

## The Anointing of Jesus

### Mark 14:1-11

This chapter is the longest in Mark and begins the passion of Jesus, his great suffering and death. He is anointed like a king or priest would be (Lev. 16:32; 1 Sam. 10:1; 16:12-13), but just as Jesus has been a different kind of king with a different kind of kingdom, so his anointing is very different. It's done in a leper's house by a lowly woman who gets scolded by the disciples for doing it. Jesus says she actually anoints him for burial! He will be exalted in a different way. Her act is *beautiful* and so we remember it.

**A Passover Plot** Passover is a freedom festival. It's like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July except that independence meant emancipation. It was a two day feast that overlapped with the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 13:6ff). This way Israel would remember that God liberated them and be motivated to be liberated again. Many in Israel were hoping someone would get them out of their current mess. Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims, so the Sanhedrin would prefer to not take Jesus during the feast lest they cause a commotion (v2). This is why they arrest him at night. But fighting against God is like trying to destroy a dandelion seed by blowing on it, and so Jesus is killed during the feast as our Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). Ultimately, the city would be filled with Jesus' teaching (Acts 5:28) and later destroyed. Make your plans with God at the center of them, and let Him change them for the better (Jms. 4:15). Make plans against Him and watch them crumble.

**A Beautiful Extravagance & Unrighteous Indignation** While the Sanhedrin plots, Jesus is in Bethany at Simon the leper's house. We don't know anything about this guy other than his house was an oddly wonderful place for an anointing. A woman comes with an alabaster flask of costly pure nard and pours it out on his head (v3). This is another of Mark's sandwich stories. On both sides of Jesus' anointing are plots against his life, one from his enemies and one from a friend. In the midst of it, this woman does a beautiful thing for him, and those who ought to recognize and enjoy it are blinded by unrighteous indignation (vv4-5). Three hundred denarii was a year's wage for a laborer, so think of tens of thousands of dollars—some good nard. It may have been a family heirloom. We don't know exactly what she was thinking. Did she know this would be her last opportunity to serve Jesus, or the only sign of affection shown to him besides Judas' traitorous kiss before his crucifixion? Regardless, her instincts are holy while the others' are not (Matt. 26:8; Jn. 12:4-6). Their stated reason is concern for the poor. John tells us Judas said these things not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief who stole as he pleased. Mark sets this up as the event leading to his betrayal. Perhaps he thinks if Jesus is going to waste resources and walk stupidly into his death, at least he'll get something out of it. Money has him by the throat. But other disciples are also caught up in it. Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 15:11, which says the poor will always exist, *so be generous*, which is different than complaining about the generosity of others. The Lord calls us to stewardship, not paperclip counting, and not stinginess dressed up as stewardship. God loves a cheerful, not a careful, giver (2 Cor. 9:7). This was tens of thousands of dollars, the best ever spent, gloriously poured out on the head and dripping down onto the feet of Jesus.

**The Memory of the Poured Out** Judas' betrayal will never be forgotten; nor will the woman's generosity (v9). He sought his own financial gain, but she sacrificed hers. She is like the poor widow (12:44): "she did what she could" (v8). Literally, what she had, she did. The prosperous give out of abundance, and they're tight. But she lets it rip. In the midst of this mess, Jesus sees the gospel proclaimed in the whole world (v9)! He becomes king by dying, his *blood* poured out for many (v24). If you're not a Christian, see Jesus pouring himself out for you, his life for yours, and hear his call to respond in repentance and faith. If you are a Christian, your life is a gift to be poured out beautifully for Jesus. We're not talking about tithing, though that's good. We're talking about loving God so deeply that you're willing to give up everything to bless Him. Can you imagine how blessed she is today for having done this? We lack no opportunity (Matt. 25:34-40).

## NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

### **Today's Passage: Mark 14:1-9**

*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." 3 And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. 4 There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? 5 For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. 6 But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. 9 And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."*

1. Do you remember what Israel celebrated at Passover (Exodus 13:3)?
2. Jesus is the king of Israel, and kings were often anointed in Israel. Why do the disciples complain when Jesus is anointed (verses 4-5)?
3. Jesus loves the poor and quotes Deuteronomy 15:11 which says people ought to be generous to them. But the ointment wasn't wasted on Jesus. What does Jesus say about it in verse six?
4. Jesus says when we meet the needs of others who love him, we are in fact serving him (Matt. 25:35). How can you serve Jesus by giving to others?
5. Draw a picture of the woman anointing Jesus with oil.

### **Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:**

*But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me." --Mark 14:6*