But Jesus does not. Look in verse 6. He says, leave her alone.

Why do you trouble her? She has done a thing beautiful to me. Begs the question, what did Jesus see that no one else did?

The famous character, Sherlock Holmes, is among the best known and most widely portrayed characters in film and television history.

Part of what makes Sherlock so compelling and so memorable is his ability to notice the tiniest details that we did not see. Illustrated well in one of his stories called A Scandal in Bohemia.

[18 : 44] The story begins, not surprisingly, with his friend, Dr. John Watson, paying him a visit. When he walks in, Holmes suddenly asks him, how do I know that you have been getting yourself very wet lately?

How do I know that you have a most clumsy and careless servant girl? Dumbfounded, Dr. Watson confirms that he took a country walk in the rain the other day and returned home muddy.

But he could not understand how Mr. Holmes knew about it. And as Holmes often said, it's simplicity itself. He goes on, he says, he saw the leather of his shoes scored six times from where a careless assistant was trying to clean off the mud in the light of the fire.

That's kind of the way it works with Sherlock Holmes. Dr. Watson says, how could I miss something so obvious? After all, I believe my eyes are as good as yours. Quite so, Mr. Holmes responds.

You see, but you don't observe. So everyone in the room sees this woman, but they don't observe her.

[20 : 01] They don't observe what's going on. So what does Jesus see that everyone in the house, including his disciples who have been with him for three years, do not see and observe?

Jesus sees that her devotion is acceptable, costly, and faith-filled. Jesus sees that her devotion is acceptable, costly, and faith-filled.

Her devotion is acceptable. Why is this act so beautiful? And Jesus' words immediately defend it.

Look in verse 7. He says, for, that's a word saying, because, this is why, because you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them, but you do not always have me with you.

Now, that's a bit of a jarring statement. You always have the poor with you. You can do with them whenever you want, whatever you want, but you don't always have me. Now, Jesus is not saying the poor will always be around, so no need to get uptight about helping them.

That's not what Jesus is saying. Sometimes it's quoted in such a way to say that. It doesn't remain the urgency of obeying God's commands to show hospitality to strangers to care for the poor.

[21 : 14] The word of God is very clear. But Jesus is saying, giving to him outranks giving to the poor. Now, that might not sound jarring, but it's actually a very staggering claim.

Now, Jesus has just said, love your neighbor as yourself, but now Jesus says, I outrank your neighbor. Now, to his disciples, been around with it. They believe he was the Messiah, they believe he was the son of David, but they're not quite sure all that's going on.

Jesus said, the poor you'll always have with you, but you will not always have me. Jesus is claiming, therefore, to be God. That's what's going on right here. Jesus is claiming to have an allegiance that should only belong to God.

He's claiming to have it because he is God. Now, the disciples, if you notice, are shocked at what this woman does because they think Jesus is unworthy of it. Like, you should go sell that.

It's wasteful because Jesus is unworthy of that type of an expensive display of devotion. But Jesus says, no, no, no, this is a woman who gets it. Then he says, she did what she could.

[22 : 29] Now, there's a lot of suspense in that phrase. She did what she could. Jesus does not think it's too expensive to him. Jesus does not think it's unworthy of him. The reality is not that Jesus is unworthy of what she gave, which disciples believe.

The reality is that Jesus is worthy of so much more than what she gave. That's what's going on. The reality is not he's unworthy of what she gave, but he's worthy of so much more.

And the disciples are missing it. Her sacrifice was acceptable because Jesus knew and she knew that he was a son of God who must be loved with all her heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And this is one of those places where we just cannot accept the idea that Jesus was another teacher who a lot of people still say, and the people around him propped him up, people after him propped him up and spread the story that he was the son of God.

It's completely bogus because in his consciousness, his God consciousness, self-consciousness, he knows he is the son of God. And so he says, give to me what is my due.

[23 : 38] Now that's pretty crazy. Disciples missed it. Let's not miss it. Her devotion is costly as well.

Now, some of the disciples say, this is too expensive. And it is. It's 300 denarii.

That's a year's wage. That's what it is. One denarius is equal to about a year. So a year of work, somewhere around 300 days. A year's wage. In straight Tennessee, that'd be \$45,000.

It's the average year's wage. Most likely, this ointment, though, was not saved up over the last year. This ointment was likely a family heirloom, something passed down for generations, a treasured possession meant to be stowed away for the really, really, really hard time.

