

The Glory of Strange Women

Matthew 26:1-16

Pastor Peter Hiatt

October 30, 2005

[The worship band plays, "I Don't Know How to Love Him."]

I Don't Know How to Love Him

(Jesus Christ Superstar)

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber

Lyrics by Tim Rice

I don't know how to love him
What to do, how to move him
I've been changed, yes really changed
In these past few days
When I've seen myself I seem like someone else

I don't know how to take this
I don't see why he moves me
He's a man. He's just a man
And I've had so many men before
In very many ways He's just one more

Should I bring him down?
Should I scream and shout?
Should I speak of love? Let my feelings out?
I never thought I'd come to this
What's it all about?

Don't you think it's rather funny
I should be in this position?
I'm the one who's always been
So calm so cool
No lover's fool
Running every show
He scares me so

I never thought I'd come to this
What's it all about?
Yet, if he said he loved me
I'd be lost, I'd be frightened
I couldn't cope, just couldn't cope
I'd turn my head. I'd back away
I wouldn't want to know
He scares me so
I want him so
I love him so

Lord, now we know you're not just a man, but we still get awfully confused on how to love you and just what it is you want. Would you help us to love You? May this financial offering be love for you. May this sermon be love for you. May our lives be love for you. In Jesus' name, amen.

About 20 years ago, I took my father and best friend to Tijuana, Mexico. Soon my youth group from Los Angeles would be building homes for the desperately poor living in the abandoned city dump. I met a woman there who'd just given birth under a piece of carpet slung over a rope. From the dump you could see the suburbs of San Diego. For \$1,000 we could build one family a home.

Well, on our way back to Los Angeles, we decided to stop at the Crystal Cathedral. I told you once how we were met by this church lady who took us on a tour. At one point, she showed us this incredible organ. I can't remember the specifications, but it was something like the most expensive organ in the United States. She told us the cost, then with an immense smile she said, "But, of course, it isn't our organ. It belongs to Jesus."

a strange attitude
toward me.

She really loved me when I didn't seem beautiful and was a pain.

Well, all I'm saying is women are strange. Amen? And I wanted to grab this woman at the Crystal Cathedral and yell, "Why this waste?!"

Matthew 26:1-5,

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."

[Peter sings...] "The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed." That's Handel's Messiah, and it's Psalm 2:2.

In Israel the king was anointed, and the high priest was anointed. In Hebrew, "anointed" is pronounced "mashiyach." The anointed is literally "the mashiyach," "the messiah," and in Greek "the Christ."

Next verse,

Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,† [which, by the

way, was a scandal in itself] *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 [apolia]?"*

That's normally translated "destruction" or "perdition." Sorry if this attitude offends you, but I believe the most accurate translation of the disciples' statement is, "What the hell?"

You see, this was scandalous for many reasons not the least of which was who was doing this anointing. Moses anointed Aaron, the high priest. Samuel anointed King Saul and King David, and now a strange woman was anointing Jesus.

In that society, women weren't allowed to eat with a male guest. It was improper for them to even speak in public. Everyday a Jewish male thanked God that he had not been created a gentile, a slave, or a woman. And now a woman was anointing Jesus in public, and this was not the first time.

According to Luke, earlier in Jesus' ministry at a Pharisee's house, a prostitute anointed Jesus' feet with tears and perfumed ointment (ointment she had undoubtedly used to ply her trade), and then she let down her hair and wiped his feet.

Just a few days before this anointing in Simon the leper's house, according to John, Mary the sister of Lazarus anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair.

More liberal scholars say it must have been just one incident written into these various occasions. I suspect it happened, like, all the time. At least three times.

You know, Jesus' disciples were male, and yet there was like this pack of strange women that followed Jesus wherever He went, ministering to Him and His disciples, "Providing for them out of their means." (Luke 8:3) That would have been costly, risky, scandalous, and strange.

And now when things were really getting stressful, this unnamed woman dumps a fortune of perfumed oil on Jesus' head... not just His feet, His head.

Mark records that it was worth 300 denarii, a year's fair wage. What is that, \$50,000 perhaps \$100,000 dollars? About the price of a fine pipe organ.

