

“COMMITMENT SUNDAY”

“Not a Fragment, But the Whole”

Scripture Reading – Mark, 14:3-9

While Jesus was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor”. And they rebuked her harshly.

“Leave her alone”, said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her”.

‘For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me”.’

I Corinthians, 11:23-24, NIV

The theme for Commitment Sunday 2007 is ‘BROKEN FOR YOU’.

It is important for all of us to be able to give fresh focus to personal commitment at the beginning of a new year. The most precious truth is that God is totally committed to us before we were ever committed to him. Through the cross, God revealed the extent of that love – total in reach and effect. At such cost, Christ’s body was broken for us.

God’s commitment to us is both undeserved and unreserved.

In love, we make a response that can never equal or compare to such commitment, but we commit ourselves to God, unreservedly. As we come in dedication, God always has blessings to give us as we make ourselves available. Those blessings are multiplied as we engage in the work and mission that are ours. Only when we are a people committed and dedicated, prepared to be broken bread for the salvation of the world, will God bless and use us.

‘BROKEN FOR YOU’ was inspired by the woman who anointed Jesus with perfume.

This Commitment Sunday, we are invited to ‘break the jar’, offering to him that which is precious to us, whatever it may be. ‘BROKEN FOR YOU’ holds the dual meaning of both Christ’s death for us and our invited response to him.

“THIS IS MY BODY, BROKEN FOR YOU”

‘For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me”.’

I Corinthians, 11:23-24, NKJV

Paul was not present on this occasion, but God revealed the events to him.

How? We do not know, but Paul’s account gives us some important information concerning the events that surrounded The Last Supper shared by Jesus and his disciples.

Jesus and his disciples met together in the upper room to celebrate The Passover.

In one sense, this was the last celebration of the old Passover and the inauguration of the new Passover. Jesus took a piece of unleavened bread and blessed it saying: “BLESSED ART THOU, O LORD OUR GOD, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO BRINGETH FORTH BREAD FROM THE EARTH”. As he broke the bread, he compared it to himself...

‘Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me”.’

Luke, 22:19, NIV

Jesus was speaking about his body and the Cross of Calvary.

The Lord’s Supper was more than just an acted parable. Jesus’ words would have meant little if he was not prepared to put them into action. His words would have meant nothing without the Cross. The Bible tells us that whilst none of the bones in the body of Jesus were broken, he himself was ‘broken’ in his death on the cross.

Jesus did not simply die a natural death.

He was the victim of a brutal murder. Crucifixion was the capital punishment of the state and it was a barbaric and particularly painful punishment. Jesus was murdered by the authorities of Rome. A murder which was engineered by the pious religious leaders in Jerusalem. A murder caused by the betrayal of one man, and the cowardice of another who could and should have prevented it. Nonetheless, it was a death that was necessary because of the sins of the world.

***O the charm of the cross! How I love to be there!
With the love that shines from it, what love can compare?***

***The seal of my ransom in Calvary I see,
All my sin, O my Saviour, laid upon thee!***

Albert Orsborn, SASB 119:1

‘O THE CHARM OF THE CROSS! HOW I LOVE TO BE THERE!’

To be honest, there is nothing about the cross that I find to be a ‘charm’ or charming. Of course, to some it is alluring or even fascinating, but do I really want to be at that scene of immense suffering? The Cross would surely prevent you and me from looking at his death!

'O THE CHARM OF THE CROSS! HOW I LOVE TO BE THERE!' ... Do I really want to be there?

'The dd rugged cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said good-bye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.'

A W Tozer

Am I willing to take up this rugged cross?

To take up this symbol of death to sin and self...?

To experience the abrupt and violent end of my life...?

To experience the end of my desires, my wants, my will...?

Am I willing to take up this rugged cross?

To say goodbye to my family and friends and head down the road, knowing that I am never coming back again?

To take the no compromising, no modifying, no sparing way?

Am I willing to die? On that cross?

Jesus broke the bread as a symbol of his body in the upper room.

The Romans broke the body of Jesus on the cross of Calvary.

Are we willing to be broken at the foot of the cross in order to experience his healing stream?

*'BROKEN FOR YOU', my Saviour cries; raising my head, I lift my eyes,
See on the cross his grief and pain, hear whispered words of love again:
'BROKEN FOR YOU'. My heart is stirred. I must respond to what I've heard.*

*Saviour Divine, what can I do? How show the love I feel for you?
I'll dedicate myself today, knowing the words I want to say,
Words from my heart said willingly – Lord, I'll repeat your words to me.*

Denise Brine

"NOT A FRAGMENT, BUT THE WHOLE"

'While Jesus was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.'

Mark, 14:3, NIV

In the material world, when a thirty-piece Wedgwood dinner service becomes a three hundred-piece set, even with the advent of 'Super Glue', it becomes pretty worthless...

But, in the Kingdom of God, brokenness is a key to blessing and service.

In the home of Simon the Leper, Mary brought an alabaster jar of perfume to Jesus.

She broke the jar and poured the perfume over Jesus. Then she wiped it with her hair. Some of the disciples (and Judas in particular) were astonished by this waste. Jesus told them to: **'LEAVE HER ALONE'.**

We must be willing to be broken at the feet of Jesus.

Do not worry about what men might think... It is what God thinks that really matters!

We worry too much about what someone might say... but what has it got to do with them?

God himself is the only rightful judge. The Almighty is the auditor.

We need to make a presentation of everything that we are to him this night...

'When Rev James Caughey visited Nottingham in 1846, his red hot revival oratory set aflame the fire already in the boy's heart and William Booth determined, "God should have all there was" of him.'

