

Service 4 - Serving God Himself

The ultimate purpose of the Gospel is to win souls, to inspire us to offer the most precious and valuable things to Jesus, and to serve God Himself.

1. Mark 14:3-9, Mary Anoints Jesus

- Mark 14, Matthew 26, and John 12, all describe the same event: Mary anointing Jesus with perfume. This is different from the story in Luke 7 about a sinful woman. From John 12, we learn that the woman who anointed Jesus was Mary, the sister of Martha. When Mary poured the perfume, Judas Iscariot was the first to complain, and soon other disciples joined in, saying, "Why this waste? This perfume could have been sold for more than thirty silver coins and given to the poor." They were upset with her for wasting such an expensive perfume on Jesus. Jesus responded, "Leave her alone! She has done a beautiful thing to me." He further said, "She has anointed my body beforehand for burial."
- After Jesus was crucified and buried, many women intended to anoint Him with perfume but were unable to do so. Mary, however, did this beautiful act of devotion while Jesus was still alive. This act was so significant that Jesus said, "Wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."
- Jesus' point is that when we share the Gospel and lead people to know and believe in Jesus, we must do so to the extent they are willing to break their most precious and valuable things for Jesus, just as Mary did. Mary came from a modest background, and the alabaster jar was likely her lifelong savings. The perfume was something a young woman would use on herself when getting married, making it incredibly valuable to her. She poured it all out on Jesus' feet (John 12) or, in some accounts, on His head. Jesus emphasizes that the ultimate goal of the Gospel is to win us over to the point where we are willing to give up our most precious and valuable things. Otherwise, the Gospel has not yet fulfilled its purpose in our lives.
- Many people think that evangelism is simply leading others to faith in Jesus, expecting that once they believe, they will receive blessings, God will answer prayers, and all problems will be resolved as if the gospel is human-centered: solely focused on the poor and meeting people's needs. Church gatherings often aim to make people happier and more joyful, but we rarely speak about how our gatherings are meant to satisfy the heart of Jesus. As one sister who prayed, "Lord, may my love also bring satisfaction to You." This is the true purpose of the Gospel.
- As sinners, when we think about believing in Jesus, we tend to focus on our benefits: Jesus loving us more, solving our difficulties, and granting us more anointing and power to serve effectively. However, we rarely consider things from Jesus' perspective and what His heart desires. During His time on earth, Jesus was burdened and troubled, dealing with numerous problems and needs: the sick, the suffering, the lepers, and others in distress. Yet, He had no place to rest, no home, His words were often misunderstood by His disciples, and He faced persecution. The entire Bible shows that during Jesus' thirty-three years on earth, only this moment of Mary anointing Him, was a time of enjoyment for Him. Mary's act was not about receiving something from Jesus; she simply wanted to express her love for Him by pouring out what was most precious to her upon Him.

