

November 16

She hath done what she could. Mark 14:8

IT is not our privilege to come into personal contact with our dear Redeemer, but it is our privilege to anoint the Lord's "brethren" with the sweet perfume of love, sympathy, joy and peace, and the more costly this may be as respects our self-denials,

R3536 "The Mary class, who would rather purchase perfume at a great cost whereby to serve the anointed Church, the body of Christ, than to spend the same upon themselves, is still with us, and has been of the Church for these eighteen centuries. Not only was the Head of the body anointed, perfumed, honored, comforted, cheered, but all of the members since have likewise received a blessing from this class, this spike-nard Mary class. It is composed not always of the orators, the wealthy or the wise--its ministry is unostentatious and to many, especially of the world, it seems foolishness and waste--but the Lord appreciates it, and so do the members of his body who are comforted and refreshed thereby. Blessing be upon this Mary class!"

R3536 "No matter if they do not notice us, or think of us, or pour any upon us as members of the feet; let us do our part, let us be of the Mary class, let us pour out the sweet perfume upon others, and the house, the Church of the Lord, will be filled with the sweet odor, even though some disciples might mistakingly charge us with being extravagant..."

"Let us consider one another," said the Apostle... Consider one another's efforts to war a good warfare against the world, the flesh and the Adversary--consider one another's troubles in the narrow way against opposition from within and without, and as we do so it will bring to our hearts sympathy, a sympathy which will take pleasure in pouring out the spikenard perfume, very costly, purest and best, upon all who are fellow-members of the one body."

R3878 "SELFISHNESS VERSUS GENEROSITY... What a sharp contrast is here drawn between the love and generosity of Mary and the mean selfishness of Judas! The one was so full of love that she could not do enough for the great Teacher..."

the more precious it will be in the estimation of our Elder Brother, who declared that in proportion as we do or do not unto His brethren, we do or do not unto Him.Our alabaster boxes are our hearts, which should be full of the richest and sweetest perfumes of good wishes, kindness and love toward all, but especially toward the Christ--toward

The last members of the body of Christ are here. Let us hasten to do all in our power, both temporally, and spiritually, for the feet of Christ..."

(2 Cor 2:14-17 KJV) "Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. (15) For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: (16) To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? (17) For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

R3537 "SACRIFICE OF SWEET ODOR

The Apostle, speaking of the ministries of the Church one for another, says that ours is a sacrifice of sweet odor unto God, but again he adds that the Gospel referred to is of life unto life to some and of death unto death to others. That is to say, good deeds, kind words and efforts will be appreciated by those who are in the right attitude of heart to appreciate them, while on the contrary the same good deeds will arouse offence and constitute a bad odor to those who are in a wrong condition of heart. How often have we seen it so, that with our best endeavors to serve the feet of Christ some have been comforted and refreshed, others have been angered--to one the effort was a sweet odor, to the others it was an offensive odor, because of their wrong attitude of heart toward the Lord and toward the body of Christ--because, perhaps, of their ambitions or whatnot that were interfered with.

It was just so at Bethany: the sweet odors that filled the house, and the blessing and refreshment that came to Mary in connection with the ministration, had a very different effect upon Judas. He was angry;

R2743 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006)

A PERFUME OF SWEET ODOR

--MATT. 26:6-16.--JAN. 6.--

"She hath done what she could."

PRECEDING LESSONS showed us incidents in our Lord's journey toward Jerusalem, via Jericho --the healing of the blind men by the wayside, the conversion of Zacchaeus, and the parable of the young nobleman, given because they were nigh unto Jerusalem, and because the disciples and many of the multitude expected that the Kingdom of God would immediately be manifested,--set up in earthly grandeur, etc. The distance from Jericho to Jerusalem was only about twenty miles, and Bethany, the home-city of Lazarus (whom our Lord raised from the dead) and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, was quite near to Jerusalem and with them Jesus decided to spend his last Sabbath-day in the flesh. We may presume that the day was happily spent according to the observance of the Sabbath required by the Jewish law; but the narrative, passing over the events of the day unnoticed, draws special attention to the feast or supper made for our Lord in the evening, after sundown, when the Sabbath was considered ended, and the first day of the week beginning.

