Measurement, Evaluation and Exegesis of the Value of the Ointment Poured on Jesus in Mark 14:3-9: A Contemporary Application in Nigeria

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Abstract: The story of the anointing of Jesus by a woman in Mark 14:3-9 is a very challenging one especially when viewed in a contemporary world such as Nigeria. This is so relevant to the church in Nigeria because it portrays immeasurable commitment to Christian worship especially in a world where Christians find it difficult to yield their material resources to God and humanity. Therefore, the comparative paradigm was used as a methodology and the aim of this paper was to measure and evaluate the value of the nard oil-perfume and apply its lessons to the contemporary church in Nigeria. The study showed that the nard perfume was equivalent to one year’s wages of an average Roman labourer of Jesus’ time. The study argued that the presence of the poor in the church community or society should not be an excuse to dishonour and impoverish church leaders in Nigeria. The paper concluded, presupposing that human worship to God should be total and sincere.

Key Words: Measurement, Evaluation, Exegesis,

I. The Bible Passage in View (Mark 14:3-9)

A. The Greek Version of Mark 14:3-9

3 Καὶ ὄντος αὐτοῦ ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ Σίμωνος τοῦ λεπροῦ, κατακειμένου αὐτοῦ ἦλθεν γυνὴ ἔχουσα ἀλάβαστρον μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτελοῦς, συντρίψασα τὴν ἀλάβαστρον κατέχεεν αὐτοῦ τῆς κεφαλῆς.

4 ἦσαν δέ τινες ἀγανακτοῦντες πρὸς ἑαυτούς· εἰς τί ἡ ἀπώλεια αὕτη τοῦ μύρου γέγονεν;

5 ἠδύνατο γὰρ τοῦτο τὸ μύρον πραθῆναι ἐπάνω δηναρίων τριακοσίων καὶ δοθῆναι τοῖς πτωχοῖς· καὶ ἐνεβριμῶντο αὐτῇ.

6 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· ἄφετε αὐτήν· τί αὐτῇ κόπους παρέχετε; καλὸν ἔργον ἠργάσατο ἐν ἐμοί.

7 πάντοτε γὰρ τοὺς πτωχοὺς ἔχετε μεθ᾽ ἑαυτῶν καὶ ὅταν θέλητε δύνασθε αὐτοῖς εὖ ποιῆσαι, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε.

8 ὃ ἔσχεν ἐποίησεν· προέλαβεν μυρίσαι τὸ σῶμά μου εἰς τὸν ἐνταφιασμόν.

9 ἀμὴν δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅπου ἐὰν κηρυχθῇ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον εἰς ὅλον τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ὃ ἐποίησεν αὕτη λαληθήσεται εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς.

(BGT)

B. The English Version of Mark 14:3-9

3 And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. But 4 there were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment thus wasted? 5 For this ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and given to the poor." And they reproached her. 6 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you will, you can do good to them; but you will not always have me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burying. 9 And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (RSV,1952).

II. Introduction

The use of measurement and evaluation in quantitative research can be applicable in all aspect of research. Although, measurement and evaluation are mathematical or statistical in computation, their usage in contemporary Religious Studies in general and biblical studies in particular is not out of place especially when the variables are quantified numerically.

In contemporary Africa, the use of measurement and evaluation in Biblical Studies may not be systematic like that of educational research but at least the idea is not strange. For instance, religious studies experts make use of numerical figures in historical research to validate future prediction. In line with the above example, Tasie
(2012) did a research which indicated a century and decade of Islam in Rivers State of Nigeria pointing out the prospects and problems. When quantified numerically, a decade refers to 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 years and 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100 years. In the same vein, Odili (2012) also authenticated Vennism among men of local prominence and Anglicanism in the early twentieth century in Ukwani land of Delta State from 1900-1941. When numerically quantified it refers to 1900, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941. All of these numerical numbers can be used statistically in both representation and computation depending on the focus of the research. Although, the above index examples did not do it statistically in the historical presentation of their research, it gives the ideal quantitative research. Also, Galadima (2006) did a survey of Christians attitude to televangelism in Jos Nigeria. Galadima used statistical computation in his research in religious studies. In African Traditional Religion, the practices of Epha geometric system is scientific and mathematical in nature.