- At this moment, Jesus was truly satisfied! Because there was someone who wasn't seeking to get five loaves and two fish from Him, or seeking to be fed or to witness miracles. His disciples were upset, thinking it was such a waste. They felt that Jesus didn't need love, money, or perfume; only the poor needed these things. Often, we as Jesus' disciples are the same way, never considering what Jesus might need. There was a sister who, after pursuing the Lord more deeply, heard Him say one day, "You often think about cooking good things for your husband, buying something to surprise him, but have you ever thought of making Me happy?"
 - We really owe so much to the Lord. We rarely use our minds to think about how to make Jesus happy or surprised. Our prayers often revolve around our own needs: "Lord, I need this, and my spouse's needs, my children's needs, and oh, my mother—please do this and that..." We seldom ask, "Lord, what do You need?"
- Here, Jesus establishes that His disciples, as well as future generations, should always proclaim this truth while spreading the Gospel. This teaches us that after we believe in the Lord and accept the Son of God who gave His life and shed His blood to cleanse our sins, the most important thing is to serve Him, and that service involves offering our most precious things.
- Today, our brother began with a prayer: "Lord Jesus, show me where my jar of perfume is, so that I can break it and offer it to You." Let us consider what our own jar might be.
 1. Sometimes it's very simple; for example, sleep might be your jar of perfume. Are you willing to wake up early in the morning to seek the Lord and draw near to Him?
 2. For some people, their most precious possession is their money. There are testimonies of individuals who, motivated by the love of the Lord, were willing to offer their most treasured savings—money for their wedding—for the construction of God's house. Not only that, they even said, "Lord, unless Your house is built, I will not get married." That was their jar, wasn't it?
 3. For others, it might be their children. Children are their most precious treasures, yet they are willing to put the Lord first. Even if their child is still asleep, when it's time for church, they will take the child to the car; if the child falls asleep again in the car, they will still bring the child to church, choosing to pour out their love on the Lord first. There are mothers who have initially succeeded in this but later failed, choosing to stay with their child in the car to avoid waking them up or causing them to cry again. However, I know of a mother who will still pick up her child (who might cry at first) and bring them to church. When you pour out your jar like this on the Lord, do you realize how great the benefit you receive will be? Not only will the Lord feel loved and satisfied, but you will also find fulfillment, and your family will be blessed; your child will become adaptable and easygoing, free from deep-seated stubbornness.
 4. For some people, their jar might be their pride or self-esteem. Their pride is extremely valuable and important to them. They fear Jesus asking them to praise or dance in front of others, feeling as though it's a matter of life and death. Are you willing to break it and pour it out on Jesus? Or are you always thinking about the poor, about how others see you? Is your pride too important, holding on to your dignity and image?

Everyone's most precious possession is different, and the Lord knows it all.

- When we break our jar, we are set free! Our bonds fall away! Another passage of Scripture mentions

that "the house was filled with the fragrance." When we are filled with this fragrance, others are also blessed! Therefore, the most important aspect of all service is to serve the Lord.

- In the past, when I invited people to church, my whole focus was on them. I noticed if they began to look around or flip through the hymn book. Later, the Lord enlightened me that I should not give my heart to them. I confessed before the Lord that we often give our hearts to those we are serving, rather than to Jesus Himself. So, from then on, when I invite people, I no longer focus on their movements or distractions; I keep my eyes on Jesus and entrust them to the Lord: "Lord, they are Yours; You work in their lives. Lord, my purpose tonight is to worship You and serve You."

- Example of Minister Pearl Young's Service
 1. Once, while Minister Pearl Young was serving at the Kuandu Christian College, after worship, the leaders handed the time over to her. Pearl Young continued to keep her eyes closed. Five minutes turned into ten, and she remained there with her eyes closed. A pastor, growing a bit anxious, wondered if she perhaps didn't understand Mandarin. After another fifteen minutes, he thought she might have fallen asleep and grew concerned. By the twentieth minute, he was about to nudge Minister Pearl Young and say, "It's your turn." Just then, he noticed people in the audience crying, weeping, and repenting before the Lord. He was astonished! He said he had never seen a servant of God who so profoundly followed the Holy Spirit. God had not yet instructed Missionary Pearl Young to speak, so she did not dare to act; she waited because the Holy Spirit was working, bringing about such a beautiful transformation. When a vessel submits and allows God to have control over the meeting, the Holy Spirit can work deeply within people. In the end, Minister Pearl Young only needed to speak a few simple words. She truly demonstrated that she loved God more than she loved serving, and her service was more about serving God than serving humans.
 2. Sometimes, before a meeting, elderly brothers and sisters who were unwell would come to Minister Pearl Young and ask, "I am ill; could you please pray for me after the meeting?" Minister Pearl Young would reply, "Yes, yes!" After the meeting, she would remain at the front, drawing near to the Lord. Later, those sick individuals would come forward again, asking, "Missionary Pearl Young, could you pray for me now?" She would say, "Yes, please sit and wait a moment." She explained that Jesus was greatly pouring out His blessings at that time, and it was best not to do anything but allow Him to work. She was truly someone who understood how to follow God, allowing the Holy Spirit to work deeply within people. She was not afraid of offending anyone, knowing that sick people often could not stay too long. Yet, she was continually serving God, understanding that as long as she followed and satisfied God, God would bring healing and blessings to the people.
 3. When Minister Pearl Young first arrived in Taiwan, for about fifteen years, the church only had about twenty people, several of them being preachers. She continued to worship God and follow Him there. It was the 43rd year of the Republic of China, and at that time, Taiwanese churches were very afraid of being filled with the Holy Spirit and found open praise quite frightening. Some people during the meetings would rise to rebuke her, saying, "Missionary Pearl Young, you're always waiting and waiting—until when? You should be out spreading the Gospel!" Being sent on a mission does not always yield quick results and often involves much suffering.

