

Mark 14:1-11

“Waste Or Worship?”

We’ve been studying the things that will take place in the last days; Ch 13 is certainly a wild and exciting ride that confronts us and convicts us to make sure we’re where we need to be with regard to Christ. Ch 14 brings us back out of things that are to happen prophetically and back into what was happening in the life of Jesus at that time presently, Him being just a few days away from the cross.

It’s also the longest Ch in the gospel of Mark with some 72 Vs. This Ch brings about the plan to betray Jesus, the worship of Mary, the institution of the last supper, Peter’s predicted and played out denial, we’ll find Jesus praying, and Judas betraying Him in the garden, and the mock trial of Christ before the Sanhedrin.

Way back when we began this gospel I informed you that Mark is the “Gospel on the go” it’s an action packed account. This Ch will be no exception to that however since the public ministry of Jesus has at this point come to a close the action that takes place we’ll find either happening *to* Him or *around* Him. We find people “showing their hand” so to speak, the cards are at this point beginning to lay down on the table for all to see exactly who is for Him, and who is against Him.

Jesus will always draw that line and make that division; people may tow the fence for awhile seek to show themselves as for Him, having nothing really against Him but when the chips are down their true hand will be exposed. Jesus said, *“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”* Matt 12:30 People can only “go with the flow” for so long but when push comes to shove the true nature of a person is exposed. Now that’s not to say that people won’t struggle or even stumble in their relationship with the Lord. We’ll see Peter, and really *all* of the disciples do just that in this Ch. However there is a *grave* difference between having a heart that’s *for* Christ yet struggling in your relationship *with* Christ, and/or having a heart of hypocrisy that’s never been really *for* Him, but has only put up a front so as to take advantage, perhaps somehow profit or benefit selfishly *from* Him.

People often wonder about Judas; was he ever really saved? Did he always have ill intent? I have to confess I’ve volleyed back and forth on that one. I’m glad that it’s not up to me to determine that, God is the one who searches the heart. Whatever his position was or was not we know that ultimately he made his stand against Christ. Jesus said regarding him (just a little later in this Ch) *“The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.”* Mark 14:21 Not generally words uttered of one who makes it to heaven...the life of Judas will end in tragedy.

Now again we need to remember at this point that Mark does not necessarily seek to place everything in his account in chronological order. Such is the case with the chain of events we’re studying this morning. These 1st 11 Vs have what we might refer to as a “sandwich” structure. Whereby the record of the conspiracy between the religious leaders and Judas is divided by the anointing of Jesus in Bethany; Vs 1 of Ch 14 informs that what took place there

happened 2 days out from Passover. John's gospel tells us that the anointing in Bethany happened 6 days out from Passover.

So what Mark is doing is providing a stark and striking contrast between a heart of deceit and destruction, verses a heart of dedication and devotion. We see the treachery of Judas against the love and loyalty of Mary. His sin and her sacrifice...

Vs1-2

You can't read through the various gospel accounts with out running into the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting found in the scribes and Pharisees against Jesus and because of that we kind of get accustomed to the flow and how it's going to go. But think through what's happening here! Those who are supposed to be the examples of godliness in Israel, those who tell people that they can look *to* them and trust *in* them to lead them in the ways of God are with cold calculation and premeditation plotting the death the Messiah, the very Son of God.

So as to where a true disciple will love Christ more than life, being willing to lay down their lives for Christ, these guys love positions of power and the praises of people so much that they're willing to murder the Son of God and in reality snuff God *out* of their lives just to safeguard their platform among the people.

Now we note in Vs 1 when it was that they were devising Christ's demise; it was with in 2 days of Passover and the feast of Unleavened bread. These are critical elements as to what's about to happen and why it had to happen when it did. Passover was a huge celebration in the nation and Israelis would travel hundreds, sometimes thousands of miles to be in Jerusalem during Passover and the feast of Unleavened bread. The time of year was around March or April and Passover was on the 14th day of the month, the feast of Unleavened bread began on the 15th day of the month and lasted a week. It's estimated that the population of the city of Jerusalem would swell to be over 2 million people throughout that week.

It was a feast that the nation was required to keep because it celebrated their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. We'll no doubt reference it more as we see Jesus institute the last supper. But in brief the feast remembered the time that the nation of Israel having been in bondage to Egypt 400 yrs was delivered as by the blood of a lamb. God raised up a deliverer for the nation, Moses. And after a series of plagues God told Moses, "Here's what I want you to do. I want you to tell the nation of Israel that each family is to take a male lamb that's with out spot and with out blemish. At twilight they're to kill the lamb and paint some of its blood on the doorposts and the lintels of their door. Then they're to roast the lamb and eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, whatever you don't eat burn in the fire. Eat it in haste with your belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Because that night I'm going to pass through the land and any home that I find that's not covered by the blood of the lamb the 1st born of that house will die. But when I see the blood I will "pass over" you and the sentence of death shall not come upon you." And of course what happened is that the Israelites were found under the blood while the Egyptians were not; and through the judgment of death and salvation by the blood of the lamb God delivered the nation of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. Of course we realize that the foreshadow of death and deliverance by the blood of the Lamb would be fulfilled in Christ (and we'll speak more on that next week) but here's the point in this passage. The city of Jerusalem would be teeming with people, millions of people.