On the other hand, the western scholars are more familiar with the scientific study of Biblical Studies. For example, Metzger (1971) used numerical in a textual commentary on the Greek New Testament. Symbols of both the English and Greek alphabets were also used just as it is used in mathematics or statistics. Moreover, Holmes (1991) who is a professor of Biblical Studies holds that New Testament textual criticism involves three major tasks: (i) the gathering and organization of evidence, including especially the collation (comparison) of manuscripts (MRS) with one another to ascertain where errors and alterations have produced variations in the text, and the study of how and why these variations happened; (ii) the evaluation and assessment of the significance and implications of the evidence with a view to determining which of the variant readings most likely represent the original text; and (iii) the construction of the history of the transmission of the text to the extent allowed by the available evidence. Another example of numerical representation in biblical studies is the textual critical apparatus by Alland (1981). In the Apparatus, some of the more significant minuscule include groups or families headed by 1 and 13 (symbols: F^1 and F^13), and 28, 33, 81, 323, 565, 614, 700, 892, 5241, 1424, 1739 and 2495 (Holms, 1991). In the same vein, Mark 14:3-9 presented a case of a woman who anointed Jesus with an expensive nard perfume. This perfume which was casd with an alabaster was said by scholars to be equivalent to a year’s wages of an average Roman worker of the time. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to measure and evaluate the value of the nard oil-perfume and apply its lessons to the contemporary church in Nigeria.

### III. Conceptual Clarification

Measurement and evaluation are very useful in quantitative research. Here we shall look at what is being referred to as measurement and evaluation. Aina (2011:43) sees measurement as a way of assigning numbers to variables. Also, Fain (2004) understands measurement to mean the systematic assignment of numerical values to concepts in order to reflect the properties of these concepts. The researcher has a responsibility of assigning numerical values to data in order to be able to measure the collected information. The National Teacher’s Institute NTI (2014) see measurement in Educatio

### IV. The values of the Nard Oil and Evaluation of the Woman’s Action in Mark 14:3-9

#### A. The Value of the Alabaster Ointment

Here the value of the Alabaster oil shall be quantified numerically in terms of financial measures in the then Roman world and relate it to the Nigerian present day currency value. Also, the descriptive statistics shall be explored here by using measures of central tendencies.

In Mark 14:3-9, we were told of a woman who brought an expensive ornament to anoint Jesus. The question here is: what is the numerical value of the Alabaster oil? We were told in the passage that the Alabaster ointment could have been sold for at least three hundred pence (300 pence). Scholars also told us that a day’s wage in Roman’s era is equivalent to at least one denarius or pence and it is equivalent to thirty two dollars-$32 (Regency Bible, 1991). The table bellow shows the measure of legal tender in Bible times.
Table 1: Measure of Legal Tender (Monies) in Bible Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Monetary Value</th>
<th>Equivalents</th>
<th>Translations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Weights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talent</td>
<td>Gold-$5,760,000</td>
<td>3,000 shekels: 6,000 bekas</td>
<td>Talent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekel</td>
<td>Silver - $384,000</td>
<td>4 day’s wages; 2 bekas; 20 gerahs</td>
<td>Shekel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bekah</td>
<td>Gold-$960</td>
<td>½ shekel: 10 gerahs</td>
<td>Bekah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerah</td>
<td>Silver-$64</td>
<td>½20 shekel</td>
<td>Gerah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Coins</td>
<td>Gold-$1,280</td>
<td>2 days’ wages; ½ Jewish silver shekel</td>
<td>Dram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daric</td>
<td>Silver - $64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Coins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetradrachma</td>
<td>$128</td>
<td>4 drachmas</td>
<td>Piece of money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(stater)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didrachma</td>
<td>$64</td>
<td>2 drachmas</td>
<td>Tribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drachma</td>
<td>$32</td>
<td>1 days’ wage</td>
<td>Piece of silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lepton</td>
<td>$2.5</td>
<td>½ of a Roman kodrantes</td>
<td>Mite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Coins</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aureus</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>25 denari</td>
<td>Pence, penny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denarius</td>
<td>$32</td>
<td>1 day’s wage</td>
<td>Farthing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assarius</td>
<td>$2</td>
<td>1/16 of a denarius</td>
<td>Farthing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodrantes</td>
<td>$.50</td>
<td>¼ of an assarius</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1\text{value of gold is fifteen times the value of silver} 
2\text{value of gold is twenty times the value of silver} 


