

1st hymn by Annie Hawkes (183-1918) T. I need Thee by R Lowry

1. I need Thee every hour, most gracious Lord,
No tender voice like Thine can peace afford.
*I need Thee O I need Thee, every hour I need Thee,
O bless me now my Saviour, I come to Thee.*
2. I need Thee every hour; stay Thou near by:
temptations lose their power when Thou art nigh.
3. I need Thee every hour, in joy or pain;
come quickly and abide, or life is vain.
4. I need Thee every hour; teach me Thy will,
and Thy rich promises in me fulfill.

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Prayer:

Dear heavenly Father, at this beginning of the day, send your Spirit to lead us, sanctify us, and show us your truths. Secure us in those truths, and let us know your keeping power.

For we ask in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

2nd hymn by Nikolaus von Zinzendorf 1700-1760 (T Fulda William Gardiner)

1. Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress,
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head.
2. Bold shall I stand in that great day for who shall my accuser be?
Fully absolved through Thee I am from sin and fear, from guilt and shame.
3. Jesus be endless praise to Thee, whose boundless mercy hath for me,
for me, a full atonement made, an everlasting ransom paid.
4. Ah, give to all Thy servants Lord, with power to speak Thy gracious word,
that all who to Thy wounds will flee may find eternal life in Thee.

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Readings:

- John 12:1-8
- 1 Chronicles 11:17-19

Intercessions:

Our Dear Father, We thank you for the opportunity we are given, partly through your servant St Paul, who requested in an epistle that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men, but especially for those in positions of authority, that we might live quiet and peaceable lives, respectable in every way. We are grateful for our

leaders, and pray that they will be guided to lead us with wisdom and justice, and know a measure of the assurance that you give.

We pray for that troubled area the Middle East and the long history of continuous warfare. We pray that a cease-fire recently called, will last, and enable help to be brought to many who are starving, or injured. Enable the services being offered from around the world to be brought to those needing it most.

We pray for the churches in our land, that your servants who preach will faithfully preach your word without distortion or weakening it. We pray that those who have not heard the word of the gospel will have opportunity to hear and respond. We pray also for the needy places in the world, where corruption has often been holding power. Grant that the corrupt people in control will be restrained, and that the needy will be assisted with their basic needs. We know many who are ill, or afraid, or suffering many different problems, or even simply the lonely or fearful. Let them hear your encouraging word of grace and continuing blessing, that they may be reassured, and come to peace.

And we ask all these our prayers in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

3rd hymn by John Greenleaf Whittier 1807-92 (T Rest F.C. Maker 1844-1927)

1. Dear Lord and father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways,
reclothe us in our rightful mind; in purer lives Thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.
2. In simple trust like theirs who heard beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord, let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow Thee.
3. O sabbath rest by Galilee, O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with Thee the silence of eternity
interpreted by love.
4. Drop Thy still dews of quietness, till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress, and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of Thy peace.
5. Breathe through the heats of our desire thy coolness and thy balm,
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire; speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still small voice of calm.

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Message: "Waste"? (Matt 26:6-10 Mark 14:3-9 [John 12:1-8](#))

The woman concerned needs clarification first.

Matthew doesn't specify this! Mark says "It was a woman" which doesn't sound like Mary of Bethany - she would have been identified. Luke says she was a "sinner" which usually referred to a prostitute, hence quite a different person from Mary - even 'though Mary had

been possessed by demons once, but now was a close friend of Jesus, together with Martha and Lazarus.

It is John who wrote his record much later who clarifies that it is Mary of Bethany who anointed Jesus. Having been healed of her demonic possession she greatly loved Jesus, as did her brother Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead *after 4 days!* Such would be more like a re-creation than a resuscitation. But we are not talking about a resuscitation, or of any likelihood of Lazarus rising - this is clearly and astonishing miracle, and both of his sisters knew this. (There are those who try to strip the gospel story of its miracles, but this cannot be done; they are an integral and essential part of the record, which either we have to accept, or reject the whole record.)

