

The Week Before the Cross – Week 3 – Mark 14:1-11

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. ²“But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.”*

³ *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.*

⁴ *Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? ⁵It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.*

⁶ *“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. ⁹Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”*

¹⁰ *Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.*

INTRO to Series “The Week Before the Cross”: When Jesus returned to Jerusalem the week before the Passover, He knew the road He was taking would soon lead Him to the cross. That final week before Jesus went to Calvary contained some of the Lord’s most important teaching, miracles, and moments. In the season leading up to Easter, we’ll journey day-by-day through Jesus’ last steps before He laid down His life willingly for the sins of the world.

INTRO to **Mark 14:** We began Jesus’ journey to the cross with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which happened on the Sunday before Good Friday. Then we moved into Monday, when Jesus cursed the fig tree and then cleared the temple of the merchants and money changers. Next, we considered some of Jesus’ final teaching as He gave on Tuesday. Today, we move to Wednesday and an important story about Jesus being prepared for His death on the cross.

-It’s important to note that this story begins and ends with the chief priests, teachers of the Law, and eventually Judas working together to betray Jesus and have Him killed (**vs. 1-2, 10-11**).

I. WEDNESDAY: Jesus is anointed with perfume ointment in Bethany. (vs. 3)

-Jesus was again in the town of Bethany, in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. John’s gospel tells us the woman who anointed Jesus was Mary (**John 12:3**).

-They were “reclining at the table” – which is how ancient Jewish people sat at table, reclining on couch like cushions on the floor around a lower set table. It was not appropriate for a woman to interrupt the men eating at a meal like this one unless they were serving food; but Mary of Bethany in this case has something very important to do.

-Mary brought an expensive jar of perfume ointment and then broke the jar and poured out all its contents. She used it to anoint Jesus’ feet and head.

-Jesus explained later that she was anointing Him as a preparation for burial—but this was more than an anointing, this was a coronation – crowning Jesus King of Kings!

II. Jesus’ disciples misunderstand the importance of this moment in God’s bigger plan... (vs. 4-5)

-There was grumbling among those present, including the disciples, but (John) says it was Judas Iscariot who said: *“Why this waste of perfume? ⁵ It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.”* (see **John 12:6** below)

-The ointment was very expensive – it was worth at least 300 denarii which was an entire year’s wages.

-Though the disciples rebuked Mary for her actions, Jesus pointed to a bigger plan that was taking shape—and Mary anointing Jesus was part of that bigger plan.

III. Jesus calls every disciple to follow Mary’s example by putting Him first (v. 6-9)

-Jesus responded to the disciples’ indignation by both defending Mary’s actions and explaining the purpose: *“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me . . . She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.”* (**vs. 6, 8**)

-It’s never the wrong time to do the right thing – and being kind and generous to the poor is a good and God-honoring thing (see **Deuteronomy 15:11** below) But in this case, the best thing was to be in perfect alignment with the will of God in Christ.

-Mary was doing something beautiful for Jesus—He was more precious than the ointment or the alabaster jar. Mary loved Jesus with all she was and all she had. Mary recognized this one important opportunity to show extravagant love for Jesus as an act of worship, and she did not miss the moment!

APPLICATION: Do you love Jesus with all you are and all you have?

-Just as Jesus said, here we are talking about her today nearly 2000 years later (**vs. 9**)!

CLOSING

-The conclusion of this story (**vs. 10-11**) moves us closer to the cross, as Jesus' own disciple Judas is revealed as the betrayer. Matthew's gospel tells us that Judas was paid 30 pieces of silver (**Matthew 26:15**)

-There had to be more motivating Judas than the money. One scholar said – in addition to Judas' greed was his covetousness, jealousy, selfish ambition, and a dominant desire to have his way. (Barclay)

APPLICATION: Before casting all the stones at Judas or others, might we need to check our own hearts for these same sinful and selfish desires?

Other Scriptures Referenced:

John 12:6: *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.*

Deuteronomy 15:11: *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.*

2 Corinthians 2:14-17: *But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵ For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? ¹⁷ Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.*

Other Quotes/Resources:

-“How many kings and captains and founders of cities and nations have passed into oblivion and been forgotten, but the faithful woman we remember still!” –John Chrysostom

-“Christ is sold, and cheap was the price—thirty pieces of silver. Yet He buys back the world at the might cost of His own blood. Like a sheep, He was led to slaughter; but now He Shepherds the whole world!” –Gregory of Nazianzus