The religious leaders realizing that their would be all kinds of people from Galilee (Jesus' neck of the woods) and common people who supported Him, had been healed and fed by Him there decided that it wasn't in their best interest to take Jesus during that week of feasting but rather they'd wait till the crowds thinned out. If not there might be an uproar among the people; here's where it becomes all the more evident who's *really* in control. Because Jesus had to die on Passover, He had to fulfill the foreshadowed deliverance. In the volume of the book it's written of Him, it points *to* Him, it revolves *around* Him, it's all *about* Him. He *would die* on Passover.

The religious leaders had one plan, God had another. We read in **Proverbs 19:21** "*There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the Lord's counsel — that will stand.*" You and I cannot thwart the plan of God; contrary to how we often perceive things we're not the ones in control. God is in control. Jesus would push the event being obedient to the Father to the point of death, even the death of the cross. And we'll see that as Jesus releases Judas to do what he (that is Judas) had purposed in his heart when He tells him, "what you do, do quickly." "Now's the time Judas to do what you've purposed to do." And with that Judas would place the final chain of events in motion.

Now we come to a "cut scene" of sorts, we'll get back to this scandalous plot in a bit. For now Mark takes us back just a few days earlier so that we're able to see a couple different things that are happening in this period of time just prior to the cross of Christ. The dynamics that are taking place around His life, some people being spurred on selfishly, others serving sacrificially; so sandwiched between the awful plot of the scribes, and the appalling proposal of Judas is this awesome portrait of worship in Mary.

Vs3-9

What an appropriate picture of the anointing of the Anointed One. We find a parallel passage in John Ch 12 and it's there that we find out that this "woman" was none other than Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. We also learn there that she also poured some of it out upon His feet and she let down her hair and wiped His feet with her hair. There's just so much to glean and to gather from this passage.

As for who "Simon the leper" was we have no idea. Presumably he was a man whom Jesus had healed, beyond that we really don't know.

But we find in Vs 3 that as they were there reclined at the table that Mary came to Jesus, broke an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, poured it over His head, and from John we know that she poured more over His feet. She poured out all that she had over and unto the Lord. Now don't be thrown off by this, it wouldn't be all that uncommon in Jesus day to be anointed with fragrant oil as a gesture of kindness in someone's home. In our day and in our culture it seems a bit odd, if you were to come here and we greeted you saying, "Welcome to Calvary Chapel" and commenced to pour some Wesson oil over your head odds are you'd never come back. However in Jesus' day this was considered refreshing and hospitable. You've got to remember this was prior to the time of modern plumbing. Showers weren't readily available, there was no such thing as deodorant, they lived in a hot, dry and dusty part of the earth, the bottom line is that B.O. was of epidemic proportions! and When you had a house full of guests it was complementary to anoint each of them with fragrant oil; it just made the whole experience much more delightful.

What sets this particular event apart is the manner in which Mary ministered to Jesus and the fact that she poured out her *all* unto Him. Understand that when we read that it was an alabaster flask of very costly oil, of spikenard. What that's telling us is that more than likely this was a family heirloom, something of a life savings. It was a flask that was sealed and had to be broken to avail the contents to the user. The type of oil it was, was a rare fragrance imported from India and often times in that day people would invest their life savings into rare spices and ointments because they retained their value and could be easily sold. Today you might invest in certain stocks, in that day they'd invest in things of this nature. They were small, easily portable and incredibly valuable. Mary takes the flask, breaks it open, pours it out over the Lord and fills the whole house with the wonderful fragrance of worship.

Vs4-5

Literally they scolded her like she was a little girl who'd just done something radically wrong. The idea being, "What a waste! That could've been sold and used to bring all kinds of benefit to the poor but you just wasted it on Jesus!" Here she was giving lavishly, lovingly, unashamed to show her love for Christ openly, and what did she get for it; criticism.

We find in John's gospel that the ringleader of the rebuke was Judas; and that he said it not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and being in charge of the ministry's money he'd been pilfering from the resources, stealing from the money box. This whole front of ministering to the poor was a smoke screen for his self serving motive. But it sounded pretty good, so good in fact that the rest of them were like, "Yeah, man a lot of good could've come of that Mary if you were willing to part with it, now it's just gone and what is there to show for it!" and There's part of us that's sorta glad Judas said what he did, because now we know exactly what the value of her sacrifice unto the Lord was that day. We read that it was worth over 300 denarii; the common man's days wage was a denarius a day. This represented the upwards of a years salary in value. Probably about \$30,000 in today's terms; but if you make \$300,000, or \$500,000, or \$50,000, whatever you bring home in a yr, as far as you're concerned to give you an idea of what she did, that's what this was worth.