Jesus had just told the story of the sheep and goats and before that, the parable of the talents. How could this be a good investment of talents? We're talking enough perfume to build 100 houses in the Tijuana dump... enough money to feed the masses, start a revolution, inaugurate the Kingdom. Jesus had said, "The Kingdom is at hand." The Kingdom.

At this point it appears the disciples were all Zionists. I meant by that, they hoped that Jesus would lead a political revolution, overthrowing the Roman oppressors, and establishing a just Hebrew society and homeland—the Kingdom.

In some form, I suppose, everyone's been a Zionist at some point:

- Americans pursue the American dream... home of the free and the brave, like Zion.
- Moslems pursue the Nation of Islam... submission and peace, Jeru-salem (city of peace), like Zion.

To Judas and the disciples, Jesus was *good for something*.
 He was good for healing the sick,
 feeding the poor,
 and building the Kingdom.

To Judas and the disciples, Jesus was *good for something*.
 To this woman, He was *just good*. He was *beautiful*.

You know, all the disciples abandoned Jesus the next night when He no longer worked and was no longer *good for something*, but that pack of strange women stayed.

They were at His cross.

Why?

They tried to anoint His dead body.

Why? What's it good for?

They were at His tomb.

Why?

By visiting His tomb, they risked being murdered and raped by Roman soldiers. This strange woman risked all and surrendered all—dignity and treasure.

Around the world, persecuted believers gather in small groups to worship and take communion. They risk imprisonment and death just to be in the presence of a savior who appears to be not working.

Is it a waste?

What good is that?

Last time I told you of my friend who was thrown in a box with a corpse, and how Christ revealed that *that* broken body was *His* body and *that* shed blood was *His* blood. Your heart may have been screaming, “What’s that good for?! And why would God allow it?!”

I'm not totally sure, but Jesus revealed He was with her. He had freed her from that hell. And by choosing to remember in faith, she not only saw He was with her, but she chose to be with Him...

visiting Him,
 naked, sick, and imprisoned in her hell,
 visiting Him,
 as He bears the sins of this fallen world.

And now she'll say, "Oh, He's good. He's good. He is so good. He's beautiful." She anoints His head with praise.

As she and Susan and I visited all those old places last year, we visited an apartment where she had lived, and she reminded us of why it was significant.

As a young woman, she had fled that state and had gone to another where she had prayed to receive Christ. At one point she went to a seminar led by a famous Christian teacher...

You know, we Christians say, "Everything comes by grace," but then we teach it comes by our works. "*We* build Zion; *we* build the city; *we* build the church; *we* build our lives." And so "just follow these formulas and rules, and you can make Jesus work for you."

Like a tool for successful living.
 Like an insurance policy.
 Like a security system.
 Like a slave.

Well, she went to this seminar, and the speaker seemed to say that if she did certain things, like forgive her

parents and submit to her father, Jesus would work for her and “save her city.”

So she moved back. Her father found her at this apartment.

At the door he said, “I’m sorry.”

She let him in in order to forgive and submit.

He beat her, raped her, and left her bleeding on the floor with a broken rib.

She said, “Peter, this is where I denied Jesus. I denied Him because He didn’t work. I thought... I thought He was weaker than Satan.”

I said, “But you came back to Him.”

She said, “Yes.”

I said, “Do you see what that means? You loved Him when He seemed good for nothing. You loved Him when He didn’t seem to work. You loved Him naked, broken, and hanging on a cross.”

She said, “Yeah, I guess so. You know, when I was beaten and raped again, I didn’t deny Him, for I figured that even if He was weaker than Satan, I wanted Him for He was good.” Not good for something, just good. “Kalos” in Greek, beautiful.

Well, the truth of the matter is He was not weaker than Satan, and He was working for her all the time.

He was there.

But He didn’t just want to be

her tool,

her insurance policy,

her security system,

her formula for success,

or her ticket to Zion.

He didn't want to be
 her Allah,
 her Buddha, or
 her Moses.

He wanted to be so much more, even if for a moment it
 required that He appear to be so much less.