This feast was at the house of Simon the leper, yet Simon is not mentioned in connection with the narrative, and it is quite probable that he was then dead. It is conjectured that Simon was either the father of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, or else that Martha was the

the Head, our Lord Jesus, and toward all the members of His body, the church; and especially on our part toward the feet members who are now with us, and on whom we now have the privilege of pouring out the sweet odors of love and devotion in the name of the Lord, because we are His. Z. '99-78; Z. '00-378; R2448:5; R2744:3

his selfishness hindered his appreciation of the honor done to the Lord; he could think only of himself and what he had hoped to get out of the transaction, and how, so far as he was concerned, the whole matter was a waste. The sourness that came to his heart because of its wrong attitude is indicated by the testimony that he straightway went to the chief priests to bargain with them for the betrayal of Jesus. Let us, then, dear brethren, see to it that our hearts are in a loving attitude toward the Lord and not in a selfish attitude--that we appreciate everything done in his name and for his body..."

R877 "NOT IN VAIN... *"Now thanks be to that God who always leads us forth to triumph with the Anointed One, and who diffuses by us the fragrance of the knowledge of him in every place; because we are a sweet odor of Christ to God..."--2 Cor. 2:14,17.--Diaglott...*

One advantage which the Christian toiler has over every other worker, is the full assurance that his labor shall not be in vain. And in proportion as he has faith in the promise of God, his service will be a joyful one, notwithstanding many things otherwise calculated to discourage... Thanks be to God who always leads us forth to triumph, and who diffuses by us the fragrance of the knowledge of him in every place.

Like Paul it is our privilege to go with Christ outside the camp bearing his reproach...

But some may question, In what sense are we always led forth to triumph? We answer, In the same sense that Paul was so led. His message was not always received and appreciated, but whether received or rejected of men, he triumphed in the fact that his labor and sacrifices were a sweet savor to God in any case... Our labor cannot be in vain if it be acceptable to God as a sweet odor, as it surely is where done with an eye single to his service and glory."

widow of Simon, and that Lazarus and Mary were younger than she. These items, however, are merely tradition, nothing in the Scriptures throwing any light upon the matter. We remember that on the occasion of a previous visit to this home, our Lord was entertained; and Mary became so absorbed in listening to the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth that for the time she neglected the ordinary affairs of life, until her more practical, but possibly less spiritually-inclined, sister commented upon the fact, which brought forth our Lord's declaration to the effect that while service is quite acceptable and appreciated, veneration and fellowship are still more appreciated--"Mary hath chosen the better part."

The two sisters had the enviable privilege of serving the Lord and ministering to his comfort in the feast of our lesson, just before the agonies which closed his earthly life. As before, so now, the service of the two sisters took somewhat different form, but probably this time by mutual agreement and prearrangement; Martha herself served the table with others assisting, and Mary was left free to render her peculiar service, of which this lesson is a memorial. From some source she had procured a valuable alabaster vase of choice perfume. She had either purchased the vase, and manufactured the perfume herself, at great expense of time, etc., or had spent for its

purchase a considerable sum of money. She had anticipated our Lord's coming, and had fully arranged matters so that at this feast she might treat him in a manner in which very few except the worldly great were ever treated;--kings, emperors, etc., were thus anointed with perfume, but very rarely indeed could others afford such a luxury, for the facilities for manufacturing perfume then were quite inferior to what they are now, and even if the perfume were of home manufacture and of fine quality the cost in time, etc., would be great, and the perfume would be so valuable that it was usual to sell it to the very wealthy.

The feast had begun, and Jesus, with the disciples and other guests, were at the table, which, according to eastern custom, was long and narrow, the guests not sitting upon chairs, but reclining full length upon couches or divans, with the head extending over the table, and the feet extending back to the rear, the weight of the shoulders poised upon the left elbow, while the right hand was used in partaking of the food.

While Martha and her associates were serving, Mary came forward and, breaking the seal upon her alabaster vase, she began to pour the precious perfume upon our Lord's head, and subsequently, as John's record of the matter informs us, going to our Lord's feet she poured some of it upon them, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Mary's affection for our Lord was so deep and so strong that it could not be satisfied with any of the ordinary methods of expression. If the kings of earth were perfumed and anointed, much more did she esteem it fitting that her friend, her Lord, the Messiah, should be anointed with the best that she could procure for him. Her love was so intense that it knew no economy--nothing could be too good for her Beloved. She would give expression to the rich sentiments of her heart by giving him the finest and most costly of sweet natural odors. Our Lord appreciated the matter fully--the sweet odor of the heart-love which prompted the act, still more than the sweet odors which filled the entire house.

