

May 19, 2019

Mark 14:3-11, 32-36

Prepares

Introduction Mark 14 begins with a note that helps set the context for this week's lesson. Mark explained that, "It was two days before the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread" (Mark 14:1). This means that Jesus is just a couple of days away from the crucifixion. The Triumphal Entry has past; the cross looms ever larger. A couple of events described in this chapter highlight the disparity of thinking about Jesus as the week moves forward.

Misunderstood (Mark 14:3-5). First, Jesus encountered a woman in Bethany. Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. On this occasion, however, Jesus visited the home of Simon the leper. Unfortunately, not much is known about this man outside of this episode in Mark's Gospel. In Simon's home, Jesus was reclining at a table when a woman came in. The woman broke open a jar that contained expensive perfume and poured it over Jesus' head (Mark 14:3). This act caused some of the guests to express indignation. They completely misunderstood what had taken place and even thought that the perfume had been wasted (Mark 14:4). Jesus would correct this perception.

Honored (Mark 14:6-9). Far from being wasted, Jesus informed those in the house that what this woman had done was "a noble thing" (Mark 14:6). It was noble because the pure nard had "prepared (his) body in advance for burial" (Mark 14:8). In other words, what some had perceived as waste, Jesus showed to be a good thing. To better understand the sacrifice that this woman made, consider two facts. First, the perfume cost three-hundred denarii. This would basically have been the equivalence of a year's salary. Second, the type of perfume she used, pure nard, came from a root in India. This was a sacrificial act on the part of the woman. Jesus further explained this act's importance noting that "wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her" (Mark 14:9).

Betrayed (Mark 14:10-11). The next two verses in this passage present a striking contrast to what has just occurred. On the one hand, you have a woman who has sacrificed basically a year's salary to anoint Jesus. In these two verses, on the other hand, you see a disciple who agrees to betray Jesus for a specific amount of money (Mark 14:11). While Mark does not report the specific amount Judas agreed to, Matthew's Gospel explained that the price Judas would receive for betraying Jesus was thirty silver coins (Matthew 26:15). This amount would have been roughly the same as four month's salary in that day. Having made the agreement with the Chief Priests, Judas begins to look for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them.

Conclusion This week's lesson contrasts two individuals and their respective reactions to Jesus. One individual, an unnamed woman, sacrifices some very expensive perfume to anoint the Lord's body for burial. Another individual, a disciple no less, Judas Iscariot, agrees to betray Jesus. People today has various reactions to Jesus. Some sacrifice much. Others, however, turn their backs. What will your reaction be?