



Christ Reformed Community Church

161 Hampton Point Dr. Suite 2 | St. Augustine, Florida | 32092 | christreformedcc.com

November 20, 2022

Dr. Andrew Smith

“The Passover Plot” Mark 14:1–11

Mark chapter 14. This morning we want to look at verses 1 through 11. The title of the message this morning: “The Passover Plot, The Passover Plot,” picking up in verse number 1:

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him [that is, Jesus] by stealth and kill him, for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining 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. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Thus ends the reading of God’s precious, authoritative, and fully inspired Word. Please be seated as we ask the Lord to bless us as we look at this text together.

Father, we enter that part of Mark’s Gospel, a very sober part of Mark’s Gospel leading up to the crucifixion of Christ. It is a reminder to us this morning of the depth of our sin, the depth of our need for Christ, together with His willingness to suffer as the final Lamb of God to atone for our sins. Open our eyes this morning that we might behold wonderful things from Your Word. We ask this for Your glory and for our good, we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

If Mark chapter 13 dealt with what we might call the facts of the future; that is, the facts that would relate to the future of the apostles’ lives in the first century, then as we move into Mark chapter 14, it deals with the facts of the present; that is, the present lives of the apostles and the present earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostles in the near future will suffer under persecution. Jesus promised that in Mark chapter 13. They would be arrested. They would stand trial for their

proclamation that Jesus was raised from the dead. They would experience martyrdom. They would experience their own level of suffering. That was what Jesus predicted in Mark 13. But in the present, in the earthly life of our Lord at this hour in Mark 14, this deals with the suffering of Christ as the final Passover Lamb. Really, chapters 14 and 15 of Mark deal with all of the events of our Lord’s betrayal, our Lord’s arrest, our Lord’s crucifixion; all of the things that relate to what we call His “passion.” The Latin word for *passion* just means His “suffering,” the suffering of Christ as the Lamb of God.

Going all the way back throughout Israel’s history, we understand that God created them as a nation for Himself. He constituted them. He delivered them from Egypt. He gave them His Law on Mount Sinai, a legislation for them to follow. This, indeed, was one nation under blood. That was what the Passover signified. The Passover was the most important of Israel’s feasts. As you well know, it commemorated God’s deliverance of His people from Egypt where God protected them from the angel of death who passed over. That’s why we call it the Passover. The angel of death passed over the homes of the Israelites, all of those who put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their homes. So, when Israel gathered in Jerusalem during the last year and the last week of our Lord’s life, they gathered to celebrate the Passover, and the Passover evoked deep national sentiment among the Jews. God had instructed Israel after the original Passover from Egypt to set up a tabernacle where more blood would be sacrificed, and then later the temple where yet more blood would be sacrificed.

So that the symbolism of all the sacrifices pointed to God’s protection of them from His judgment, going all the way back to His deliverance of them from Egypt; and at the Passover, God required blood on all the Israelite houses. That was to correlate later to the tabernacle, which was itself a symbol of the nation and the temple as well, a symbol of a nation full of protected houses. The house of worship, the tabernacle. The house of worship, the temple was where the main sacrifices took place, but it was symbolic of God’s protection of all the other houses and homes of faithful Israelites who were looking to the blood of the Lamb to atone for their sins. And that is why we have been emphasizing the temple, the destruction of the temple. It was a national symbol of protection. It was a national symbol of atonement. It was a national symbol of forgiveness. But Jesus, in His earthly life, cleansed that temple. He interrupted all the activity that went on there. He pronounced woes of judgment upon the religious elite. He condemned Israel from top to bottom, and in fact, He predicted plagues. Not the plagues that landed on Egypt but new plagues that would land on Israel; earthquakes and famines that He spoke about in Mark chapter 13, all culminating in the Roman army being used by God to slay those Israelites who had sought refuge behind the walls of Jerusalem and had sought refuge in that very temple of protection.

Now it would become a place of utter and total destruction and judgment by God. The people of God, Old Testament Israel, would fall by the edge of the sword. That’s what Mark chapter 13 was all about, right? The Mount Olivet discourse was about God’s destruction of the temple. Luke tells us: *“They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”* God was in the process, in that year AD 70 when the temple was destroyed, of forming a new type of nation, a new type of tree; one whose branches would not be natural branches, wild olive branches grafted in, and we saw a peek of this last week. We discussed the theology of trees. You remember Jesus gave the parable:

And he said, ‘With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.’”

