

# MARK — How Will You Respond to Jesus? (Pt 1)

## Mark 14:1-11

Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. “But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.”

While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and

promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

*The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mk 14:1–11.

## Have You Ever Smelled Death?

It is a distinct odor, emanating from a person or animal. Distinct from decay, distinct from the preserving smell of formaldehyde.

In this text, the smell that steeps the room is the fragrance of nard, most probably imported from India (very expensive), and it overwhelms the senses.

And the people in the room reacted almost immediately:



Have you ever seen someone, and maybe they were a Christian, spend a ridiculous amount of time or money on something that you deem irrelevant or stupid?

## Jesus, Don't You Care About the Poor?

The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want.

Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need.  
9 Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them

nothing. They may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. 10 Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

*The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Dt 15:8–11.

Being open-handed is an orientation to action. When you see the poor, talk about what you or someone else with their money should do for them. It says, I command you to be open handed and act, do something when you see the poor.

Is talking about what someone else should do with their money for the poor the same thing as caring for the poor?

This is not caring for the poor, and Jesus knows that the disciples don't care for the poor. In fact, John's gospel explicitly states it:

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always

have the poor among you, p but you will not always have me.”

*The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Jn 12:3–8.

And Jesus knows that. So he reminds them of the law, and their deep value toward the poor, and how it should motivate them toward open-handed generosity toward the poor. This whole façade of the poor is covering something else entirely.

## **The Smell of Death**

What's happening in this moment isn't about the poor. It's about Judas, who is making a distraction with the poor so that he can extend his hand to receive silver to betray Jesus. It's about the disciples creating a diversion to talk about something else so they don't have to explain the stench of death on their own clothes. (Let the reader understand).

The other question that can be asked from this text is, “where is our alabaster jar?” Do we have an alabaster jar

## **You Smell Like Death And You Know It**

This moment is an atonement (a covering) of the smell of death. It foreshadows what Jesus is going to do: break his alabaster jar, everything he has, to give it away to cover our smell of death.

Our lying, cheating, hating, unforgiveness, bitterness, and hardness of hearts makes us smell like death. And the only thing that can remove that smell of death is Jesus' death.

And some of us, Christians, who agree that Jesus covers our smell of death, still stand around talking about what other Christians or secular people do with their money, still not getting it.

Repentance and confession is such a gift, because it eliminates any room for shame.

And for those of us who have an alabaster jar, a personal wealth of resources, you can break your jar and go all in, all gifts, talents, treasure, and let Jesus call it beautiful.

And you get to be fully alive, giving everything, not having to listen to voices of criticism and harsh rebuke.

You don't have to keep living with the smell of death on you. You get to break your own jar and offer all of what you have to Jesus.