The ointment that was poured on Jesus was valued at 300 pence, which amounted to the wage of a labouring man for three hundred days, almost an entire year’s salary. In today’s currency, the value was somewhere between twenty ($20,000) and thirty thousand dollars ($30,000). The disciples said: “Might it not have been sold for more than three hundred pence and have been given to the poor?” Certainly it might. Just a moment’s calculation would have told this woman that three hundred poor people could be fed for a day on the cost of the ointment, that a single person could live for almost a year on its value. Yet she emptied it upon the head of Jesus, and the poor were allowed to remain in want. Converting this to the present day value at the exchange rate of N163 (one hundred and sixty three Naira) to a dollar, it amounts to $20,000 x N163 or $30,000 x163 which is equals to N3,260,000 (three million, two hundred and sixty Naira) or N4,890,000 (four million, eight hundred and ninety Naira) respectively.

B. Method of Representation
The above data can be represented using the simple bar chart as follows: 

![Bar Chart](chart.png)
From the chart above, it can be observed that the worth of the ointment oil is higher in Nigeria currency and hence it can be said it is more valued and expensive in this part of the world.

C. Using Measures of Central Tendencies
Using the measure of central tendencies the following coefficient shall be used to compute the data. 
- Frequency (f) = 365 days making up one year 
- X = Values of denarius and pence in Greco-Roman Bible times and contemporary American dollar and Nigerian Naira. 
- Dollar rate to Naira = 163 to a dollar 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of currency</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>fx</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denarius</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollar</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>12,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naira</td>
<td>5,216</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>1,903,840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean of the data 

\[
\frac{\sum fx}{\sum f} = \frac{1,917,345}{1,460} = 1,313.25 
\]

Median currency = \( \frac{1+35}{2} = \frac{36}{2} = 18 \)

Mode = 5216

Interpretation
The mean shows that the average of all the currencies stand approximately at 1,313. Therefore, the monetary worth of the nard perfume oil poured on Jesus by the woman can be valued at a maximum rate of 1,313 pence and a minimum of 300 pence of annual wage of a worker in the Roman province of the bible times. 

The median suggest that the cost of the perfume is between one pence to thirty two American dollars which translates to a day wage of an average worker in the Bible time Roman province. The mode implies that the Nigerian Naira has the highest face value.

D. The Cost of the Nard in Mark 14:3-9 and Minimum Wage in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis
The Nard perfume in the Bible which was poured on Jesus by a woman was valued at 300 denarius at the time of Jesus and it was equivalent to the annual wage of an average worker in the Greco-Roman world of that time. If 300 denarius amounts to a year’s wages and if a year was made up of 12 months at that time it means the minimum monthly wages is 25 denarius. If divided into 30 days it will give us approximately one denarii a day. Presently the monthly minimum wage of an average civil servant in Nigeria is N18,000. If N18,000 is divided into 30 days, it will give us 600. This implies that the daily wage of an average worker in Nigeria is N600. When compared with the biblical situation it stands at 1 denarii to N600. When a day’s wage in Nigeria is converted to one year wages it will amount to (600x365) 219,000. By implication, it means that the value of the nard is equivalent to 219,000 annual wages of an average civil servant in Nigeria.