"THE HISTORY OF THE SALVATION ARMY (Volume One)", Robert Sandall

That single-mindedness and dedication proved to be the hallmark of a life totally dedicated to winning the lost, a dedication which shaped the lives of many from London's East End to those around the world.

Some years ago, the highlight of one of the Congress Meetings in London was when a Commissioner, after receiving the Order of the Founder, testified and sang...

*All my days and all my hours, all my will and all my powers,
All the passion of my soul, not a fragment but the whole,
Shall be thine, dear Lord, shall be thine, dear Lord.*

Edward H Joy, SACS 32

Tonight, I want us to consider what William Barclay calls, "Love's Extravagance"...

1. THE PROMISE TO LOVE

Shall be thine, dear Lord. Shall be thine, dear Lord!

On every banknote, we read a promise.

"I promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of _____ pounds."

I have to admit that I am not too sure who is making the promise.

Is it the Queen? Is it the Governors of the Bank of England? Is it the Chief Cashier?

The Chorus states: 'SHALL BE THINE, DEAR LORD, SHALL BE THINE, DEAR LORD'.

And we sing that not once, but twice! It is a big promise that we make. Nonetheless, it indicates to us the basic response all Christians should make in the light of God's love. We can never out-give him, but at times we wish we could give more and give better.

Can you remember when you first began to recognise the love of God?

You enjoyed the selfless giving of Jesus and you felt so privileged, thinking: "ALL THIS HE DID FOR ME!" You were so overcome with feelings of his love that you were keen to respond in a positive manner. His demonstration of love demands a response from you... and you made your promises.

'This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.'
I John, 3:16a, NIV

'Real love is an action, not a feeling. It produces selfless, sacrificial giving. The greatest act of love is giving oneself for others.'

"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes

*His death's a claim, his love has a plea; O it is wonderful love!
Ungrateful was I to slight thy call, but, Lord, now I come, before thee fall,
I give myself, I give up all, all for that wonderful love.*

*Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful love, coming to me from Heaven above,
Filling me, thrilling me through and through; O it was wonderful love!*
Emmanuel Rolfe, SASB 114:3

2. THE PROMISE TO LIVE

All my days and all my hours, all my will and all my powers!

In our praying and in our singing, we often pledge to give God our all.

But how difficult it is to put that into practice! Satan quickly tempts us to take back our offering.

"You are giving far too much... No one else is giving so much."

"It is time you sat back and let others do it... You have done it in the past, now it's their turn."

Jesus himself had to struggle with the temptation to withdraw all or part of his offering.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, when the redemption of mankind was at stake, Jesus was there – he was praying. The disciples were there – they were sleeping. Satan was there – he was prowling. Jesus' prayer was full of commitment to the calling and purpose of the Father.

"Abba, Father", Jesus said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will".'

Mark, 14:36, NIV

'While praying, Jesus was aware of what doing the Father's will would cost him. He understood the suffering he was about to encounter, and he did not want to have to endure the horrible experience. But Jesus prayed, "Yet I want your will, not mine". Anything worth having costs something. What does your commitment to God cost you?'

"LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE", Study Notes

Like Jesus, we too have to struggle with the ultimate difficulty – 'commitment'.

Satan tells us to hold back. Go slowly, slowly. Don't be too eager. Beware of the hidden costs.

3. THE PROMISE TO GIVE

All the passion of my soul, not a fragment but the whole!

Submission is often viewed as a painful experience,

The concept of surrender... It is too often feared with thoughts of a merciless enemy.

Let us remember our offering is to a friend who loves us so well, to a friend in confidence.

The story of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus shows us love's extravagance.

The woman took the most precious thing she had and poured it out on Jesus. Jewish women were very fond of perfume; and often they carried a little alabaster phial of it round their necks. Such perfume was very valuable.

If love is true, there must always be a certain extravagance in it.

It does not nicely calculate the less or more. It is not concerned to see how little it can decently give. If it gave all it had, the gift would still be too little. There is a recklessness in love which refuses to count the cost.

Love is not love if it nicely calculates the cost.

It gives its all and its only regret is that it has not still more to give.

'A young American couple, Della and Jim, were very poor but very much in love. Each had one unique possession. Della's hair was her glory. When she let it down it almost served as a robe. Jim had a gold watch which had come to him from his father and was his pride. It was the day before Christmas, and Della had exactly one dollar and eighty-seven cents to buy Jim a present. She went out and sold her hair for twenty dollars; and with the proceeds bought a platinum fob for Jim's precious watch. When Jim came home at night and saw Della's shorn head, he stopped as if stupefied. It was not that he did not like it or love her any less; for she was lovelier than ever. Slowly he handed her his gift; it was a set of expensive tortoise-shell combs with jewelled edges for her lovely hair – and he had sold his gold watch to buy them. Each had given the other all there was to give. Real love cannot think of any other way to give.'

"THE GIFT OF THE MAGI", William Sydney Porter

'BROKEN FOR YOU'. Myself I bring; Lord, I'll surrender everything.

Costly and precious sacrifice, anything less will not suffice.

'BROKEN FOR YOU', my gift outpoured as I respond to you, my Lord.

Solemnly I renew my vow, making a new commitment now.

It must be more than dutiful; may it be fine and beautiful.

Your life you gave, my life I give; 'BROKEN FOR YOU', for you I'll live.

Denise Brine

**All that I am, all I can be, all that I have, all that is me,
Accept and use, Lord, as you would choose, Lord, right now, today!**