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 Palm Sunday

Something Beautiful for God
As told by the woman who anointed Jesus at Bethany....
Mark 14:1-11

I knew Jesus. I was the one who anointed him that night.

Looking back on it, all I can say is that I loved him that much, even more than that, and it was *the least I could do for him* at the time.

I know what I can do for him *now* that he is raised again,
 I know that I see Jesus now,
 in the faces of those who need me, in people who need him.

But that night it was an *alabaster jar of oil*—my most prized possession—
 that I knew I had to give to him, because he had given me life again.

It had already been a *crazy week*.
 It all started with Jesus coming into Jerusalem on a donkey,
 and throngs of people crowded around him,
 laying down their coats and waving palm branches
 as he rode past.

It was nothing like what you'd expect from the King of the Jews,
 certainly nothing royal about it, he was riding on a borrowed donkey,
 over the coats of ordinary sinners like us.

But when you saw him in front of you, you knew in your heart that something was
holy and royal about this man—
 you couldn't help but say 'hosanna' with the crowds,
 and acknowledge that he was indeed a King—our king.

Just two days before Passover Jesus came to *Bethany*. He wanted to see
 Mary and Martha, and their brother Lazarus—the one who he had raised from the
 dead. But he also stopped to have dinner at Simon's house. And ever since Jesus
 had healed Simon of his leprosy, every dinner at Simon's house was a celebration.

That's what it was that night—a *celebration*. As the crowds in Jerusalem
 were growing, any time alone we had with Jesus was rare and precious.

So we were certainly celebrating.

It was such an *honor* to be invited to dinner that night, I was almost too nervous to go. I was overwhelmed by the thought of sitting beside this incredible teacher, prophet, and healer.

I know how he has *healed me*—and you know what a wreck my life has been. But my heart, my thoughts, and my desires have all been made new. I have received the abundant life he speaks about to the crowds. And so I knew I had to do something in return for him.

I took the *most valuable thing* in my house, never doubting that it was worthy of the occasion.

I knew that Jesus deserved my best,
and that's why I grabbed the alabaster jar of oil.

I knew how expensive it was, worth more than an entire year's wages.

I knew it was rare, and some would say even priceless.

And I knew that once it was gone, I would own nothing of value.

But something inside me realized that what I would *receive* was far more precious than anything I could ever give.

You could have heard a *pin drop* when I broke the jar open, and I could hear the *gasps* as I gently poured the entire bottle of oil on his head, and watched it flow down the sides of his face.

Words cannot describe what I felt.

It was my heart being poured out to him,
my praise and thanksgiving for a new life.

I heard the *comments*, but I didn't stop pouring the oil.

One said, 'what a waste!'

and another cried out 'do you know how much that is worth? It's a year's wage'.

I heard another one say 'that money could have been given to the poor'.

And he was *right*. It could have been given to the poor.

But after all Jesus had done for us, what could we do for him?

How were we going to show our gratitude

to the man who had changed our lives forever?

Every person in that room had been transformed by Jesus of Nazareth.

After all Jesus had given me, what could I possibly do in return for my brand new life?

But it was even *more than a gift* for Jesus.

When I poured the oil on his head he looked right into my eyes
and saw straight into my heart.

It was then that I remembered all the times he told us ‘the Son of man will be betrayed and killed.’ And I realized I was doing something more than offering a gift.

I was preparing him for what was to come...
he said it himself. I was preparing him for burial.

When I started to cry, he gently wiped away my tears.

I didn’t know *then what I know now*.

I was thinking of death as the end of our time together,
not the beginning.

And I no longer cared about the *voices of shock* and disappointment in the room.

When you’re in the presence of Jesus you can’t pay attention to all that.

All I could see was my Lord and my Savior.

And he was smiling at me.

He too knew that what I had done was the right thing to do,
the only thing to do.

He tried to explain it, telling them, ‘*she has done a beautiful thing for me*’.

I don’t know if they understood him, I barely did.

I guess we *started to understand* just a few days later as he hung on a cross—for crimes he did not commit....

when we realized that he willingly died on our behalf, for what we had done.

And we truly understood his defeat of sin and death

when we saw the empty tomb,

and heard of his appearance to the disciples.

That night I had to give him my alabaster jar of oil—my most prized possession.

He had given me life, what could I possibly do in return?

You never saw him, or ate with him,

you didn’t have the experience of sitting beside him,

and I know you must long for that.

But in a way we have *more of him now* than I ever did then.

Now he lives in our hearts—we don't have to fear his leaving or dying,
because we know he is alive.

We can find him *everywhere*--in the faces of those who need us, in the hearts of
people who need his good news.

In a way we have *more opportunities to give back* than I ever did.

Each and every day is another chance to say 'thank you';
another occasion to give and serve because we have received.

And today, after the cross and the resurrection,

we know what it means to say he was our *sacrifice*,
giving his own life that we might have life.

And we know he asks nothing less in return.

Looking back, all I can say is that I love him that much,
and the least I could do was give him my very best.

I pray *you'll have a chance* to do the same.

Amen.