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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1674 ~ Jesus Anointed at Bethany.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

A godly old man once said: "If the Lord be with us, we have no cause for fear. His eye is upon us, His arm is over us, His ear is open to our prayer, His grace sufficient, His promises unchangeable." This man lived most of his life during the 18th Century but he didn't always think this way. In his younger years, he was a ship captain who sold people from Africa as slaves to other parts of the world.

What changed this man from being a cruel and uncaring person to one that the Lord Jesus could use as an effective church preacher? John Newton was his name and at the end of his life he said: "Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly: that I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Saviour." Newton is best known among Christians for writing the hymn, *Amazing Grace*. He also said: "I am persuaded that love and humility are the highest attainments in the school of Christ and the brightest evidence that He indeed is our Master." In his senior years, Newton was a very prolific writer and one favourite quote of his was this: "God's love in time past forbids me to think, He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink."

In today's *Bible Adventure*, we look at the parable Jesus taught about love and thankfulness. A person will love and thank God according to the mercy God has shown him. The greater the sins God forgives, the greater will be the sinner's love for God.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

In today's drama, two incidents are included together. In the first incident listed in Luke 7, Simon the Pharisee invited the Lord Jesus to his house. When Jesus came, this Pharisee didn't give Jesus a greeting or body cleansing that a host would normally give their dinner guest. It was highly rude what the Pharisee did.

In those days, the furniture arrangement was different in Jewish homes. People semi-reclined on their sides while lying on couches around the table and they didn't use chairs.

A woman known in the city as a sinner or prostitute came in behind Jesus as He reclined at the table. She brought with her a flask of very expensive fragrant oil. As she wept over her many sins, her tears fell on Jesus' feet. She wiped the tears away with her hair, kissed His feet and then anointed them with the fragrant oil.

When Simon the Pharisee saw this happening, he thought to himself that if Jesus really was a prophet, that He would know what kind of woman was touching Him. However, Jesus knew what the Pharisee was thinking that, so he asked for permission to speak. When granted, Jesus told the dinner party a parable about a man who was owed money by two people, one owing only a small amount and the other owing ten times as much. Neither had the money to repay their debt, so the man forgave them both and cleared their debts.

Jesus then asked the Pharisee which forgiven debtor would love the man more, the one who had been forgiven a little or the one forgiven a lot. The Pharisee rightly chose the one who had been forgiven much more. It's interesting to note that if a person thinks in his heart that his sins are small, he will be less grateful for forgiveness. Whether our sins are great or small, we cannot pay back our debt to God by our own righteousness. Only by God's mercy can our debt be forgiven. The Bible says it's better to consider our sins as very great, because that's how God considers them.

Jesus then turned to Simon the Pharisee and compared him with the sinful woman that he had just despised. Pharisees didn't consider themselves to be sinful, therefore, God's mercy and forgiveness meant nothing to them. In their minds, this Pharisee and his fellow Pharisees had no reason to be grateful to God or to love Him with all their hearts. Instead, they only loved God with their lips.

But the sinful woman loved Jesus from the depths of her heart and showed this love by using the expensive oil on Jesus' feet in front of her religious leaders. Jesus told the woman her sins were forgiven and that her faith had saved her, and He sent her away in peace. For us too, it's only by faith that we can receive the forgiveness, the healing and the salvation that God kindly offers to us.

The names of Simon and Mary seemed to be very common in Jesus' time on earth and it's easy for us to get the different Simons and Marys mixed up sometimes. In the Gospels of Matthew, Chapter 26 and Mark 14, a second anointing was given to Jesus by an unnamed woman in Simon the leper's house at Bethany. This anointing was done out of love for Jesus and in symbolic preparation for His burial. It was only six days before the Passover and one day before Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. In John 12, this woman was named as Mary and the sister of Martha and Lazarus; Lazarus being the man who Jesus had raised from the dead.

Crowds of people went out to Bethany to worship Jesus and see Lazarus. They believed in Jesus because Lazarus was alive again. Therefore, the Jewish leaders decided to kill Lazarus too. As long as Lazarus was alive, he was visible proof of Jesus' power. If he was killed, the leaders hoped the people would soon forget about him and Jesus. It had come to the point where the Jewish leaders could see the whole world around them going after Jesus and amid all this extra interest and attention, it was going to be harder still to kill Jesus.

The ointment Mary used to anoint Jesus was probably worth a year's wages. Yet she poured it over Jesus' head and feet and wiped His feet with her hair. This was the greatest possible demonstration of love and respect anyone could give to another person. Jesus greatly valued what she did to prepare for His burial. Jesus knew He was going to die a criminal's death. The Jews always anointed a dead body with ointment, but not for executed criminals.