What's that indicate of her love for Him, the depth of sacrifice that she just made for Him? She was willing to sacrifice *anything* for Him, there was no act of worship too costly for Him, she loved Him with everything she had. Now I don't know about you but for me that's pretty convicting; there would be nothing that she would hold back from Him, she gave Him her all. She served Him with excellence, yet interestingly enough those in prominent places around Him didn't get it, as a matter of fact they rebuked her for it.

I'm going to tell you something; sometimes the most prominent followers of Christ can be wrong. There are times that people will perceive your sacrifice to the Lord as wasteful when the Lord sees it as wonderful, as resourceful, in fact beautiful. Whether it has to do with the amount of money you give, or time you donate, or the ministry you're in, or whatever, there are times people won't understand. But listen, Jesus *always* understands, He sees the sacrifice of your heart and to Him it's a beautiful thing. I'm sure the Lord's treasuries are *filled* with interesting articles; broken flasks, cups of water, widows pennies...the question that confronts me would be does He have anything of mine, anything of yours in His treasury? A precious and beautiful sacrifice to that you made unto Him for no other reason than that you love Him...and wanted to bless Him.

We don't know but we can't help but wonder if maybe she didn't feel a little embarrassed about what she'd done. Almost as if she'd done something wrong, but notice how Jesus quickly places Himself between her and her critics, Christ becomes her defense.

Vs6

In essence Jesus is saying, "Why is your eye evil because her eye is good? She's doing a good work here and all she gets from you guys is grief!" You might underline that phrase there, "Why do you trouble her?" How critical we can become of one another when we don't always understand what someone is doing, or why they're doing it that way, or if we think there's a better way. and Because they're doing a good work we trouble them. Jesus says, "Leave them alone, if you want to do a good work go for it, knock yourself out. Don't criticize *their* work unto Me." We're to extend grace to one another, not gripe at each other. Often times we bark at people because they're showing a greater act of devotion than we are.

We don't like that so we label them as fanatics, over the top, overboard, doing things unnecessarily, wastefully, Jesus says leave them alone. If they're doing a work unto Jesus it's not wasteful; it's beautiful.

Vs 7

Now He's not saying that we should show acts of benevolence, the bible is clear that we should. He's simply stating that the window through which they can minister to Him in a physical, practical way upon this earth is rapidly coming to a close and she's seizing an opportunity before it's too late.

Vs8

2 Things, 1st of all (underline it) *she's done what she could*. What an incredible commendation from the Lord, and that's all that Jesus would ask of any of us, "Just do what you can." The question is, what can you do? Think it through and be honest with yourself. Don't set your sights low and say, "Well, I can't do anything so evidently God expects nothing from me!" Top 10 answers on the board, survey says, "X." What can you do, what sacrifice can you make in your worship and service to the Lord? God wants nothing more from you than what you can do, but what you *can* do is only appropriate *to* do. That's what Paul meant when he said, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" Rom 12:1-2 Here's one thing you can do, you can present your body to the Lord as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. After all He's done for you in Christ it's only reasonable that you respond in that way. That you allow Him to use your life in a manner that reflects Him and His love to the world around you. Beyond that He'll work out the details. Do what you can.

2nd thing? Jesus says that she anointed His body beforehand for burial. What? All we've read about the disciples so far is that every time Jesus would inform them of His coming death that they didn't get it. Are you suggesting that Mary got it? That's exactly what I'm suggesting because that's what Jesus is saying. How? How did she have the insight that they lacked?

You guys there's so much to be learned from Mary. We only find her by name 3 times in the gospel record yet every time we find her it's (listen) it's at *the feet of Jesus*. Mary was a worshiper; and be it her *burdens* (in the sense of her brother Lazarus' death) or her very *best* as

seen here in this act of love she always brought it to the feet of Jesus.

Mary broke this flask, this vessel and just poured out her worship unto the Lord. and I'm just going to tell you that so often that's exactly where true worship will come from in our lives. That place of brokenness, when your vessel is broken and you are just pouring yourself out before the Lord in worship at His feet. Listen, sweet is the scent of worship that fills the room from a broken vessel. There were consequences to Mary's worship wasn't there? It cost her, it cost her financially, she risked her dignity, she moved in humility, and Jesus received it. No one else may've understood it, her aim was to please Jesus, no one else needed to understand it.

What else happened as she poured the ointment out upon Jesus, rubbed it upon Him and wiped it from Him (from His feet) with her hair? She took on the same fragrance as Jesus, everyone else enjoyed the scent of her worship, but when they left the house the fragrance diminished from all of them. It remained only upon 2 of them, Jesus and Mary. We come into this place and the sweet fragrance of worship fills the house. What about when you leave?

