

Message #51**Mark 14:1-11**

Jimmy Stewart is considered to be by many the most beloved actor of all time. He had, as one writer said, an “everyman quality to him” that made it impossible for people not to like him. When Jimmy Stewart was near his death in 1997 at age 89, he was at his home in Beverly Hills and was surrounded by his children and his final words were “I’m going to be with Gloria now.” When he died the President of the United States said, we have lost a “national treasure.”

It didn’t quite work that way for Jesus Christ when He died. Jesus Christ was no beloved play actor; He was the beloved Son of God. He was the only God Savior and when He died, most were saying good riddance. In fact, His final hours, for the most part, were surrounded by people who wanted to betray Him and kill Him. If anyone wanted to do something nice for Him, they were verbally assaulted and threatened. That point is clear from this text:

IN THE FINAL HOURS OF CHRIST’S LIFE HE WAS SURROUNDED BY MANY PEOPLE WHO HATED HIM AND WHEN ONE WOMAN WANTED TO DO SOMETHING NICE FOR HIM, EVEN HIS OWN DISCIPLES VERBALLY ATTACKED HER.

This text is heartbreaking. Jesus is about to give up His life to save sinners and no one seems to care. There are three narrative parts to this moment in the life of Jesus Christ.

NARRATIVE PART #1 – The religious leaders are plotting to kill Christ. **14:1-2**

In **verse 1**, we learn that the Passover and feast of Unleavened Bread was just two days away. Mark only records one Passover, which is the one in which Jesus gave up His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

The Passover was one of the three main “pilgrim festivals” for which Jewish people would travel to Jerusalem to attend their religious services. The Passover, the Tabernacles and Pentecost were the big three festivals that drew thousands of people, perhaps even one million people, into the city.

The Passover commemorated the theme of redemption, specifically the deliverance God gave Israel from the Egyptians. It specifically was designed to cause them to remember the tenth plague in which the death angel killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, but passed over the homes of the Hebrews on which the blood of the Passover lamb had been smeared on the door posts (Ex. 12:1-13, 23, 27). **This festival clearly pointed to redemption via applied blood. It would be the applied blood of Christ that would save any sinner who would believe in Him.**

The Festival of Unleavened Bread began with the Passover and continued for seven days. During this time leaven was removed from the homes and only unleavened bread was eaten. Leaven signified sin. So the removal of leaven after the deliverance was an illustration of being pure after one had been delivered.

These two key Jewish festival days (Passover, Unleavened Bread) were just two days away and the city of Jerusalem would be buzzing. The city of Jerusalem would be preparing for a big crowd of people. During the festivals, thousands and thousands of people came into Jerusalem.

It was a time when “hordes of people and animals” would be seen in the streets. The sights and smells of the city changed during this time. This was somewhat of a tense time for the religious leaders and especially for the police. The chance of “riots” breaking out increased dramatically during this time. Jewish leaders feared that because if riots broke out, the Romans would put a stop to them quickly and it would affect their livelihood. The Jewish religious leaders did not want any trouble.

Now according to **verse 1**, the chief priests and scribes were trying to figure out a way to secretly arrest and kill Jesus Christ. The word “seize Him by stealth” indicates they were trying to figure out a way to forcefully grab Him by some deceitful and crafty way. They were trying to figure out a way to lure Him into a trap so they could overtake Him (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 120 & 256). They had Jesus Christ right in their city and in their Temple and they figured this was the time to get Him.

Why did they want to kill Christ? He was a threat to their whole religious system. He was teaching grace and they were controlling people by their system of religious works, and Jesus could potentially put them out of business. Rather than promoting that people need to believe in Him to be saved from sin, they would rather have them go to hell as long as they had their power and money.

The problem was **verse 2**, during the festivals visitors streamed into the city from all over Palestine. Many of these people loved Jesus Christ because He had done some wonderful things for them and if the leaders tried to take Him, it could cause a riot. Many of the people in town were Galileans and the Galileans were tough people. They were used to fishing and hunting and mountain life and survival. The religious leaders would be no match for them.

