

“True Love”  
Mark 14:1-9  
(Preached at Trinity, October 22, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we open **Chapter 14** we find the Passion Week continuing. This chapter moves in rapid succession ending with His arrest and Peter's denial. In **Verses 1-2** we feel the sense of urgency with the chief priests trying to arrest Jesus. The timing of their plotting was probably late Tuesday even or early Wednesday—the same day according to the Jewish rendering of days. The Feast of Unleavened Bread would begin on Friday.
2. **Verses 1-2** set the state for the betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot and His arrest. This picks up again with **Verses 10-11**.
3. **Verses 3-9** form a parenthesis to this section and actually takes us back to the previous Friday & Saturday evenings. John's Gospel also describes the supper but states more clearly the time-element.  
**John 12:1-3 NAU** - "Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. <sup>3</sup> Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."
4. Let me give you a brief overview of the week thus far.
  - A. On Friday Jesus arrives at Bethany before sunset prior to the beginning of the Sabbath. Bethany was the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. He probably spent the Sabbath rest with these friends.
  - B. Saturday evening - a supper was held in His honor in the home of Simon the leper.
  - C. On Sunday morning, as He departs from Bethany, He sends two of His disciples ahead to Bethphage to fetch a young donkey. Before the day ends Jesus enters briefly into the Temple and observes the buying and selling.
  - D. Monday – He curses the fig tree and then enters into Jerusalem for the cleansing of the Temple, casting out the hypocrites and demonstrating God's curse upon Israel.
  - E. Tuesday – They pass by the fig tree and find it withered. Jesus enters into the Temple where He holds an intense session of teaching. The religious leaders try to discredit His teaching but are continually foiled.  
Upon leaving the Temple Jesus retires to Mount Olivet where He explains to His disciples the destruction of Jerusalem and of His coming and the end of the age.
  - F. Wednesday – **Verse 14** – Jesus sends two of His disciples to prepare the Passover meal. On Wednesday evening Jesus shares the meal instituting the Lord's Supper. Judas betrays Jesus and He is arrested.

5. This chronology coincides with a Thursday crucifixion. Bear in mind this is a difficult subject and there is strong arguments on both sides. The richness of a Thursday crucifixion finds Jesus entering into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday which is the day the sacrificial lambs would have been herded into the city.
6. **Verses 3-9** record the stirring story of Mary anointing Jesus with the costly ointment. Mark is recording an event that took place on Saturday, 4 days before, while Jesus was in Bethany.  
Present were individuals whom Jesus had touched.
  - A. The twelve Apostles were present
  - B. One named Simon whom Jesus had apparently healed of leprosy – still referred to as Simon the leper – the dinner is being held in his home
  - C. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were present
7. While the guests were relaxing, Mary takes position behind Jesus with an alabaster jar of filled with perfume. Alabaster was a translucent form of gypsum – it was considered a luxury item.
8. It was filled with an extremely valuable perfume.
  - A. Matthew calls it “very precious ointment”  
Mark calls it “very costly” – **Verse 3**
  - B. Mark calls it perfume extracted from pure nard or spikenard.  
John tells us it was of not less than a Roman pound - **John 12:3**
  - C. In **Verse 5** we read that the value exceeded 300 denarii, an amount exceeding over 300 days wages, roughly equivalent to almost a year’s wages.  
Looking at today’s value it would be at least 40-50 thousand dollars.
9. She takes the jar filled with the perfume and pours the whole contents upon the body of Christ (v. 3). The smell fills the house.  
John records:  
**John 12:3 NAU** - "Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."
10. The reaction around the room was one of indignation.  
**Mark 14:4 NAU** - "But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted?"
  - A. John’s Gospel records that Judas led the protest quickly calculating the value of the oil.  
**John 12:4-6 NAU** - "But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, <sup>5</sup> "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?"
  - B. John also records the hypocrisy of Judas  
**John 12:6** – "Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it."
  - C. Matthew, however, makes it clear that all of the disciples voiced their disapproval. As Mary looked around she found nothing but scorn for her actions.  
**Matthew 26:8-9 NAU** - " But the disciples were indignant when they saw *this*, and said, "Why this waste? <sup>9</sup> "For this *perfume* might have been sold for a high price and *the money* given to the poor."

7. Jesus quickly comes to her defense.

**Mark 14:6 NAU** - "But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me."

**Matthew 26:10 NAU** - "But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me."

- A. Matthew implies that some may have been uttering it in private, secret censorious accusations. Isn't that just like us?
- B. Jesus was in no way diminishing the need for compassion and mercy upon the poor. He had often times demonstrated His care for those in need. But there would be many opportunities to care for the poor – there will be needy people as long as the earth endures.
- C. But the opportunity to show compassion upon Jesus in His humiliation had almost come to an end. Never again would He be in this position. When He comes again it will be in power and glory.  
And Jesus was pleased and honored by her extravagance.