Remember when Jesus cleared the temple, He said that this was supposed to be a house of prayer for the nations. That was always God’s intent. He was never intent on just saving ethnic Israel. He wanted that temple as a symbol of the atoning blood of the Lamb slain to be blood that would be slain for the nations. And so, Jesus established the new covenant. The son of David who came from the seed of Abraham would fulfill all that the Passover signified, a new nation, a holy nation, as Peter called it, set apart by the sacrifice of Jesus, as He spilled His blood at Mount Calvary. I say all of that to say this simple point; it is no coincidence that Jesus was crucified during the Passover. This fit the sovereign plan of God. He is, after all, the final Passover Lamb, and so in the intricacies of God’s sovereign plan for salvation, He made it a point that the last week of our Lord’s life would coincide with celebration of the Passover. If Mark chapter 13 is the longest answer to any question asked of Jesus, Mark chapter 14 is the longest chapter in Mark’s Gospel, wanting to point out to us the Passover plot. There were lots of plots, lots of planning that was taking place, but none of it can undermine the plan of God, that His only begotten Son would be slain for the sake of His people.

And so, chapter 14 shifts to the looming reality of Jesus’ passion, His suffering for the sins of His people in order to redeem them, and verse 1 of Mark 14 makes it clear that all of this took place during the Passover. But it was during this particular Passover, as I said, that much plotting took place. That conspiracy of the Pharisees, which we’ve seen throughout Mark’s Gospel, finally evolves into a hatched out plan led by Judas as he goes to the religious leaders, and then they collude with the Romans to put Jesus to death. Here we see the darkest moment in human history. The whole nation of Israel turns against their Messiah. Even the disciples partake in this—Judas with his hands, Peter with his lips, and even the Father leaves Jesus on the cross in that hour of darkness so that He could serve as a substitute for sinners. Chapter 15 and verse 33: *“And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”* Isaiah said, *“All of us like sheep have gone astray.”* The sheep were scattered at the dark hour of Jesus’ crucifixion at His passion, at His suffering. The religious leaders plotted against Him. Rome plotted against Him. Judas plotted against Him, and yet in all of this we see the sovereign purposes of God behind these Passover plots because Jesus is the final Lamb slain for our sins. The cross is, after all—I hope you know—the apex of redemptive history. It’s through the blood of Christ that the new covenant is ratified. It’s through the blood of Christ that sin is atoned for. It’s through the blood of Christ and the blood of Christ alone that sins are forgiven. It’s in and through the blood of Christ that we see God’s perfect justice, His perfect wisdom, His infinite love, and His grace coalesce. You’re here this morning because presumably you believe that, but the world at large rejects that and views that as foolish. However, God says through the apostle Paul:

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

All of redemptive history, even prior to the Passover and God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt, points to Jesus as the final Lamb of God, from the promise delivered in Genesis chapter 3 that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent to the shedding of animal blood after the fall and the skins covering Adam and Eve, all the way to Abel’s acceptable sacrifice before God, all the way to the ram caught in the thicket to spare Isaac at Mount Moriah, to the Passover lambs killed in Egypt, to the entire Levitical system, Hebrews 10 verses 1 and following, even to the bronze serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness for healing. Jesus says all of this points to Me, even the laws concerning the kinsman redeemer from the Book of Ruth. All of that points to Jesus. The words of John I will quote to you: *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* That was John the Baptist, and the apostle John all the way at the end of the Bible in the book of Revelation points to Jesus as the perfect Lamb slain to redeem us: *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”* Jesus, the Lamb of God.

So, we are entering new territory as we enter Mark chapter 14. Really, chapters 14 through 16 speak about what all of the Bible speaks about, so that these three chapters are like a mini-Bible within the Bible. All of Scripture points to Christ as the final sacrifice for sin. Now, our purposes this morning are just to look at verses 1 through 11 because in these verses we find three planned events, three planned events that lead to Jesus as the final sacrificial Passover Lamb by God’s sovereign decree. First of all, we see the planned arrest in verses 1 and 2, followed by the planned anointing in verses 3 through 9, and then finally, the planned appointment, verses 10 and 11.

Notice with me, number one, what we call the planned arrest, beginning at verse 1: *“It was now,”* Mark says, *“two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.”* As I said, the Passover was the most important celebration of Israel. It was a pilgrim festival where all the Jews traveled to Jerusalem. It began on the fourteenth day of Nisan, depending on the moon, either March or April. This is where the one-year-old unblemished male lamb was sacrificed, hundreds of them, thousands of them in the temple. And after sunset, each Jewish family would eat the Passover meal, which would then begin the week-long celebration. That’s why it’s also referred to as verse 1 says, *“the Feast of Unleavened Bread.”* The fifteenth day of Nisan all the way to the twenty-first of Nisan, it was an entire week of a celebration of the Passover; and as stated, the Passover celebrated and commemorated God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt. They ate a lamb to commemorate that, to remind them of the blood of the lamb that was smeared on the doorposts of the homes as they were delivered from Egypt, but they also ate bitter herbs as a reminder to them of the bitter bondage they had in Egypt. And as you well know by the title of the feast, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, they ate unleavened bread to remind them of the haste by which they left Egypt, at a moment’s notice. They ate with staff in their hands, sandals on their feet. God said, *“You don’t have enough time to allow the yeast to rise in the bread. Eat the unleavened bread.”*

