

You know what they say...No good deed goes unpunished. In the case of this woman, goes unscolded. They viciously pounce on her for doing a beautiful thing to Jesus. She breaks open a flask of expensive ointment, pouring out the contents upon Jesus' head. This ointment is easily worth an entire year's salary. What love she must have for Jesus. What shock and what anger she causes among those who are watching. They are indignant it says. They are furious. How dare she do such a thing. "What a waste!" they say to themselves; to pour out this ointment on Jesus. They appear to be ready to take her out and stone her to death, so angry are they at her.

But Jesus speaks, and He scolds them. *"Leave her alone! Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to Me... She has anointed My body beforehand for burial."*

Jesus did not ask for this. He did not command nor encourage the woman to do this. This was all her. It was her idea. Her ointment, her act of love. Yet we know that she did this in response to Jesus' love for her.

In those days, people did not just go around emptying out expensive ointment over the heads of strangers. Not even over the heads of friends. This kind of thing just did not happen.

Until now. And what this woman did to Jesus has been picked up and carried on across the ages, so that in every generation since then, those who love Jesus as this woman did, have shown their love by wasting their ointment on Him.

It's what you do, isn't it? You waste your ointment on Jesus. Rather than giving your offerings to His church, which really is the same as pouring them upon His head, you could be doing productive things with your money. That is what the enemies of Jesus would tell you. It's what they told the woman so, of course, they would tell you the same thing. And perhaps they have. Has anyone ever become angry at you for wasting your ointment on Jesus?

Now what if the main feature in our story was reversed? What if it was Jesus who poured out the flask of ointment on the woman? Would those watching still have been angry?

The answer hangs from the cross. This is what they did to Jesus, so angry were they at Him. And why? For wasting His costly ointment on sinners such as this woman. Two days after our story in St. Mark, Jesus showed His love for the woman and for you. He was Himself the flask which the soldiers broke open with their nails and their spear. And Jesus' blood, like precious ointment, was poured out for all sinners.

And just so we're clear on this, Jesus' precious ointment was poured upon your head when you were baptized. What a beautiful thing Jesus did for you. So that Satan now is told by Jesus to leave you alone, to stop troubling you. For in pouring the water of baptism upon your head, your sins are washed away. And though Satan is angry, he cannot accuse you and condemn you because you are forgiven.

What this woman did to Jesus, Jesus did to you in your baptism. She prepared His body beforehand for burial. And so, in pouring over your head the precious ointment of your baptism into Christ, He prepares you beforehand for your burial. For now you are able to fear the grave as

little as you fear your bed. You have the assurance that God is at peace with you, for your sins are forgiven. Your baptism has done everything necessary to prepare you for burial, because you are baptized into Christ Jesus.

Every time Christ Jesus is poured over the head of a sinner in Holy Baptism, it makes Satan furious. What a beautiful thing this is. Go in peace, dear forgiven one. You are covered, now and always, with the most precious ointment of all – Jesus Himself. Amen.