

## 15. WASTING YOURSELF ON JESUS

John 12v1-8.

C. T. Studd lived in the late nineteenth century; at a time when cricket was the nation's number one sport rather than football. He was one of three privileged brothers, Kynaston, George & Charles, (educated at Eton & Trinity College, Cambridge). All three were talented cricketers, but C.T. was exceptional. When at Cambridge, he scored a century for the University against visiting Australians. One banker had three gold studs especially made - each with the initials of the brothers. (J.E.K / C.T. / G.B.) Whichever brother hit top score on a given day - the banker wore that studd in his evening dress shirt. C.T. Studd went on to play regularly for England, and be acknowledged as one of the game's greatest all-rounders.

His father was a rich man, who had made his fortune as a planter in India. He became a Christian as a result of the ministry of the American evangelist D. L. Moody. Kynaston also began to follow Christ, but: If C.T. had any faith it was now saturated in *"love of the world"*. However, while touring Australia news came of his other brother being near death. As he sat at his bedside he thought *"Now what is all the popularity of the world worth to George? What is all the fame and flattery worth? What is it worth to possess all the riches in the world when a man comes to face Eternity?"* At the first opportunity C.T. went to hear Moody and he too put his trust in Jesus. His life was transformed; he became consumed with telling others the Good News about Jesus. And then this man who had everything joyfully began to throw it away.

- His fame: For a time he carried on playing cricket, but solely to tell his team mates about Jesus. *"Formerly I had as much love for cricket as any man could have, but when the Lord Jesus came into my heart, I found that I had something infinitely better than cricket. My heart was no longer in the game; I wanted to win souls for the Lord."* He even took his England team mates along to Moody's meetings.
- His prospects. Very soon, rather than pursuing his career he set his heart on China. Great resistance from family. *"Think of the influence you can have in England as a Christian."* But for C.T. this was just the start of a lifetime of pioneering.
- His fortune: He came into a large inheritance at 25. So on January 13th 1887 he sat down and wrote out four cheques giving his inheritance away. His biographer comments. *"As coolly and deliberately as a business man invests in some gilt edged securities, as being both safe and yielding good interest, C.T invested in the Bank of Heaven !"* He wrote out cheques to D.L. Moody to set up Training School; to George Muller for his orphanage & missionary work; , to George Holland who worked among the poor in Whitechapel; to the Salvation Army for their work in India (they were able to send out 50 workers to India with the money) and to Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission. Kept back a sum which he presented to the girl he was to marry. But she gave him a flea in his ear and said he should give it all away So he did, to General Booth of the Salvation Army, for evangelistic literature.

Later in life, about to embark for Africa to take the Gospel into new regions, he was challenged by someone. You're sick, you're old, you're leaving your family behind.

Why? He replied, famously, *"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."*

Why am I going over C.T. Studd's story? Because it illustrates one of the great themes at the heart of our passage this morning. Wasting yourself on Jesus.

**1,2: Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.** A celebration after the raising of Lazarus!

**3: Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.** This was spikenard, an oil from the root of a plant in North India (which is still used as a perfume for the hair). It was imported in sealed jars and opened on special occasions, and was a very strong perfume! She poured the entire contents over Jesus. The other Gospels indicate that it was over more than the feet of Jesus; she poured it over his head too. Remember that Jesus was reclining at table i.e. lying on his side. His head and his feet were at the same level. There are very few examples in the Gospels of extravagant love being shown to Jesus. But this is one. Mary is expressing extravagant love because of Jesus' extravagant love in raising Lazarus.

**4-6: But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.** But Judas wasn't the only one to raise objections. In Matthew's Gospel other disciples chime in with the words "Why this waste?". Passover was a special time for giving to the poor. Surely, Jesus would have preferred the perfume to have been used for others, not Himself!

**7,8: "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "[It was intended] that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."** Jesus defends her. Matthew records some extra words of Jesus. "She has done a beautiful thing to me." (Mtth.26v10) The perfume was not lost when it was "wasted" on me. Matthew records Jesus saying: "When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial."

Jesus was only a week away from the cross. In burial it was customary to anoint the body with perfume; a broken flask was placed with the corpse. Jesus was just about to lay down his life in the greatest act of extravagant love ever known. Mary did not realize it at the time, but her act was prophetic. Jesus would soon "waste" himself for us on the cross. Some "waste! His wasting His life has led to salvation, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and adoption into the family of God for all who believe.