So that’s the calendar period in which these events take place. Now, Mark says in verse 1, *“It was now two days before the Passover.”* Not to go into any sort of detail—you can read up on this on

your own. If Jesus was crucified in the year AD 30 as some believe or others believe in AD 33, it really makes no difference because on both of those years the fourteenth day of Nisan fell on Thursday. That would have been the day that Jesus and the disciples celebrated the Passover, which would make the fifteenth day of Nisan the day Jesus was crucified, the first official day of Passover, the fourteenth being the eve of Passover. So, Mark’s pointing that out. Two days before that, these particular events took place. I believe that this is Wednesday of the last week of our Lord’s life. By reckoning of Jewish time, it’s not two full days, but it’s two days. That’s how the Jews determined time, but Mark tells us in verse 1 what happened on this day, and that’s the most important thing. He says, *“And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest [Jesus] by stealth and kill him. The chief priests and the scribes,”* obviously refers to the Sanhedrin, and Mark tells us here that they sought to arrest Him by stealth. The Greek word there is *dolos*. It has the idea of “deceit.”

Their ultimate plot involved the killing of Jesus, as Mark says there. They wanted to *“kill him.”* This planned arrest of Jesus was planned according—and this is what you need to see—according to optics or popular opinion. Notice verse 2: *“For they said,”* as they gathered together, we can’t arrest Him during the feast, *“not during the feast.”* Here’s the reason why: *“Lest there be an uproar from the people.”* Mark tells us that they were fearful of a Jewish uprising. Matthew tells us in his account that the Sanhedrin gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas. So, this is an official meeting how they are going to arrest Jesus and kill Him. They’re fearful of Jesus’ popularity. They’re afraid if they arrest Him during the feast, it will spark a revolution, and that would provoke the Roman military to squelch that protest, and that would eventually result in the entire Jewish leadership losing their authority, losing their power, becoming in disfavor with the Romans. On the other hand, if they arrested Jesus after the feast, which is clearly what they intended to do according to verse 2, all of those pilgrims that traveled from especially Galilee that were followers of Jesus would be away from Jerusalem. They’d be in their homes, and they might not even know what was going on, lessening the risk of revolt.

You do remember at this point that the religious leaders are absolutely outraged at Jesus, absolutely outraged. We read in John’s Gospel that the crowd had been with Jesus when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, and John tells us this is the reason the crowd went with Him. During His triumphal entry, it was the crowd that recognized the miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead that hailed Him as the son of David and the King. This infuriated the religious establishment. And as I said, Jesus cleansed the temple. He had the parable of the tenants, which He squarely targeted the religious leaders. He pronounced woes on them. He mocked the religious leaders for wearing their long robes and praying long prayers. Matthew’s Gospel includes the long list of woes that Jesus pronounced. Mark is more abbreviated. But the important point to see here in verses 1 and 2 is that their plan to arrest Jesus, which was rooted in hatred, their plan to arrest Him after the feast was capsized, we could say, by the Father. The plan of the Father prevailed. Jesus would be arrested, as we are going to see in Mark’s Gospel, during the feast. As a matter of fact, it’s Wednesday. Jesus is going to be arrested Thursday evening, early Friday morning, and on Friday, He’s going to be crucified.

The religious leaders had their scheme and their authority, but what you need to see is that God the Father had His scheme and has His authority, and He is going to use the motive, evil intentions, motivated by evil to showcase His plan of glory before the foundation of the world. In fact, just

skip with me to verse 21. *“For the Son of Man”* Jesus says, *“goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”* *“For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him.”* It was according to the plan of the Father that Jesus be crucified, but the Father would override the details of when this would take place. Why? Because He wants Jesus to be crucified during the Passover because of the symbolism. The religious leaders want to do it after. The Father says, *“This is going to happen before.”* It reminds us of Act 2:23. Jesus was delivered over, Peter said, *“According to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”* Or if you like, Psalm 33:10: *“The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples,”* and that’s what the Father did. The Father planned that Jesus be arrested during the Passover, so that He be crucified during the Passover because all of those Passover lambs throughout Israel’s history pointed to the one final Passover Lamb that would be slain. You don’t have to worry at all about the death of Jesus. It was ordained by God the Father to atone for the sins of His people, and the Father used the evil intentions of lawless men and hateful men to accomplish the most glorious thing that ever occurred; the crucifixion of Christ, which led to His resurrection, His ascension, and the crowning of Him as our Savior and our Lord. Those of you that are coming to Sunday school are watching a little series on Calvinism, and Calvin says this in his commentary regarding verses 1 and 2. He says, *“But they said,”* the religious leaders, *“we can’t arrest Him during the feast because,”* Calvin says:

