

Mary's Special Gift



Study Words



ointment: (òint' mənt) a soothing or softening salve

pence: (pents) more than one penny

How well Mary remembered those four terrible days when her brother lay dead in his tomb. She didn't like to think about it.

Even now, she could hardly believe that Lazarus actually got up and came out when Jesus called to him.

Lesson 2

She and Martha had always enjoyed having the Master in their home. Since He brought their brother back to life, nothing was too good for Him. Yet Mary longed to do something extra special for Him to show her love and gratitude.

This time when Jesus and His disciples came to Bethany, she and her sister made a special supper for Him. He and Lazarus and the disciples sat at the table. Martha, as usual, kept herself busy serving them.

Many Jews hung around the house that evening. A crowd always gathered when Jesus appeared. But this time the people hoped to catch a glimpse of Lazarus too. Everyone seemed to have heard how Jesus brought him back to life. Now Lazarus wasn't even sick anymore.

Mary knew that if a doctor had cured Lazarus, he would have charged them plenty—more money than they had. Likely she would have had to sell her box of spikenard to pay him. But Jesus wouldn't take a penny for healing people. Besides, how much money would it take to pay for bringing a man back to life?

The more Mary thought about it, the more she wanted to do something special for Jesus. However, she had nothing to give that He needed. What could she do to

show Jesus that she worshiped Him as the Son of God?

The most valuable thing she owned was her pound of spikenard **ointment**. She kept it sealed in an alabaster box. Alabaster is a soft kind of stone that you can carve rather easily. It is beautiful like marble, but not as hard. Spikenard was a costly, sweet-smelling perfume.

A man would have to work a year to make enough money to buy a box of spikenard like Mary had. She could offer that, but she knew the Master would not accept it. So what could she do?

At last she thought of something. Was it a silly idea? Maybe so. But she knew Jesus would understand. He would know she did it because she loved and worshiped Him.

She looked at all those men around the table—talking, eating, laughing together. How she must have shrunk from carrying out her plan in front of them. Her brother and Jesus would understand. But what would the disciples think? Well, she would find out.

Mary went and got the alabaster box. Doubtless she moved as quietly as possible, hoping the disciples wouldn't notice her. However, there is no quiet way to break a box made of alabaster. And she had to break

it to pour out the ointment.

If the disciples had not noticed Mary before, they certainly looked when she broke the box. They saw her pouring the perfume on Jesus' head and feet. The spikenard ran and dripped, and Mary used her long hair to wipe it away. The sweet fragrance flooded the house.

Then Mary found out what the disciples thought. They began to mutter among themselves, "Look at what she's doing! She broke the alabaster box. She meant to break it!"

"It had spikenard in it. And she just poured it all out!"

"It's dripping on the floor—that expensive stuff!"

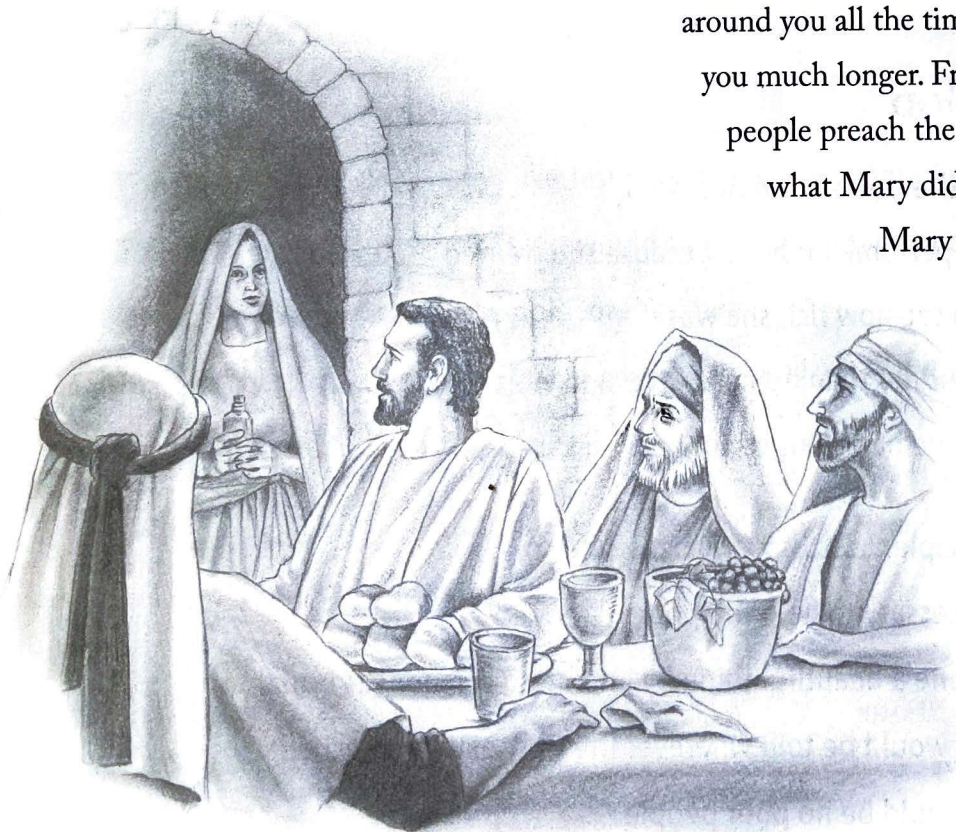
"What's wrong with her—wasting the valuable ointment like that?"

