

Title: **DO WHAT YOU CAN**

Text: *Mark 14:3-8*

Subject: *Serving Christ*

Introduction:

If the Lord will enable me, I want to talk to you tonight about serving Christ. The title of my message is — “**DO WHAT YOU CAN.**” Our text will be Mark 14:3-8. Here the Holy Spirit shows us what a good work is.

(Mark 14:3-8) “And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured *it* on his head. (4) And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? (5) For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. (6) And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. (7) For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. (8) She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.”

If I am not mistaken, the woman mentioned in our text is Mary, the sister of Lazarus. The Apostle John identifies her for us in his Gospel (11:2). She was an eminent believer, full of faith and full of grace. Our Lord says, of her, “*Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her*” (Luke 10:42). **Every time Mary is identified in the Scriptures, she is set before us as an example of faith, humility and grace.**

- In **Luke 10:39** we see Mary sitting at the Savior’s feet and hearing his word.
- In **John 11:3** Mary, along with her sister Martha, sent a message to the Master, seeking his help for their sick brother. — “*Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*”
- Later, **in that same chapter**, we see Mary waiting patiently upon the Lord (v. 20) and worshipping him in the midst of great sorrow (v. 32).

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Readings: *Rex Bartley and Bob Duff*

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- Then, **in our text**, just a few days before the Lord Jesus would die in her place and put away her sins by the sacrifice of himself, Mary came into the house where her Redeemer was eating at a feast prepared in his honor and anointed him with a costly, costly spikenard.

Though some thought she had acted fanatically and rebuked her for having made such a waste of her goods, the Lord Jesus not only received what she did, but also highly honored her for it. **Look at what he says concerning Mary's work.** — "**Why trouble ye her?**" — With those words, he sharply rebuked those who murmured against Mary, indignantly calling her sacrifice a "waste."

The spirit of these narrow-minded fault-finders is all too common. Their followers are found in every age and in every part of the visible church. These pious, self-righteous worldlings are quick to denounce what they call "extremes" in religion. **Dedication and commitment** to Christ they call "fanaticism." These are the people who are always urging "moderation" in the service of Christ and his gospel. — If a man devotes his time, money and affection to the pursuit of any worldly interest, they call him wise. — If he dedicates himself to the pursuit of riches, politics, or fame, they find no fault in him. — If an athlete devotes himself to exercise, training and practice, they say "he is to be admired." — But if a man devotes himself and all that he has to Christ, to his worship, to his service, to his gospel, the self-righteous worldling cannot find words ugly enough to express his contempt. **Devotion to Christ they call a "waste, fanaticism and foolish."** **Cold, hard hearts are always slow to do and quick to criticize.** — You can bank on it. Mr. Critical Tongue and Ms. Gossip Jaws are always do-nothings in the Kingdom of God!

If a person ever comes to understand the sinfulness of his sin and the mercy, grace and love of Christ in his sin-atonement death as the sinner's Substitute, he will never imagine that anything is too great or too costly to do for Christ or to give to Christ. Rather, his heart will cry, — "*What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits.*" (Psalm 116:12). He is not afraid of wasting his time, his money, and his life on his Savior. He is afraid of wasting them on the world! He is not afraid of doing too much for Christ. He fears giving too much care to the world!

A GOOD WORK

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Then our Lord said, “**She hath done a good work.**” — How marvelous and great is this praise coming from the lips of the Son of God! We read of no other work done by a human being on this earth called by the Son of God “*a good work.*”

- It was a work done **for the glory of Christ alone.** — She was wrapped up in, absorbed with and consumed by the Lord Jesus Christ. She cherished him. This perfume was meant for no one but him. She had no regard for herself, the consequences of her actions, what she might lose, or what she might gain. She wanted nothing but to honor Christ. — “*She hath wrought a good work on me.*” Mary had no thoughts toward anyone but her Redeemer as she poured out her spikenard. What she did she did purely for his praise, for his glory, from a heart of love.
- This was **an act of pure love.** — This is exactly what Luke’s narrative of this event teaches us. Because she had been forgiven much, she loved much (Luke 7:36-50).

(Luke 7:36-50) “And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. (37) And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, (38) And stood at his feet behind *him* weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. (39) Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. (40) And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. (41) There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. (42) And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? (43) Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. (44) And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. (45) Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman

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since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. (46) My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. (47) Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little. (48) And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. (49) And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? (50) And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

The one thing that motivated this woman to do what she did was love for Christ (1 John 4:19; 2 Corinthians 5:14). When our hearts and lives are ruled by love for Christ, they are well ruled.

