

The Tennessee Tribune

Volume 23, No. 14, 3 Sections

THURSDAY, April 5-11, 2012

\$1.00

Generosity that is Grounded in Gratitude: Giving Thanks for Palm Sunday

A Commentary by Jason Curry



The Reverend Dr. Jason Richard Curry is Dean of the Fisk Memorial Chapel at Fisk University. He can be reached at jecurry@fisk.edu or www.fiskmemorialchapel.com.

There are two biblical passages that represent the quintessential embodiment of gratitude and generosity. The first example of a profound gratitude for the life, ministry and presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, concerns a woman with an expensive alabaster box of ointment (Luke 37:36-50). The text states that she made some mistakes in her life; however, out of a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving for Jesus' presence and ability to forgive sins, the woman anointed both his head (Mark 14:3) and his feet (Luke 7:46) with an expensive alabaster ointment. The second passage of scripture which captures a profound sense of gratitude among a people concerns the laying of palm branches in the streets of Jerusalem. Jesus helped and healed many people during his public ministry, and out of a sense of gratitude for Jesus' kingly presence, "they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet

him, crying, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord...' (John 12:13)." These stories are simply two examples among many passages of scriptures which illustrate the generosity of people (e.g., the alabaster box, the palm trees, and garments spread before Jesus along the road — Matthew 21:8, Mark 11:8) which was rooted or grounded in their gratitude for Jesus the Christ.

Many people within the church have expressed to me that they have found it very difficult to be generous in today's society. They've stated that the economy has prohibited them from making a generous contribution to the church or various civic organizations, and that the attitudes of mean-spirited people have made it difficult for them to be generous with their time and talents. The actions of the people of the early church suggest that our ability to display Christian generosity is not rooted in the local

economy, the applause and affirmation of men or women, our age, gender, race or nationality. Our inclination to display generosity with our gifts to God as well as our service to humanity is ultimately rooted in our thanksgiving and gratitude for what the Lord has done in our lives. We should give out of the wellsprings of joy that emanate from our grateful hearts just like the people who cut down palm branches which led to the tradition of Palm Sunday. The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), the lessons about tithing (Malachi 3:10), and scriptures about giving to the needy (Matthew 6:1-4) discuss the rewards of giving to others with a grateful heart. As we enter Holy Week and prepare to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior on Easter Sunday, let us continue to display generosity to God and our neighbors with our time, talents and tender.