But the disciples, more selfish and less able to appreciate Mary's true sentiments, and the propriety of their expression in this form, found fault with her, and the records show that their leader and mouthpiece, who incited the fault-finding spirit amongst the others, was Judas, the treasurer of the little company, whose disappointment was great that the value of this ointment did not find its way into his money-bag, and thus a part of it, at least, to his own private uses; for we are told, "He was a thief, and carried the bag." His objection seems to favor the thought that Mary may have prepared the perfume herself, for he does not object to its having been purchased for a large sum, but that it might have been sold for three hundred pence. (Mark 14:5.) Estimating the value at 300 Roman pence, or *denarii*, worth about 16 cents each, the value of the ointment would be about forty-eight dollars, but much more than this amount would be represented in today's values; for we are to remember that a *denarius* represented a workman's wages for a day, and hence that 300 *denarii* would practically represent a workman's wages for a year. It was indeed an extravagant action, but it represented an extravagant love, and was expended upon one whom God and the angels delighted to honor, and whom Mary seems to have appreciated much more nearly at his true value than did his other associates of the hour.

Beloved Mary! We can, perhaps, imagine to some extent the emotions which filled her heart as she prepared this costly expression of her devotion, the sentiment of which she hoped others would appreciate. But now, on the contrary, she beholds the "indignation" of her friends and guests, the Master's nearest companions; and her heart sinks within her as she fears that the Lord himself will view the matter in a similar light, and reject and disapprove her libation. What a load is lifted from her heart, when she hears our Lord pronouncing her work a noble deed, and reproving his disciples for lack of sympathy in her sentiment, telling them that this perfuming of his body was in preparation for his burial. It was probably in the midst of this discussion of the matter between Jesus and the apostles that Mary, having anointed his head with the perfume, went to his feet, and began anointing them also, wiping them with her hair, as an evidence that the most precious thing of her personal adornment was gladly at the service of her Lord.

Probably Mary had no thought of perfuming our Lord's body for burial, and his words to this effect would be as astounding to her as to the others who heard them. It was customary with the ancients to spend considerable care and money upon the persons of their dead in preparing them for burial; sweet spices and perfumes, etc., were lavishly bestowed, just as today it is the custom to provide handsome caskets and many and expensive flowers and fine monuments, as expressive of the love and appreciation in which the dead are held by their friends. In Mary's conduct in the pouring of the precious perfume upon the Savior while he was yet living, we have a most

excellent suggestion in respect to the proper course to be pursued toward those we love. It is far, far better that we should unstop our alabaster vases of perfume, and pour them upon the heads and upon the weary feet of our friends, while still they live, than that we should wait until they have expired, and then give our attention to the cold, inanimate and unappreciative corpse. ⁽¹⁾Our alabaster boxes are our hearts, which should be full of the richest and sweetest perfumes of good wishes, kindness and love toward all, but especially toward the Christ--toward the Head of Christ, our Lord Jesus, and toward all the members of his body, the Church; and especially on our part toward the feet members who are now with us, and on whom we now have the privilege of pouring out the sweet odors of love and devotion in the name of the Lord, and because we are his. The poet writes:

"How oft we, careless, wait till life's sweet activities are past,
And break our 'alabaster box of ointment' at the very last!
O, let us heed the living friend, who walks with us life's common ways,
Watching our eyes for looks of love, and hungering for a word of praise!"

The heart of each truly consecrated child of God is like the alabaster vase--a receptacle for the holy spirit, the spirit of love, the choicest perfume and most precious to the Lord and to men. It is expensive, because it cannot be gathered rapidly, but requires patient perseverance in well-doing to be "filled with all the fullness of God." Again, it is like Mary's vase in that it gives forth its odor not before, but after the seal is broken and the contents poured forth. It differs from hers, however, in the fact that it may be continually poured out and yet its fullness all the while increase.

Our hearts and their holy love are like Mary's vase again, in that they should be poured upon the Lord himself--upon the Head first, but subsequently upon the members of his body, even the humblest, the lowliest, the feet. And this should be our service, even tho it be unappreciated by others, who instead would think that we should pour our love and devotion upon sinners, or upon the poor heathen world. They realize not what abundant opportunities there will be for blessing the heathen world in the future, in the Millennial age, which God has set apart for their blessing, and in which his disciples will have abundant opportunity for co-working with him in the general uplifting of the world of mankind. Those who upbraid us for pouring out our heart-treasures upon the members of Christ, the Church, do so through ignorance, and if at times it has caused some discouragement to us, let us hearken to the words of the Master, declaring that such is a noble course that has his approval, and that it is proper as a prelude to the burial of the entire Church, the body;--that it will be appropriate that this shall be done to the Church rather than for the poor world, up to the time when the Church shall have finished the earthly pilgrimage;--up to the time when the sufferings of Christ having been fulfilled there shall be no longer opportunity to bless and refresh and comfort the body of Christ, respecting whom our Lord declares that what is done to them is done to him.--Matt. 25:40.