- This was **a work requiring considerable cost, self-denial, and sacrifice.** — If you read the accounts of Mark and John, you will find that this ointment was worth nearly a year’s wages (300 pence - Compare Matt. 20:9-13).

(Matthew 20:9-13) “And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. (10) But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. (11) And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the goodman of the house, (12) Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. (13) But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?”

- This great sacrifice was **the result of thoughtful, deliberate preparation.** — This was something she had been planning for sometime. She had been saving this rich, costly perfume specifically to use it for Christ’s honor, at the appropriate opportunity (John 12:7).

(John 12:7) “Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.”

- This woman’s sacrifice was **made silently.** — She said nothing, she drew as little attention to herself as she possibly could. She said nothing about what she would like to do, what she planned to do, what she was doing, or what she had done. She just did what she could.

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- It was a good work because it was **a work of faith**. — “*She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying*” (v.8). This was the response of a believing heart to the sacrifice of her Lord. She anointed him for his burial, but she did so in anticipation of his resurrection (Isaiah 53:10-12). The primary object of embalming was and is a belief in the resurrection of the dead. It appears that **Mary alone understood** and believed what the Lord had been teaching his disciples about his death and resurrection.

(Isaiah 53:10-12) “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (11) He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. (12) Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

WHAT SHE COULD

Now, I want you to look at verse 8. Our Lord highly commends Mary’s work, saying, — “*She hath done what she could.*” Our Lord commended this woman’s work because she did what she could do for him. No stronger words of commendation could be given than these — “*She hath done what she could!*”

Multitudes live and die without grace and are lost forever, who are always saying, “I do what I can.” Like Ananias and Sapphira, they lie to the Holy Ghost. Maybe they do some little something in the name of Christ, but they are far from doing what they can. Few, I fear, are like this woman and do what they can.

Proposition: Our Lord Jesus holds this woman, Mary, before us as an example to follow. I want to show you that **our Lord Jesus Christ highly esteems every work, every service and every sacrifice done for him.**

DO WHAT YOU CAN

I am talking to you about works, works of faith, good works. I want to stir up our hearts to do what we can for Christ. Many seem to think that a believer is a person who has certain feelings, experiences and convictions, forgetting that these things are a delusion if they produce no fruit. Like flower blossoms on a wild fruit tree, they look pretty, but they are useless. They bear no fruit. **Faith in Christ is more than creeds, convictions and correctness of life. Faith works by love.** And “*faith without works is dead.*” (Galatians 5:6; James 2:26).

(Galatians 5:6) “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.”

(James 2:26) “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

TO THE LOST

Let me first address you who are under the wrath of God, you who are yet without Christ. There are some things you who are lost can and must do for your immortal souls (Acts 2:36-38; 16:29-31).

(Acts 2:36-38) “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (37) Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? (38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

(Acts 16:29-31) “Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, (30) And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? (31) And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

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When the Jews asked Peter and the Apostles, “*What shall we do,*” **Peter did not say**, wait for God to save you, if you are one of the elect it will happen in God’s time. **He knew** that election was necessary to salvation. **He knew** that faith is the gift of God. And **he knew** the depravity and inability of man. **Yet, Peter knew** that the people who stood before him were responsible men and women who were under the wrath of God! Therefore he said, “*Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for [because of] the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” (Acts 2:38). **Will you hear me?**

The claims of Christ upon your soul are urgent! You are a guilty sinner with an immortal soul. The wrath of God is upon you. Time is short! Eternity is long! And Judgment is sure! But there is a Savior for guilty sinners! **Christ is that Savior.** The only way of salvation, grace, and eternal life is Christ. **Your sins cannot be forgiven,** but by the blood of Christ. **You cannot be made righteous,** except by having his righteousness imputed to you. **You cannot be saved** from the wrath of God, but by his grace. Why will you die? Are you content to perish under the wrath of God?

