

Breathtaking Worship - Matthew 26:6-13

Introduction: Have you ever had a moment when your breath was taken away? I'm not talking about getting sucker punched in the stomach and having the wind knocked out of you. I'm talking about experiencing something so wonderful that it left you breathless. For me, one of those times was when I saw Elaine as the door was opened and she walked down the aisle on our wedding day. That moment was absolutely breathtaking.

Another time was when my two sons were born. When I saw their faces for the first time, all I could say was WOW! I couldn't say anything else. It was breathtaking.

We've all had those moments. You can't prepare for them. You can't make them up. They are all real and almost indescribable, but we've all experienced them.

There are those kind of moments recorded in the Scriptures as well. When Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up as he entered the temple on day, he said, *"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."* **Isaiah 6:5 (NIV)** When Ezekiel saw only an appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord, he fell on his face. When John the revelator saw the risen Jesus in all His heavenly glory, he said he fell at His feet as dead. It would be an understatement to say that those were breathtaking moments. They were moments of pure and unhindered worship; moments of adoration of God in all of His glory. But do we have to wait until we see Jesus face to face to have those kinds of breathtaking moments with Him? Do we have to wait for some time in the future to fall on our faces before him in worship and adoration? No! We can live in such an intimate relationship with Him that we can experience those moments in the here and now.

We talk about worship all the time. We come to worship every Sunday. We gather in a worship center – a sanctuary of worship, but do we really know what worship is? If we've never had a breathtaking experience with Jesus, then we probably don't.

In our passage tonight, Mary had a breathtaking worshipful experience with Jesus. From the parallel passage in John 12, we know that the woman was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. This is the same Mary that hung on Jesus' every word while her sister Martha was busy doing the housework. Mary adored Jesus as her teacher. The housework could wait. She was going to give her undivided attention to the Word of God. And in our passage, Mary had only one thing on her mind. Nothing was going to stand in the way of Mary worshipping Jesus.

The question for us tonight is: how is our worship? What do we let get in the way of our worshipping Jesus with our whole hearts as Mary did? What is more urgent than adoring the One who created us and bought us with His blood? When was the last time worship was more than just casual?

Tonight, I want us to see worship for what it is: A breathtaking, whole-hearted, committed adoration of our Jesus Christ. Mary is a great example of that. From her example, we're going to see four attributes of breathtaking worship. The first is that breathtaking worship is:

1. Unrestrained (7)

Matthew 26:7 (NIV) *“A woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.”*

Picture the scene with me. It's the Saturday night before Palm Sunday. Jesus is with His close friends, Lazarus, Martha and Mary. It was only days prior to this that Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave. And here they were sharing a meal together in the house of another friend, Simon the Leper who obviously had been healed by Jesus at some point, or else others wouldn't have been in his house. So Jesus was sharing a meal with two men he had helped in miraculous ways. Can you imagine the joy and fellowship in that house that evening?

Then, Mary comes out. She's not so much concerned with the food and the fellowship as she is focused on one thing – the Lord. In her hand, she held an Alabaster bottle. Alabaster is a beautiful semi-transparent gemstone. It was used to make containers which would hold only the most expensive and precious contents. When the contents were extremely precious, the makers would work the stone in such a way that the only way to empty it would be to break the container. It was the ultimate example of extravagance. This particular bottle contained some of the most exclusive and expensive perfume of the day. Vs. 7 says it was *“very precious”* It cost over a year's wages. Can you imagine someone today buying a vial of perfume that costs \$35,000? That's what Mary had. But it was precious also because it had sentimental value. This bottle of perfume had probably been passed down to her from someone in her family. It was a family heirloom. It was valuable in more ways than one, and Mary understood that. But by her action that day, she also understood the eternal value of the Savior. So she broke the bottle and poured the perfume over Jesus' head, and it ran all the way down His divine body. John tells us that Mary then knelt down and wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. Mary's act of worship that night was unrestrained. She didn't stop and worry about what others would think. She didn't put it off for a more convenient time. She would not be restrained by financial or emotional costs. She just wanted to worship Jesus. Nothing would restrain her from offering Him her best.

But her act of worship wasn't appreciated by everybody there. Which leads me to the second point about breathtaking worship - It is also:

2. Impractical (8-9)

Matthew 26:8-9 (NIV) *“When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. ‘Why this waste?’ they asked. ‘This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.’”*

Jesus' disciples were there at Simon's house too. And when they saw what Mary did, verse 8 says they *“were indignant.”* I can just hear some of the people in that room when Mary broke the bottle and poured the

perfume on Jesus' head: *"What is she doing? This was a family heirloom. She just wasted a \$35,000 bottle of perfume. Why not a bottle of Old Spice? You could feed a lot of poor people with \$35,000? She's crazy!"*

I mean, they were going off on her behind her back. And guess who was the ringleader? John tells us it was Judas, their treasurer. And John goes on to tell us that all the while Judas was leading this tirade against Mary, he was skimming money from the bag too. So actually, he had an ulterior motive for wanting that money. But the others didn't have that motive. They just saw it as an impractical waste.