They did not think it a fit season till the festival was past, and the crowd was dispersed. Hence we infer that, although those hungry dogs eagerly opened their mouths to devour Christ, or rather, rushed furiously upon Him, still God withheld them by secret restraint, from doing anything by their deliberation and at their pleasure. So far as lies in their power, they delay till another time; but, contrary to their wish, God hastens the hour. And it is of great importance for us to hold, that Christ was not unexpectedly dragged to death by the violence of his enemies, but was led to it by the providence of God; for our confidence in the propitiation is founded on the conviction that he was offered to God as that sacrifice which God had appointed from the beginning. And therefore he determined that; his Son should be sacrificed on the very day of the Passover, that the ancient figure might give place to the only sacrifice of eternal redemption. Those who had no other design in view than to ruin Christ thought that another time would be more appropriate, but God, who had appointed him to be a sacrifice for the expiation of sins, selected a suitable day for contrasting the body [that is, Christ’s body] with its shadow [that is, the Lamb], by placing [the body and the Lamb] together. Hence also we obtain a brighter display of the fruit of Christ’s suffering.

And so, we see the planned arrest in verses 1 and 2, capsized by the Father to coincide with the Father’s sovereign timetable. But in the ugly planning of Jesus’ arrest, we see the planning of something beautiful. That’s what Jesus refers to it as, and that is His anointing. And so, we move from the planned arrest, verses 1 and 2; number two, to the planned anointing, verses 3 through 9. Notice with me in verse 3:

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining 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. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done

what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

Very interesting account. Those of you who have been with us as we studied Mark’s Gospel are familiar with what theologians refer to as a Markan sandwich. It’s a literary technique that Mark uses where he writes a certain event, which is one piece of bread, and then another event which is the bottom piece of bread, but in between those two pieces of bread is really the meat of what Mark wants to say, and we see that here. The first piece of bread is verses 1 and 2, the conspiracy to arrest Jesus. The second piece of bread is verses 10 and 11. We’ll get to it in a little bit. That is Judas Iscariot going to the religious leaders to betray Jesus, but in the middle, you have this anointing of Jesus. Now, this is actually a flashback to the Saturday before the triumphal entry. Mark is inserting it in here, not as a point of strict chronology, but because he wants us to see the contrast between the ugliness of Jesus’ betrayal and arrest and the beauty of what this woman does, as she anoints Jesus with this expensive perfume.

And so, we pick up in verse 3: *“And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining 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.”* Jesus stayed in Bethany during the Passover, some two miles outside of Jerusalem located on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives. This scene took place, as verse 3 says, in the house of Simon the leper. Now, we don’t really know who Simon the leper was, and the only way that we know who the woman was is because in John’s account, John chapter 12, he identifies the woman as Mary—not Mary the mother of our Lord but Mary the sister of Martha. Mary and Martha being the sisters of Lazarus, who has just been raised from the dead. This is a flashback going back to the Saturday before the triumphal entry. Simon was a former leper; therefore, one that Jesus had healed. Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and so in the home of Simon comes Mary and Martha and Lazarus. They also lived in Bethany, along with Jesus and the disciples. And verse 3 says that *“he was reclining at table,”* which means this is some sort of social event, an opportunity to thank Jesus out of gratitude for Him healing Simon and for conducting His most glorious miracle of all, raising Lazarus from the dead. That is what’s taking place here, but in the middle of this feast, this woman identified as Mary in John 12, notice your Bibles. She *“came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.”*

Now, for a woman to interrupt men as they ate was a breach of Jewish etiquette, and not only that, but she did this extravagant activity of breaking a bottle and pouring the ointment, which it was perfume, on Jesus. Mark refers to it as *“an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly.”* The flask itself was valuable. It was made of marble from Egypt, so it would have been imported. And then the perfume inside was extremely expensive, imported from India, from an herb called nard from which the perfume was extracted, likely a family heirloom. That’s the only reason a family like this would have it. These were common laborers. They were not wealthy people. So, this was something passed down through generations, this flask of expensive perfume being saved, maybe for a time of famine, being saved for a time when the family would need it. This was—mark it—the family’s fortune, and it not only had financial value, it had sentimental value, something passed down generationally. John 12:3 says that it was a Roman pound. That would be the equivalent of twelve ounces. This is a twelve-ounce bottle of expensive, imported perfume, and it says she broke it and she *“poured it over his head.”* The bottle itself was designed in such

a way that it was wide at the bottom but skinny at the neck because when you turned it over you didn't want to pour it all out; and pouring it, turning it over with the skinny neck, would allow you to dole out drops at a time so you didn't waste it. She wasn't concerned about that. It says she broke the neck of the bottle and poured it out on Jesus in total devotion. Mark says poured it all over His head, but Matthew tells us that it was poured over His whole body, and John tell us that she wiped His feet with her hair, meaning that the oil went all the way from His head down to His toes, the entire bottle, all twelve ounces poured out on Jesus in an instant, almost, because the bottle was broken and it poured out freely. The bottle was gone, never to be used again. The perfume was gone, and all that was left was this strong fragrance in this small house, a reminder to her siblings and to the disciples that she had just poured out her life savings on Jesus.

