

**SERMON TITLE:** "Mother's Day—Weighing The Cost"

**TEXT:** Matthew 26:6-13

**PREACHED AT:** Neighbourhood Church

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Today we have a multi pronged assignment for our service. First, we are having a Child Dedication service and then we are celebrating Mother's Day. It is not a mistake that we do both of these things on the same day. The famous story of Samuel's mother bringing him to the temple sets that pattern.

There is of course the challenge of getting everything done. But we will try to do this in a meaningful way.

#### First- Child Dedication

Almost since the beginning God's people have felt it important to acknowledge the birth of their children. As in many things this was often focused on the first child. The very first child born was acknowledged in this way-

Eve . . . became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." Genesis 4:1

From that birth onward parents have given variations of Eve's statement- and because it was Eve and not Adam who spoke these words- doing this on Mother's Day is very fitting. Note- that it was Eve and not Adam who brings her child before God.

And what is Child Dedication about?

#### #1. Parents Acknowledge God's Primacy Over Parenthood

From the very beginning God's people worked to find ways to do this. Even before the temple was built they brought their children to their places of worship with sacrifices.

This child- like these gifts is the result of a decision that was made. In the case of the child being in the family- it was a decision made by God.

The Biblical language around this is "stewardship". A steward does not own what is in his possession- he cares for that on behalf of someone else. In the case of children the Owner is God and parents are stewards of those children. We don't own our children but care for them under God. When we bring our children to the church/temple we are acknowledging that.

This is the first thing that is being done when we have a Child Dedication service. I know that every parent here- both from instinct and teaching joyfully joins with Eve in acknowledging God's role in this trust.

The children belong to God and not to us.

#### #2. Parents Commit To Obey God In Raising This Child

The instinct to acknowledge God when children come into our lives is universal, I believe. All of those who have ever been part of the birth process know the awe that fills you when a child is born. They say that there are no atheists in fox-holes. I suspect that there are also no atheists at the moment of birth.

But from that moment on life does have a way of sweeping the power of that insight away.

Those who come to the temple or the church do so because of a commitment that God demands of His people- the command not only to obey Him- but to train our children to do so. God spoke these words Himself:

*Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*  
Deuteronomy 11:18-19

The families that come here today are publicly committing themselves to this requirement.

### #3. The Church Commits To Be God's Family To This Family

One of the things that the Bible assumes more than it describes is the family of God. The Biblical family unit extended far beyond the nuclear family unit. It extended to uncles and aunts, cousins and grandparents and beyond.

When tough times came upon a nuclear family unit the assumption was that the larger family simply stepped in and took over the duties and responsibilities.

That is partially why Child Dedications were public events almost from the beginning.

That larger family is what often collapsed when societies fell apart.

One of the things that came when Jesus instituted the Church was that God now gave His people another family unit- one that extends to everyone- even those who don't have any other family.

And so it was that when the Church was born- very quickly the Church became the place that parents took their children- just as they had taken their children to the temple for dedication in ancient times.

And that is what we are also doing today. We are joining with these 4 families to see them bring their children before God- to acknowledge their commitment to raise their children to walk in His ways- but we are also here to commit ourselves to be God's family to these families.

Parents	Children	Prayer Team
Natasha & Glen Friesen		Grayson      Alastair & Karen
Rob & Karen Simpson		Safina & Sarita      Darlene & Iain
Jamie & Betina Kungel		Andrew      Ryan & Naomi
Tara Falk      Tyler		Tasha & Glen

### Mother's Day- Honouring The Cost Of Commitment

It is safe to say that when it comes to families the dedication of the mother represents the ideal of what commitment is. Stories of dedication to people or to ideals are deeply inspiring. Sebastian and I have finished Huckleberry Finn and are now listening to The Three Musketeers. The novels of that time- such as The Count of Monte

Cristo, Les Miserables, and A Tale of Two Cities, are about commitment to ideals. They are inspiring.

When we think about Mother's Day we often think about this commitment that mothers show to their children.

But what is sometimes buried in the romanticization of this dedication is the cost that this entails. What I would like to do today is look at a story that revolves around the cost of dedication. It is a story from the very end of Jesus' life on earth.

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. Matthew 26:6-7

### #1. Commitment Is Poured Out

This was one of those acts that attract attention because it is not the ordinary way of doing things. Here was a bottle of expensive perfume, designed to be used in little dabs, and the woman pours onto Jesus' head. This is not how things are done.

When romantic stories of commitment, such as I mentioned, are told, the writer skillfully weaves together the tension between the extravagant commitment of the hero with the ideal of commitment that we all share. Does the commitment go to far? Reality is that when it comes to commitment we normal human beings have fairly practical limits.

In Les Miserable the tension exists between the commitment to his letter of his promise of Jean Valjean and the commitment to absolute justice of Police Inspector Javert.

Both men are noble in their commitment and are heroic for it.

Valjean's commitment is the more sympathetic and even when we might think he has gone to far- we cheer him on.