But when Jesus comes to town, the one who set her free and forgave her many sins, he bursts into the house and breaks it open on his head. Without holding anything back.

[24 : 53] Very unlike Ananias and Sapphira who kept back a little bit. No wonder the disciples said, she's wasted.

This ointment's too expensive. Again, Jesus says, she did what she could. In saying that, Jesus isn't disregarding the value of the ointment, but Jesus is making clear the value of the ointment is not what impresses them.

It's helpful to contrast this with the poor widow several weeks ago when she puts in two small coins. Everyone thinks, what a pitiful offering.

Okay, thanks. Get out of here. We need some more rich people to come in and throw it in and make this thing really dinged. But Jesus says, she put in more than all the rich. When this woman pours out her expensive ointment, everyone says, what a waste.

What a waste. But Jesus says, she has done what she could and she did something beautiful to me. He's letting us see something. The value of the ointment is not what makes it costly.

[26 : 00] The value of the ointment. You know, we would probably read this thing this way. We'd read this story this way. Oh, it's so costly because of its value. That's not what impresses Jesus.

He's not impressed by money. He doesn't have a monetary heart in there. So the value is not what makes it costly. The costliness of the ointment displays that this woman values Jesus more than

anything else.

That this woman understands that Jesus is more valuable than anything else. Do you see? The ointment becomes a vehicle for displaying the greater value of Jesus Christ.

That's what's meant to happen with all of our money. Money is just a currency and it's meant to display not worldly treasure, but the superior treasure of Jesus Christ.

And that's the way disciples live. They show the world the value of Jesus when they respond to him with total commitment. Right now, Christians in Ukraine are putting on a clinic in what it means to value Jesus Christ.

[27 : 07] Looking down the barrel, they're steadfast. These viral images of Christians kneeling in the cold praying for peace.

Videos of families. I saw this video of a family worshiping and singing, He will hold me fast.

Refusing to leave the elderly behind.

To leave their fellow countrymen behind. Lines of people, and this morning, lines of people yesterday standing up to join civilians, the territorial defense.

One pastor, Vassal Ostry, if I say that right, how could the church respond when there's a growing threat of war?

How should the church respond when there's a growing threat of war? When there's constant fear in the society? I'm convinced that if the church isn't relevant at a time of crisis, then it's not relevant in a time of peace.

[28 : 20] That's the costly devotion that this woman models. That Ukrainian Christians are modeling.

that we must put it all on the line. Times of peace, yes. Our bank accounts should say something. Times of crisis, absolutely.

Her devotion also is faith-filled, though. Look in verse 8b, second half of the second sentence or whatever.

she was anointed, she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. Now, this woman does what the disciples fail to do.

Jesus has already told them that he will be mocked, spatadied, flogged, and killed. Jesus has already told them that he will be numbered among the transgressors. Jesus has already told them that he will not receive the burial he deserves, but will be thrown to the dogs and thrown to an unmarked grave.

[29 : 25] The burial he deserves is to be anointed, to be cared for, his body to be cared for and properly burrowed. But he said he will not be buried in that way. But this woman sees what's going on.

She sees that Jesus is about to be treated as a criminal, and so she anoints his body for burial. Now listen, this is the first person in the gospel of Mark to see that the good news will only come through the cross.

Everybody thinks Jesus is going to ride into power, topple Caesar, and sit himself on the throne to reign on the earth. But this is the only one who sees that it must come through the cross, that the only road to glory for Jesus Christ will be the road of suffering.

So whereas other kings are anointed before they take up the throne, Jesus is anointed before he takes up the cross. Whereas other kings are anointed before they're lifted up on the throne, Jesus is anointed before he's lifted up on a cross.

Whereas other kings are anointed before they ride into glory, Jesus is anointed before he's crushed in agony and clothed in shame. Cursed is a man who hangs on a cross and this woman gets it, this woman understands it, this woman sees what is going on.

[30 : 41] Look at verse 9, and truly, this is one of those important statements, truly, truly, I say to you in the KJV, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her, one of those important statements of our Lord, and now the gospel this morning is being proclaimed, and we're still reading her story.

We're still reading about what she did. We're still reading of her costly devotion of laying it all on the line for Jesus Christ, and I just find this so ironic, almost humorous, that whenever the good words of the gospel are proclaimed throughout the world, this unnamed woman's deed will be known.