She had literally spent a fortune on her Lord, and the response was anything but kind. Notice verse 4: *“There were some who said to themselves indignantly, ‘Why was the ointment wasted like that?’”* Sarcasm. *“For this ointment could have been sold,”* verse 5, *“for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.”* And verse 5 says, *“And they scolded her.”* Scolded is a strong word, *embrimaomai*. It literally has to do with horses flaring their nostrils in anger, snorting. It has the idea of murmuring and even blaming. This is no mild rebuke. In fact, the text says that they were indignant. *“There were some.”* Verse 4, *“who said to themselves indignantly, ‘Why was the ointment wasted like that?’”* Indignantly—that's the same word that was used to describe the indignation of the disciples at James and John when they asked Jesus if they could sit one on His right and one on His left. This is absolutely outraged anger, hot anger from all of those present, and their view was this was inappropriate excess. *“Why was the ointment wasted like that?”* And in fact, verse 5, someone made the argument, *“For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.”* During the celebration of the Passover, it was customary to give large donations of money to the poor. You remember the woman with the two mites, giving her offering in the temple. This was common, so the argument was made, *“We could have sold this for three hundred denarii and given the proceeds to the poor.”*

Now, I want you to turn with me to John chapter 12. I've alluded to it. I want you to see with your own eyes in John's account who was leading the charge here. Verse 4 of John 12: *“But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ‘Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’”* And then John says, *“He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.”* But he's making the argument and everyone's following him in that argument. Three hundred denarii; that's a lot of money. One denarii was one day's wage for a common laborer. Here's how it worked in the ancient world. You didn't receive a paycheck at the end of two weeks. You worked a day, and you received your money at the end of the day. Then you went to the market and what did you buy? Not extravagant clothing or extravagant perfume like this. You bought food for your family to eat for that day. So, the point is this, Judas is saying, *“Look, I've done the calculations. If we would have sold this bottle of perfume, we could have fed three hundred families a meal.”* Three hundred denarii, three hundred days of wages. This keeper of the moneybag, this treasurer who would betray Jesus clouds his argument. He covers it as if he's interested in giving to the poor. That really wasn't the issue. The issue was this was money going down the drain to him, right? This was money that he could have siphoned if that had been sold, and so we already begin to see the heart of Judas.

And then we see the response of Jesus in verse 6, back to Mark 14: *“But Jesus said, ‘Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.’”* Jesus says in essence, “Let her be.” He comes to her defense and even says what she has done is a beautiful thing. In verse 7: *“For you always,”* Jesus says, *“For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me.”* Jesus clearly had regard for the poor. That’s not the point. You remember He told the rich young ruler, if you want to get into the kingdom, *“there is one thing you lack. Sell all you have and give to the poor.”* You remember He had pity on the poor widow who gave her two pennies into the treasury. Jesus hung out with poor people. Jesus healed poor people when others dismissed them. But here He quotes in verse 7 Deuteronomy 15:11, which says, *“For there will never cease to be poor in the land.”* In other words, within God’s scheme of sovereignty there is always going to be a place for poor people in the world. Why? So that it gives a motive and a reason for service. If there’s always poor people, there always needs to be people serving, and so that is something that is built into the fabric of the world we live in. Jesus here is not arguing against giving to the poor. He’s keeping the main thing the main thing. He’s not going to get into a debate about whether or not this should have been sold to feed the poor. That’s not the issue. His actions can speak for themselves. He’s not going to debate them. The main thing is the main thing, and the main thing is this: the poor would always be with them, *“But here’s what you need to focus on,”* Jesus is saying, *“My life is slipping away. I’m going to be crucified. I’m going to be dead. Aren’t your eyes open to the reality of what is getting to befall me?”*

Then Jesus clarifies why what Mary did was a beautiful thing. Notice verse 8. Jesus says, *“She has done what she could.”* I love that expression. *“She has done what she could.”* That’s all Jesus ever asks of us, to do what we can. *“She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.”* Very, very interesting. Apparently, Mary had been listening far better to the teaching of Jesus and His predictions of death than even the disciples. You remember back in one account, Luke gives this. Mary sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to His teaching. She was criticized for that as well. Martha, her sister, said, *“Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.”* And on that occasion, Jesus came to Mary’s defense again, and He said, *“Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”* You see, Mary was used to being criticized. I don’t know if Mary was purposely intending to anoint Jesus’ body before His burial. I don’t know if she had the forethought to do that or not. Perhaps she did. We know that Jesus was placed in an unused tomb, the tomb of a rich man, so perhaps Mary says, *“This is my last chance to show my devotion to Jesus. Simon the leper is showing gratitude. Lazarus is showing gratitude, my brother. I want to show gratitude. I want to show my devotion,”* and maybe she thought, *“I’ll anoint His body because no one else is going to anoint it.”* Perhaps she had that on her mind. We really don’t know. She didn’t want Him to die anymore of an undignified death than He was going to die, being crucified as a common criminal on a cross, but here’s the point; Jesus viewed this as symbolic of His anointing for burial. Jesus used this as an opportunity to say, *“You may say this is extravagant. You may say this is a waste, but I see this as a beautiful thing. She is anointing my body because I’m getting ready to die.”* And in fact, Jesus believed that so much, notice what He says in verse 9: *“And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”*

