

IN MEMORY OF MARY

“Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.” Matthew 26:13

Jesus spoke these words about Mary of Bethany. What admiration Jesus must have had for her to make such a profound statement and yet, she’s only seen a few times in scripture. In fact, I can only find twelve words spoken by this woman so what did she do that pleased His heart to this degree? What did her life look like that made her story so precious to Him...so precious that He said it would be told wherever the gospel is preached “as a memorial to her”?

The first time we see Mary, her sister Martha had invited Jesus into their home (Luke 10:38-42). Martha was busy being a hostess while Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening and enjoying His presence. Martha’s intentions were good but she was distracted. Her mind was overly occupied and busy with the tasks at hand. Being very overwhelmed with the preparations led to frustration. She became so aggravated that she entered the room and didn’t even speak to Mary. Instead she addressed Jesus. The original text regarding her entrance into the room indicates ‘placing one’s self above or to stand over’. So when Martha burst into the room she ‘stood over’ them. “Don’t you even care that I am doing all the work around here? Mary abandoned me for you so *you* make her get up and help me” Ok, that’s a paraphrase but the word ‘left’ in the original text means to ‘abandon’ or ‘forsake’. It sounds like the devil had been whispering in Martha’s ear in the kitchen, telling her how badly she was being treated. He had planted those seeds of bitterness in her mind causing her to be rather dramatic. Not only was she upset with Mary, but she was telling Jesus what to do. Watch Mary’s reaction. She didn’t say a word to defend herself. She remained at His feet and let Him deal with Martha. Listen closely to how He responds. *“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her.”* Mary exemplified what it looks like to be a true disciple. Luke 14:26 says, *“If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.”* Mary wasn’t concerned with the chores, the busyness, the expectations, or the rebukes from her sister. Jesus was in her midst and all she wanted was to sit at His feet. One thing....His presence!

The next time we see Mary of Bethany is in John 11. She was in the midst of a very sad time. Her brother was sick and she and Martha had sent word to Jesus to come quickly. Jesus intentionally waited for several days and in that time, Lazarus died. Upon Jesus’ arrival, Martha ran out to meet Him and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died.” He converses with her awhile and she

went back to the house to tell Mary that Jesus had called for her. Mary, having waited to be called, ran out to meet Him and fell at His feet. She made a similar statement, "Lord, if you had been here our brother would not have died." Notice that both ladies acknowledged Him as their Lord and said the same words to Him. The difference was their posture as they approached Jesus. Scripture gives no indication of Martha doing anything but standing in His presence. However, Mary fell down at His feet. Mary poured out her heart with that *one* act as if to say, "I don't understand, but I choose to trust you. I'm still at your feet, Lord. I'm still surrendered to you" Jesus loved both women but He responded to them very differently. He conversed with Martha but when He saw Mary weeping, He 'groaned in the spirit and was troubled' and then "He wept". He wasn't crying for Lazarus because He knew Lazarus was about to be raised from the dead. Mary touched His heart in a way that Martha had not. Why?

The last time we see Mary of Bethany is right before Jesus is arrested and crucified. The story takes place in John 12 and in Mark 14. A dinner had been prepared in Jesus' honor. Once again, Martha was busy serving, and Lazarus was sitting at the table with Jesus and the others. Mary took a bottle of very expensive perfume, broke it and poured it over Jesus. The gospel of Mark says that Mary poured it over His head. As the perfume ran down, the fragrance filled the room. She broke the jar indicating that she was spending all on Jesus...holding nothing back....extravagant worship! Some of the men at the table gave her a harsh rebuke, accusing her of being foolish with valuable things that could have been sold to help the poor (which was not the intent of their hearts anyway). As in the first story, Mary didn't say a word to defend herself. Instead, she let Jesus speak for her. *"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."* Mark 14:6-9. The account given of this story in John 12 says that Mary anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair. We find Mary, once more at the feet of Jesus, oblivious to the crowd around her, unashamedly worshiping her Lord. One thing...His presence!

Mary must have understood the desire of David's heart when he wrote in Psalm 27:4, *"One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple."* God said that David was a man after His own heart. Both David and Mary were seeking one thing...His presence!

Mary's story...the story of love...has been told the world over as a memorial to her just as Jesus said. Very soon after she had anointed Him with the vial of fragrant and expensive perfume, He was crucified. Scripture doesn't say...but I just wonder...when He was being stripped, tortured and beaten, could He still faintly smell the aroma of the perfume that was poured over Him so freely? The memory was still fresh on His mind and sweet to His heart but when the breeze was just right, was He able to catch a

whiff of the very worship of Mary? Did the Father send the breeze in just the right direction so Jesus would be encouraged and comforted in His pain and humiliation by the scent of a surrendered heart? I just wonder.....