There's no star on Hollywood Avenue for this woman, no headlines, no books. We don't know who she is, but we'll never forget how she treated our Lord.

all Christians for all time will be called into this house to ponder the value of Jesus Christ that is worth everything to this woman.
it's only fitting that she's unnamed. Count Zinzendorf said, I want to preach the gospel, die and be forgotten.

[32 : 18] Oh, the race for fame. Point three, the death of Jesus planned. After telling the story of this woman anointing Jesus, Mark returns to the plot.

In verse 11, 10, Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priest in order to betray him to them.

We don't know that woman's name. We know Judas' name. Mark's making that very clear. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, goes to the chief priest to betray Jesus. What prompted Judas to run out of the house? What happened? Luke and John say he was filled with Satan, the devil, climbed into him, overtook him.

Mark doesn't say that. Mark doesn't include any details about money. It seems to me the best guess is that Judas assumes that the anointing of him, that Jesus, this lady does this thing and what's offensive to Judas is not this thing but the fact that Jesus doesn't rebuke her.

[33 : 41] Okay? And Jesus, in fact, says she anointed me. I think the best guess is that Mark assumes that this anointing means Jesus is going to announce to everybody that he's a Messiah.

It's going to be an uproar and an uprising in Jerusalem. And Rome will crack down and so, verse 11, when they heard it, chief priests and scribes, they were glad.

Of course they were. They found their way. They knew that Judas would give over Jesus quietly. And so it ends ominously.

He sought an opportunity to betray him. Now that's not the same word used earlier. That's the word delivered over. Now we know that word. We've heard that word a lot. So he sought an opportunity to deliver him over, to hand him over.

What do we do? What do we take away from all this? Why the sandwich, you know? Why the hoagie? Why this sandwich for us?

[34 : 52] In a word, I think the main point is if Jesus is not first in your delight and devotion, then he might as well be last. If Jesus is not first in your delight and devotion, then he might as well be last.

Now, I want to make two points by application because there's a lot here. First is, those who truly put Jesus first are often not who you think.

Those who truly put Jesus first are often not who you think. Now, in this passage, Jesus is commending again someone we didn't expect. Right?

Jesus is commending someone in a way that we don't expect it. You know, I've already pointed out here that the model of devotion is a woman, not a man. Now, that's not what a first century reader would have expected.

So it's a woman, not a man. But did you notice that all the religious leaders are in Jerusalem, but Mark suddenly takes us to Bethany outside the holy city to find the person that he commends.

[36 : 03] Did you notice that all this takes place at a former leper's house, a house the chief priests and scribes are sure to never be found in.

And did you notice that all the religious leaders, the good guys with the high standards are the ones plotting. Did you notice that one of the twelve, one of Jesus' inner circle, one of his disciples joins in their plot.

The ones who are closest to Jesus often are not. From a horizontal, humanly speaking way, the ones who are closest to him, family, friends, religious affiliation, are not the ones who are truly close to him.

The ones we think who are on the inside reject Jesus. The ones who are on the outside get him. The ones who are on the outside understand him. Remember, he's the one who eats with tax collectors and sinners and messes them up.

I mean messes up the religious leaders, not the tax collectors and sinners. John Newton says it well. If ever I reach to heaven, I expect to find three wonders there. First, to meet some I had not thought to see there.

[37 : 11] Second, to miss some I expected to see there. Third, the greatest wonder of all to find myself there. That's the mystery. That's often the way it is though.

you've heard this before from this pulpit, but this is a warning for religious church going people. There's a danger in being close to Jesus Christ.

There's a danger in being known for going to church. There's a danger in doing religious things. There's a danger. We should have a caution sign out front. Caution. There's a danger. danger. The danger is though Jesus might have been first in the beginning, he may fall down the list without you noticing.

Jesus might become little more than a slogan, a bumper sticker, a t-shirt, a blurb, praying on Facebook.

[38 : 19] Jesus might be little more than a conversation piece. So this text pushes us to ask, is Jesus first?

Is he the son of God? Have you bowed your knee to him? The Bible is very clear. The gospel is at hand. Repent and believe.

You cannot enter the kingdom unless you repent. You bow the knee and kiss the son. You say that he is the greatest. He's the only, he's the way, the truth, and the light.

