

19-03-2017

MARK 14:1-9 = PASSIONTIDE (Fools for Christ...)

#SCRIPTURE READING: Mark 14:3-9 (see Matt 26/Luke 22/John 12) & Luke 7:36-50

#SERMON=INTRODUCTION: The famous painting - or then copies/reprints thereof - called "The Last Supper" (by Leonardo da Vinci), is to be seen all over the world. But I wonder why this meal (on the last Wednesday in Jesus' earthly life) hasn't been painted? *I wish I was a gifted artist/painter - like Rembrandt - then I definitely would have painted this meal..*

+TRANSITION: You want to ask why? *Because what happens here is so beautiful, I'm convinced that (just on a human level) it brought a "ray of light" for Jesus during this last dark week before His crucifixion.*

+EXEGESIS&APPLICATION: I would have loved to paint *the guests* seated at the table: *Simon the leper*, as host, seated at the head of the table. Who knows, could be that Jesus healed him - imagine the gratitude on his face. Then there's *Lazarus*; according to the Gospel of John (12:1-8), this meal takes place the day after he was resurrected from the dead. For him and his 2 sisters (Martha/Mary), this must have been a "Thanksgiving ceremony". O yes, it's a good thing supper is ready to be served, otherwise dear *Martha* would possibly not have been so relaxed (see LUKE 10:38-42). Then I would have painted *the 12 disciples*, all seated in a row (Judas Iscariot included)... *But something's wrong, someone is missing - where's the "leisurely lady" = where's Mary? Is she just (as always) a bit late or isn't she joining?..*

*Then the door opens and she enters. She has an alabaster flask of very costly oil (perfume) in her hands. I wonder *what is* she going to do with such a precious item? *What's* going through her mind: "Am I allowed to do this?.." *Then she kneels at Jesus' feet and breaks the flask. Immediately an incredible fragrance fills the house.* Mark describes how she anoints Jesus. In his rendition of this episode, *John* writes that she even poured the oil onto Jesus' feet and wiped it with her hair (JOHN 12:3). Everybody gasps for their breath... But the moment they're OK, they question the merit of her act - Judas Iscariot being the leading protester: "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" And they criticized her sharply." (14:4b-5) But Jesus comes to her rescue - read v6/9.

*Beloved, this incident - but more specifically Jesus' answer/commentary - teaches us a few Spiritual lessons/principles: -

~ (1) *True love doesn't have boundaries*: Sometimes true/Biblical love *is lavish and prodigal*. This alabaster flask with this liter of spikenard oil (from India) *was worth* 300 denarii = *about one year's wages for a worker*. Sir/M'am, just imagine the expression on your husband/wife's face when you take all the money you have earned during one year - *and you spend it in one moment to His glory?..* Such an alabaster flask had a very thin neck that was sealed because of the precious content. It was to be opened very carefully and the oil/perfume would be used drop-by-drop. *Mary breaks off the neck and pours everything onto Jesus!..*

Do you also (together with me) - after 2000 years - experience this fantastic feeling when you read this? *Did Mary also do it on your behalf?..* B/S, God uses this quiet lady of Bethany to teach us *true Christian love doesn't "do calculations" when it comes to "giving"*. Immediately you want to protest and say: "But..." Wait, dear Beloved, please wait! Take note: *What Mary did was just foreshadowing what Jesus was going to do 2 days later - when Hé gave Himself totally for our redemption; when Hé poured out His love abundantly on us; when His "neck was broken" to infuse us with His "aroma" (Holy Spirit). On Golgotha JC kept nothing back!..*

*B/S, *God's love is lavish and prodigal=all-embracing. Before Golgotha God didn't do any calculations.* Have you ever thought about it? *When God had to decide who He was going to love, He decided to love the whole world! When He decided how He was going to love, He decided to "break" His own Son - nothing less!*.. And us in our daily lives, *re deeds/actions, tithing - what are our attitudes?.. Dear Beloved, true Christian love doesn't know any boundaries and doesn't make/do calculations constantly...*

~ (2) *Re the Spiritual, your "common sense" should not always be the determining factor:* We must be slow to judge the reaction of the guests at the table. Wasn't their reaction exactly what ours would have been? *I believe they just used their common sense.* I mean - it is crazy to spend a year's wages "in a moment of madness"!.. But Bride of the Groom, *there are many moments in our lives/on our Spiritual journey that we have to "leave our common sense aside" and allow God to direct us through His Holy Spirit. That you/I - like 1000's before us through history - (in the eyes of the world) become "Fools for Christ"... Oh, we with our perfectly organised lives - cool/calm/collected, realists. We can learn so much from Mary, because even up to today God's work is often done by "Holy fools", men/women that are prepared to do the seemingly unlogical, but because of their respect/love for God - they obey!*

~ (3) *For some things in life you only get one chance:* Jesus' words (v7) aren't unique. He expanded on a well known saying of the rabbi's: *"God allows the poor to be with us always, in order for us to constantly have the opportunity to do good."* But, and this is the point, *for some things in life you only get one opportunity - and never again.* After the crucifixion there were many who wanted to take care of Jesus' body, like Nicodemus & Joseph of Arimathea (JOHN 19:39-40), *but it was too late! Mary, however, grasped the opportunity in time.*

Beloved, it could be that during this year's Passiointide, *God opens our eyes to notice an opportunity to do something special - to alleviate need, to save someone's life by witnessing when the opportunity arises. Grab it, it's a gift from God - before it's too late!..*

~ (4) *Acts of kindness/love have eternal value:* We should take note of Jesus' words in v9. B/S, these days so many horrific things happen/are done by possessed people, that 1 gesture of kindness stands out like a city on a hill... It was the same with Jesus during this last week - so much unfaithfulness, betrayal, hatred and and pain; but then Mary and her alabaster flask! And Jesus was right - today (2000 years later) we still honour/contemplate her act of love.

But that which applies to Mary, also applies to us: *Every cup of cold water, every piece of food, every visit to the sick or those imprisoned, every time that we stand up/in the gap for others (absent/weak), has eternal value.* If that's not the case - how then should we interpret MATT 25:31-46?.. Yes B/S, *acts of kindness/love have eternal value, because Jesus' death on the cross (2 days later) - an act of immense Love - brought eternal Life!*

+**CONCLUSION:** I started by mentioning my desire to paint this Biblical picture... *But what if the Heavenly Painter (JC) wanted to paint a portrait of us as body, having a meal with Him at a table - how would it look like?.. Who's going to remain seated? Who's just going to listen? Who's going to be painted where he/she is busy protesting and accusing Jesus of all kinds of things? And who's going to be painted (by Jesus) where he/she kneels down at His feet - with everything that they have accumulated during their lives?..* Bride of the Groom, if the Lord Jesus invited us today for a meal with Him - *will the wonderful fragrance of spike nard oil fill this building - and infuse/cover our town?..* May the almighty Triune-God enable us to become *Holy fools = Fools for Christ!..* Halleluja & Amen!

(...\Preke\Lydenstynd\Mark14v3iiib)