So, then, let the Marthas serve the Lord in one way, and the Marys pour out their most precious spikenard perfume, assured that neither service will be forgotten; for both are told and have been told for eighteen centuries, as memorials to their praise, testimonies of their love, which the Lord appreciated and accepted, however they were viewed by others.

OPPOSITION FROM SELFISH HEARTS

In this connection it is well to notice sharply that the one who made the greatest ado on behalf of the poor, and who objected most to Mary's expression of her devotion, was the thief and murderer, Judas. And the principle, to a considerable extent, seems to hold good all down throughout this Gospel age: that those who make the greatest outcry on behalf of mission work and in opposition to the expenditure of costly time in the anointing and blessing of the consecrated members of the body of Christ, are not always those who have the interests of the heathen exclusively at heart, but are frequently those who have an "axe to grind," a selfish interest in some way to serve. And not infrequently these hypocrites mislead others of the Lord's dear people, who are thoroughly conscientious, even as Judas, by his sophistry, for a time misled the other apostles into indignation against Mary for the doing of the very thing which was pleasing to the Lord, and on account of which he decreed that wherever this Gospel should be preached her conduct should be mentioned as a memorial.

And so it is today: this gospel is preached in more than 350 languages--to every important nation in the world. But we presume that it was not merely Mary that our Lord wished to memorialize, but especially her deed: he wished that all who should know the

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good tidings should know also of his appreciation of such devotion to him, to his body, and that the more it costs us the more he appreciates it. In view of this, let each one who would be pleasing in the Lord's sight seek continually to pour the perfume from his heart and life upon other members of the body of Christ, and let him realize that in so doing he will not only be pleasing to the Lord, but will be receiving also a blessing himself; for as no alabaster vase could pour forth perfumes upon others without itself being thoroughly involved in the perfume, so our hearts, as they pour forth upon others of the members of the body the sweet perfume of love and devotion to the Lord and his cause, will be sure to bring a blessing to ourselves, even in the present life --our Lord's approval and benediction now and everlastingly.

Some of the methods employed in connection with present endeavor to anoint the members of the Lord's "body" for burial,--with the perfume of his truth and grace--call down the condemnation of fellow-disciples. As for instance, the expenditure of time, energy, and large sums of money this present year in the "Volunteer" work has been, and will be misunderstood by many of the Lord's dear children,--and be *bitterly* reproved by those who are of the Judas stripe. Yet realizing the Lord's approval we have quite sufficient to make our cup of joy overflow. Fellow-disciples tell us that we should not be handing the meat in due season to the household of faith, but to sinners; that we should not be seeking to anoint the saints with the sweet perfume of present truth, but should, on the contrary, be going to the outcasts of society, engaging in slum-work or in foreign-mission work. The real difficulty with the Judas class, however, is that they fear that the circulation of the truth amongst the Lord's people would cut off the revenue which otherwise might flow into their coffers: they fear the loss of numbers and influence in sectarianism. But their fears are largely imaginary; for the perfume of the truth is only designed to fall upon "the members of the body of Christ," and our expectations are that the Lord will guide it to these, and that to others it will be of no effect. And since the members of the body of Christ, the consecrated ones, are so few, their anointing and their separation from Babylon, and their burial, will be comparatively unnoticed so far as numbers are concerned,--tho their taking away as the "salt" and the "light" of those systems, will indeed be a serious loss, conspiring to their downfall in the great time of trouble approaching. --Matt. 5:13,14.

Let us not forget to note clearly and distinctly the wide difference between love and selfishness, as exemplified in the opposite courses of Mary and Judas. Mary, full of burning devotion, was willing to sacrifice much to honor, comfort and please her Lord. Judas not only was unwilling to sacrifice on his behalf, but on the contrary was willing to sell him to his enemies for thirty shekels--the

price of a slave. Not only so, but the devotion of the one seemed not to impress the other favorably, but rather the reverse; the devotion of Mary, and our Lord's approval of it, seem to have aroused the opposite spirit in Judas, for he went straightway to negotiate with the chief priests for our Lord's betrayal into their hands.