This story of commitment, however, has no one [except Jesus] cheering the woman on. Her commitment is seen as simply excessive. She pours out her treasure on Jesus.

When it comes to Kingdom commitment, however, there is a metaphor in this story that we do well to take note of and especially on Mother's Day. We could spend the morning telling stories of mothers who have poured out and are pouring out their love on their children.

Kingdom commitment, however, is not merely a trait that mothers are to have and we are to benefit from- Kingdom commitment is to be something that all Kingdom people are to strive for.

When it comes to doing the right thing- we are all to learn from the ideal of motherhood in that determination.

As I mentioned, no one was cheering this woman for what she was doing- When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Matthew 26:8-9

## #2. Commitment Is Costly

There are at least 2 sides to the price of commitment- First, it is a commitment that is done at the expense of something else. One of the things that I struggle with in political discussions is that the trade-offs of life are almost never talked about. Everything has a price and what is spent in one area is taken away from another area.

It is wonderful to look for “win-win” situations but almost nothing is purely “win-win.” The woman who poured out the perfume chose not to use it for other purposes. The most obvious would have been to spread its use out over some years. Because of her extravagance the critics quickly jumped on an alternative use that seemed very “spiritual.” Since the woman obviously, in their view, did not value the perfume in its normal application, why not sell it and give the money to the poor?

Sounds like a very reasonable. It recognizes the trade-off. Jesus however was not impressed.

Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me . . ." Matthew 26:10-11

Jesus probably was aware that the critique was less motivated by principle they were using than by “critiquism.” Nonetheless, He answers their charge. It is true that this money could have been spent on the poor- and that is a worthy cause but in this case the woman has made the right call.

Everything we do has a price/cost. Those who don't understand this delude themselves. In science it is call “The Law Of The Conservation Of Energy.” Nothing produces nothing.

Secondly, we must make sure that we are aware whom we ask to pay for things. Politics is famous for suggesting all kinds of worthy causes that “someone” should undertake. That is very easy but when it comes to Kingdom principles the commitments that we expect of others don't amount to very much. The question that Jesus asks is not “how much should be done?” but rather “what are you willing to do?”

Kingdom commitment is not a theory- it is our action. It is measured by how much we are willing to bring to the table.

One of the OT stories that illustrates this comes from King David's time. David found himself in a place where a sacrifice was required. The sacrifice was due to David's sin.

Because the consequences of David's sin fell far beyond David's domain, and because someone needed to pay, and because of the respect that David had in his community, others were more than willing to help with the cost of that sacrifice.

But David's answer was classic-

But King David replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing." 1 Chronicles 21:24

When it comes to Kingdom values we must be prepared to pay the price. Paying the price is rarely a glorious activity that makes it into inspiring musical productions like Les Miserable. Paying the price, especially in matters such as motherhood takes place in the daily grind of life with no visible rewards.

We love theatrical productions and in the right circumstance could see ourselves standing on the barricades [as in Les Mis] to the sounds of an inspiring orchestra and musical score- but that is not where life is lived.

We pay our dues or don't pay our dues quietly when no one sees but God- and it is there in the secret place that only God sees that the true accounting of our commitment is kept and that is what Jesus now tells those who were watching.

“ . . . When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.” Matthew 26:12-13

### #3. Commitment's Real Value Is Usually Hidden

God made us to look for results. This is important. Waste is bad. Like many of you I remember when my parents would tell us to eat our dinners because waste was bad. We were reminded that in places around the world people were starving to death while we sent good food into the garbage.

Waste is bad.

But along side of this Jesus makes us aware of the fact that some values are hidden from our sight. Everything has a price but not every price is easy to determine.

In the case of this story, the value of what this woman did in pouring out her perfume on Jesus' feet turns out to be of an exceptionally high value- far more than the monetary price of the bottle of perfume itself. This value had all kinds of dimensions-

-it was a preparation of Jesus' Body for burial

-it was symbolic

-it was illustrative

And no one really knew any of those values except Jesus- not even the woman herself.

This woman's actions are a powerful metaphor for the work of motherhood. Motherhood is one life poured out onto another.

And, BTW, in our commitment to serve each other- the pattern of motherhood is to be the ideal that we hold for each other and ourselves. We are to serve on another.

The last aspect of this story, for this morning is:

### #4. We Are To Honour Commitment

Jesus points out this woman's actions as a pattern for you and me. In almost every area in life sober thought and careful consideration are really important- and they are here as well.

BUT when it comes to our commitment to serve our Master there are 2 things Jesus points out here-

First, that the place of honour due to God is to be like the perfume poured out. This is not the place where we are to carefully measure off just the right amount. In serving God we are to take our best and pour it out in serving Him.

Secondly, that we are to honour those who serve from this place. That is why Mother's Day is rightfully more extravagant than Father's Day.

Those who pour out their lives in serving are to be honoured. What this woman did in pouring out her perfume on Jesus' feet has been recognized for nearly 2000 years now.

So today, honour the mothers that fill your life.