E. Evaluation of the Woman’s Action
In John’s Gospel this incident occurred before passion week began (cf. John 12:1). Matthew and Mark may place it here to contrast the hatred of the religious leader in the betrayal by Judas with the love and devotion of the woman who anointed Jesus (Lane and Foster, 1995). We know from John’s Gospel (12:3) that women in the passage she was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Alabaster jar. A sealed flask with a long neck that was broken off when the content were used and that contained enough ointment for one application. The perfume was called Nard. It is a perfume made from the aromatic oil extracted from the root of a plant grown chiefly in India. Pouring such perfume on Jesus’ head is symbolic of anointing. Anointing was a common custom at feasts (see Ps. 23:5, Luke 7:46). The woman’s action expressed her deep devotion to Jesus.
Those present at the scene of event were identified by Matthew (26:8) as the disciples, while John (12:4-5) singles out Judas Iscariot. It was a Jewish custom to give gifts to the poor on the evening of Passover (see John 13:29). Jesus’ response to the criticism did not express lack of concern for the poor, for their needs lay close to Jesus’ heart (see Matt. 6:2-4; Luke 4:18; 6:20; 14:13, 21, 18:22, John 13:29). The woman’s action also shows high respect for the Lord Jesus Christ. It was Jewish culture to wash the feet of a noble visitor. Jesus came to Bethany and visited. Moreover, the woman’s action can also be viewed from the passage as an acknowledgement of the worth of Jesus among humans. The monetary value of the perfume suggests that the woman valued the worth of Jesus as the highest in the society. To her, it was not a waste of resources to anoint Jesus’ body with such an expensive ornament because it was done for nobles. The woman placed Jesus in that class. This can also be seen as a sign of honour for the Lord Jesus Christ. The woman’s act pre-figured the preservation of Jesus body for the crucifixion, burial and resurrection. It was a normal Jewish custom to anoint a body with aromatic oils in preparing it for burial (see 16:1). Jesus seems to anticipate suffering a criminal’s death, for only in that circumstance there was no anointing of the body (14:8). The woman had recognized in Jesus, the object of greatest value, for which nothing else could stand in comparison to: not her money, not her perfume, not even aiding the poor.

Jesus’ response to those who criticized the action of the woman was contrary to a normal human understanding of caring for the poor in the society (Mark 14:6-7). Jesus condoned and commended what the woman did. Jesus response concerning the preparation for His burial (vv.8-9) suggest that the woman was divinely prompted by God. This event becomes symbolic of the preparation of Jesus, for his upcoming death and burial. The cross, central event of all history, would eventually purchase all of humanity from sin and death. Jesus notes how this act in time and space transcends all charitable deeds. While the poor will always have their time and place to be helped, Jesus’ life on earth will never recur. What she does receives commendation, centuries after her noble act.

Guijarro and Rodríguez (2011) postulates that two peculiar elements of the Markan account of the anointing of Jesus in Bethany—the anointing of the head and the mandate to remember—suggest that the evangelist has transformed this memory into a rite by which Jesus is anointed as Messiah. This new ritual redefines the traditional rite of royal anointing to give new significance to the messianic character of Jesus. The mandate to remember the woman’s gesture and the critical moment in which Mark has placed the scene reveal that this new understanding of what it means to be the Messiah is key to the true identity of Jesus and of his followers.

V. Literary Genre and Socio-Economic Context of Mark 14:3-9

A. Literary Genre of Mark 14:3-9

Blomberg (1991) observed that casual readers of scripture often treat the Bible itself as if it were all a book of proverbs and as such they quote, interpret, and apply their favourite verses with little awareness of the contexts in which those texts appear. In contrast, Biblical Scholars read the scripture, putting into cognizance scholarly tools and methods of interpretation hence they interpret any verse or verses of scriptures in light of the paragraph in which it appears and in view of the overall structure and themes of the particular book in which it is found.

In the New Testament according to Aune (1987:13) four primary genres appear: gospels, book of acts, epistle and apocalypse. Blomberg further see genre as a group of texts that exhibit a coherent and recurring configuration of literary features involving form (including structure and style), content and function. In this context, Mark 14:3-9 belongs to the Gospel genre. Particularly, the synoptic. However, the story of the woman appeared in all the gospels. It belongs to the passion narrative (chs 14–15) and the story of the empty tomb (ch. 16). Mark leads into the passion narrative with his only mention of a definite date: it is two days before the Passover when the chief priests and teachers of the law plot Jesus’ death (14:1–2). The narrative of Jesus’ anointing in Bethesda—the anointing of the head and the mandate to remember—suggest that the evangelist has transformed this memory into a rite by which Jesus is anointed as Messiah. This new ritual redefines the traditional rite of royal anointing to give new significance to the messianic character of Jesus. The mandate to remember the woman’s gesture and the critical moment in which Mark has placed the scene reveal that this new understanding of what it means to be the Messiah is key to the true identity of Jesus and of his followers.