So the leaders had pretty much decided to not act until after the festival. But their plans will change when they get approached by Judas.

NARRATIVE PART #2 – One woman loves Christ and did something good for Him. **14:3-9**

While the religious leaders are plotting as to how to kill Christ, the scene shifts to where Jesus is. **Verse 3** informs us that Jesus was in Bethany. This was a city located just a couple of miles out of Jerusalem, on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives.

He was in the home of Simon (Matt. 26:6), who had obviously been healed by Jesus of his leprosy. We know that he was healed because under O.T. law a leper was unclean and would not be able to host this dinner party.

So Jesus is in Simon's home and **verse 3** says He was "reclining at the table." This was a common term used for dining at a banquet or dinner party.

Now while Jesus was there a woman came to the home (**v. 3**). Mark does not mention her name, but John tells us the woman's name was Mary (John 12:3), whose brother was Lazarus and whose sister was Martha. **This Mary appears three times in the gospels and each time she appears she is at Jesus feet (Luke 10:38-42; John 11:31-32; John 12:1-8).** This was a woman who loved and revered Jesus Christ and she knew that He was going to die for her sins. This was a woman who wanted to be taught.

Mary brought with her an "alabaster vial" or "alabaster flask." Pliny said that an alabaster container was the best there was and it was commonly used for only the finest of perfumes or ointments (Cited from Mark Strauss, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, pp. 606-607).

Inside this alabaster box was "pure nard." Nard is formed from the dried root leaves of a Himalayan plant. It is a very expensive herb that comes from a plant native to India (Song of Sol. 1:12; 4:13).

Verse 5 tells us just how expensive this perfume was. It was worth more than 300 denarii. Now a denarii was about a day's wage. So the value of this perfume is about a year's salary. Calculate a year's salary and you have the value of this perfume.

According to **verse 3**, Mary came into the room with this expensive jar of perfume and she broke the jar and poured the perfume all over the head of Jesus. John adds not only did she do that but she also poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair and the whole house was filled with the fragrance of this beautiful perfume (John 12:3).

We have no idea where Mary got this perfume. Some think it could have been a family heirloom. Perhaps she came from a wealthy family. She did something amazing for Jesus Christ.

Now it is critical to see what she does. She poured it over the Lord's head. The text does not say she anointed Him. Mark uses one word that means "pour" (**v. 3**) and Jesus in **verse 8** will use another word that means "anoint."

Now the typical liquid that was used for anointing a King or Priest was olive oil and typically someone of recognized authority did the anointing. Jesus was already anointed by God as Messiah at His baptism. So this is not a Messianic anointing. Jesus makes it clear in **verse 8** that this is an anointing for His burial. **Mary knew about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. She understood what was happening and she loved Jesus Christ for what He was about to do for her.**

In **verse 4**, we learn that when Mary did this, it made several of them mad. It started with Judas (John 12:4). But the others became “indignant,” which means they were very provoked, aggravated and irritated by this action.

In fact, **verse 5** says they were scolding this woman for doing that. That is a strong word which means they were rebuking her over and over again for her action. This woman wanted to do something wonderful for Jesus while He was here on earth and the disciples are mad about it.

Now what they were saying was “Why have you wasted this perfume?” (**v. 4**). They considered the fact that she was doing something so extravagant for Jesus as being a waste. Then they tried to lay a guilt trip on the woman by saying you could have sold that perfume for 300 denarii and given the money to the poor (**v. 5**). They were about to go into the Passover season and the money could have been given to the poor.

Jesus, who is about to die for them, came to the defense of the woman and really went on the offensive and he answered them:

Answer #1 - Leave her alone. **14:6a**

This is a nice way of saying, shut your mouth and leave her alone. She knows what she is doing and you don't know what you are talking about.

