

**Series: Jesus' Unexpected Heroes**  
**“AN EXTRAVAGANT WOMAN”**  
Sunday, October 11, 2009 AM Perth Bible Church  
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## INTRODUCTION:

A true story from a USA Today article 14 yrs. ago: Ronald Warwick, captain of the well-renowned luxury cruise ship, *Queen Elizabeth II*, questioned a passenger who insisted on bringing his dog as an additional passenger on their deluxe around-the-world cruise – even to the point of willingly paying an additional full fare (btw. \$25k - \$150k). “Wouldn't it have cost less to leave him at home?” puzzled the captain. “Oh, no” the man answered, “When we are away a long time, the dog's psychiatrist fees are so high, it's less expensive to bring him along” (USA Today, 10/25/95).

Today, fourteen years later, do you realize one of the hottest new fads and businesses is luxury service and retail for pets. This is just the kind of thing we often think and shake our heads about when we hear the word “extravagant.” The New Webster's Dicionary (2004) defines extravagant as: “*Exceeding due bounds; fantastic; wasteful; lavish.*” We live in a world in which extravagance is simultaneously worshiped and vilified. Just turn on the TV or open up a magazine and you'll quickly see what I mean.

But what really should we, as Christians, think about extravagance? Is it something to be commended or criticized? Displayed or destroyed? And what, for that matter, should guide our perspective and action?

This morning, we will remember a woman who was despised by people for her unashamed display of extravagance, BUT praised by Jesus! **What prompted Jesus to see a hero in a seemingly 'crazed' woman?**

## SCRIPTURE: Mark 14:3-9

## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- This is far more than an accident at a dinner party. It is a living contrast between one who seems to honor Jesus but is really waiting to betray Him and another who seems to dishonor Him but in fact is demonstrating the highest devotion; one who talks about doing good even while doing evil and one who is silent while doing good even though others call it evil. *One who is filled and guided by extravagant personal ambition and one who is compelled by extravagant devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ!*
- You see, extravagance itself is simply a description not a value. **What determines the value (positive or negative, good or bad, selfish or self-less) of extravagance is the object, purpose and intent of it's display!**
- In the case of this woman's extravagance before Jesus, it was an act of lavish, self-less devotion toward the Lord Jesus Christ to honor Him beyond all normal expectations and displays!
- All the others disdained and criticized her because all they could see was the physical/material implications and the only intent or motive they could imagine was foolishness.
- Jesus, however, commended her for all time for her display of extravagant devotion.
- *How about us? When is the last time you displayed devotion to Christ in such a way? Could you even describe what constitutes extravagant devotion?*

# EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION IS . . .

## 1.) Uncomfortable

- Women in this culture did not ordinarily attend banquets with men, except to silently serve them, while remaining as absent and 'invisible' as possible.
- Yet, here is this one woman pushing through her discomfort to come between this man-fest and approach the most important and honored of them all. Nothing about this situation or what she was about to do could have been comfortable for this woman.
- She did it anyway for her devotion to lavishly honor Jesus was greater than her fears and inhibitions in an uncomfortable environment.
- What might this mean for us today?
- **VIDEO: “COMFORT”**
- *Extravagant devotion is, by it's nature, uncomfortable – but that doesn't stop it!*

## 2.) Risky

- Imagine the risk this woman took and all of the bad things that could have happened as a result of her choice to publicly display extravagant devotion.
- The men could have (rightly, according to their customs) berated her, physically thrown her out, publicly embarrass her, or punished her in a variety of ways. They also could make sure that her reputation was henceforth forever sullied as a disrespectful, foolish, wasteful and insane woman.
- *The risks did not stop her. Her devotion to Jesus was not simple or lukewarm, it was extravagant!*
- Illustration: When I was a teenager struggling deeply with a painful awareness of the risks and disappointments of 'real life' my Mom comforted me by giving me a poem whose impact has never left me.

### Dare to risk...

*To weep is to risk appearing sentimental  
To reach for another is to risk involvement  
To expose your ideas, your dreams, before a crowd is to risk their loss  
To love is to risk not being loved in return  
To live is to risk dying  
To believe is to risk failure*

*~But risks must be taken because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.  
The people who risk nothing, do nothing, have nothing, are nothing.  
They avoid suffering & sorrow, but they cannot learn, change, grow, love, live.  
Chained by their attitudes, they are slaves, they have forfeited their freedom.  
Only a person who risks is free.*

- **Can the same be said of our attitude and devotion to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?**

## 3.) Expensive

- The alabaster jar full of fragrant perfume that this woman emptied all at once upon Jesus was worth more than a typical man's wages for more than a year!