I mean, that’s amazing to me. Jesus says, “As long as the gospel is proclaimed.” As people proclaim the gospel, they will tell the story of this woman, Mary, anointing Jesus. So, therefore, Mary forever reminds us through her sacrificial deed how devoted she was to Jesus and how devoted we should be to Jesus, to the one who became poor so that we might become rich. Imagine the scene as the perfume lingered in the house. It was a constant reminder on the one hand to the witnesses of what they viewed as a waste. On the other hand, the smell of that perfume, that ointment was a reminder to Jesus, a sweet-smelling aroma for the ages, something that the world would never forget, a reminder to us of our devotion to Christ. It involves not holding anything back. It involves not turning back. I mean, wouldn’t you agree that Mary did better than some of the other disciples who scattered like sheep when Jesus was arrested? Mary’s legacy was one of anointing, and Jesus says, “Whenever this gospel is preached...” He already said in chapter 13, “You’re going to proclaim the gospel in all the world.” Now He says, “Whenever you proclaim this gospel, you’re never going to forget. You’re going to tell others about what Mary did. Right now, you’re being critical, but you’re going to tell others what she did. You’re going to understand the significance of what she did. The significance of My death.”

For our purposes, we learn that Mary’s extravagant gratitude was heavenly, something to be emulated. First of all, it involved heavenly devotion. I mean, just imagine watching her break that flask. This is surely emblematic of her total devotion. That flask and ointment pictured her life poured out as a living sacrifice, something the New Testament tells us to do: *“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”* I mean, the witnesses viewed it as extravagant waste, but Jesus viewed it as extravagant worship. And back to that phrase in verse 8, *“She has done what she could.”* That causes us to ask the question, “Do we do what we can do for Jesus in our devotion to Him? Mary’s devotion was heavenly. It was from the heart. It wasn’t mere words. It involved action. Words don’t cost anything, but Mary’s course involved action. She wasn’t full of hot air. This was real, sacrificial, Christian devotion. She didn’t measure out drops of perfume to dab on Jesus as the flask was designed to do. She broke that thing and poured it out on Jesus, reminding us of Psalm 23: *“You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”* And that refreshing aroma in the room was a reminder of the refreshing, sweet-smelling service to her Lord. John 12:3 says, *“The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume,”* and we could say that the fragrance of that perfume has filled the ages. Even unbelievers are familiar with this story of Mary anointing Jesus.

Is our gratitude for Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb, the one that fulfills all of those lambs in the Old Testament, is our gratitude for Jesus as our substitute, is it marked by full devotion, heavenly devotion? Mary’s sweet-smelling deed will always be remembered not only because of its heavenly devotion, but secondly, because of its heavenly premeditation. The text doesn’t say this, but I believe that Mary planned the anointing of Jesus. Verse 3, notice it says, *“And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper.”* You know what that tells me? That tells me that before Mary left her own house, she went to the secret place where she hid this, and she hid it in her robe and carried it with her to Simon’s house. This was premeditated. She was so aware that the death of Christ would be such a monumental thing, and she wanted her Lord to die with some level of dignity, that she premeditated this whole thing. She planned to show her own gratitude, didn’t she? Everyone thought this was a feast for Simon and Lazarus to show gratitude. Mary said, “No, this is a feast for me to show gratitude.” Heavenly premeditation. She counted the cost, and she wasn’t found wanting. She literally poured her future savings, and remember this, the future

savings of her family out in total trust on Jesus. How could she not know that His death prefigured, or was prefigured in all the lambs of the past sacrifices and the past Passovers? This was an act showing her gratitude, heavenly premeditation, heavenly devotion, heavenly premeditation, but it also involved heavenly humiliation.

