

If we are following Paul's advice, what do you think others should notice about us? How do you think others recognize that you are a Christian?

Psalm 9:1 NIV - 1 I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

WRAP-UP

When we remember Jesus's sacrifice and the triumph over sin and death that he provides for us, our natural response should be an outpouring of worship and gratitude. In fact, every good thing that we have comes from God's hand. There is no gift too costly to offer Him in return, but there will always be critics who say that extravagant worship is inappropriate or wasteful. When the woman in this passage emptied her jar, she poured out more than perfume. She fully surrendered herself humbly and worshiped Jesus with everything she had. Her gratitude resulted in worship, and so should ours.

Memory Verse

3 ... While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head.
- Mark 14:3b NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- Have you let criticism keep you from extravagant expressions of gratitude to God? What can you do to empty your jar?

"It's an Act of Worship" Gratitude #3

INTRODUCTION

In our gratitude series we have found that gratitude is both a decision and a habit. As we conclude the series, we discover it is also an act of worship. If we trace the origin of everything we are thankful for, we should come to the same conclusion as James – "Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father..." James 1:17a. And so, it is natural that our gratitude results in the worship of God. In the Gospel of Mark, we read a story of a woman who expressed her worship of Jesus through an extravagant gift. It defied the social norms and subjected her to ridicule, but it was an offering that pleased Jesus and which is still remembered to this day.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

What container have you broken open to extract all of its precious contents?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Gratitude Empties the Jar

Mark 14:3 NLT - 3 Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head.

The story of the woman with the costly perfume is a demonstration of gratitude expressed as worship. She was not one of the dinner guests but entered with one purpose; to express her worship and gratitude to Jesus.

The woman's perfume was worth a year's wages. Think about what you earn in a year. What could you buy with that amount? Can you imagine offering that as an act of worship?

If you did feel moved to demonstrate such extravagant worship, what might hold you back?

If you have ever experienced or witnessed a moment like the one described in this passage- overwhelmed with emotion, spontaneous, costly, or uninhibited, can you describe it to your group?

2. There will be Haters

Mark 14:4-7 NLT - 4 Some of those at the table were indignant. "Why waste such expensive perfume?" they asked. 5 "It could have been sold for a year's wages and the money given to the poor!" So they scolded her harshly. 6 But Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me? 7 You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me.

Of course, there was a response to her actions from those who witnessed the jar being emptied. These guests were in the home of a man healed of leprosy. They knew, and perhaps had witnessed, Jesus's power to perform miracles. Yet they questioned lavishing something of great value on Him.

The expression of unconstrained worship meets with worldly criticism. Jesus asked, "Why criticize her for doing a good thing to me?" Have you seen anything similar, where an extravagant act of worship was criticized as being wasteful or inappropriate?

But this woman was not deterred by the challenges to her expression of gratitude. She crossed social barriers, and endured ridicule to give something of great value to the one she worshiped.

In addition to the money spent on the perfume, what did it cost the woman to do this? What do you see as some of the intangible things she offered Jesus by this act?

We know the value of something based on what people are willing to pay for it.

What does the criticism of those at the table reveal about what they value most? Do you think they were concerned for the poor or did something else motivate their comments?

"Did he pour out his soul unto death for us, and shall we think any box of ointment too precious to pour out upon him?" -Matthew Henry

3. The Scent of Gratitude

Mark 14:8-9 NLT - 8 She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. 9 I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman's deed will be remembered and discussed."

A strong, sweet, earthy fragrance. That is how the aroma of this precious perfume is described. It is the fragrance of gratitude. No doubt it lingered in the room that night. Jesus associated it with her gratitude, but also with His burial, because Jewish tradition dictated wrapping the body in spices before laying it to rest. He would carry the scent of gratitude to the grave.

We still reflect on this woman's uninhibited act of worship. As we read the gospels, its fragrance lingers. Is there a special fragrance, an image, a song or something else that acts as a reminder of God's love and sacrifice and produces gratitude or worship in you?

Philippians 4:4-7 NLT - 4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again--rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon. 6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

In his letter to the Philippians Paul gives advice for another way to spread the "fragrance" of gratitude. We are to rejoice, be considerate, pray, *give thanks for all He has done* and experience peace.

Gratitude to God is integrated into the way Paul calls us to live.