No one comes to the Father. No one comes, no one knows God apart from a relationship with Jesus Christ. That's what I offer you this morning. If he's not first, if you don't know whether he's first, if you're unsure, if you're on the outside looking in, then I want to offer you the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you believe in him, believe that he died for your sins, was raised for your justification, you will be saved. As far as the east is from the west, so far the Lord will remove your transgressions from you.

[39 : 22] But I would ask everyone who's familiar, is he still first? Is your life still marked by things that people say, what are you doing?

That's a waste. Why would you give? Don't you need a new car? Why would you give so much? Why would you show so much hospitality?

Don't you need time for you or something? I don't know. Why would you show, why would you commit to friends in the way you do to be there and be around and be known? Aren't these years supposed to be the ones where you're free?

Why do you serve so often? Charlie, why do you serve so often? Why do you do this? When we planted this church, we asked people to partner with us financially. A single man in Knoxville who didn't own a home, didn't own a nice car, gave us a \$15,000 check.

Now, I didn't know who the man's name, but I immediately said to our accounting people, go back to him and make sure that's right. Surely that was 150, you know, or something. Surely it's one too many zeros.

[40 : 38] 15,000. 27-year-old man. It made me wonder, is there anything in my life that makes people say, what are you doing?

That's too far. That's too much. Anybody ever ask that to you? Let's be a people who put Jesus first and live in such a way that people say, that's too far.

After all, we worship a God who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. We worship a God who held nothing back, but wasted his son. He broke the alabaster flat.

He broke the back of our Lord with the wrath of God. He wasted. Why waste Jesus on a cross? To set us free so that we waste our lives in a way that John Piper would like on living our lives for the cause of Christ.

Point two, sub-point two, all your attempts to put Jesus first are beautiful. Jesus says, she's done a beautiful thing to me.

[41 : 52] Now, that's incredible. All your attempts to put Jesus first are beautiful too. That's not the way we feel. You know, if we heard that main point, if Jesus is not first in your delight and devotion, he might as well be last.

We think there's no way I could do that. There's no way I could move him up. There's no way I could do that and accept the way. There's no way that I could put him first in such a way that he finds it beautiful.

He finds it pleasing to it. We think all our attempts to put him first are unimpressive and ordinary, puny and pitiful, flawed and broken. But hear the words of Jesus.

Now, this is what I want to leave us with. Hear the words of Jesus. She did what she could and it was beautiful to me. Now, just swing between those two. She did what she could and it was beautiful to me.

She did what she could and it was beautiful to me. So, beloved, what I want to leave you with, do what you can. Do what you can. If you're a young mom juggling the demands of children, do what

you can.

[42 : 56] If you're working two jobs trying to hold things together financially, do what you can. If you're buried under schoolwork and feel as if you have no time to give, do what you can.

If your strength and energy is lagging with age, don't stop. Do what you can. If you're overwhelmed with burdens such that you can barely think of anyone or anything else but the burdens, do what you can.

No, Jesus is not lowering the bar here. He surely said, she did not give me what I deserve but she did what she could. Jesus is saying, run to me and give me whatever you can.

That's what I want. By all means, you must not give me less than you can but give me what you can and when you do what you can, you're doing enough.

to say, it's beautiful to me. Reminds me of the field or not field dreams. I don't know. What was that?

[44 : 01] Eric Little movie, Chariots of Fire. He's running. I feel his pleasure. I feel his pleasure.

That's what he wants you to feel. I feel his pleasure fixing dryers, figuring out light switches. I feel his pleasure the halls of the high school, training up the next generation.

I feel his pleasure working on electrical jobs or whatever. I feel his pleasure down in children's ministry grimy out and cleaning up brownie crumbs and stuff like that. I feel his pleasure.

I'm doing what I can. I'm giving my life to him and he says, it's beautiful to me. May God help us do what we can and put him first. Father in heaven, we cast ourselves onto you.

We thank you for loving us with an everlasting love. We thank you once again for these words of scripture, living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, able to pierce the heart, separate joints and marrow, discern the intentions of the heart, able to make us thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[45 : 20] Most importantly, a word that unveils to us the wonder of Jesus Christ, who though he is rich became poor, though he dwelt in glory, embrace agony.

though he knew no sin became sin, that he might suffer for sinners to set us free forever.

We give you all the glory, Lord. We want our lives to be marked by doing what we can and by feeling your pleasure. We thank you. We praise you.

Give you all the glory. In Jesus' name, amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com.