One disciple especially was disgusted at what Mary had done. "She could have sold that ointment for more than three hundred **pence** and given the money to the poor."

No doubt about it—the disciples thought she had done something foolish. They did not see it as a special love gift to their Master. But Jesus did.

"Leave her alone," He said. "She has done a beautiful thing. She has anointed My body for burial ahead of time. If you want to help the poor, you can find them around you all the time. But I won't be with you much longer. From now on, wherever people preach the Gospel, they will tell what Mary did to me."

Mary did not understand all of Jesus' words, but they comforted her. She didn't care what the disciples thought. She knew Jesus understood why she had given Him that special gift.



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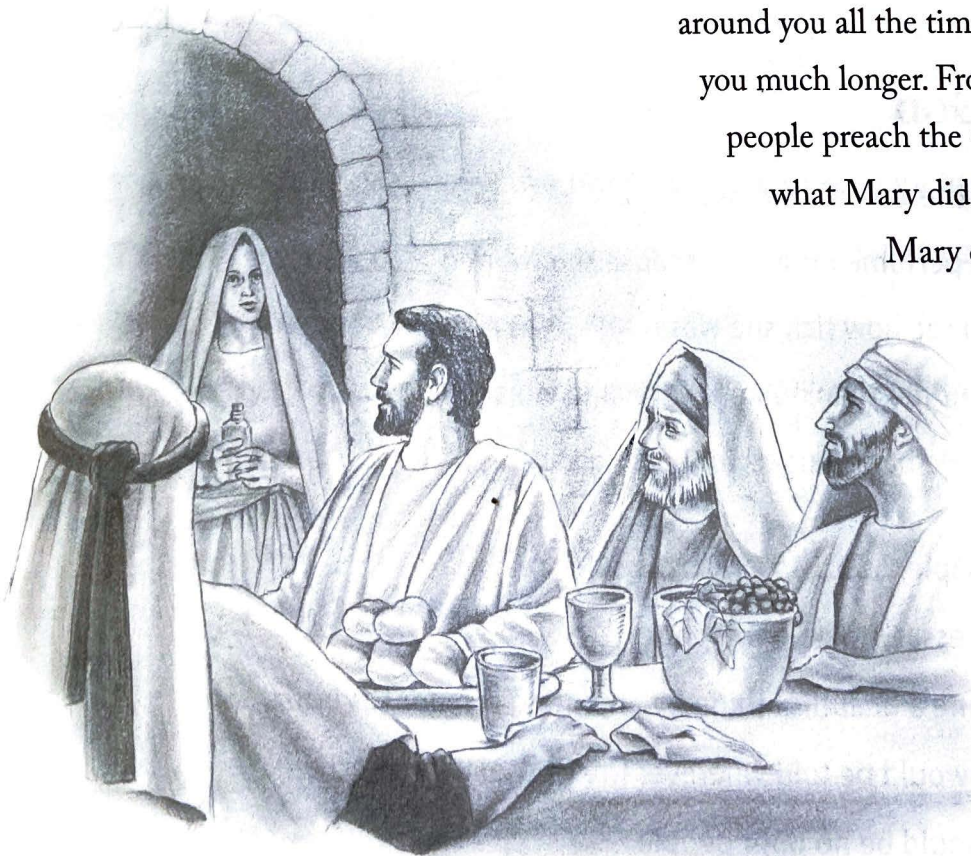
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FROM THE STORY

Number these in the order they happened.

- _____ Lazarus' sisters fixed a special supper for the Master.
_____ Mary wiped up the perfume with her hair.
_____ The disciples criticized Mary for wasting the ointment.
_____ Mary anointed Jesus' head and feet.
_____ Jesus brought Lazarus back to life.

Complete the sentences.

- The alabaster box of perfume was worth _____ pence, the amount a man could make in a _____.
- The disciples criticized Mary for _____ the box, _____ out the ointment, and not _____ the ointment to give the money to the _____.

THAT'S OUR GOD

Write the letters of the correct answers.

- Mary poured her perfume on Jesus because she wanted _____.
 - everyone to see how rich she was
 - to show Jesus her thankfulness, love, and worship
 - to pay what He had charged for healing Lazarus
- Jesus told the disciples _____ and _____.
 - it wasn't necessary to help the poor
 - Mary had done a beautiful thing by anointing Him for His burial
 - Mary's deed would be told wherever the Gospel was preached
 - soon there would be no poor people

FOR ME TODAY

Answer these questions.

- △ 6. Mary gave her most valuable possession to Jesus. What is your most valuable possession? _____
- △ 7. Would your father need to work a year to buy it? _____

HOW THEY LIVED

Match.

8. _____ easily carved stone
9. _____ expensive perfume
10. _____ soothing salve
11. _____ more than one penny

- a. ointment
- b. pence
- c. alabaster
- d. spikenard

WE REMEMBER

Underline the correct answer.

12. The **Romans, Pharisees** didn't like Jesus' teachings and wanted an excuse to kill Him.
13. The Pharisees said Jesus' teaching would cause the Romans to **come, leave**.
14. Herod built **Jerusalem, the temple** for the Jews.
15. The **Jews, Romans** appointed kings, governors, soldiers, and tax collectors.