Well, now she's seen Him, and I have too.

We've seen Jesus utterly crush the ancient dragon.
 All power and all authority belongs to Jesus.
 Principalities and powers bow down before Him.
 Angels constantly sing His praise.
 Every particle in the cosmos is continually upheld by His
 Word of power.

But my friend,
 that strange woman,
 loved Him just for Him when He appeared
 good for nothing... just good, beautiful.

But the disciples say,

*"Why the 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 [a 'kalos
 ergon,' good work]."*

For the entire Gospel of Matthew, Jesus has been
 talking about good works and outside of Jesus this is the
 first one we've seen. This strange woman does a "kalos
 ergon" to Jesus.

There are two words in Greek translated as “good”:
 “Agathos” and “kalos.”

“Agathos” suggests what is ethically good, as in
 good for something.

“Kalos” suggests what is intrinsically good—good
 for nothing, just good—and so “kalos” is often translated
 “beautiful.”

Next verse, a beautiful thing...

*For you always have the poor with you, but
 you will not always have me. [Yet at the end
 of Matthew Jesus says, “And lo, I am with
 you always.” He’s with us, but maybe we’re
 not always with Him.] In pouring this
 ointment on my body, she has done it to
 prepare me for burial.*

Burial...

This strange woman anointed Jesus,
 but not because He was King,
 and not because He was high priest,
 but because He would be buried... dead.

Dead is, like, good for nothing.

The body is broken;
 the blood is shed,
 like, good for nothing...
 but good, beautiful.

A crucified King. A high priest who descends into death. I
 doubt that she could comprehend all that that means, but
 she could recognize beauty.

She sees the beautiful One, then she does the beautiful thing—limitlessly, extravagantly, unselfconsciously—as if it were her nature.

“Truly I say to you,” says Jesus, “wherever this Gospel is proclaimed in the whole world [cosmos] what she has done will also be told in memory of her [or as a memorial from her].”

“In all the cosmos... ”
 as if her good work,
 her beautiful thing,
 is eternal,
 like an “eternal weight of glory.”

Eternal...
 and the disciples called it a waste.
 Judas called it a waste.

Remember what Jesus called Judas? “The son of waste,” (John 17:12) “the son of apolia,” perdition, waste (same word). All Judas’ efforts to save the city, build the church, build Zion, and feed the poor... a waste.

And did you hear what Jesus said? “The poor you will have with you always.” It’s Deuteronomy 15:11, “^dFor the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand.” Feed them, clothe them, but they will be with you always.

Dang! What kind of a fund-raiser is that? “Give to help the poor because we’ll always have the poor.”

The poor you will always have for all time. Poor is a broad word. It covers all types of poverty... all need. So Church...

- You will never have enough money.
- You will never have enough children's workers.
- You will never finish preaching the Gospel.
- You will never produce enough clean water, Tom... never make enough electricity, John.
- You will never build Zion, produce Utopia, not in this world, not in time, not you.
- Like the world has been subjected to futility, and you can't fix it!

You may say, "Gosh, isn't that rather defeatist?"

For us, yes. We're defeated.

But what about God? Is it defeatist for God?

Yes, if you think His purpose is to grow economic prosperity in this world. But no, if you think His purpose is to grow mercy, and faith, and hope, and love. For where does that stuff grow? Only in poverty. Only in need. Only in the broken soil of our pain, dirt, and shame... like an empty womb into which God speaks His seed, His sperma, His Word of Mercy which bears the fruit of mercy.

This woman sees mercy, receives mercy, and bears mercy, as if it were the painful fruit of her own womb. She bears mercy, and the mercy is worship, and it is eternal...

So the means are the ends,
and the end is only the means.
The verbs are nouns, and the nouns are verbs.

People speculate about his motives. Some think He just wanted the money. Some think he wanted to build Zion another way. Some think he was trying to force Jesus' hand and start the revolution, and that's why he killed himself when he realized Jesus would be executed. Whatever the case, Judas anointed himself savior and decided he'd fix things.

We took a family vacation with my friend, the excavator. We went to the Grand Canyon.

