

## “What Is It Time For You To Do?”

### Matthew 26:6-13

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor  
Smoke Rise Baptist Church  
Stone Mountain, Georgia  
March 16, 2003

It is important whether you are merging onto the interstate, hitting a ball, playing an instrument or proposing to your sweetheart. As a matter of fact, some people say timing is everything. Even I would be hard pressed to determine when it is not crucial.

I don't know when I have studied a passage of scripture where timing was so important and evident as our passage for today. I think it is the key to understanding it. Let me explain.

Jesus and his disciples went to the home of Simon the Leper for a meal. While eating, a woman whom many think was Mary, Lazarus' sister, approached Jesus and poured perfume on his head. His disciples became incensed and rebuked the woman for wasting this valuable treasure. They thought the perfume could have been used more wisely, especially in light of Jesus' recent discussion about feeding and clothing the poor.

To their surprise, Jesus disagreed with them and commended the woman for her act of love and gratitude. Her kind and generous deed would be remembered forever, he told them.

Now, why do I think timing is the key to understanding this passage? I think this because of the decisions that this woman had to make that evening.

**To begin, she had to decide what to do with the perfume she was saving.** Was it time to sell it and use the money to feed the poor or use it to express love and appreciation for this honored guest?

This is the kind of decision that keeps me up at night, a choice between good and good. Decisions between good and bad are relatively easy to make, not that I always do what is right. A choice between two good opportunities can be agonizing, though, and I think Mary would agree.

This expensive perfume could have been used in a variety of ways, all of them good. She could have sold it as the disciples recommended and used the proceeds to feed the poor. It could have been saved as a hedge against an emergency. Or, it could have been used sparingly to make special occasions even more special. There were many good ways to use this perfume. She chose, however, to use it, all of it, to anoint the head of Jesus that evening and she had a room full of angry preachers that disagreed with her.

“Why this waste? They asked. “This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor” Matthew 26:8-9.

Can you imagine how this woman felt when she heard this? She had to second guess herself and wonder if she had made a big mistake. After all, how could twelve preachers be wrong and one obscure woman be right? There was certainly no precedence for this.

What relief she must have felt when she heard Jesus rebuke them and compliment her. Can you imagine what this did for her self-esteem? Now she had another reason to love him even more.

By the way, let me caution you about judging other people's actions. You may be condemning the very thing that pleases God the most. Just because someone does

something that you see no rationale for does not mean it is foolish. The fact that something could be used differently to help many people doesn't make it wasteful. Everything we have can be used in a variety of productive ways. Allow people to use what they have in ways they think are best under their circumstances. If you need help understanding this, seek the counsel of the disciples that were with Jesus that night.

**Secondly, this woman had to decide when to use this perfume on Jesus, while he was alive or after he was dead.** If she had waited to use this perfume as a portion of the burial spices after the crucifixion, I doubt that anyone would have criticized her. She would have been praised for her generosity.

However, she chose not to wait until Jesus died to pour it on him. She decided to do it while he was alive and could receive the full benefit from it. She poured it on his head as an act of love and gratitude. Somehow she had to let him know her feelings for him and this seemed to be the best way.

Was it extravagant? Sure and it was meant to be. She refused to calculate to see how little she could use to express her gratitude, but poured the entire contents of the bottle over his head as a demonstration of her deepest feelings.

I don't know what you intend to spend on the funeral of your loved ones, but whatever it is, cut it in half if at all possible and spend that money on them before they die. This will be one of the best decisions you ever made. Ask Jesus.

I can only imagine how grateful he was that this woman used this perfume on him while he was alive. Encouragement and support were exactly what he needed at this time in his life. He was days away from being tortured and crucified. Could he go through with this mission and be faithful all the way to the cross? Would his death really make a difference in the lives of people? Did anyone appreciate the sacrifices that he was making?

Obviously one person did and showed it that night. Her timing could not have been better and this was what he meant by making that statement about always having the poor around you. He was not justifying poverty or ignoring the needs of the poor. He was not absolving the disciples of their responsibility to help the less fortunate. Instead, he was emphasizing the need to show gratitude, express love and give encouragement. These were important, too, and using resources for this purpose was not foolish or wasteful.

**Finally, this woman had to decide when was the best time to pour this perfume over his head.** Should she do this while he was eating or wait until another time? She would run the risk of being misunderstood and condemned if she did it in public and would certainly interfere with his meal. Perhaps it would be best to do it another time in another place. However, she chose not to wait. Why?

Call it instinct if you want or divine providence. I think this woman knew that Jesus was in great danger and that something could happen to him at any time. In her heart, she knew that she might not have another opportunity to express her love for him and encourage him to continue on his mission. The feelings in her heart had to be expressed and the time to do this was during that meal in Simon's home. Taking this risk would be part of her gift to him, too.

Did Jesus appreciate what she did? Without a doubt. He told the disciples that "she has done a beautiful thing to me and wherever this gospel is preached throughout this world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" Matthew 26:10,13.

**Speaking of timing, what is it time for you to do?** What do you need to do this morning to let Jesus know that you love him? Is it time for you to accept him as Lord and follow him in baptism and discipleship? Do you need to join our church so that you can worship and serve him through Smoke Rise? Is it time to share your faith with someone in search of theirs? What could you do to demonstrate your gratitude for him that he would label “beautiful?”

What about the other people in your life? Do they know how you feel about them? Who do you know that is struggling and needs encouragement? What beautiful thing could you do for them in Jesus’ name that would lift their spirits and give them hope?

I hope you will do it because I have a feeling when you do it will cause Jesus to smile and say, “That’s another beautiful thing done to me.”