

Series: **Gospel of Mark**

Today's Title: **"Extravagant Worship"**

March 7, 2021 – *Mark 14:1-11* (Also: Matthew 26:1-16 Luke 22:1-6; John 12:1-8)

Objective: To encourage people in God's sovereign control and for them to worship Christ with all they have.

Sometimes plans you make turn out exactly as you hoped...sometimes they don't.

This can bring us great disappointment - when we were really looking forward to the plans we made.

It can also bring great relief and praise to God - when we look back and are thankful that our plans didn't succeed.

Proverbs 16:9 - *NLT*

"We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps."

This shouldn't discourage us from planning - but to keep in mind that we are not king/queen of our life - of our destinies.

God is in control. (James 4:13-14)

One of the overriding truths in the Bible about God is that He is sovereign over all things.

Sovereign = *undisputed ascendancy / possessed of supreme power / unlimited in extent / enjoying autonomy*

(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sovereign>)

Since God is sovereign over all things, this means God is in control over the course of history - and as Mark continues to tell us the account of Jesus' last days, we are reminded that God is in complete control of the events - and the timing of those events.

Turn to Mark 14:1-11 (Matthew 26:1-16 Luke 22:1-13; John 12:1-8)

Prayer

As we begin chapter 14, Mark gives a chronological marker - to let us know chronologically where we are in the timeline of events leading up to Jesus' murder.

This marker reminds us of God's sovereignty. We see:

Human plans - God's control. vs. 1-2

The religious establishment were plotting how they could arrest and kill Jesus. Their hatred and jealousy have taken them to the point of excessive sin.

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 by stealth and kill Him, 2 for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."

Passover was a meal which celebrated the nation's deliverance from Egypt.

In that last and final plague, God's "destroyer" (Exodus 12:23) '*passed over*' the homes which had the blood of the Passover lamb on the door frame, sparing the life of the 1st born inside.

If the blood of a Passover lamb was not on the door frame of the home, the 1st born inside would die.

After this plague of judgment in Egypt, the Pharaoh let the Hebrew people go - and they had to hurry - so they made unleavened bread to eat on their journey.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was observed the 7 days after the Passover meal.

So, this was a great feast in ancient Israel - and Jerusalem's population would swell by at least 4x its normal number.

Mark tells us it's "two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread."

It's important to know the Jewish reckoning of days is different than our reckoning.

For them, the day started at 6 a.m.

So, later, when Mark will say "in the third hour" - he's referring to 9 a.m. (15:25) - or "At the sixth hour" - he's referring to Noon (15:33).

Also, the smallest part of 1 day - was counted as a full day.

So, the end of the day was around 6 p.m.

When we read that Jesus was in the tomb for 3 days - it's because He was placed in the tomb on Friday - shortly before 6 p.m.

He was in the tomb on Saturday.

He rose from the dead minutes after 6 a.m. on Sunday - but those few minutes still count as 1 day = 3 days total - according to the Jewish reckoning of days.

All that to simply say - this chronological marker is helpful - but Mark's mention of "two days" must be

thought of in the Jewish mind - not our modern, Western mindset of time and days.

The religious leaders wanted to arrest Jesus by “stealth” (ESV, NASB) - “sly” (NIV) - “by craft” (KJV).

The Greek word means: *a bait, craft, deceit, guile, treachery.*

Why not just arrest Jesus if their case is solid?

1) Because it wasn't solid.

2) They were afraid of the people - because the people loved Jesus - He was a folk hero of sorts - He was the one person who called out the religious establishment for what they were - who said out loud what everyone knew to be true but was afraid to say it publicly.

With the huge number of pilgrims in Jerusalem for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread - things could get out of hand very quickly for them.

What's really important for us to know is the religious establishment - those who wanted to murder Jesus - didn't want to arrest and kill Him during this week.

Too many people - too much risk.

The last thing they wanted to do was to murder Jesus on Passover - as the Passover lambs were being slain at the Temple.

Human plans - God's control.

God is in complete control of these events - and the timing of the events.

There had been numerous times in Jesus' ministry that His life was threatened - but it wasn't time yet - and with divine protection He survived each of those instances. **Why?**

Because God is in complete control - He is sovereign.

In the N.T. we read of God's sovereign control over the events and timing of Jesus' crucifixion.

Acts 2:23

“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God...”

Ephesians 1:4

“even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...”

The arrest and crucifixion of Jesus was not a ‘*good plan gone bad*’.

It was God's perfect plan all along - since “before the foundation of the world”!!!

This also means your salvation is not mere fate - chance - luck - or random.

God chose YOU!!!

He “predestined [you] to be conformed to the image of his Son...”

- Romans 8:29

Likewise - if you're here today - if you're watching this online - it's not by accident or happenstance - it's by the divine plan of God.

He's reaching out to you - calling you to Himself - letting you know His love for you and desire to make you one of His own!

The offense and defense of extravagant worship. vs. 3-9

First, another note about chronology...

Mark is giving us a flashback.

The anointing of Jesus didn't happen chronologically after the events of chapter 13 - they actually occur (chronologically) right between chapter 10 & 11 - the night Jesus and His disciples leave Jericho and make the 12-mile ascent to the area of Bethany.

Chronologically speaking, in chapter 14, we are in the middle of the week - likely on Wednesday - and about 36 hours from His crucifixion.