Perhaps you ask, “**Pastor, what shall I do?**” How I pray that God Almighty has awakened you to see your need of Christ. If he has, **this is what you can and must do ...**

- **“Repent!”** Turn to Christ. Turn to him in submission and faith, confessing your sin, trusting him, bowing to his dominion. Cease your rebellion against God. “*Be ye reconciled to God.*”
- **“Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”** That is trusting him, “*everyone of you for the remission of sins.*” — Confess Christ! — Trust Christ alone, by whose blood your sins have been put away. Yes, if you trust him, he put your sins away!
- **“And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”** — Eternal Life! — Forgiveness of Sin! — Peace With God!

TO BELIEVERS

Now, I want to talk to you who are my brothers and sisters in the kingdom of God, let me show you that there are some things you and I can do for Christ. I could talk about many things here because good works done for Christ encompass many, many things. Indeed, every aspect of the believer’s life ought to be filled with service to Christ. But I do not want to speak in

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general terms. Someone said, “He who aims at nothing will hit his mark every time.” I am not aiming at nothing. Here are **five specific things** that I want us to lay to heart and do for Christ.

1. **Worship Him!**

This is what Mary did. This anointing was an act of worship. In fact, every time we see Mary, she is worshipping her Lord. He had saved her soul. Christ had saved both her brother and her sister. And Mary felt that she could never do enough for him. She brought an alabaster box of ointment, a very expensive spikenard, broke open the box, and poured it out upon the Savior’s head. She loved the disciples. She loved John in his humility and Peter in his boldness; but she loved Christ more. She loved her brother and sister, to whom the ointment might have been given; but she loved Christ more. She loved the poor and, no doubt, often relieved them; but she loved Christ more. On his blessed head, that was soon to be crowned with thorns, on his blessed feet that were soon to be pierced with nails, she poured out her ointment with love, gratitude, and praise.

This is what she could do, and this is what we should do. If we have been saved by Christ, we should give him our affection in true, devoted worship. **The essence of worship is love, praise, and faith. All these things were represented in this woman’s act.**

- Love for Christ moved her to do what she did.
- Faith enabled her to make such a sacrifice.
- Praise for Christ was her object.

McCheyne wrote, “It was not the ointment Jesus cared for, — what does the King of glory care for a little ointment? — but it is the loving heart, poured out upon his feet; it is the adoration, praise, love, and prayers of a believer’s broken heart, that Christ cares for. The new heart is the alabaster box that Jesus loves.”

Faith in Christ, love for Christ and praise, real heart praise to Christ, manifest themselves in the worship of Christ. — Private Worship (Psalm 5:1-3) — Public Worship – (Psalm 5:7-8)

(Psalms 5:1-3) “Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. (2) Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. (3) My voice shalt thou hear in the

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morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.”

(Psalms 5:7-8) “But as for me, I will come *into* thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: *and* in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. (8) Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.”

I never cease to be amazed at the number of men and women who claim to trust and love Christ who willingly absent themselves from the worship of Christ, or attend the worship of Christ half-heartedly. (James 1:18-21). **As you care for your soul, seek to honor Christ in worship and seek profit for your own soul in the house of God.** — Arrange you life around the worship of God. — Prepare your heart, mind, and body for worship. — Pray for God’s blessing upon the means of grace. — Seek to hear the Word attentively and to retain what you hear.

- Take notes
- Discuss the Message
- Ask the Spirit of God to Apply the Message to Your Heart

2. **Follow the path of Righteousness.**

This is how the church of God is described in the Song of Solomon: “*Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?*” (Song of Solomon 3:6). Righteousness in conduct is the perfume of grace in the heart. **When I talk to you about righteousness and holiness of life, this is what I mean...**

- Seek to live in close, intimate, personal **communion** with Christ.
- Seek to **consecrate** your life entirely to Christ.
- Seek, in all things, to be **conformed** to Christ in thought, word, and deed.

How many we influence to evil when our lives are inconsistent with our profession! How many we might be the means of leading to Christ if we lived like Christ before them. (1 Peter 3:1-2).

(1 Peter 3:1-2) “Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; (2) While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear.”

DO WHAT YOU CAN3. **Seek the salvation of lost sinners** (Romans 10:1; I Corinthians 9:22).