I believe this act of Mary's would also have been of great personal significance to Jesus in His last week. Do you think the smell of that perfume would have worn off in an hour or two? Or a day? I believe the fragrance would still have lingered in Gethsemane when he sweated; and on the cross in His agony. What you "waste" on

Jesus may come to have a significance way beyond anything you might imagine at the time.

Extravagant love. Wasting yourself on Jesus! How can you and I relate to this incident? It's all very well citing C. T. Studd's example. But what about ordinary people like you and me? How can we waste ourselves on Jesus?

1. We can "waste" ourselves in our Devotion:

This action of Mary is a wonderful picture of adoring, extravagant worship; of holding nothing back. It is an example of being "lost in wonder, love and praise". Worship that is not just offering a few drops – but pouring everything out; anointing the head of our King with the perfume of our worship; filling the place with the sweet aroma of your devotion

2. We can "waste" ourselves in our Giving:

Mary's action also models sacrificial giving. The perfume was very expensive. *But Mary was not calculating its' value - others were doing that.* She was concentrating her gift of love on Jesus. Of course, giving is not just about money. It may be about time, energy or priorities. It may be something else you are saving up for a rainy day; or a segment of your life you are jealously guarding; or a season of your life.

3. We can "waste" ourselves in our Serving:

Mary was serving Jesus as she "wasted" her perfume on Him. That's the way it is for many of you. It is about your time & energy. Sometimes pouring yourself out serving people who are ungrateful & who make little progress. What a waste of time and energy! Jesus - when you did that, it wasn't wasted. It was done to me.

4. We can "waste our Reputation on Jesus:

Mary's act would have blown any reputation she had for respectability! Jack Deare writes, *"Mary walked in during the middle of dinner with a pound of pure nard, a perfume worth at least a year's wages. Then she "wasted" that expensive perfume by pouring it on ...Jesus. Next she let down her hair and wiped the feet of the Lord with her hair. (John 12v1-3) This was an extraordinary act. It was also an improper act. Mary interrupted the dinner, she approached a male guest, she let down her hair in the manner of an immoral woman, and she did the work of a slave. What led her to humble herself and transgress the bounds of propriety? What led her to such extravagant waste? ... She wasted the perfume on Jesus, and she would waste her entire life on him if he would give her the opportunity. The gift was extravagant, but the gift only reflected the extravagance of her feelings for Christ."* ('Surprised by the Power of the Spirit')

The apostle Paul wrote about being a fool for Christ's sake. Wasting your reputation on Jesus! "Wasting" your good name; your position. You and I may not be martyred - but we still have to die to self every day when we walk this path. It might be owning up that you are a Christian in your locality; at work; at school. Jesus' response is still to say: *"Beautiful!"*

J.C.Ryle. (19th Century Evangelical Bishop) wrote, *“the deeds and titles of many a King and Emperor and General are completely forgotten as if written in the sand. But the grateful act of one humble woman is recorded in 150 different languages, and is known all over the globe.”*

The fact is, these poor insignificant lives of ours only attain significance when we waste them on Jesus. They are only of lasting value when we invest them in the kingdom of heaven. “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.” Don’t keep holding on to stuff that is going to decay and perish. All that you most prize and think you would be giving up is very fragile and earthbound. No, waste yourself on Jesus. “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6v19-21)

**John Wilthew. June 2005.**

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

**Briefly recap the Sunday message:**

**Before the Questions:** On the same theme of “wasting yourself”, read **2 Samuel ch. 6**. Now listen to this extract from James Neil’s ‘Everyday Life in the Holy Land’ It describes a bridal procession in a Palestinian town or village.

*“In front of the procession is the native jester, half-naked, dancing backward with all manner of antics; sometimes playing cymbals, or waving about a drawn sword - but always appearing dishevelled; almost indecent. Making himself utterly ridiculous. The more outrageous and absurd his conduct, the more he is supposed to do homage to those getting married. This character, generally a common man, was always in evidence at all kind of street processions - by his own humiliation doing honour to whoever or whatever was being celebrated.*

Perhaps this is what David was doing when he brought the ark of God from the house of Obed - Edom to Jerusalem, when he “danced before the Lord with all his might” clad only in a linen shirt.

### **Questions.**

- 1 In what ways was David “wasting” himself on the Lord? And what different reactions might this have drawn?
2. Why would Mary’s act of pouring the perfume over Jesus have been such a blessing to the Lord?
3. It is so easy to get weary; to start thinking that worship, giving, serving, being different - is all a bit of a slog. Has the story of Mary “wasting” her perfume on Jesus helped you to see WHY again? In what way? Share it with the group.