As we stood on the edge I said, "Wow, that's beautiful!"

And he said, "I could fix that (fix that hole in the ground)."

We took a family vacation with my friend the plumber. We went to Niagara Falls.

As we stood below the falls I said, "Wow, that's beautiful."

And he said, "I could fix that."

We stand at the foot of the cross, and what do we say? "I could fix that..."

for it's my job to end suffering, poverty, and pain... to build Zion."

Do you think, "I could fix that?" Or do you drop to your knees, longing to anoint His head with praise for He is beautiful beyond description?

Well, Judas couldn't see the beauty, only the waste.

Next verse,

Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

According to Exodus 21, 30 shekels was the price of a slave. To Judas, Jesus was a means to an end... like a slave, like a thing, like a concubine or prostitute.

And maybe that's why so many women understood Jesus. They were poor, treated as things, used as concubines, sold as prostitutes.

I looked, and in all the Gospels I could find no bad women that related to Jesus (Herod's wife was petty mostly, but she never met Jesus). No bad women. I mean, they all like Jesus, but they were strange...

the Samaritan woman,
 the Canaanite woman,
 the woman with the hemorrhage,
 forgiven prostitutes,
 women from Herod's household,
 women at His feet,
 women anointing His head,
 women at the cross,
 and women the very first on Easter morning.

All good, except perhaps Martha, and that was because she was busy with much serving. She had a cause. She was seizing control rather than submitting to grace. Seems to

me she was acting like a man, a sinful man. Acting like a man, and to us, she seems least strange.

You know, the differences between men and women scare us because in a fallen world they often lead to pain. So in America we try to make all people just the same, and to protect women, we try to turn them into men. I think that's a tragedy.

For God has written the Gospel into our very flesh as male and female. "It refers to Christ and the church," writes Paul.

Christ is the Eschatos, ultimate Adam, and we other Adams (men) are called to reflect His glory in a unique way through sacrifice. Jesus is Adam, and the church is Eve. Women exhibit who we all most deeply are. Paul writes, "Woman came from man [the church is made at Christ's bleeding side], even so man also comes through woman" (1 Corinthians 11:12). Christ is born of the church and through the church. And men, I think that also means our masculinity can only come through femininity. I mean a deep surrender to Jesus, Messiah.

Well, Judas and bad men wanted to be the Messiah.
The strange woman wanted to love the Messiah.

To Judas, Jesus was *good for something*... 30 shekels.
To the strange woman, Jesus was just good,
and so she dumped a fortune over His head.

Judas worshipped a cause,
and so betrayed *the* Cause of all things.
Judas worshipped a kingdom,
and so betrayed the King of all kings.

Whenever we worship a cause or a kingdom,
 we betray the King.
 The strange woman didn't worship a cause or a kingdom,
 she worshipped Jesus.

Even when He appeared to be good for nothing.
 Even when He was naked and weak.
 Even as He hung on the cross,
 especially as He hung on a cross.

 She saw Him.

The only one in this whole fallen world to see Him, and so
 she loved Him when no one else would:

 on crosses,
 in catacombs,
 in prison cells,
 in lepers and beggars,
 at great expense and pain.

 She adored His body broken and blood shed.

She loved Him when He appeared to be good for nothing,
 and lo and behold, He was good for everything, an entire
 new world.

 The strange woman loved Him when He was
 vulnerable, exposed, and naked, and lo and behold, she got
 pregnant. Pregnant with life, eternal life. She bore eternal
 fruit, some of which you are.

 The strange woman is the church.

 She doesn't create the city. She doesn't make Zion.
 She is Zion, and she bears Zion. She is the New Jerusalem.

 In the Revelation, John sees her coming down out
 of heaven from God, as a bride adorned for her husband.

As she comes down John says, “She has the very glory of God.”

The glory of the strange woman is that she sees the glory of God, and thus, reflects the glory of God... Jesus. The glory of the strange woman is the glory of the strange man... Jesus.

There are all sorts of strange women in the Gospels, and they all have names or titles or occupations except this one, the night before Jesus’ passion begins.