- Mary anointed Jesus with the perfume, and although she was willing to break the jar, she faced

criticism and condemnation. This was not easy. Not only did the disciples rebuke her, but I imagine her sister might have also blamed her, saying, "What are you doing? Where are you going to earn another thirty pieces of silver? You don't need to love the Lord that much; you can just cook for Jesus! Even if you prepared an extravagant meal, it wouldn't cost this much; you spent over thirty pieces of silver in one go!" When a person loves the Lord with such fervor, it often leads to misunderstanding and criticism from others. When someone passionately loves Jesus, it frequently results in rebuke from others. Yet, Mary was willing, and Jesus said that this act should be remembered in the Scriptures and that wherever the Gospel is preached, this story must also be told.

- We might feel that the Lord has not sent us on any particular mission, but you can still break your jar and pour out your most precious fragrance on Jesus. This is a form of serving that everyone can offer, and it is the most important service, as well as the foundation for all other services.
- After serving for some time, Watchman Nee returned to his hometown and happened to encounter one of his former professors. At that time, Nee was using a cane because of a serious illness. The professor looked him up and down and said, "How did you end up like this? We had such high hopes for you! You should turn back now!" Nee felt the professor was right: "I indeed served the Lord to the point of such a pitiful condition, with my body afflicted by illness and all my career, prospects, and health ruined." Just as he was about to cry, a verse from Scripture: "The Spirit of glory rests upon you," suddenly dawned on him. He became so radiant with glory, feeling that to serve the Lord in such a way—to pour out even his body as an offering to Him, to be "wasted" on Him—was an honor beyond measure. Even though he was full of sickness, he felt it was a great honor!
- Brothers and sisters, have you tasted how glorious it is to serve God? Or do you often feel ashamed of the Gospel? Do you still feel ashamed of praying in front of your family, whether kneeling or closing your eyes to say grace at meals? Or do you feel embarrassed about praising and worshiping the Lord in front of your family? We really need to break through our fears and pour out what we cherish most onto Jesus.
- We can ask ourselves: Have I truly poured out anything on the Lord? In fact, nothing poured out on the Lord is ever a waste; it's just that people don't understand and therefore call it a waste. To waste something means to spend more than it's worth, to devote too much time or energy to something that seems unworthy. But does Jesus not deserve such "waste" or "expenditure" on Him? He is absolutely worth it! Everything done for Him is never in vain.
- Mary was truly wise. Why? When we reach heaven and see God's glory, each of us will long to offer jewels, diamond rings, houses—all our love—at Jesus' feet, because it will be so glorious. But by then, it will be too late, and these treasures cannot be taken to heaven. We will only lament, "Why, before leaving this world, did I have so much but did not pour it out on Jesus?" Only Mary seized the best opportunity and poured it out. Later, many wanted to anoint Jesus, but the opportunity was gone, as Jesus was crucified a few days later.
- Brothers and sisters, we don't know how many days we have left on this earth. We can't say, "Lord, I'll serve You after I retire or once I've earned enough money." It's best to pour out our youthful years on Jesus. I'm not saying that everyone needs to become a full-time minister, but you can start your mornings by dedicating your most precious time to Jesus. It's not about going through the motions of morning devotion but truly rising early, even when you feel you haven't had enough sleep, and saying, "Lord, I want to pour out my love, I want to dedicate this time to You because You are worthy." Genuine devotion is offered out of love, not out of duty; it exceeds what is merely required by responsibility. When you offer it to Jesus, the whole house will be filled with fragrance.