Have you just enjoyed the fragrance of someone else's worship, or are you ministering *to* the Lord, bonding *with* the Lord in such a way that His fragrance abides upon you when you leave? I'm just telling you that things change at the feet of Jesus. It's there that you'll receive wisdom, insight, understanding, as you worship Him, seek to be a blessing to Him, something in you will change. You'll be more like Him.

and You'll never know the impact a life led at the feet of Jesus will make, thousands of yrs later believers are still being blessed all over the world by this sacrificial act of worship in Mary. She had no idea when she did this what would come of this. Yet Jesus promised it would be remembered throughout history as a memorial to her. and Here we are fulfilling that right now.

You might note this as well; she never sought to defend herself. They started criticizing her, I have no doubt that she just looked at Jesus and Jesus became her defense. When people start criticizing you, don't jump in there and, "Oh yeah, Judas I think you're an idiot!" Just look to the Lord, let Him worry about it, you trust Him.

What else should we note? That the significance of her sacrifice is that she offered it herself. What'd ya mean? How would this have come across if Mary would've asked Martha to anoint Jesus for her because she was too busy that day? Same cost, same act, but the value of it would've been radically reduced wouldn't it have? Your love *for* Jesus, your devotion *to* Jesus has to be expressed personally. If not the work is still good, but the intrinsic value of it is diminished, it's not you. It may be *from* you, but it's not you.

Finally I would have you see the fact that Jesus was confident in His resurrection. He mentioned His death, but He also mentions that there will be good news (this gospel), He knew He would die, but He also knew that He would rise again the 3rd day.

Vs10-11

There's something unsettling about that phrase isn't there? "So he sought how he might *conveniently* betray Him." At a time when the crowd wouldn't conflict with the plan. So often people wonder what prompted Judas, what was his motive? We don't know conclusively, was it this rebuke, was that the straw that broke the camel's back? Did he become disillusioned because Jesus didn't establish the kingdom that *he* thought He should? I don't know. What I do know is that there was no small part of it that revolved around *money*. Vs 11, "...they were

glad, and *promised to give him money.*” The bible says, “...*those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*” 1 Tim 6:9-10 Is money bad? No, it’s the lust of it, the greed for it, the love of it that will ensnare you, drown you and destroy you. We’ve said it before; money makes a great servant, but a terrible master.

In no small part here the contrast and comparison we see between Judas and Mary has to do with money. One who willingly gives the other who does whatever he has to, to get. One with a giving heart of worship, the other with a greedy heart of waste. It’s interesting that Judas accused Mary of waste, yet that same word that Judas used to say that Mary “wasted” the fragrant oil is the same word that Jesus used in John 17:12 in regards to Judas. Judas criticized Mary for “wasting” oil yet he wasted his entire life! Mary was willing to give *to* the Lord, Judas was willing to steal *from* the Lord. You can’t serve 2 masters; you’ll love one and hate the other, you’ll be loyal to one and despise the other, you can’t serve God and money.

Question; is it possible to put our resources to a use better than that of blessing the heart of Jesus? There’s no higher order. There is nothing that you do for the Lord that’s wasted. Paul the apostle declared that our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

You may be guilty of doing all kinds of things in vain (I know I am) but one thing you have *never* done in vain is labor for the Lord, its *never* a waste.

There will always be those who are like Judas. They will criticize people that worship Jesus openly, extravagantly, lavishly...perhaps that’s you.

Others are like Mary; leading lives of simple yet incredible devotion. Not drawing attention to it, not seeking to defend it, just looking *to* the Lord, and loving *on* the Lord... Perhaps *that’s* you.

As the Holy Spirit searches your heart, as you bare your soul in transparency before the Lord, who are you closer to in attitude and mindset? Are you skeptical or sacrificial? Finding excuses or at the feet of Jesus? Critical or committed to Jesus with all that you are? May you (right here, right now, and at this moment) find yourself at the feet of Jesus, drawing near *to* Him, in open worship *of* Him, being changed and made more *like* Him.

Prayer Points:

Lord we come before You now, and we humble our hearts before You, it’s our desire to be a blessing *to* You. We want to offer a sacrifice of love unto You. Lead us, show us what *we can do personally* that will bless you abundantly. Use our lives for the glory of Your name.

Perhaps you’re here today but far from sacrificing *unto* the Lord you’re realizing that you’re in sin *before* the Lord. You’ve never asked His forgiveness, you’ve never cast yourself upon His mercy. Listen, it’s not only *sacrifice* that’s made at His feet, *salvation* is found at His feet, mercy and grace are available to you if you will but humble yourself before Him, cry out *to* Him, open your heart before Him and let Him rescue you.