She’s archetypical. I believe she is to be us. We’re the bride of Christ, and when we worship we become Mother Church, impregnated with life.

[Peter shows a picture from the Passion of the Christ. Mary is holding Jesus’ body just after He was taken down from the cross.]

Last year I showed you this picture of a strange woman. It’s Mother Mary holding Jesus—body broken, blood shed. Mother Mary is a picture of Mother Church. So this is a picture of us, especially when we come to the table in worship, for when we do, we minister to Jesus at His cross for we come to His cross at this table.

This is called a worship service, and Jesus is the one we serve. We are His bride.

Last year I preached a sermon titled, The Temptation of Superman’s Girlfriend. Her temptation was to domesticate the superman. This sermon could be titled, The Ministry of Superman’s Girlfriend (or perhaps Spiderman’s girlfriend).

In any case, I think this is who we are. Mary Jane Watson has just run from her former marriage as a bride adorned for her groom. She runs to the dingy apartment of Peter Parker in spite of the risk and pain.

[Peter shows a film clip from Spiderman 2...]

MJ: I know there will be risks, but I want to face them with you. It's wrong that we should only be half alive, half of ourselves. I love you. So here I am, standing in your doorway. I've always been standing in your doorway. Isn't it about time, somebody saved your life? [Long pause...] Well, say something.

Peter: Thank you, Mary Jane Watson.

Peter and MJ kiss until they hear sirens in the distance.

MJ: Go get 'em, tiger.

We then see Spiderman swinging from building to building and shouting with joy as he saves the world.

This is the doorway. Jesus isn't a tiger; He is a lion.

A biblical word for "kiss" is "proskuneo." It's normally translated "worship."

As MJ knew, we don't save the savior as He saved us, but we minister to Him as He saves the world (we minister His own mercy).

Only we the church truly see Him... Him, not just Spiderman, but Peter Parker, not just God almighty but a baby in a manger, a man on a cross. It hurts to see Him, but the beauty eclipses the pain and gives birth to life.

We are the strange woman (a Biblical word for "strange" is "holy").

So on the night *before* the night He was betrayed Jesus rested in and relished the loving touch of that holy woman as she anointed His head with fragrant oil. The next day, as they flogged Him, beat Him, abused and crucified Him, as He saved the world, He would smell that perfumed oil.

Bride of Christ, as Jesus saves the world, you're called to anoint His body with love.

For on the night that Jesus was betrayed, He took bread and He broke it saying, "This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And in the same way after supper He took the cup and He said, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me."

So if you want Him, if you want to minister to Him, we invite you to come to the table, tear off a piece of the bread, dip it in the cup. Purple cups are juice; black cups are wine. They're both fire. But worship Him, amen.

[The worship band plays "Everything's Alright."]

Everything's Alright

(Jesus Christ Superstar)

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber,

Lyrics by Tim Rice

Mary: Try not to get worried, try not to turn on to
problems that upset you, oh, don't you know
everything's all right, yes, everything's fine

and we want you to sleep well tonight.
 Let the world turn without you tonight.
 If we try, we'll get by, so forget all about us tonight.
 (everything's all right, yes, everything's fine)

Mary: Sleep, and I shall soothe you, calm you and
 anoint you
 myrrh for your hot forehead, oh, then you'll feel
 everything's all right, yes, everything's fine
 and it's cool and the ointment's sweet
 for the fire in your head and feet.
 Close your eyes, close your eyes and relax
 think of nothing tonight.

Judas: Woman, your fine ointment, brand new and
 expensive
 could have been saved for the poor.
 Why has it been wasted? We could have raised
 maybe
 three hundred silver pieces or more.
 People who are hungry, people who are starving
 matter more than your feet and hair!

Mary: Try not to get worried, try not to turn on to
 problems that upset you, oh, don't you know
 everything's all right, yes, everything's fine
 and we want you to sleep well tonight.
 Let the world turn without you tonight.
 If we try, we'll get by, so forget all about us tonight.