Although Mary had anointed Jesus before He died, she herself didn't realise what she'd done. However, Jesus knew and that's why He promised that wherever the Gospel is preached, what she did will also be told. And that promise has certainly come true.

For us, this record of the anointing of Jesus is like a parable. God has given each of us different gifts and skills and possessions. If we keep them for ourselves, they won't benefit anyone. In the end, they don't even benefit us, because we can't take them from this earth when we die. Only when we pour out our gifts, skills and possessions at Jesus' feet can He take them and use them for God's glory and the benefit of others.

Some of the people present in the room rebuked Mary for wasting the ointment on a living person, and Jesus at that. They thought that the unopened container of ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor. Certainly the man in charge of the disciples' money purse, Judas Iscariot, thought that, not because he had any concern for the poor but because he was a thief. He often helped himself to the group's money whenever it suited him. The more money in the purse, the more that he could have.

In modern times, so many people think that they've lived a good life – they haven't robbed a bank or murdered anyone, so God must be fairly pleased with them. When the news bulletins on the radio and television give details of some high-ranking official being charged with wrongdoing, their public response is to deny that they've done anything wrong. In their own eyes, they're right all the time. But God knows their need for forgiveness is still great.

There are also groups of people within the church who desire to be right all the time. A woman in a Sunday School lesson was asked a question by the leader. She wasn't sure what the correct answer was so she wouldn't give any answer at all in front of the others. It was too much of a loss of face if she gave the wrong answer. This fear of being wrong shouldn't motivate us in life but instead, a desire to learn and understand God's ways in humility, love and peace.

Mary brought Jesus the gift of precious ointment. What gift are we bringing to Him? Some will say they have no special talent or gift to bring to Jesus and so make no attempt to do anything for Him. That was the very attitude of a man in one of the parables Jesus taught about and it's found in Matthew, Chapter 25. Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man about to travel to a far country. He called together his servants and entrusted his goods to them to trade with while he was gone. Because the servants had varying abilities, he gave five talents (or 5,000 gold coins) to one servant to trade with, he gave another two talents and he gave to another, one talent. Then he left on his journey. In this parable, Jesus Himself is the man and He has entrusted His followers with different gifts, both natural and spiritual. The Holy Spirit is a gift and everything the disciple of Christ has is also a gift from God.

Jesus wants us to use the gifts we've been given. If we've been given land, He wants us to use it diligently and well, like growing crops or supporting an orphanage. If He gives us the chance to study, He wants us to study with good effort. Christ doesn't expect everyone to return the same amount of achievements to Him but He does expect that we return to Him all that we can. Especially, He expects us to give Him our best love, faith and obedience.

In this parable, one servant received only one talent. He was a lazy man and didn't use it at all for his master's success. Instead, he buried it in the ground and refused to do anything with it. Although not mentioned in this parable, we can assume that there are many people who have been five or two talents in this life yet bury them all in the ground too. These people's guilt of unwillingness and selfishness when required to do more will be even greater than the guilt of the man with only one buried talent. In Jesus' story, the servant with the five talents traded and made another five talents. The servant with two also gained another two more. They had used their talents well and were rewarded with responsibility for many things in heaven. The servant with one talent, however, had looked down with contempt on his gift and also at his master. He thought he could never please his master and on the day of giving an account of his actions, the servant even dared to accuse his master of being unjust and dishonest. But God is always just. It's wicked men who always try to blame God for their own wickedness.

The wicked servant tried to defend himself by returning his gift with nothing more than what it was, but nothing less either. He hoped by doing this to escape punishment. But the master asked why the servant hadn't put the money in the bank so the master could have gained some interest on the investment. It was obvious the wicked servant had cheated his master and so lost the one talent that he had been given responsibility for. If we don't use our spiritual and material blessings for God's service, they too will be taken away from us.

If we do use God's gifts in His service, to the same extent back, God will give us even more. The punishment for a servant who misuses a gift of God was indicated in the parable as very severe. If we cheat God, we oppose Him and as a result, He will ultimately oppose us.

This same parable is told a bit differently in Luke, Chapter 19. Here there were 10 servants who were given the same amount each. However, they received different rewards according to how faithfully they had used their gifts. The meaning in Luke's parable is the same as the one in Matthew's Gospel, but there is extra meaning added about a historic event regarding King Herod's family.

Let us not be among those who oppose the true king, the Lord Jesus Christ. If we refuse to serve Him, we shall bring upon ourselves eternal condemnation. If now you realise that you have been hiding away your gifts from God and are not using them, ask Him for forgiveness and pray for guidance about the best way to use them for God's honour and glory.

In Galatians, Chapter 5, Verse 22, it says: "But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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