

7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 8 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. - Matthew 15:7-8 NLT

6 "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." - Mark 14:6-9 NIV

Jesus was quick to defend her against the attacks and criticism of her actions. He calls it a beautiful, or precious thing, a good deed. Then He says, “you can help the poor any time you want.” As Jesus quoting Isaiah previously said to the scribes and Pharisees, they were hypocrites whose hearts were far from Him. So, unlike the rich ruler, Jesus doesn’t agree that she should have sold the nard and given to the poor. Instead, He recognizes it for the symbol of His own sacrifice that lie ahead and commends her.

Sometimes we need to pause and check our motivation. Who is the audience we consider as we do our “good deeds”? Are we seeking the approval of people around us, trying to meet their expectations? Or are we recognizing that God, who never takes His eyes off of us, is looking into our hearts? Let His love fill you as your actions flow from love and worship of the one who sacrificed everything for you.

WRAP-UP

As the Gospel of Mark turns toward the events leading to the cross, Jesus is anointed with costly perfume in the home of Simon the leper. What appears to some as an outrageous waste is affirmed by Jesus as a beautiful and meaningful act of devotion, preparing Him for His burial during Passover. The woman’s willingness to give what was most valuable to her stands in contrast to the objections of others and reveals a heart responding in love and gratitude to Jesus’ coming sacrifice. Her actions invite reflection on whether we, too, are willing to offer our lives fully in worship, holding nothing back from Him.

MEMORY VERSE

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.
- Mark 14:3 NIV

Challenge –

Reflect on Jesus sacrifice for you as you determine what you have to offer Him.

Scandalous Worship **Gospel of Mark Ch. 14 - Week 1**

INTRODUCTION

This week, in the Gospel of Mark, we begin our journey towards the cross in what is referred to as the Passion Narrative from the Latin word *passio* meaning to endure or suffer. At the home of Simon the leper, Jesus encounters a woman whose extravagant worship was the source of controversy amongst some of Jesus’ disciples. Why did the emptying of a jar of perfume cause such an outcry? Are we willing to empty our “alabaster jars” onto Jesus?

Ice Breaker

Is there a fragrance that holds a special meaning for you either currently or from your past? (e.g. wife’s perfume, dad’s aftershave)

Key Passages

1 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? 5 It 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. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." - Mark 14:1-9 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The Setting

The events of Mark chapter 14 begin just days before Passover. The chief priests and scribes were plotting the murder of an innocent man to protect their influence and status. But they had to do so in a politically “smart” way. Roman and Jewish officials were already concerned about

revolt as Jerusalem was overflowing with Jews celebrating their liberation from slavery in Egypt. Any action that would stir up the proverbial hornets' nest during this time was unwise. But ultimately, they were unable to avoid Jesus' death during Passover.

What was the prophetic significance of Jesus' death related to the Passover? How do you think that influenced when Jesus would die?

Jesus knew His time on earth was nearing its end. The place of this meal reveals the people who Jesus chose to spend His final days with.

*6 While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper,
- Matthew 26:6 NIV*

*1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.
- John 12:1-2 NIV*

Who was the host of this dinner? How do you think that influenced the guest list? Who are the people you would want to spend time with if you knew your life was drawing to a close?

Although we don't have a specific account of his healing, it is likely that Jesus healed Simon of leprosy, because if he were not healed, he would not be hosting others in his home. And John's Gospel tells us Lazarus was among the guests, and that his sister Martha was serving. Their lives were a testimony of the healing and restoration that Jesus offers to a hurting and broken world just as we want the church to be in our community.

2. The Woman

3 Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance. - John 12:3 NLT

In John's Gospel, we find it was likely Mary, Lazarus' sister who poured perfume on Jesus at this dinner. (The amount of perfume, 12 oz, was apparently enough to run from His head to his feet) Why do you think she was moved to an act of such extravagance? In addition to the cost of the perfume what else was she offering Jesus through her actions?

She's not worshipping Jesus because she needs answers or wants his power added to her destiny or agendas. Her worship is a response to his death. The perfume she used was nard, an expensive aromatic oil. It was the custom of the day to wrap the body of the deceased with

fragrant spices to mask the odor of death. At Jesus birth, one gift of the wise men was Myrrh which was often included in this practice. Mary's actions give us a prophetic vision of Jesus's death on the cross.

Jesus previously had encountered a rich ruler who, unlike Mary, had a hard time parting with his wealth.

*21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.
- Mark 10:21-22 NIV*

In this encounter Jesus suggests that the man sell everything and give to the poor. It isn't until we accept and experience God's great grace and sacrifice that we feel moved to respond in extravagant sacrifice as worship like Mary.

If we are honest, we might admit that we would react like the rich ruler if Jesus asked us to sacrifice everything to follow Him. But even as he struggled, how was Jesus viewing this man (v.21)? Pause to pray that God would help you to loosen your grip on the things of this world that prevent you from fully embracing all He lovingly offers you.

3. The Response

*4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "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." And they rebuked her harshly.
- Mark 14:4-5 NIV*

*4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." 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.
- John 12:4-6 NIV*

Those who have other agendas freak out when they see authentic worship and devotion because it reveals their own sinful heart.

What does John tell us was the underlying motive of objecting to "wasting" the perfume rather than selling it?