Answer #2 - She has done good to Me. **14:6b**

The word “good” means she did something that was beautiful and good in the mind of God.

Answer #3 - You always will have the poor with you. **14:7a**

You can do well to them whenever you want because they are always with you. This is not meant to downplay the poor; but to show that something far more important than the poor is at stake here.

Answer #4 - You will not always have Me with you. **14:7b**

Jesus did not come here to be a good example of healing the sick and helping the poor. He came to die to save us from our sins. He is here to go to the cross so that we might have a relationship with God. Once He has accomplished His goal He is leaving this earth and going back to heaven.

Answer #5 - She has done what she could do for Me. **14:8a**

What Jesus means here is that in view of the fact that I am going to die, this woman did everything she could do for Me. She is the only one in the room who actually put Jesus Christ first in her life. She gave everything she had to Jesus Christ. She made a monumental sacrifice because she wanted to do something good for Me.

What a testimony for Jesus Christ to give here. If He says of us—he/she did everything he could for Me, what a great testimony that will be. I am afraid that will not be the testimony of too many; it wasn't here.

Answer #6 - She has anointed My body before its burial. **14:8b**

This woman was expressing a gratitude for the fact that Jesus Christ was going to die for her sins. She wanted to do something nice for Him before He died for her. She was the only person in the room who truly believed and understood that what He said would happen to Him was about to happen. She was literally preparing His body for burial.

By the way, how did Jesus know that this was her motive? He is God.

Answer #7 - This woman will be remembered wherever the Gospel is preached. **14:9**

There is a great deal revealed in this statement. **First**, Jesus begins with “truly I say to you,” which reinforces the reality of this point. **Second**, Jesus says what this woman has done is part of the Gospel. The Gospel is about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Third, it is the expectation of Jesus Christ that we systematically go through every book of the Bible and understand the Gospel and proclaim it. Truth is we do not come to this story until chapter 14 of Mark's gospel. Jesus says this story is to be proclaimed concerning this woman wherever the Gospel is preached.

To be saved you must believe in the fact that Jesus Christ died for your sins and He rose again three days later as proof that He can take away your sin.

NARRATIVE PART #3 – Judas went to betray Christ. **14:10-11**

Now as this scene is taking place, Judas was there listening to all of this. He heard Jesus mention that she did that for His burial and more than likely he figured that since He is going to die, I can cash in on this deal.

So according to **verse 10**, Judas left and went to the chief priests to make a betrayal deal. Mark stresses the fact that he was “one of the twelve.” The deal that he makes is for 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15), which is the value price of a slave (Ex. 21:32).

According to **verse 11**, the religious leaders were glad when Judas showed up. They intended to wait until the Passover was over, but Judas could figure out a way to betray Him at just the right moment.

The leaders were happy and they promised they would pay Judas the money to betray Christ.

There has been much discussion about what led Judas to betray Christ.

- 1) We know that Satan played a key part in this. Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27
- 2) We know that Greed played a key part in this. Matt. 26:15; John 12:6
- 3) It is possible he was jealous that someone did something so expensive and nice for Jesus.
- 4) Some have put a positive spin on this and speculate that Judas was upset because Jesus did not overthrow Rome

But the truth is what really led Judas to betray Christ was the predetermined, predestined, sovereign plan of a sovereign God (Acts 4:27-28).

In order for us to be saved from our sins, Jesus must die as our substitute. In order for Him to die, when He has not sinned, means He will have to be killed. In order for Him to be killed there will need to be people involved and Judas is one of those people.

Think for a moment what Jesus Christ is actually experiencing here. One woman wanted to do something nice for Jesus and the rest were mad. This is the scene of the way it really was as Christ neared His death. No loving family surrounding Him. Frankly, for the most part, He was all alone.

Why would He put up with that? Why would He be willing to subject Himself to that?
The answer is that He did that for us.