It would appear from the Greek text, and the rendering of the same in the Revised Version, that Judas received the money for his work in advance: "They weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver." He completed the contract; he sold himself to work evil, and that against his benefactor, his Lord, of whose power he was fully conversant, and of which, indeed, he had received so abundantly that he himself had been enabled to heal the sick and cast out devils. How strange that any could be so perverse! No doubt he had a way of reasoning the matter to himself which made his crime appear to him less heinous than it does to us. No doubt, also, others who today are willing less directly to sell the Lord for earthly advantage or influence or money find ways of excusing their perfidy; but in proportion as our hearts are loyal and devoted, as was Mary's, in that same proportion will the Judas course appear heinous and impossible to us.

Yet these climaxes of character are not reached suddenly. Mary's love had been growing from the first; it was greatly strengthened by her course in sitting at the Master's feet and receiving from him spiritual nourishment, which our Lord declared to be a still better part or course than that pursued by her sister, tho the latter was not disapproved. Mary's faith and love had been still further increased as she witnessed the Lord's power in various ways, and especially at her brother's awakening from the tomb. She had cultivated this love and appreciation for the Lord until it filled her entire heart, and found its expression in the costly libation which she had just poured upon his head and his feet. Judas, on the other hand, had long been permitting the spirit of selfishness to more and more intrude upon his heart; he had permitted himself to think of what money would do, and had given his thought largely toward its accumulation. It had fettered his soul, so that he was unable to appreciate the Lord's character, even tho he knew him intimately from daily association, so that he was unable to measure anything except from a monetary standpoint. And these bands of selfishness gradually grew so hard and tight about his heart that they squeezed out everything of character, of love, devotion and friendship, and thus gradually he came to be the representative of, and his name the synonym for, the grossest of ingratitude and meanness, selfishness and treachery. One lesson for us here is, to *cultivate* love and the appreciation of whatsoever things are just, good, lovely and pure; and to fight down and eradicate so far as possible (especially from our own hearts and lives) everything selfish, mean, ignoble, dishonorable.

R2447 (From Harvest Truth Database V5.0 2006)

"A BOTTLE OF SPIKENARD, VERY COSTLY"

--APRIL 9.--JOHN 12:1-11.--

"She hath done what she could."--Mark 14:8.

THE last week of our Lord's earthly ministry was a busy one. The sixth day previous to the Passover was the Jewish Sabbath, which ended at six o'clock in the evening, and it is possible that it was at that time that our Lord and his disciples were entertained by Martha and Mary at "the house of Simon the leper" --probably their father: Lazarus, their brother, whose recovery from death was noted in the previous lesson, was also one of the table-guests.

Our Lord knew that the time of his death was near at hand, and he had given intimations of this to his beloved disciples, but they were so accustomed to having him say wonderful things beyond the power of their comprehension that they probably failed to realize their closeness to the great tragedy of Calvary. This need not surprise us when we remember the Scriptural declaration that our Lord spake in parables and dark sayings --"and without a parable spake he not unto the people:" for instance, his declaration, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." And again, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man shall eat of this bread he shall live forever." And again, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John 2:19; 6:51,53.) Having in mind such unusual language, the apostles would be entirely excusable in doubting the proper meaning to be attached to our Lord's declaration, "The Son of man must be lifted up," and other similar expressions foretelling his death.

Before coming to the consideration of the Bethany supper and the anointing on that Sabbath evening, let us have before our minds the incidents of the days following it, that we may be able to appreciate our Lord's declaration that the anointing with the spikenard was preparatory to his burial. The next morning (the first day of the week, now usually called Sunday), having sent after the ass, our Lord rode upon it to Jerusalem. The people, recognizing the wonder-

ful miracle wrought upon Lazarus, congregated and hailed him as Messiah, the Son of David, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah (9:9), and strewed clothing and palm branches in the way; (hence this is generally known as Palm Sunday). It was on this occasion that our Lord wept over Jerusalem, and declared, "Your house is left unto you desolate." --Matt. 23:38.