8. Jesus declares that Mary was preparing His body for death.

**Mark 14:8 NAU** - "She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial."

- A. It is not clear that *she* understood the full measure of what her actions symbolized – but it is possible that she did. After all, she was one of Christ's best listeners.  
**Luke 10:38-39 NAU** - "Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word."
- B. It is possible with conscious purpose Mary knew that this would probably be her last opportunity to pour out her love upon Christ.
- C. Jesus had often spoke of His coming death. Even His enemies knew of His predictions.  
**Matthew 27:62-64 NAU** - "Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, <sup>63</sup> and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I *am* to rise again.' <sup>64</sup> "Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day"

Continuing to look at the chronology:

- a. Presuming Jesus was crucified on Thursday, He would have been placed in the tomb just prior to the end of the day. Friday would have begun shortly after at sundown. Mary and Martha were there as the sun set.  
**Matthew 27:61 NAU** - "And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave."
- b. The term "day of preparation" was usually a designation for Friday. The day before the Passover was also called the "day of preparation." John's Gospel says Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover.  
**John 19:14 NAU** - "Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!"

- c. Both Thursday and Friday were days of preparation. The next day was Saturday, the regular Sabbath. This is when the chief Priests and Pharisees came with concern to Pilate. Sunset on Saturday would have marked the end of the third day. Jesus rose early on Sunday morning.
9. There are several personalities mentioned in this passage
  - There is Simon the leper who gave a supper in honor of Christ in gratitude
  - There is Martha who was probably serving as was her custom – this was her gift
  - Lazarus was there who had recently been raised from the dead – still amazed at Christ
  - There is Judas who demonstrated his wicked heart of hypocrisy
  - And the rest of the disciples were there, still lacking full discernment concerning Christ's death
10. The individual who must be our focus, however, is Mary
 

**Mark 14:9 NAU** - "Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

  - A. This is a great testimony that the full counsel of God's Word must accompany the Gospel – they go hand in hand.
  - B. This is a also great testimony of the success of the Gospel. The success of the Gospel has never been in doubt. "in the whole world"

**Matthew 24:14 NAU** - "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."
11. The thing I want us to focus on tonight is the significance of Mary's love
  - I. It was extravagant
    - A. The perfume was expensive—an entire year's income. It was probably the most precious thing she owned. We aren't told how she acquired it but it was most valuable. She broke the alabaster flask which tells us she had no intention of using just a portion. Mary took the most precious thing she possessed and spent it all on Jesus.
    - B. Love is not love if it calculates the cost – love's only regret is that it does not have more to give
 

William Sydney Porter better known as O. Henry writes in one of his short stories about a couple, Della & Jim who were poor but very much in love with each other – the story : *The Gift of the Magi*.

Each had one unique possession:  
 Della's hair was her glory – when let down it could almost serve as a robe  
 Jim had a gold watch which was given to him by his father – his most prized possession.  
 It was the day before Christmas and Della had \$1.87 to buy Jim a present.  
 She went out and sold her hair for \$20 and bought Jim a platinum chain for his watch.  
 Jim came home and was amazed at her gift.  
 Slowly he handed her his gift – expensive tortoise-shell combs for her hair. He had sold his watch.
    - C. Does this describe your love for Christ? Does He have your best?
      1. Is there anything in your life more precious than Christ?

2. Have you given Him your life?  
**Luke 14:26 NAU** - "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

## II. True love is not self-conscious

- A. Mary demonstrated her love for Christ without regard to what other people might think
  1. There are too many closet-Christians
  2. Mary poured out her love to Christ in spite of the displeasure of everyone present
- B. Love creates humility – it creates selflessness  
**1 Corinthians 13:4-5 NAU** - " Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup> does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own"
- C. To meet Christ is to find the greatest treasure of which we are willing to part with all else.  
**Matthew 13:44-46 NAU** - "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. <sup>45</sup> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, <sup>46</sup> and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."

## III. True love seizes the present opportunities

- Mark 14:7 NAU** - "For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me."
- A. We will not always have loved ones with us
    1. How many people despair because a loved one died before they were told how much they were loved
    2. Today is the day to say those words  
 Today is the day to do that act of kindness  
 Today is the day to encourage, strengthen, help
    3. But more important than anything else. Are you redeeming the time today to serve and honor Christ.
  - B. God continually gives us opportunities of service – but they pass quickly
  - C. Life is fleeting – no one will stand before Christ grieved because they spent too much time serving Him, too many hours in worship, too much time praying

## IV. Extravagance towards Christ is inseparably linked to Regeneration

- A. Jesus had linked her act to the preaching of the Gospel  
**Mark 14:9 NAU** - "Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."
  1. In other words, she stands before us as an example of one who has been touched by the Gospel. Those who have experienced God's forgiveness will love Him greatly

2. Jesus clearly taught this to Simon the Pharisee  
**See Luke 7:36-47**
  3. Those who come to Jesus will love Him supremely  
**Matthew 10:37-39 NAU** - "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>38</sup> "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. <sup>39</sup> "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it."
- B. True love for Christ will always be demonstrated by our actions  
**John 14:15 NAU** - "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."  
**John 14:21 NAU** - "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."  
**John 15:10 NAU** - "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."  
**1 John 5:2-3 NAU** - " By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. <sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."
1. Mary demonstrated her love by her extravagant actions toward Christ. Love is at the very heart of the Gospel.
  2. Without love a man could give all of his goods to the poor and it would mean nothing  
**1 Corinthians 13:3 NAU** - " And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

#### Conclusion:

May we demonstrate our love to Christ with extravagance giving Him our very best.  
May others look upon us as fanatics. But may their scorn not prohibit us from our love gifts to our Savior