

ANOINTING "THE FEET" OF CHRIST

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

WE CAN scarcely think of a higher encomium that could have come from the Master's lips to any of His followers. This expression of Jesus, then, should be of special comfort, particularly so to the sisters in the Church. They have not all the opportunities that the brethren have of service in the Truth. There are certain limitations of the sex, and these, of course, were upon Mary. She did not have the privilege of going about with Jesus to hear all of His teachings, and of co-operating with Him in that way, nor of being one of the seventy sent out to do mighty works, to proclaim the Kingdom.

But not discouraged by these limitations, Mary was very much on the alert to improve all the opportunities that she had. She and her family had been special friends of Jesus – for how long a time we do not know. But we know that He frequently went to their home; and the Scriptures testify that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." – John 11:5.

When Lazarus fell sick, the sisters sent Him word, "He whom Thou lovest is sick." They manifested their faith and submission also as to what answer would come – as to whether He would simply send word, or bless a handkerchief, or what not. They felt that He would care for them – being a special friend of the family.

It must have been a great trial of their faith when our Lord remained away, when Lazarus died, when the funeral took place. On the fourth day after, Jesus came to Bethany – too late to do any good! We remember that then Mary, who had sat at Jesus' feet to be taught of Him, was so overcome because He had not sent some help in her brother's case, that she did not feel that she even wished to see the Lord. She did not feel like honoring Him. So when she heard that

He had come, she sat still in the house, and did not go to greet Him. Of course, after Jesus had called forth Lazarus from the tomb, her faith and love and zeal were revived and intensified. Her faith had been sorely tried and tested, and had finally triumphed.

On this occasion, when Jesus came up to Jerusalem, prior to the crucifixion, He came to their home as usual. Then Lazarus and Martha and Mary made quite a feast, at which there were present some of the Pharisees from the city of Jerusalem. After this feast, Jesus rode upon the ass into Jerusalem, and was proclaimed King by a multitude of disciples. It looked as if things were getting very favorable, and as if very soon *the people* would receive Him as King. – Luke 19:37-40.

Some had previously wondered and some had persisted in faith. These thought that now was the moment of Jesus' glorification, and this, they felt sure, meant also their own glorification. When He came into Jerusalem, He drove out the money-changers from the Temple, and all things seemed auspicious. Later on, some of the scribes and Pharisees tried to show up the fallacy of His teachings, and they were all put to flight, so that they were afraid to ask him questions, because it did more harm than good. – Luke 20:40.

FAULT-FINDING ANTAGONISTIC TO LOVE

The common people were in favor of Jesus, but the leaders were much discontented. They said, "The Romans will treat us badly and not give us any liberty, if we allow [R5230 : page 135] this thing to go on. It will bring us all into disgrace." So the high priest said, "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." (John 11:50.) But this determination was to be kept quiet. The chief priest and rulers, therefore, worked secretly.

Just before the day of the crucifixion, Jesus was again in the home of Lazarus and Martha and Mary. It was on this occasion that

Mary took the opportunity of breaking a box of ointment and pouring it over the head of Jesus. This ointment was not oil – such ointment as we use today – but very expensive perfume. The alabaster package in which this was put up was apparently a small vase.

Mary broke the vase – probably uncorked it – that she might pour out the ointment. In this way she manifested her high appreciation of His being a Guest at their home. To Mary our Lord was not simply a great man. To her He was more, He was the Messiah. So far as she understood, she adored Him, revered Him as her Lord; and she took this opportunity for showing her devotion by pouring upon Him the precious perfume.

One of the disciples, Judas, rebuked the woman, saying, "This is a shameful waste of money, this ointment was valuable." Such ointments were much more expensive at that time than now. By the synthetic process we can now manufacture almost any odor without using even one flower. But the process used in olden times made it much more costly.

As Judas was upbraiding Mary, Jesus stopped him, saying, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on Me....She hath done what she could." She has manifested her love, her devotion. She has not followed Me as you disciples have done. She had the restrictions of her sex upon her. But this is one thing that she *could* do, and one thing that she *did*. I appreciate what she has done. She has anointed Me for My burial. – Mark 14:6,8.

THE MASTER'S TRIBUTE OF APPROVAL

We may suppose that these would seem very strange words for the Master to use – "She hath anointed My body aforehand for the burying." The disciples thought He would not die. But Jesus was so in the habit of saying peculiar things that if they stopped to quarrel over them, they would have been led away from Him. On one

occasion He had said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:53.) This saying had perplexed them greatly. When He said He was about to be crucified, they thought, How can He use language which is so untruthful? And when St. Peter said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord! This shall not be unto Thee!" Jesus upbraided him. – Matthew 16:22,23.

These words, these things, came to their remembrance in future days; and thus their faith and hope and trust were much intensified and were made more precious. Thus also *our* faith has been strengthened.

Applying to ourselves Jesus' words to Mary, we can see that no one could have a higher tribute from the Master's lips than the approval given to Mary's act. Apparently it meant: She cannot do more – she has done *all she could*. There is encouragement in these words for all of us. However brethren may criticize us, if we are **[R5231 : page 135]** sure that our hearts have been loyal to the Lord, we may be sure that He will say of us sympathetically, "It is not any great thing that they can do, but they are doing what they can." As the Heavenly Father looks down upon us, He must see that we are doing very little. It is comforting, however, for us to know that the Heavenly Father is pleased to look down upon us, and that He sees that we are trying to do what we can.

This text should be of special encouragement to the sisters. They have special opportunities, in a more private manner, of ministering to the Body of Christ. Of course it does not mean that the brethren are not to minister to the Body of Christ – to wash one another's feet, etc. – but it points specially to the privilege of the sisters – the anointing of the Head and the feet.

ANTITYPICAL PERFUME ON ANTITYPICAL FEET

We of today are in a very special sense the feet members. This expression is specially applicable to those who are living now – the last members of the Body of Christ, the Church. The expression, "anointing the feet," seems to call attention to the fact that any service done to any member of the Body of Christ will be esteemed a service to Him. He will say of all who thus serve Him that they have done what they could.

Mary's conduct in this case, and her deep humility, are in strange contrast with that of the Apostles on the next day. When they had assembled for the Passover Supper, they felt their own importance so much that they were not willing to be servants to each other. They were going to be kings on the Throne. Therefore they were not going to wash each other's feet; and not only so, but they were not going to wash the Master's feet. Then the Master washed *their feet*, and set them an example.

This is a special time for seeking to honor one another, to serve one another and to strengthen each other's hearts. The perfume itself is a beautiful picture of love and devotion, and illustrates the manner in which we can pour perfume on each other by speaking graciously to each other, and by seeking to see the best that there is in one another. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." – Ephesians 5:1,2.

A DISCIPLE'S PRAYER

Loving Master, I am thine;
Joined with Thee I may resign
All I have that is of earth,

Yet I know it has no worth,
But in it I think and live,
And I have naught else to give.
Even this Thou didst give me
As a test that Thou mightst see
Whether I love these things more,
Counting up my little store
As of wealth that can compare
With the crown that I may wear
If I gladly give it all,
Letting my ambitions fall,
Toppling as the flames arise
Through my willing sacrifice.
Honored am I thus to be
Called to heirship, Lord, with Thee,
And my seeming pause was due
To the overwhelming view
Of Thy dazzling purity,
And my own depravity,
In contrasting the exchange
Of human life for spirit gains;
Holiness to replace sin,
Peace and joy where grief has been,
And if faithful in the strife
The reward, Immortal Life!
Trusting, humbly do I pray:
Keep me faithful day by day!

– MARY CHRISTIANCY.

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