It is supposed that it was on the second day (Monday) that our Lord scourged the money-changers out of the Temple, and taught the people there; and we gather from the narrative that it was in his journey on this day that he pronounced the curse upon "the barren fig tree," supposed to represent the Jewish nation--barren of fruit, and therefore rejected. It would appear that the third day (Tuesday) was again spent teaching in the Temple, answering questions, etc., and that evening, as they returned again to Bethany, he discoursed with his disciples respecting the great events near at hand. The fourth day (Wednesday) apparently was spent quietly at Bethany, and on the fifth day (Thursday) the disciples made ready the Passover supper which was eaten after six o'clock that evening--the beginning of the sixth day (Friday) according to Jewish reckoning--the 14th of Nisan. The Gethsemane experiences followed that night and the trial before Pilate the next morning, and the crucifixion later.

Now we come back to witness the hospitalities extended to our Lord six days before the crucifixion, at the house of Simon the leper, the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus. We are to remember that our Lord was a visitor in those parts, his home, to the extent that he ever had one, being in Galilee, and the most of his time spent there. "He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him." (John 7:1.) But now the time for his sacrifice had come, and in harmony therewith he came amongst his enemies,--altho it was known

that prominent Jews sought to kill him and also sought the death of Lazarus, who was a living witness to his Messianic power.

We may suppose that this was no ordinary supper, but in the nature of a feast or banquet in our Lord's honor. Nevertheless, one incident connected with it so outshone all its other features that the narrator mentions it alone--the anointing of our Lord with the "spikenard ointment, very costly." Our Lord himself declared, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." (Mark 14:9.) It is entirely proper, therefore, that we should examine with some particularity the details of this service so highly esteemed by the Master.

Prof. Shaff says, "By the 'ointment' we are to understand rather a liquid perfume than what we commonly know as ointment." The alabaster box was rather in the shape of a flask or vase, and the breaking of the box (Mark 14:3) signifies the opening of its tyings and seals by which the precious odors were confined. Judas' words of dissatisfaction furnish us a clue respecting the costliness of this perfume, for he says that it "might have been sold for three hundred *denarii*." A *denarius*, translated "penny" in vs. 5, is represented as being the average daily wages at that time--"a penny [*denarius*] a day." (Matt. 20:2.) If we compare these values with present money values, counting farm labor at fifty cents a day (which is certainly a moderate valuation), the three hundred *denarii* would be the equivalent in wages of one hundred and fifty dollars of our money. Thus we see that the perfume was indeed "very costly." There was nearly a pint of the perfume, a Roman pound being twelve ounces. Nor need we question the possibility of perfumes being so expensive, for even to-day we have a counterpart in value in the attar of roses made in the far East. It is claimed that four hundred thousand full-grown roses are used to produce one ounce of this perfume, which, in its purity, sells as high as one hundred dollars an ounce, or twelve hundred dollars for the quantity used by Mary in anointing our Lord. It is said that Nero was the first of the Emperors to indulge in the use of costly perfumes for his anointing; but one much more worthy of tribute, homage and anointing with a sweet perfume was the "Prince of the kings of the earth," whom Mary had the honor to anoint.

Judas was first to object to this as a waste--the difficulty with him being that he loved the Lord too little and money too much. The amount that love is willing to expend for others is, to some extent at least, a measure of the love. Another Evangelist informs us that several of the disciples, under the influence of Judas' words, took the same view of the matter, and spoke disapprovingly of Mary's action. The Apostle John, however, takes this opportunity to throw a little sidelight upon the character of Judas--more than is apparent in the common translation of vs. 6. His declaration is, "Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the box, and stole what things were deposited in it."--*Diaglott*.

Our Lord's words, "Let her alone!" are in the nature of a severe reproof to those whose sentiments of love had no other measure than that of money. It was indeed true that there were plenty of poor, and there would still be plenty of poor, and plenty of opportunities to minister to them; but the opportunity to specially honor the Lord, and to pour upon him the fragrant odors so beautifully expressive of Mary's love and devotion, would not be for long, and our Lord declares that the circumstances fully justified the costly expenditure. He shows himself out of sympathy with the sentiments which balance themselves too accurately with money values. Moreover, we may esteem that in many instances like the one here recorded the persons who are so careful lest money should be spent except for the poor are often like Judas, so avaricious that whatever money gets into their possession very little of it gets to the poor.