Mary: Sleep, and I shall soothe you, calm you and
 anoint you
 myrrh for your hot forehead, oh, then you'll feel
 everything's all right, yes, everything's fine
 and it's cool and the ointment's sweet
 for the fire in your head and feet.
 Close your eyes, close your eyes and relax think of
 nothing tonight.
 Close your eyes, close your eyes and relax.
 Close your eyes, close your eyes and relax.

Close your eyes, close your eyes and relax.
Close your eyes, close your eyes and relax.
Close your eyes, close your eyes and relax.
Close your eyes, close your eyes and relax.

Don't leave. I have to ask you a question. Did you do it? Did you do a kalos ergon? Did you do a good work? Did you do a beautiful thing?

I think maybe for a few moments at a couple of the services, I did. I adored Him and forgot about me. It's like the edge of ecstasy.

So did you do a kalos ergon? I know something about Him. He suffered and died on that cross once and for all, and yet He comes to us throughout space and time. So tomorrow, He'll be there. When babies are sacrificed, He'll be there. When little girls are tortured, He'll be there. As soldiers breath their last and their blood spills out on sand somewhere over in Iraq, He'll be there. When old men take their last breath in their hospital bed or their living room, He'll be there. And if they see Him, they'll rise with Him, but He'll be there.

And so if you're a guy, maybe it means something like this, you look at His hands and His feet, and you say, "Oh, Jesus, you're my Superman. You're Spiderman. You're like John Wayne and John Rambo all rolled up in one. You're awesome! And next time, can I go with you, be a man like you?"

If you're a woman, maybe it means grabbing His head and holding it tightly to your chest, anointing His

head with kisses and fragrant oil saying, “Everything will be all right.”

You know, we sang that song, “Everything’s Alright.” Some people may write letters and say, “Part of that was theologically inaccurate.” And you may have thought to yourself, “It was strange.”

It was strange. Do you know why? The person singing the song was concerned about how Jesus felt, not about how she felt. So many of our worship songs are all about how we feel. It’s strange to sing about how He feels. Strange... to minister to Him, to serve Him.

And by way of benediction... Do you know what “benediction” means? It means a blessing, and I always “benedict” you. Let’s “benedict” Him. He’s the One we’re here to serve, right? And so lift your hands with me, and see if you can kind of make these words your words, “Oh, Jesus, we love You. We adore You. You are our Superman. You are the eschatos man. You are it. You are the most beautiful One. You are the beautiful One, and Lord Jesus, we’re beginning to see You. We’re beginning to see how good You are, and so we say to You, Your church says to You, ‘Go get ‘em, tiger. Go get ‘em.’ You’re the Lion of Judah. You’re the savior. You’re the One who bears the sins of the world, and we love You. We adore You, Lord Jesus, amen.”

See ya. There are prayer people in the back. They would love to pray with you.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

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.”

Matthew 26:1-5

The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his anointed.

Psalms 2:2

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.

Matthew 26:6-7 and also Mark 14:3

Women’s participation in public worship was limited. In Herod’s temple they were confined to an outer court fifteen steps below the men’s. . . . Rabbinic writings attest other restrictions. Women did not count as part of the *minyan* (quorum for a congregation); by custom they were not called upon to read lessons at worship: they could not act as legal witnesses; they could not pronounce the blessing at meals; they were discouraged from studying the law, the special privilege and delight of a Jew. Rabbi Eliezer is reported to have said, “If a man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law it is as though he taught her lechery.” . . . Every day a Jewish male thanked God that he had not been created a gentile, slave, or woman. . . . Women did not eat with male guests, and men were discouraged from talking with women. Jose ben Johanan (1st Century B.C.) advised, “Talk not much with womankind; such talk, even with one’s wife could lead to Gehenna (Mish. *Aboth* i. 5). Conversation with a woman in a public place was particularly scandalous, even if she were a member of one’s own family.

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ [the Messiah, the anointed]?”

