



## Life Group Study Notes

### “Palm Sunday: The Right Response”

Ps. James Lowe - March 25, 2018

#### Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- Who is someone you admire because they overcame hardship?
- Who is one person you've helped to get out of a tough situation?
- What is one hardship God has helped you to overcome?

#### Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at [www.bethelworld.org](http://www.bethelworld.org)

Matthew 26:1-13 ESV

*When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."*

*Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."*

This woman stands forever as an example of how we should respond to Jesus.

Women had a diminished standing in the ancient world compared to today. Her boldness to come to Jesus is admirable. This is even more so the case given that she had lived a very sinful life, and that her life was apparently well known to the community. She would've been viewed by most people as an outcast.

She lavished upon Jesus what was presumably all her wealth. Given that she had lived a “sinful” life, which likely indicated a life of promiscuity and perhaps even prostitution, her act of devotion is even more poignant. It is almost certain that she would not be able to earn enough to replace what was likely her life’s savings or inheritance. It’s implied that she was turning from her sinful lifestyle, so prostitution or sexual manipulation was out of the question as a means to earn money. And her reputation would’ve kept others from giving her any respectable work opportunity.

Jesus didn’t ask for her to do what she did. Her gift was a voluntary and extravagant act of devotion. She didn’t pour *some* of her expensive ointment on Jesus, but instead gave it all as an act of deep gratitude. She believed with all her heart that God had forgiven her because Jesus had forgiven her. She rightly adored him. He had restored her value, her dignity, her sense of self-worth. She knew that God still loved her, and that he desired a relationship with her.

Everyone of us is also a sinner in need of God’s forgiveness. Our debt before God is enormous and impossible for us to redeem. The more we correctly perceive God’s holiness, the more we will be aware of the true extent of our own sinfulness. When we consider that Jesus, knowing the full depths of our sinfulness, willingly died for our sins so that we might be forgiven, it should precipitate a response from us that is like the woman we read about. If we truly understand all these things, we should be deeply grateful to Jesus and should also lavish him with love and devotion. Our entire lives should be given to him without reservation or condition.

The disciples on the other hand are reported as being indignant. Ironically, those who were closest to Jesus failed to discern what was going on in the woman’s heart. Nor did they understand Jesus’ perspective even though they had lived and travelled with him for a long time. They were highly critical of the woman’s actions.

Sometimes people will likewise be critical of our decisions and actions which are borne of deep gratitude and devotion toward Christ. We should not allow such opinions to sway us, no matter who expresses them. Jesus rejected his disciples’ view. He defended the woman and praised her, and used the occasion to teach his disciples about heartfelt devotion to God. We can be certain that a great reward was laid up for her in heaven because of what she did and why she did it.

### **Discussion (10-15 minutes)**

**Choose one of the points below, and discuss how the lesson applies to our lives.**

- What has Jesus done for you?
- What is one of the worst things you’ve done that Jesus has forgiven? (Just tell what you are comfortable relating.)
- How are Jesus’ love and mercy affecting you at this time in your life?

### **Prayer (10-15 minutes)**

**Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.**

- Thank God for his extravagant forgiveness.
- Ask God for a deepened revelation of the depths of his love, mercy, and grace given us through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Ask God for opportunities to tell others about God’s forgiveness and mercy.