On the contrary, it is the deep, loving, benevolent hearts, like that of Mary, which delight in costly sacrifices at times, which also are likely to be deeply sympathetic and helpful to the physically poor. And ⁽²⁾in our ministrations to others we are not to forget that money is not the only thing of which people are sorely in need--some need love and sympathy, who do not need money. Our Lord was one of these: his own heart, full of love, found comparatively little companionship in the more or less sordid minds of even the noblest of the fallen race represented amongst his apostles. In Mary he seemed to find the depth of love and devotion which was to him an odor of sweet incense, of refreshment, of reinvigoration, a tonic; and Mary apparently appreciated, more than did others, the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the Master's character; she not only delighted to sit at his feet to learn of him, but now delighted, at a great cost, to give him some manifestation of her devotion, her love.

She poured the perfume first upon our Lord's head (Mark 14:3), the usual custom, and then the remainder she poured upon his feet. But the Apostle John, in recording the matter, seems to have forgotten entirely the anointing of our Lord's head, so deeply was he impressed with the still more expressive devotion manifested in the anointing of the feet and the wiping of them with the hairs of her head. It is indeed a picture of love--a devotion well worthy of being told as a memorial. Some one has said,--

"She took 'woman's chief ornament' and devoted it to wiping the travel-stained feet of her Teacher; she devoted the best she had to even the least honorable service for him. It was the strongest possible expression of her love and devotion. She gave her choicest treasures in the most self-devoted manner. She was bashful and retiring, and could not speak her feelings, and therefore she expressed them in this manner."

We are not surprised to learn that the whole house was filled with the odor; and we doubt not that the odor remained for a long time: but far more precious than that was the sweet odor of Mary's heart-affections which the Lord accepted and will never forget, and the sweet odor of her devotion which has come down through the centuries to us, bringing blessing to all true hearts who have honored her service and desired to emulate her conduct.

⁽³⁾It is not our privilege to come into personal contact with our dear Redeemer, but we have, nevertheless, many opportunities for doing that which to some extent will correspond to Mary's act--it is our privilege to anoint the Lord's "brethren" with the sweet perfume of love, sympathy, joy and peace, and the more costly this may be as respects our self-denials, the more precious it will be in the estimation of our Elder Brother, who declared that in proportion as we do or do not unto his brethren, we do or do not unto him. (Matt. 25:40,45.) Moreover, he represents these "brethren" in a figure as "members of his body;" and from this standpoint we see that, while it is not our privilege to pour the perfume upon the Head of the body, now highly exalted far above angels, principalities and powers, and every name that is named--next to the Father,--it is our privilege to pour the perfume upon the feet of Christ--the last living members of his Church of this Gospel age.

We know not to what extent the closing years of this Gospel age may correspond to the closing days of our Lord's ministry--we know not how similar may be the experiences of the "feet" of the body of Christ to the experiences of the Head of the body; we do know, however, that in any event it is our blessed privilege to comfort one another, to encourage one another, to sustain one another, in the trials incident to our "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." (Col. 1:24.) And to whatever extent we would improve these opportunities, as did Mary, we must first appreciate them as she did.

Nothing in this suggestion is intended to imply any neglect of the members of our natural families "according to the flesh;" attentions to these are proper always, and are generally so understood, and should more and more be appreciated and used in proportion as the Lord's people receive freely and fully of his spirit of love,--kindness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering. But we emphasize that which the Scriptures emphasize, namely, that our interest and efforts are not to be confined to those of fleshly tie, but, on the contrary, are to be "especially to the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10.) There will be other and future opportunities of doing good to mankind in general, but the opportunity for serving "the body of Christ" is limited to the present age.

Appropos of this propriety of doing good to others --expressing our love by our conduct as well as by our words, to the members of our families as well as to the members of the body of Christ, we quote the words of another,--

"The sweetest perfume that the home circle ever knows arises from deeds of loving service which its members do for each other. The sweetest perfumes of our homes do not arise from elegant furniture, soft carpets, elegant pictures, or luxurious viands. Many a home, having all these, is pervaded by an atmosphere as tasteless and odorless as bouquets of waxen flowers."

Another has said,--

"If my friends have alabaster boxes full of fragrant perfume of sympathy and affection laid away, which they intend to break over my body, I would rather they would bring them out in my weary and troubled hours, and open them, that I might be refreshed and cheered with them while I need them....I would rather have a plain coffin without a flower, a funeral without a eulogy, than a life without the sweetness of love and sympathy.... Flowers on the coffin cast no fragrance backward on the weary road."

⁽²⁾ July 15 Manna, 1 Cor. 13:3

⁽³⁾ 1/2 Nov. 16 Manna