- Extravagant devotion to Jesus is always expensive. It always costs us – and the costs are as extravagant as the devotion!
- *Whether the costs are measured in finances, precious 'things', time, energy, talents, lost opportunities, popularity and reputation, etc., only the most extravagant investments will prove to be extravagant devotion.*

#### 4.) **Fragrant**

- Let's face it, normally if we want to improve our scent we'll dab perhaps a few drops of cologne or perfume over just a few specific areas of our body. For those who come in close proximity of us, it is noticeable and nice. It's not intended for others.
- Here, the woman doesn't just dab few drops on Jesus, she pours out the entire jar – at least 12 ounces! When she got done, I assure it wasn't just those sitting closest to Jesus that could pick it up!
- Illustration: Trust me, I know. Sometime in the past year my son suddenly 'discovered' cologne and decided he liked the idea of being doused in supposedly manly fragrance. Somehow, he also was given a few large bottles of cheap cologne from friends. The problem is that nobody taught him about dabbing the stuff, he splashed and showered in it. And we would always know when, because the entire house quickly reeked of cheap cologne!
- And so this fragrance from the alabaster jar would have saturated not only Jesus but the whole house and stayed with them all for some time. Only, this was an expensive and sweet fragrance.
- The sweetest fragrance, however, wasn't the Nard oil mixture, but that intangible fragrance that abundantly poured out from the woman's heart!
- *In the same way, extravagant devotion produces an expanding aura of sweet fragrance not only to Jesus but all others in the vicinity as well.*

#### 5.) **Criticized**

- As this woman quickly discovered, extravagant worship will also always be misunderstood and criticized by others for being unnecessary, misguided, inappropriate and/or wasteful.
- In this case, it was the hypocritical pretender and betrayer who complained the loudest! The value of that perfume poured out all at once on just one person was enough to be able to feed at least 300 families for a whole day and still have leftovers. Why wasn't her focus on the poor instead? Couldn't she have even just given Jesus a respectful dab or two and then still fed the hordes of poor? What kind of a godly woman is she anyway? And, again, it was one of their own who most harshly criticized.
- Wherever she turned, this woman was met with shocked, angry and disapproving looks.
- In different ways, we still hear these questions and accusations and see these looks today don't we? And not just from those outside of the church either. Ever been to a church budget meeting?
- As I said in the beginning, this does not mean that there is never a time or place for inspection and accountability or that extravagance is always good and should be unquestioned. Far from it! But, how careful and circumspect are we really when it comes to what acts of extravagance we put under such a microscope and why?
- *Do we, like Jesus, look for and consider the true object, purpose and intent of extravagance? Or, like the disciples at this dinner, do we just judge and criticize impulsively based on our own sensitivities, assumptions, vision and priorities? Even our own selfish ends? Do we see the bigger picture, or just our own picture?*

## 6.) **Discerning**

- The purpose of this woman's extravagant devotion wasn't just to spend a lot of money on Jesus or make Him smell pretty. It was, as Jesus remarked, to anoint Him in advance for His coming burial.
- The disciples, to whom Jesus had repeatedly spoken of His coming death and resurrection, never really saw this or believed it. It just didn't fit their own personal framework of expectation and solution.
- This woman, however, had obviously watched and listened to Jesus with an open heart and mind. She heard and saw what He taught without personal filters. She took Him at His Word just as He presented it, whereas the disciples took His Word and fit it into their own preconceived understanding, preferences and expectations.
- **Extravagant devotion can come only from a discerning spirit that takes Jesus exactly at His Word.**

## 7.) **Remembered**

- Two thousand years later, we're still not only remembering but learning from this woman's example of extravagant devotion.
- *What acts of genuine yet extravagant devotion to Jesus Christ have you committed? Were they remembered the next day? Week? Year? If so, what was it remembered for? Your own praise or Christ's glory?*

## **WE CAN DISPLAY EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION THROUGH . . .**

### 1.) **Sacrificial Giving**

- a.) **Finances**
- b.) **Comfort**
- c.) **Praise**
- d.) **Trust**

### 2.) **Honoring Christ Where HE Is Not Recognized & We Are Not Invited**

- Work
- School
- Public Square
- Social Gatherings

**Video: “Grandma Witnesses To Robber”**

**What kind of fragrance will pour forth from your own personal devotion to Jesus?  
How obvious & appealing is your faith & devotion to Christ?**