But we know this celebration meal and the anointing we're going to read about happens not 2 days before Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread - but earlier.

vs. 3 - "While He was at Bethany" - Mark gives a very general timeframe in vs. 3.

Jesus and His disciples were in Bethany for many days. Mark gives us a 'flashback' of sorts - because of the murder plot of the religious establishment he's just revealed.

All four Gospels record these events (Luke - Judas' betrayal) - but John gives us not only when it occurred - but he also tells us it was Mary - one of Lazarus' sisters - who did the anointing.

John 12:1

“Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.”

This happened the day before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem - the big parade for Jesus! (John 12:12)

Mark probably inserts the story here for the context of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion.

Read vs. 3-9

This woman (Mary - John 12:3) is an example of devotion and worship.

It's uncertain if she knows that Jesus' death is near.

We aren't told her thoughts or motives - just her actions.

She is bold - walking into the dinner party - an interruption of sorts.

She heads for Jesus - and begins to anoint Him with very expensive perfume - worth a year's wages!

Her breaking of the flask was a sign that she did not plan to keep any of it - her intent was to empty the bottle.

This would have disrupted the dinner party - the fragrance of the perfume would have filled the room - probably to the point of pausing the dinner.

Her devotion is on display for all to see.

But her devotion and lavish, extravagant gift didn't impress the others - it enraged them - and they complained.

They thought it was foolish - a waste (vs. 5)!!

Passover was a time where the poor were remembered - so they could celebrate also - so comments were made that this should have been sold and the money given to the poor.

John tells us the primary person saying this was Judas - and that Judas was in charge of the money bag - but he was a thief, and his motive was not the poor but his own greed.

Mark says: “they scolded her” (vs. 5).

Many people in churches never have a problem with moderate, tempered, dignified worship of Christ.

But they often criticize those who are exuberant, expressive and extravagant in their worship!

- What is your heart for worship?
- When we're invited to stand and sing - are you inconvenienced?

- When we sing are your arms folded - just waiting for it to end?

'I don't know these songs.'

Have you tried to learn them?

If someone comes to faith in Christ - they don't know any worship songs - but I think the 1-day old Christian who has just begun to feel the life of Christ in them is more mature in their approach to songs they don't know - than many Christians who have been in church for decades!

The 1-day old Christian has been told - and believes that worship is a high priority - and it's not about their preference but it's about their Savior!

Galatians 1:10

"I'm not trying to win the approval of people, but of God."

We see an example of this utterly devoted God-centered, extravagant worship by King David.

2 Samuel 6:1-2, 5, 14

"David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.

2 And David arose and went with all the people...to bring up from there the ark of God...

5 And David and all the house of Israel were *making merry* (laugh / celebrate) before the LORD, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals."

14 And David danced before the LORD with all his might.

When was the last time you worshiped God with all your might?

That your worship was a celebration - a party - a “making merry before the LORD”?

When David got home - his wife was hyper-critical of him - because in her eyes he acted in an undignified way - especially for a king - and God judged her for her critical spirit and lapse of judgment.

This woman - Mary - was “scolded” by many in the room.

But Jesus would have none of it.

He comes to her defense:

vs. 6 - “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to Me.

Never let others shame you for worshiping Jesus.

Never let others discourage you from worshiping with all your might!

vs. 7-8 - Jesus points out this is a unique moment - and she is anointing His body in preparation for His burial.

He also affirms our regular practice should be serving and helping the poor, but in this instance, His time with them was short.

vs. 9 - Jesus promises that what she has done will be shared “in the whole world...in memory of her.”

The others scolded her.

Jesus praised her.

The betrayal begins. vs. 10-11

This was too much - the last straw for Judas.

This triggers him and he secretly goes to the religious establishment and offers to betray Jesus.

10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them.

11 And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray Him.

The leaders were “glad” and promised to pay him.

Mark doesn't tell us the amount - Matthew is the only writer that does.

“So they counted out for him thirty silver coins.” - Matt. 26:15

Mary sacrifices her money (300 denarii) to lavishly love and worship Jesus.

Judas sacrifices what little faith he had - to betray Jesus and gain some money.

Traditional timeline: Starting on Saturday night - the night before Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem - Judas is looking and waiting for the right opportunity to betray Jesus.

Apply it...

We've just come through one of the worst years I have known.

2020 - the year of COVID - death / sickness - Government shutdowns - businesses ruined by government decrees - a year that saw riots across the country and people murdered in those riots - an election in a deeply divided nation where even who is what gender is not agreed upon.

A world with evolving threats against our nation and others. If you're not careful and you just keep watching the news - you can quickly be overcome with fear and severe anxiety.

God is sovereign over all things.

We need to repeat this truth to ourselves every day. This should bring us great comfort - great security. God uses all things - even evil things - to accomplish His plan and for His glory.

Nothing is outside of His sovereign control.

Your faith - is not by accident - He has chosen you. If you're here today - watching on-line - it's not by chance or random choice. God is drawing you to Himself.

Put your faith in Him.

Put your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

Let your worship of Christ be extravagant and with all your might.

What a wonderful example of extravagant worship

Mary gives as she anoints Jesus.

She didn't care what the others thought.

She knew 1 thing: She loved Jesus - she wanted to honor Him by anointing Him with the very best she had to offer.

Will you give your best to Christ through your worship?

Will you honor Him with everything you have?

Will you worship Him with all your might?

Close in prayer