John 4:27-29

And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. . . . Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

Luke 7:37-38, 7:44-46

Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”

John 12:3-5

To further study all of the STRANGE WOMEN of the Gospels, see: Matthew 1:3-5, Luke 1:35-38, Luke 7:12-13, Luke 8:1-3, Matthew 8:15, Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:41-42, Matthew 15:25-28, Luke 10:41-42, Luke 13:10-14, Luke 18:1-8, John 8:1-11, Matthew 28:8-10, John 16:21-22, Matthew 12:49-50, Galatians 4:19, 1 Peter 3:3-5

And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste [apolia]? For this could have been sold for a large sum [Three

hundred denarii according to Mark 14:5. A denarii was one day's wage.] and given to the poor.”

Matthew 26:8-9

I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction [apolia], that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

John 17:12

When Christ dies on a cross, let no man ask, “Why this waste?”

George Buttrick

But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing [“good works” - KJV, “good deed” - NAS] to me.

Matthew 26:10

Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker Movement admitted to the folly of her soup kitchen: “What a delightful thing it is,” she said, “to be boldly profligate, to ignore the price of coffee and go on serving the long line of destituted men who come to us, good coffee and the finest of bread.”

Philip Yancey

This thing, if it were not for Jesus, would not be worth doing. The minister of Social Welfare is a Hindu gentleman in New Delhi. One day we were talking and he said, “You and I are doing the same social work. But there is a great difference between you and us. We are doing it for something and you are doing it to somebody.” And I think that is all. That explains the reason for our work.

Mother Teresa, Words to Love By

I asked for three graces of God's gift. The first was vivid perception of Christ's Passion, the second was bodily sickness and the third was for God to give me three wounds. . . . I thought how I wished I had been there at the crucifixion with Mary Magdalene and with others who were Christ's dear friends, that I might have seen in the flesh the Passion of our Lord which he suffered for me, so that I could have suffered with him as others did who loved him.

Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love

There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Matthew 27:55-56

The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

Luke 23:55-24:2

For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me [Dt. 15:1-11].

Matthew 26:11

And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20b

“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.” Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Matthew 26:12-16

If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels^sof silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

Exodus 21:32

Certainly we do not want men to allow their Christianity to flow over into their political life, for the establishment of anything like a really just society would be a major disaster. On the other hand we do want, and want very much, to make men treat Christianity as a means preferably, of course, as a means to their own advancement, but failing that, as a means to anything—even to social justice. The thing to do is

to get a man at first to value social justice as a thing which the Enemy [God] demands, and then work him to the stage at which he values Christianity because it may produce social justice. For the Enemy will not be used as a convenience. Men or nations who think they can revive the Faith in order to make a good society might just as well think they can use the stairs of heaven as a short cut to the nearest chemist's shop.

C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters

One cannot serve God as one serves another Majesty who, humanly speaking, has a cause. Action is indeed true worship, but it is true worship only when it is freed from all busyness, as if God had a cause. To give up everything—not because God must make use of you as an instrument, no, by no means—to give up everything! This is what it means to worship and serve God.

Soren Kierkegaard

I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other.

Isaiah 42:8

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. . . . And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

Revelation 21:1-3, 21:10-11a (NKJV)

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent because the people with you care for it no more than for a tin can in the ditch; to hear a good joke and find no one to

share it with. . . . If it were possible for a created soul fully (I mean, up to the full measure conceivable in a finite being) to “appreciate,” that is to love and delight in, the worthiest object of all, and simultaneously at every moment to give this delight perfect expression, then that soul would be in supreme beauty. It is along these lines that I find it easiest to understand the Christian doctrine that “Heaven” is a state in which angels now, and men hereafter, are perpetually employed in praising God. . . . To see what the doctrine really means, we must suppose ourselves to be in perfect love with God—drunk with, drowned in, dissolved by, that delight which, far from remaining pent up within ourselves as incommunicable, hence hardly tolerable, bliss, flows out from us incessantly again in effortless and perfect expression, our joy no more separable from the praise in which it liberates and utters itself than the brightness a mirror receives is separable from the brightness it sheds. The Scotch catechism says that man’s chief end is “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.

C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms

© 2005 Peter Hiet

Lookout Mountain Community Church

534 Commons Drive, Golden CO 80401

Phone: 303-526-9287 Fax: 303-526-9361

E-mail: info@lomcc.org