They criticized her because they could have sold it to give to the poor, and yet ironically, her gift was given to the poorest of all. Second Corinthians 8:9: *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”* Mary loved the poor, but she loved Jesus more, and He was the poorest of all. He was the one who gave up His life for her salvation, and she recognizes that. In utter and total humility, she spends the family fortune on Jesus in a moment of impulsive Holy Spirit led extravagant worship. That’s why Jesus says, *“This is a beautiful thing.”* And John tells us that she began to wipe His feet with her hair. That was an act of humiliation. All Jewish women viewed their hair as their glory, and when you let your hair down, that was a demonstration of humility. That was not something you were supposed to do, but that’s what Mary did at the feet of Jesus, letting her hair down, worshiping Him as she wiped His feet with her hair. She used her hair to wipe His feet; and Jesus never forgot, and the world has never forgotten. It’s a good reminder to us, isn’t it, that even when others aren’t watching, Jesus is always watching. Jesus sees everything done in His name, even if it’s giving someone a cup of cold water. Jesus saw the poor widow with the two mites. So, whether it’s two mites, whether it’s a cup of cold water, whether it’s an alabaster flask of expensive perfume, Jesus sees. And Mary’s greater love for Jesus surely wouldn’t allow her to disregard the poor, but that wasn’t the point here. It was her love for Jesus and devotion to Jesus that led her to serve others.

You remember the two tables of the Law: love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; love your neighbor as yourself. Last time I checked, you can’t separate those two. Those two things go together. Mary wasn’t disregarding the poor. She was giving this perfume and anointing the poorest of all to show her gratitude and devotion to Jesus, and she was a servant to Jesus and the disciples and the early church later. Those who have truly been changed by the gospel are servants. Because they are lovers of Jesus, they’re lovers of others. Pure heavenly devotion marked Mary. Heavenly premeditation and this heavenly, heavenly humiliation, humility of service. But as much as I don’t want to, Mark forces me to, and that is close our study this morning by contrasting Mary’s heavenly devotion to Christ with Judas’ hellish betrayal.

We move from the planned arrest, verses 1 and 2, and the planned anointing, verses 3 through 9, to the planned appointment. This rounds out the three events, and just as the planned arrest was capsized by the Father because He ensured that Jesus was arrested during the Passover and crucified during the Passover, and just as the planned anointing was criticized, we see that this planned appointment was confirmed in the heart of Judas. Notice with me verse 10: *“Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him [that is, Jesus] to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.”* The planned arrest, the planned anointing, leads us to the planned appointment. This was hellish by all accounts. Mary’s active anointing was heavenly, heavenly devotion, but this is hellish devotion.

Verse 10 says that “*Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve,*” was devoted to himself. “[*He*] *went to the chief priest in order to betray him,*” and verse 11 says, “*When they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money.*” He goes to the Sanhedrin to betray Jesus, we read from the other gospel accounts for thirty pieces of silver. According to Exodus 21, that was the price of a slave. Matthew tells us this: “*Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?’ And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.*” Mary was marked by heavenly devotion in pouring out the perfume and was criticized for it. Judas is marked by hellish devotion, not devotion to Jesus—devotion to himself.

Jesus would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. We’ll see this next time we gather together in more detail, but you remember the theme verse of Mark’s Gospel? Mark 10:45: “*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*” The ransom price of a slave was what Jesus was betrayed for, and here you see the contrast. This is why Mark flashes back. He gives us a chronology, verse 1 and 2, and then flashes back to the Saturday before the triumphal entry, and then comes back to the present because he wants us to see the contrast. Mary was loyally devoted to Jesus. Judas was loyally devoted to himself. Mary was operating out of inconvenience. She spent the family fortune on Jesus, but Judas operated according to convenience, selfishly pursuing money. Mary poured out her future on Jesus. Judas sacrificed all his past on Jesus. He had an inside track to heaven, an inside track to the kingdom, and he squandered it away. He certainly didn’t take to heart Jesus’ words: “*For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.*” He squandered it all. She squandered the family fortune and gained heaven. Judas squandered all the company and blessings and miracles he witnessed with Jesus and betrayed his Lord; hellish, hellish devotion to himself. And just as Mary was marked by heavenly premeditation, Judas was marked by hellish premeditation. Notice the end of verse 11. It says, “*He sought an opportunity to betray [Jesus].*” The reality is he had been waiting for an opportunity, but this was the last straw. When Judas saw that Jesus on that evening, that Saturday night, confirmed and even affirmed Mary for this extravagant waste of perfume, when he saw that Jesus was willing to waste that kind of money, he realized, “I’m not going to be able to siphon anymore money off the top, so I need to go get money somewhere else.” And so, he sought an opportunity for Jesus to be arrested as he goes to the chief priests; that is, to the Sanhedrin. Again, John sort of colors things in for us. John tells us “*He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.*” So, his funds are running low. He needs more funds, and he’s going to betray his Lord to get it.