- There was a sister who hosted a woman with cancer for seven months, sharing the gospel and serving her until she was taken by the Lord. Her husband was deeply moved and later came to faith because he saw the genuine love of God manifest in the life of a Christian. He then passionately pursued the Lord, visiting anyone in need, whether for evangelism or sickness, and helped many people. This brother became a person who served many in the church because of that sister, who poured out her perfume on Jesus. Because of her love for God, she devoted herself to loving others wholeheartedly, and the fragrance filled the entire house. Our service is about being willing to break our most precious offerings and pour them out on Jesus, being willing to expend ourselves just like that sister did. She won an entire family and made that brother eager to serve others, because he first experienced the fragrance that came from her.

2. **John 12:26** “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”

- Serving God while following him is important. When you follow the Lord, you will be sensitive to His needs and will serve Christ at the right time, serving those the Lord wants you to serve.
 - There is a brother in Hsinchu who, after church, was supposed to go out to eat with everyone. He loves spending time with fellow believers, but that day, he felt a persistent urge to "return to the dormitory." So he went back to his dorm. When he arrived, he found that a close friend from his childhood, who was serving in the military, had come to visit him unexpectedly. This friend had always resisted accepting the Lord, but this time, after talking with him, he was willing to believe in Jesus.
- Serving God often requires setting aside your convenience, enjoyment, and pleasure to follow Him. This is also like pouring out the precious ointment on Jesus. Unless we decide to break our jar—meaning breaking our old selves, our preferences, our joys, and our self-made plans—and commit ourselves entirely to the Lord, it will be difficult for God to use us. Are we willing to be directed by the Lord at any time? We need to stay closely connected with Jesus to hear His voice.
- The Lord said, "If anyone serves me, my Father will honor him." We cannot demand that the Lord anoint us with His blessing. We must first break our precious jar and pour it out on Jesus, and then we will naturally be anointed with His blessings.
- Brothers and sisters, if you are not serving others in your daily life, you will not experience God's glory very much. Don't always think that others should come to care for you, visit you, or love you. Instead, we should often think, “Lord, is there someone You want me to visit? Is there someone You want me to serve?” Moreover, we should avoid being the kind of person who waits for others to visit us. It is better to be someone who actively serves others.
 - “If anyone serves me, my Father will honor him,” but this kind of service is not something others prescribe for you. Serving with the mindset of “I’m part of the care team, so I must be available to visit people in the evening” will not bring blessings. All service should be like that of Mary’s—pouring out a precious ointment of love. Such service will be remembered by the Lord. Service done merely out of duty or obligation, without a heart of love poured out on God, will not receive much reward.

3. Conclusion

- May the Lord help us to, during our days on this earth, love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to also love our neighbors as ourselves with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, for this is the greatest commandment. The foundation of all service is to pour out the ointment of love upon Jesus: playing the piano is about pouring out love on God through music; welcoming others is about pouring out love on the Lord as we greet them. Therefore, when you welcome people, you do so with the love of the Lord.
 - Every act of service is an act of love. In serving, you will draw closer to the Lord, and His fragrance will continuously emanate from you. Service is deeply connected to receiving more from the Lord. It is not enough to just pursue, grasp, and seek to be anointed and filled. You might kneel at the altar, but if you do not regularly approach with a heart willing to serve others, you won't receive much. God's principle is that as you pour out, He will pour in more to you.

Service 4 Questions

1. Jesus said, "Wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her." Why is this so precious?
2. Why was the perfume jar that Mary broke so valuable? What was the reaction of the disciples?
3. This passage, illustrated by Mary anointing Jesus with the perfume, highlights the most important purpose of the gospel. What is it?
4. When you attend church, do you think about receiving God's love, seeking anointing, or fulfilling God's own desires?
5. Reflect on what your "alabaster jar" might be.
6. Have you experienced moments where, when you broke open your own jar, the whole room was filled with fragrance? Did this fragrance bring blessings to both yourself and others?
7. Do you often give your heart to the people you serve rather than to Jesus Himself?
8. Mary anointed the Lord despite the criticism and reproach she received for breaking the alabaster jar. Have you ever faced similar experiences?
9. Ask yourself, have you ever made sacrifices for the Lord?
10. Serving God often requires you to let go of convenience, enjoyment, and personal happiness to follow Him. Are you someone who can be readily used by the Lord at any time?
11. Memorize: Mark 14:6-9.