And here's the point: Worship itself is impractical in the world's eyes. To the outside world, it's impractical to spend Sundays in church when life is so busy. It is impractical to pray or read what they would consider an ancient, out-of-date book that is so hard to understand anyway. It's impractical to sacrificially give to the Lord when you live from paycheck to paycheck. Those things are impractical.

In some of the disciple's eyes, what Mary did that night was impractical. But what Mary did was show Jesus how much she loved Him.

How much do you show Jesus you love Him? How much does it cost you to show Him how much you love Him? Sometimes we can get so casual and complacent and callous in our worship, we can be like the man who told his wife, "I told you I loved you once when we got married, and if I ever change my mind, I'll let you know." Is that how we treat Jesus? I told Him I loved Him when I got saved, and that ought to be enough? If that's your attitude, you need an attitude adjustment. It may sound and look impractical to worship Jesus every Sunday, but that's the very least we can do to show our love for Him. And that's just a small part of our worship of Him. Breathtaking worship of God is unrestrained, and it is impractical. But there's more:

Breathtaking worship is also:

3. Irreproachable (10-11)

Matthew 26:10-11 (NIV) *"Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me."* The disciples just thought they were muttering their objections to themselves. Jesus knew what they were saying. He knew their hearts and He called them on it. I'm paraphrasing, but I can hear Jesus saying, *"Why are y'all giving Mary a hard time?"* Can't you just see the look on their faces? They were busted! And I'm sure it surprised them even more that He defended Mary. He told them that what Mary had done was a beautiful act of worship.

Now, let me try to explain something here. When Jesus said, *"The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me."* He wasn't saying to worship Him instead of giving to the poor. He was saying that helping the poor is a good ongoing thing to do. We ought to be doing that all the time. But worshipping Jesus is our priority. It's our urgent thing to do.

Jesus had just told them in Mt. 25 that in order to be properly prepared for His return, they ought to be about feeding the hungry and giving water to the thirsty and taking in strangers and visiting the sick and those in

prison. Those were good and proper things to do for their fellow man. But Paul said in **1 Corinthians 13:3 (NIV)** *“If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.”* In other words, good works means absolutely nothing if you’re not doing it out of a love for Jesus Christ. If we do those things for any other reason, it is reproachable. But loving the Lord this way and worshipping Him extravagantly and unrestrained is irreproachable.

Is your love for and worship of Jesus irreproachable? Do you adore Jesus in such a way that you don’t care what other people think? Does your extravagant love of Jesus make other people talk behind your back? If they reproach you, do you care? Breathtaking worship is irreproachable, unrestrained, and impractical. And finally, it is:

4. Unsurpassed (12-13)

Matthew 26:12-13 (NIV) *“When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”*

All of the money in Judas’ moneybag had a certain value. Later on, the 30 silver coins that he earned for betraying Jesus had a certain value. The coins that Jesus had Peter pull out of the fish’s mouth to pay their taxes had a certain value. Mary’s alabaster bottle had a certain value. And the perfume inside had a certain value. But where is that money now? Where are the 30 pieces of silver now? Where is Peter’s tax money now? If Mary had chosen to keep that bottle of perfume to herself. If she had chosen to keep the bottle intact. If she had chosen to keep the perfume inside. If she had kept it on a shelf in the best display case in the house. Where would it be now? It would be turned to dust – evaporated into the air - It would all be gone.

But instead, Mary chose to use it in a way that is unsurpassed by any other way. She chose to use it to anoint the body of Jesus. She gave it up in worship of Him. And by doing so, she did something with eternal significance.

Even if the fragrance dissipated after a few days, the fact is, Mary’s loving, unrestrained, impractical, and irreproachable act of worship has never worn off. We’re still inspired by it today. The fragrance of worship is unsurpassed and eternal because the Christ to whom it is offered is eternal.

So, how is your worship? It is just a restrained act of singing a few songs and listening to a sermon on Sundays? Or is it flippantly laid aside every time there’s something else more practical to do?

Breathtaking worship will leave you speechless. It will inspire you to greater love and service. It will motivate you to spiritual growth. It will change your outlook.

If your worship of Christ is less than breathtaking, it’s time to empty yourself of you and start pouring yourself out in worship of Christ. The time for real worship is now.