

Alabaster Monologue

By Jamie Wright

Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 7, John 11-12

(Mary enters, carrying a small sealed jar. She looks off stage and then notices the audience.) Hello, is it okay if I wait here with you – for just a moment? What am I waiting for? Oh, well...courage I suppose. You know Jesus is in that house. Yes, Jesus of Nazareth – the great rabbi. I need to see Him, to do something for Him. But it is no small thing to burst into the home of Simon the Pharisee while everyone is eating, and I'm a little scared.

Well, yes, my sister is already in there. But she has a good reason to be. Martha is organizing the meal – she's so good at that sort of thing. But me, well, I'm less dependable, less respectable. A bit of a mess.

But you know, Jesus never treated me that way. He sees me; He cares about me.

(After a moment) You heard what happened when my brother got sick a few months ago, right? What, have you been living under a rock? I thought the news of this had spread to Rome and back! Well, never mind. I can tell you. He got sick, Lazarus did, so very sick. And we knew there was no coming out of it. His fever was so hot, it could scald your fingers to touch him. And he made no sense, wouldn't eat or drink. No one knew what to do.

But we knew if we could just get word to Jesus, He could do something. Jesus is the teacher who does miracles. The blind see, and the lame walk! And those are strangers to Him, so surely Jesus will come and heal our brother who He already knows and loves... but He didn't make it in time. Lazarus died, and he went cold, and it was over. They put him in the tomb.

I was so angry; it caused me to doubt Him...so confused. Why? Why hadn't Jesus come sooner? It just didn't make sense. I felt my sister and I had been betrayed. What would we do now, with no brother to care for us? How would we live, and how could Jesus not come? Didn't He care?

So when we heard He was on His way – too late – I wouldn't go out to meet Him. Martha did, because she's Martha. She does the right thing. She went out to see Jesus, and I stayed in the house surrounded by the mourners and cloaked in my own self-pity. For a while at least. Martha came back and said He was looking for me. Asking for me by name.

So I ran out of there right away. I know it wasn't dignified; but if Jesus calls you by name, even if you're angry, you GO. So I went. And I was still a mess. I was crying and accusing. I told Him the truth; I poured out my heart. I said, "Jesus, if you had shown up on time, my brother would still be alive!"

(Mary pauses, takes a deep breath and continues thoughtfully) He didn't look angry at my outburst. No, He cried too. We cried together on the way to the tomb. I didn't know why we were back at that place, and I thought Jesus was acting a little strange, because he asked for the tomb to be opened. And after four days, no amount of perfume will cover all the smell of death. But we opened it.

Then Jesus stood before that tomb, turned His face to heaven, and prayed. And then, it got really strange...

He raised his voice and hollered toward the tomb for my brother to come to Him. Like maybe my brother was just taking a nap. "Lazarus, come out here!" And he did! Because if Jesus calls you by name, even if you're dead, you GO. (*Mary laughs.*)

He came out of the tomb swaddled up like we left him. And the smell of the perfume wafted out with him. No death, just wholeness and life and that sweet smell. We had our brother back. But more than that, I knew then. I knew nothing could stop the power of Jesus. He is the Christ. And this same Christ had wept with me, and called me by name. I knew that being His disciple, the death and weakness in me has been swallowed up by wholeness and life – and the sweet fragrance of God's presence.

Still, what could I possibly offer Jesus? What could I give that would come close to what He has given me? I am at a loss. We don't have a lot of extra wealth or much in the way of influence. What could I possibly do to honor the Christ who raised my brother from the dead?

I have to act soon, because I know that time is of the essence. I have heard the rumors that Jesus is in danger. Just this morning, there is talk that the Sanhedrin is displeased with His teaching, that they are asking information on Jesus' whereabouts. I don't know what they might do, but I know Jesus is not one to stay hidden for long. People flock to Him wherever he goes – I have been a part of the herd! Desperate for more of His words, for His truth and His love.

I have also sat at His feet and listened to Jesus' teachings. I have heard His beautiful truth: that the kingdom of God is not built on physical might or wealth or political power, but the love of God and the lives of those who offer devotion and obedience to Him. I know He is the son of God, the one we waited for so very long. And I have heard Him say He, Jesus, will lay down His life for those He loves.

I feel the call to lay down everything I am, everything I have, in response.

This? It's an Alabaster jar of perfume oil; it's still mostly full. We didn't have to use much for Lazarus; it's strong smelling stuff. And it's the most costly thing I own. Can you smell it through the seal? (*Mary offers a sniff to the audience.*) I thought maybe I should sell it and give the money to the poor. Or maybe I should just walk in, hand it to Him, and get out so He can do what He wants with it. But neither of those options seems right. If He, our Savior, is going to face down death for us, I want Him to smell like the victory we witnessed at my brother's tomb. This oil – it should cover His head, his feet. I want all who smell it to know He is worthy; He is the Messiah. I want Jesus to carry this fragrance, this reminder, with Him wherever He goes. I want this to be a gift that honors Him.

(*Mary exits on the opposite side of the stage.*)

(*In the quiet of the darkness, have a voice that says:*) Twice in Jesus' ministry, He noted the generosity of giving. "Wherever this Gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done [with her Alabaster jar of precious oil] will be spoken of in memory of her."

Another, whose name we do not know, was observed and honored by Jesus: a widow who dropped two coins (*drop two quarters, one by one, into a tin plate or bowl...for effect*) in the offering, not out of surplus, but out of lavish generosity, and devoted sacrifice. Make your gifts such that they will be remembered across the generations.