A work done on Mark’s literary structures in (www.valdes.titech.ac.jp/~h_murai/bible/41_Mark_perico_e.html), structured Mark 14:3-9 as follows:

A (14:3) -14:3 an alabaster jar of perfumed oil (14:3) (μύρος)
B (14:4-5) - 14:5 the money given to the poor (14:5) (πτωχοῖς)
C (14:6) - 14:6 She has done a good thing for me. (14:6)
B’(14:7) - 14:7 The poor you will always have with you (14:7) (πυτχημένος)
A’(14:8-9) - 14:8 She has anticipated anointing my body for burial. (14:8) (μαριτόνα)
The narrative structure of Mark often relies on the juxtaposition of texts to create meaning. Often, the similarities, as well as the differences, between two or more stories encourage the audience to compare the stories as observed by Malbon (2008) explains that Mark’s rhetoric is one of juxtaposition—placing scene over against scene in order to elicit comparison, contrast, insight. This juxtaposition includes repetition, not only of scenes but also of words and phrases; duality is widespread. Juxtaposition also includes intercalation—splicing one story into another—and framing—placing similar stories as the beginning and the end of a series. In addition, juxtaposition includes foreshadowing and echoing of words, phrases, and whole events. Echoing and foreshadowing may be intratextual (within a text) or intertextual (between texts).

B. Socio-Economic Context of Mark 14:3-9
Mark’s church community is well abreast of the economic situation of the Greco-Roman world where the church was situated. Mark’s acceptance of authorship of the Gospel of Mark and its dating which falls between the second and fifth centuries showed that the church community of Mark was that the early church (Telford, 2013:10). The priests, the business mongoose, Roman officials formed the aristocrats of the time. The poor were living at the mercy of the rich. Eck (2013) states that to preserve their power and privilege, the priestly elite (as Roman clients) always took the side of Rome when conflicts arose between Judeans and Rome. Like the Roman and Herodian elite, the priestly elite accumulated wealth through tithes and offerings (consisting of up to 23% of a peasant’s harvest), and added peasant land to their estates by investing in loans (using the wealth they accrued in the temple) to the poor at up to 20% with the clear intention of foreclosing on their debtors when they could not repay their debts. They also denied benefits to those who failed to tithe their produce, rendering them (the so called am ha-aretz) unclean and indebted. Even the major pilgrimage festivals were ideologically employed; through liturgy and ritual the ‘Great Tradition’ was rehearsed and preserved, with the view to renew the ties of the peasantry with the temple, its sacrificial system, tithes and offerings (Herzog 2005:60). In their accumulation of wealth, the priestly elite ignored the widening gap between the rich elite and the poor peasantry and the social tension and hostility generated by the cycle of oppression and exploitation they encouraged through their own interests (Horsley 1993:90–120; Goodman 1982:426).