It is good to pray for lost souls. But I fear that prayers without labor are nothing but provoking God. We must do more than pray for the lost. We must speak to men, women, and children under our influence about their souls. — You know that **there is a hell** and that the unconverted are rushing madly to it. — You know that **there is a Savior**, ready, willing and able to save lost sinners. — **Will you not seek to save the lost?**

- Speak to them about their souls, Christ, and his salvation. It doesn't take much learning to tell sinners like yourself that they are perishing and that Christ will save. If their house was on fire you would speak to them, wouldn't you?
- Begin at home. — Be a faithful father, like Abraham (Genesis 18:19). See to it that your sons and daughters worship God.
- Do what you can for the salvation of your neighbors. — Personal Witnessing — Bring Sinners to the House of God — Tracts — Tapes.

4. **Give of your means to the cause and service of Christ.**

- Devote some of your time and energy every week to the service of God's kingdom.
- Devote an ever-increasing, just portion of your money every week to the preaching of the gospel (Malachi 3:10-12; Luke 6:38; 1 Corinthians 16:2).
- Look for a need, and do what you can to supply it.

5. **Do what you can to minister to the needs of your brothers and sisters in Christ** (James 1:26-27).

(James 1:26-27) “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain. (27) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

Christ is in heaven today. He no longer stands in need of Mary's ointment, Martha's hospitality, or the Samaritan woman's drink of water. He is personally beyond the reach of those things and will never need them again. But he has left many of his brothers and sisters in this world who do need the comforting visit of a friend bearing ointment, the hospitality of warm

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family, and the refreshment of a cup of cool water. What you do to these, he says, you do to me. (Matthew 10:42; 25:34-40).

(Matthew 10:42) “And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

(Matthew 25:34-40) “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (35) For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: (36) Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. (37) Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? (38) When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*? (39) Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? (40) And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.”

I say, let us all do what we can for Christ in these five specific areas. — Worship Him. — Follow the Path of Righteousness. — Seek the Salvation of Lost Sinners. — Give of Our Means to the Cause and Service of Christ. — Minister to the Needs of our Brothers and Sisters in the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps you think, “**What can I do?**” — **I am a woman!** **Mary** was a woman, yet she did what she could. **Mary Magdalene** was a woman, but she was the first one at the tomb on the morning of the resurrection. **Phoebe** was a woman, but she ministered to Paul and many others. **Lydia** was a woman, yet she lodged Paul and Silas in her home. **Dorcas** was a woman, but she made coats for the poor saints at Joppa. — **I am a Child!** But out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, God perfects praise. **Naaman’s maid** was a child, but she told her master where God’s prophet could be found. — **I am a simple, uneducated person!** It was a simple, uneducated man that God used to point Spurgeon to Christ. It takes no learning to tell men about forgiveness, blood atonement, and a great Savior, only grace.

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Maybe you think, “**I have too little grace to be of any service.**” There is a full supply of grace in Christ. “*Our sufficiency is of God!*” (2 Corinthians 3:5). Never has there been a man, a woman, or a child who attempted to do anything for Christ who failed! “*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*”

THE REASON

Why must we do what we can? — “*The love of Christ constraineth us.*” The inspiration for doing anything for Christ must arise from your own heart. Let me simply remind you of something that ought to inflame the love and gratitude of our hearts.

Our Savior has done what he could for us. — He says, “*What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*” (Isaiah 5:4). He thought nothing too much to do or suffer for us.

- He lived for us.
- He suffered for us.
- He died for us.
- He rules for us.
- He makes intercession for us.

Satan is doing all he can against Christ and the souls of men. — He **roars** like a lion, **tempts** like a harlot, **beguiles** like a serpent, **deceives** as an angel of light, **divides** brethren, and **leads** captive wicked men and women.

We did all we could in the days of our rebellion, running greedily after the lusts of our flesh. — John Newton used to say, regarding himself, “How can the old African blasphemer be silent?”

What I am calling for is just our reasonable service (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). “**The time is short.**” — We must buy up every opportunity now to serve our Redeemer. Whatever God puts in your hand today, do today, do it with all your might, as unto the Lord.

Illustration: *Drew Dietz*

Christ will own and honor those who own and honor him (1 Samuel 2:30).

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(1 Samuel 2:30) “Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed *that* thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”

- He will honor you in this world.
- He will honor you in the day of judgment.
- He will honor you in the world to come.

APPLICATION

I send you home with this one word of exhortation: **Do what you can!** No more is asked or required. No less should be given. Do what you can....

- For your own soul.
- In the worship of Christ.
- In righteousness of life.
- For the salvation of sinners.
- In the support of the gospel.
- To meet the needs of God’s saints.

Amen.