As I said, next time we’ll go into more detail regarding what was motivating Judas, but let me just give you a sneak peek. Luke tells us that “*Satan entered into Judas,*” which led him to betray Jesus. John tells us the same thing, not because Judas wasn’t culpable. He was fully responsible for what he did. But to fulfill the plans of the Father, Jesus was delivered over according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. But as I said, as Mary was marked by heavenly devotion and heavenly premeditation, Judas was marked by hellish devotion to himself, hellish premeditation. And just as Mary was marked by heavenly humiliation, so was Judas marked by hellish humiliation. You remember that Judas ended up hanging himself. He hung himself in suicidal shame because he was sorrowful for betraying Jesus. There you see the contrast. Mary became famous; Judas became infamous. Mary is remembered for her loyalty; Judas is

remembered for his treachery. And all of this fulfills prophecy: Psalm 41:9, Psalm 55:12–14, Zechariah 11:12–13. I’ll just give you one of those, Psalm 41:9, David pointing forward to the son of David, Jesus: *“Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.”* That was Judas. He ate bread with Jesus, literally, on the night of the Passover, but he also ate the bread of the words of Jesus, the truth of Jesus. Jesus said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds comes from the mouth of God.”* And Judas threw all of that away. He squandered all of that. He forsook the kingdom of God willfully out of a love for the things of this world and a love for money. He is forever marked in infamy while Mary is forever remembered for doing her beautiful deed. What a contrast.

A reminder to us this morning, beloved, there are only two types of people in the world: those who are loyal to Jesus and those who betray Jesus; those who worship Jesus in an extravagant totally sacrificial devotional way, and those who only appear to serve him like Judas. There are always goats among the sheep. There are always tares among the wheat of God’s visible church, and all of this is a reminder to us of that thing. We need to be careful who we criticize in the kingdom of God because it just might be that it’s that person we will see in heaven; while all the other people who appear to be doing things and appear to have prestige, they’ll be remembered in heaven too, but not because they’re there but because they’re not there, just like Judas. We can only conclude from this that as ugly as disloyalty to Jesus is, evidenced in Judas, and a beautiful thing it is that Mary did, we can only conclude that this shouldn’t surprise us. How could this innocent, naïve woman do something so wonderful and be remembered forever for it, and how could Judas, one of the Twelve, forsake Jesus, one of the most ugliest of all things, betrayal? Well, it’s because that’s what the gospel reminds us of, right? It is the gospel that turns an ugly, sinful, depraved heart into a beautiful soul that selflessly, sacrificially serves Jesus.

The world drives by this church and says, “Crazy people.” We look at the world and we say, “Crazy people.” We know who Jesus is. He is our Lord. He is our Savior. He is the one for whom we won’t hold anything back. Out of gratitude for Him, we serve Him, we love Him, and we ought to be like Mary. We ought to be thinking about our legacy. We ought to be thinking about generations after us, what we believe for people to remember. Will they remember Jesus, or will they remember someone who didn’t finish well, someone who didn’t make it to the end, someone who proved to not even be a believer? That’s the moral, that’s the lesson this morning in all of this, pointing us to Christ, right? Mary’s active anointing Jesus was not works salvation; this was an act of worship. Mary understood, I think, perhaps better than the disciples. She needed to anoint Jesus’ body for burial because Jesus’ death fulfilled all of those Passovers she had celebrated before and throughout Israel’s history. She understood that Jesus was her substitute. She understood that Jesus was the one that made atonement for her sins, and that is the essence of the gospel. The essence of the gospel is that we can’t save ourselves. The essence of the gospel is that we need Christ to fully atone for our sins. We can only be saved one way; that’s through Christ, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. And so even this week, as we celebrate Thanksgiving, that ought to be on our hearts. That ought to be at the forefront of what we think about, a feast of gratitude, and Thanksgiving much like the Passover, as we remember this Passover Lamb who fulfilled all that symbolism of the Old Testament for us. In our place condemned He stood, to give us eternal life. How can we not pour out oil upon Jesus and sacrificial service, a whole life devoted to Him, holding nothing back, not turning back, no matter the cost. That’s what Mark wants us to see, and next time, we will see even more that takes place as Jesus goes to

celebrate the Passover with the disciples, and we see the highhanded betrayal of Judas who is finally identified. We’re heading towards the cross, and the closer we get there, the darker it gets, but the light of the gospel shines through it all, and therefore we are grateful and we worship our King forever in light of that. Let us bow for prayer.

Father, we do thank You for the Scriptures which remind us, Lord, of what is most precious to us, and that is the gospel. Even this perfume, this ointment that Mary poured out upon our Lord’s head is emblematic of the sweet-smelling aroma and fragrance of the gospel. Lord, we are to leave that aroma wherever we go throughout this world. We are to serve You, serve the interests of Your kingdom, proclaim the gospel; and Father, we are to be warned as well this morning regarding the highhanded treachery and betrayal of Judas. Lord, may You guard our hearts from acts of treason, acts of betrayal. May we quickly repent because, Lord, as we sing this morning, we are prone to wander, Lord. We feel it. Prone to leave the God we love. We ask, Lord, that You would guard and preserve our faith. You are the only hope. You always preserve the faith and the salvation of Your true children. Help us to remember this. Help us to be full of gratitude as we celebrate Thanksgiving this week. We do it for the sake of Christ and in His name, and we pray all these things in His name as well, we pray. Amen.