Eck (2013) also observed that Palestine in the 1st-century was an advanced agrarian, and therefore an aristocratic and tributary society. The ruling class (elite) comprised of only 1% – 2% of the population, and controlled most of the wealth (one-half up to two-thirds) by controlling the land, its produce and the peasants whose labour created the produce. This suggests that the elite shaped the social experience of the empire’s inhabitants, which determined the ‘quality of life, exercised power, controlled wealth, and enjoyed high status’ (Carter 2006:3). Rome, the Herodian elite, and the aristocratic elite in Jerusalem controlled the land, its yield, its distribution, and its cultivators by extracting taxes, tribute, rents, tithes and offerings. The Roman empire was legiory and as such it was possible for the elite to rule by coercion, meeting any kind of rebellion with ruthless military retaliation (Horsley 1993:6). These armies were costly in terms of food, clothing, housing and equipment but taxes and special levies extracted from the ruled covered these costs as if the ruled paid to be ruled over (Eck 2012:107). The rulers treated controlled (conquered) land as their personal estate to confiscate, distribute, redistribute and disperse as they deemed fit (Herzog 2005:55; Oakman 2008:124, 147–149). This scenario was not different in Judaea where the priestly elites were in control as a result rising indebtedness and the loss of land also led to the loss of the peasant’s place in the traditional social structure (Horsley, 1993:11; Eck 2012:114). Due to the enforcement of the payment of taxes, tithes and loans, landowners (Mark 4:3-9) first became tenants (Mark 12:1-12), then day labourers (Matthew 20:1-16), and finally ended up as beggars in the cities (Luke 16:19–21).

Labour in first century Greco-Roman world in which the Church community of Mark was situated was familiar with agrarian and slave labour. Hired labor and tenancy were the dominant labor arrangements. Classical Athens provides a counterpoint to this ‘low-equilibrium scenario: given high real wages and low slave prices, it must have paid to buy slaves instead of relying on hired labor (Scheidel, 2005). The poor and the less privileged were to be cared for in the society and as such Israel was warned not to exploit nor be cruel to the poor and the weak in their midst (Leviticus 19:15; Isaiah 9:8-10:4).

The priest were given the privilege to feed from the proceed of tithe and offering. They were to be well respected and taken care of and as such the presence of the poor in the society does not suggest a yardstick to impoverish the priest. The socio-economic situation of the passage in view was that of honour and poverty.

VI. A Brief Exegetical Analysis of Mark 14:3-9
Here, some relevant themes shall be explored to validate the value of the nard perfume poured on Jesus by the woman in the passage. All the issues in the passage were connected to the action of a woman who poured an ointment on Jesus. Here the areas of exegesis shall focus on the ointment and denarii.
i. **Μύρον-muron of νόρδος-nardos** (v.3): The Greek word μύρον means ointment, perfume, pure nard, or, liquid nard. Also the Greek word νόρδος also nard, the head or spike of a fragrant East Indian plant belonging to the genus Valerianna, which yields a juice of delicious odour which the ancients used (either pure or mixed) in the preparation of a most precious ointment nard oil or ointment (Gill, 1999). The nard brought by the woman was being referred to as ointment of spikenard or “pure nard”, unmixed and genuine; or liquid nard, which was drinkable, and so easy to be poured out; or Pistic nard, called so, either from "Pista", the name of a place from whence it was brought, or from "Pistaca", which, with the Rabbins, signifies "maste"; of which, among other things, this ointment was made. Moreover, ointment of nard was made both of the leaves of nard, and called foliate nard, and of the spikes of it, and called, as here, spikenard.

ii. **Πολυτελής-poluteles** (v.3): The Greek word πολυτελής means precious and requiring very great outlay, very costly, excellent, surpassing value. The nard poured on Jesus by the woman in the passage was described as something very precious, costly, and of great price.

iii. **ἀπόλεια-apoleia** (v.4): The Greek word ἀπόλεια means destroying, utter destruction of vessels, perishing, ruin, destruction of money or the destruction which consists of eternal misery in hell (Strong, 2001). The audience who showed ἀγανακτέω (aganaktēo) on the pouring of the expensive ointment on Jesus regarded it as a waste.

iv. **Δηνάριον (dēnarius)** v.14:5): The Greek word δηνάριον, is also translated into the Latin word denarius (Stein, 2008:14). Δηνάριον is a Roman silver coin equivalent to a labourer's average daily wage. A denarius was equivalent to a penny and it was what an agricultural worker typically was paid for one day's labour.

v. **Καλός-kalos** (v.6-9): The Greek word καλός as it is used in this passage means beautiful, good, better, commendable manner, excellent, fair, fine, high, honest, honorable, right thing, sound, treasure, good (Strong, 2001). In the passage the Greek word ἔργον (ergon) was used to complement καλός when put together it reads καλός ἔργον meaning good work. Jesus called what the woman did as good work.

