

Cheltenham  
Ps Rob Buckingham  
27 & 28 May 2017

## LET THE FUTURE BEGIN

### Message Notes

*Revelation 2:4-5, "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first..."*

I'm coming back to the start  
Where you found me  
I'm coming back to your heart  
Now I surrender  
Take me this is all I can bring

You'll never stop loving us  
No matter how far we run  
You'll never give up on us  
All of heaven shouts let the future begin  
Let the future begin

It's good to celebrate the past but just don't get stuck there...

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So let's go back to the past to read a story that still impacts the present and the future...

Text: Mark 14:1-11

(Matthew 26:6-13; Luke 7:36-50 & John 12:1-8)

*Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. <sup>2</sup>“But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.”*

*<sup>3</sup> While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.*

*<sup>4</sup> Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? <sup>5</sup> It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.*

*<sup>6</sup> “Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>7</sup> The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup> She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. <sup>9</sup> Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”*

Let the future begin!

The setting of the story two days before Passover (v.1-2)

Meanwhile, a few kilometers away in Bethany, Jesus and His disciples are enjoying a meal in the home of “Simon the leper” (former leper) a Pharisee who had probably been healed by Jesus

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### **The Event**

(v.3) A woman called Mary, who had lived a sinful life in Bethany, came into the room with an alabaster jar with half a litre of pure nard, a very expensive perfume. She broke the seal on the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus' head as He was reclining at the table. As she stood behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she lets down her hair to wipe His feet, kiss them and poured perfume on them. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Phillip Keller writes in his book *Rabboni*, “*The special rite of perfuming the head and body was a rare ritual reserved only for royalty. It was the most lofty honor that could be bestowed by a common person. Jesus recognized this and so did those around Him. It was a significant moment of momentous meaning.*”

Pure nard was aromatic oil made from dried leaves of a rare Himalayan plant. The alabaster jar used to contain this expensive

perfume was also a thing of beauty and value. The whole thing was said to be worth "more than a year's wages"

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I don't think that Mary was calculating the value of her gift when she carried out her act of extravagant worship. She simply took the most precious thing she owned and spent it all on Jesus.

William Barclay, *"Love is not love if it nicely calculates the cost. It gives its all and its only regret is that it has not still more to give."*

Not only did Mary break a jar she also broke traditions...

A Jewish woman never reclined at a table full of men. She would prepare the meal and serve it to the men, but would then withdraw and eat in another room!

A woman would never uncover or let her hair down in public

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## The Response

*<sup>4</sup> Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? <sup>5</sup> It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly*

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The magnificence of the moment was marred by the murmur of some small-minded men. Mary had broken the whole thing - surely a little dab would do! This mentality has dogged the church ever since. People who think that the bare essentials are enough have criticized Christians over the centuries for their generous worship.

## The Legacy

*<sup>6</sup> "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>7</sup> The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup> She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. <sup>9</sup> Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."*

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And this wasn't a final act by Mary. Sometimes we think of a legacy as a last act but we should change our thinking from what we might leave to what we can still achieve!

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The apostle Paul summed up this kind of generosity like this...

*2 Corinthians 9:9, "As it is written, He [the benevolent person] scatters abroad; He gives to the poor; His deeds of justice and goodness and kindness and benevolence will go on and endure forever!" [AMP]*

Let the future begin!