The cost of the ointment was almost unimaginable in our day - 300 denarii was a working man's salary for a whole year, so at least \$40,000 today. And here was no possibility of saving any of it - it was an alabaster flask, sealed and with no stopper. Mark said "she broke it and poured it on Jesus' head". John said it was "pure nard", a highly scented perfume, properly called "spikenard" from north India. A discussion immediately arose among the disciples. The cost was astounding, they agreed, and the value of it was discussed, along with the verbal criticism of "waste" - "this could have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor". It is significant that it was Judas Iscariot who claimed the great value of it. He was very interested in money, and was probably a shrewd valuer - but John makes it very clear why he was so interested. He possessed the money box which was the store for the whole group's financial management - the chances were he asked for that privilege as he had a special reason for doing so (he was a thief and used to pilfer from their stocks for his own benefit!) He was later to approach the chief priests to ask what price they required should he wish to betray Jesus for money, which they were only too happy to do. The going price was a traditional and legendary amount - "30 pieces of silver" which had been the price for a long time for a slave i.e. a lowly worker of little value in a community. The ultimate significance of this was probably lost on Judas at the time. He was one of the specially chosen followers of the Jewish Messiah. Apparently he had been unable to imagine how badly this would read for the duration of history. Everyone would have heard of "Judas Iscariot". When it did dawn on him he could think of nothing else to do but commit suicide. That was also foretold in the scriptures.

Meanwhile Jesus was not thinking about Judas. He was delighted with Mary's action! He heard the criticism but immediately over-ruled it. He told them to "let her alone, why do you trouble her. She has done a beautiful thing to me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body before-hand for burial." Of course he was the only one who knew exactly what was going to happen soon.

He was also aware that the disciples as a group had no real idea what was going to happen! Maybe Mary had a premonition from the Spirit of what was to happen - she also may have had an inkling that this man was indeed their promised Messiah.

Hundreds of years before, King David had been hiding from the Philistines in the cave of Adullam, unknown to his enemies. A garrison of Philistines had control of Bethlehem, and David voiced a deep longing "O that someone would give me some water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate." He was overheard, and 3 of his "mighty men",

Waste

brilliant warriors who loved their lord broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well, and brought it to David! But David, when he saw what had been done, refused to drink it! Instead he poured it out before the Lord God as an oblation, a sacrifice truly honouring to God. He said "Far be it from me before my God that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of these men who went at the risk of their lives? For at the risk of their lives they brought it". David had been a warrior often at risk of his life - he understood the huge risk these loyal men had taken! We didn't hear that anyone criticised him; he truly honoured his brave and loyal men. Someone may well have claimed that this valuable water had been "wasted". Honour was very important to David.

So I have long thought there was a parallel between these two events. The love and devotion by the "mighty men" to David was more than mirrored by Mary in her love and devotion to Jesus. The disciples called the nard a waste, because they knew how valuable it was. Jesus' delight in her act probably reflected her understanding of the true state of affairs of the imminent events that were to take place, of which Mary seemed to have a sense! These are stories of honour and truth. When it comes to value anyway, what value can anyone put on Christ? The criticism of "waste" arises from failure to truly understand! Amen.

4th hymn by C Wesley (T Blaenwern William Rowlands 1860-1937)

- 1) Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down,
fix in us Thy humble dwelling, all Thy faithful mercies crown:
Jesus Thou art all compassion, pure unbounded love Thou art,
visit us with Thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.
- 2) Come, Almighty to deliver, let us al Thy life receive;
suddenly return and never, never more Thy temples leave;
Thee we would be always blessing, serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
pray and praise Thee without ceasing, glory in Thy perfect love.
- 3) Finish then Thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be,
let us see Thy great salvation perfectly restored in Thee:
changed form glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

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Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.

This service was prepared by Neil McIntosh (M.B.B.S. F.R.A.C.S.) for HopeNet SA