VII. **Discussion of Findings**

From the above interpretation gotten from the measure of central tendencies, the mean points out that the average of all the currencies is about 1,313 and as such the monetary worth of the nard perfume oil poured on Jesus by the woman was valued at a maximum of 1,313 pence and a minimum of 300 pence of annual wage of a Roman province of the Bible times.

In the same vein, the median showed that the cost of the perfume could be between one pence to thirty two American dollars which translates to a day wage of an average worker in the Bible time Roman province. The mode highlighted that the Nigerian Naira has the highest face value in the sense that it stands at N5,216 as against 1 pence and $32. A perfume of this nature in a Nigerian contemporary context is very expensive. Those who can earn between N3,260,000 (three million, two hundred and sixty Naira) and N4,890,000 (four million, eight hundred and ninety Naira) per annum are very few in Nigeria. Those receiving such amount of remuneration are the political office holders and crude oil drilling and processing workers. Most civil servants’ salary in Nigeria does not amount to such amount annually.

The monetary value of the perfume could be viewed from the point of affluence. It suggests that the woman in question is probably very rich. The cost of the perfume could have been necessitated by high import duty since it was imported from India. Such importation could only be afforded by the rich. The woman pouring such expensive perfume on Jesus is an indication of the type of class she rated Jesus in the society.

VIII. **Implication for Contemporary African Christianity**

i. **High Regard for Church Leaders** (v.3): That the woman poured a perfume which amounts to N3,260,000 (three million, two hundred and sixty Naira) and N4,890,000 (four million, eight hundred and ninety Naira) annual salary in Nigeria when converted from three hundred pence is a show of high regard. Such treatment were treatments accorded a king in that era. The woman saw Jesus in that capacit

ii. **Appreciation of church leaders**: Appreciating God’s servants with expensive gift is not a waste of resources but a show of acknowledgement of God’s work through such church leader, acceptance of God’s leadership through His servants and encouragement of church leadership in humanitarian work in the church community and beyond (vv.3-5). The people’s reaction is typical of the present day reaction of people in Nigeria who are angry that a luxurious gift is given to a church leader. The Nigerian Christian should see it as a duty to give for the work of God. Taking care of the priest (pastor) is something that should be encouraged in Nigeria so to encourage the priest to put in all.
iii. **Posterity of the Gospel (v.6-9):** Jesus remarked that the deed of the woman is acceptable in the kingdom of God and as such, what she has done is for posterity of the Gospel. This lesson is also very crucial for the Nigerian Christian in the sense that people should be taught to learn how to do things for posterity in both the church and society. Those Christians who are very rich in the society should not think of caring for church leaders and poor alone but also establishing the gospel for posterity. Nigerian Christians should look beyond taking credit for what they have done so that they can be selfless when it comes to preaching and doing the gospel.

**iv. Giving costly gifts to church leaders should not hinder us from giving to the poor (v.6-7):** Neglecting church leaders under the guise of giving to the poor and other more important church needs is rather faulted by Jesus. Jesus’ responds showed that there would be plenty of opportunities in which to do good to the poor in one decides to do so.

**IX. Conclusion**

The story of the woman who came to anoint Jesus with the nard perfume was interpreted in both theological and mathematical articulation so that meanings can be given based on the angle from which a scholars is viewing it. Mark 14:3-9 has been viewed here from the angles of measurement and exegesis. The work has shown that the nard oil which was by a woman to anoint the Jesus amounts to a year’s wages of an average worker in the Greco-Roman world of the time.

On the other hand, the analysis of the woman’s action showed that she did it to honour and appreciate Jesus for His good works. Her action is also seen as an acknowledgement of the worth of Jesus among humans. Jesus’ response to those who criticize the woman’s action presupposes that the presence of the poor in the society or the church should be used as an excuse to dishonour or impoverish church leaders. The passage (Mark 14:3-9) does not presuppose demonstration of flamboyance of church leaders but a lesson that portrays that God can be worshipped with expensive materials and as well bless His servants adequately.

**References**


