



Let Us Give Thanks

A Beautiful Work — Then and Now
Desmond Ford

Only once, that I can remember, did Jesus describe a specific work done for him as "beautiful." In Mark 14:6 and Matthew 26:10 (KJV) Mary's act of anointing is said to be a "good" work. The word translated "good" is a different term from the usual Greek term for good. The RSV has rightly corrected the older version by using "beautiful."

Christ saw in the applied ointment of the broken flask a symbol of the woman's sacrificial love and that of his own. As the fragrance filled the whole house (Jn 12:3) so the sacrificial love of Christ reflected in Mary's beautiful gift is to fill the universe. Love that is spent upon self becomes sewage. There is no real love except that shown in self-sacrifice. A generation ago C. S. Lewis concluded his *Mere Christianity* with these wise words:

The principle runs through all life from top to bottom. Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of

your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will ever be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.¹

According to our Lord many will call him Master, even in the last days, who yet shall be lost eternally for they have not worked works of love. They have never sacrificed for him like Mary. We must have the courage to ask ourselves the question, How much do we owe our master? (Lk 16:5) Of course the sum cannot be computed. It is an ocean that would drown us, a mountain that would dwarf us, a reckoning that would bankrupt us a trillion times over.

What then shall we render the Lord for all his benefits towards us? Micah puts the question and offers in reply one of the most wonderful statements in all literature whether that of history, philosophy, or religion. Observe it:

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Mic 6:6-8 KJV)

The word here translated "mercy" like that of Mark 14:6 has the connotation of beauty as well as piety, grace and generosity. The most merciful thing we can do for him who died for us, the most beautiful thing we can do, is to die to selfishness and like him, and like Mary give without stint. "But I weary of continued requests for help. Giving hurts." True of us all. When therefore can we ignore appeals to give? Just as soon as we cease to receive. "Freely have ye received, freely give." "To whom much is given, much is expected." If we receive much continually,

we must give much continually. God's love, God's grace, God's provision of air, food, shelter, friends, and protection, calls for a regular response. This is why Paul without embarrassment told his parishioners:

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. (2 Cor 9:6-8, 11, 15)

In harmony with these words from God GNU asks you to prayerfully consider its endeavors to shed the love of God abroad and seeks your financial help as well as your prayers. We are grateful for your partnership. But, and we speak now to those from whom we have not heard, please don't be a sleeping partner!

This ministry came into existence without the planning of any of its workers. After Glacier View, Gill and I had intended to return to Australia and rest a while before seeking new employment. Out of the blue, the Lord, through the request of friends, indicated a continuing ministry in this country. Now after more than five years we look back in gratitude and exclaim "What hath God wrought!" The talents of Noel Mason, Calvin Edwards, Smuts van Rooyen, Brad McIntyre, as well as those behind the scenes such as Marian Fritz, Stan Bisel, Janie Coon and Jo Ann MacFarlane have resulted in blessing to multiplied thousands throughout many countries of the world.

Since September of 1980, GNU has had radio programs across the USA, as well as a much smaller number in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. At one period while producing the weekly broadcast we were on over fifty stations. More recently with the daily broadcast

we have been on a smaller number of key stations. Cable television in Orange County has repeatedly used GNU video tapes of gospel sermons. Our magazine has been circulating for years in over sixty countries, and tracts and books on practical, devotional, and doctrinal issues have been widely circulated. Then there is our Tape of the Month which goes to hundreds of homes regularly. Personal presentations of the gospel have been made in seminars, not only in the USA, but also in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, England, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, etc. Even in Puerto Rico we have spoken in various cities. Perhaps we should also mention the GNU ministry by letter. Because of the large number of letters received often our replies have to be brief but where there is special need we go to considerable length in time and space to apply the gospel salve or its wisdom as best we can. GNU speakers also conduct church services not only for the Auburn Gospel Fellowship, but to other communities and for a variety of denominations as opportunity offers.

Many have seen the media talk-shows, both radio and TV, in which GNU has been represented. In the last few months I have spoken with Walter Martin on his Bible Answer Man Program — the largest Christian talk-back show in the USA; on KPDQ with Lou Davies, and KFIA with Jamie Clark. Telephone lines have run hot and many have expressed their appreciation of these programs.

This year, as with other ministries throughout the USA, we have had severe financial pressures. Consequently, with sadness, we have had to remove our daily radio program from some stations despite their regrets. At this point of time we have also had to curb our ambitions for new ventures for the gospel. Therefore, we seek your continual help this Christmas season.

We are grateful for loyal partners who have regularly sent offerings. Such generosity elicits our constant praise to God. Without you we would close down GNU. But as long as our friends continue to make it possible for us to survive we will persevere. Under God you

dictate the future for GNU. The most joyous times are when we meet you, fellowship with you, even staying in your homes and eating with you. You have been an inspiration to us and your sacrifice has been written in heaven, but of greater moment is the hearts and minds you have gladdened by the good news you have made possible for so many to hear. They too would thank you if they could.

GNU has made several video productions for TV but our ambitions in this field have not yet been realized. We intend to pursue a much-wider presentation if the Lord wills. Do remember that project prayerfully.

We are fully aware, that, but for the good Lord's mercies GNU would have gone out of existence long ago. We praise him for his care and providence. To him we look supremely, but also we look to you as his instruments. Will you help us to clothe the naked with his righteousness, to feed the hungry with the bread of life, and the thirsty with the water of life, to visit those who are sick and in prison, in person or by letter, tape, radio or video — telling all that there is One who has numbered the hairs of their head for he died for them, that he offers them something so much better than anything they can get for themselves — even a title to and fitness for everlasting life, and in addition his friendship and constant provision here and now? What gifts can match heaven's gifts? Gifts of forgiveness, righteousness, the indwelling Spirit, faith, hope, love, and guidance and strength for each step of the rugged path until the heavenly city is reached. Will you continue to help us to tell the best of the good news — that this man receiveth sinners? This Christmas season is the opportunity for you to work a beautiful work for the Master because "Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these, my brethren, ye do it unto me." "Freely have ye received, freely give." Remember "What I spent I had, what I saved I lost, what I gave, I have." Our warmest love to you all from all of us here at GNU.

—Desmond Ford