



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 42: Anointed and Betrayed

Text: Mark 14:1-11

Introduction

This text takes place in the last days of Jesus' life, during the week leading up to the Jewish Passover festival. Jews from all over the world flocked to Jerusalem to worship, so the city was bustling with people.

1. We May Make Our Plans But God Has The Final Say

- Read Mark 14:1-2

We know from previous texts that the religious leaders were plotting to kill Jesus, but at this stage, with the city so busy, they knew that killing Jesus would draw too much negative attention, and so they were cautious about their timing. But we know from the rest of the story that Jesus was still killed in the Passover week, according to God's plan, because he had already decided that Jesus would die as the 'Passover Lamb', who would take away the sins of the world (Isaiah 53:7, 1 Corinthians 5:7 & John 1:29). Not one of man's plans could stop the precise and perfect will of God.

- ❖ Q: Why were the religious leaders worried about killing Jesus during the Passover week?
- ❖ Q: Why was it significant that Jesus died during the Passover?
- ❖ Q: Genesis 50:20 summarizes the same message about God's sovereignty over human evil. Why is this incredibly important to hold on to when we are going through trials of various kinds?
- ❖ Q: Think of a time when God clearly interrupted your plans because he had something different in mind. How did you respond to his divine intervention, and how has that shaped the way in which you now view your own planning and circumstances?
- ❖ Q: What do you think Dietrich Bonhoeffer meant when he wrote, "We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God?"¹

2. Jesus Is Worth It

- Read Mark 14:3-7

The woman in the text is identified in John's Gospel (12:2-3) as Lazarus's sister, Mary. Breaking open the alabaster jar to pour out its entire contents showed just how much Jesus meant to her. Being worth about a year's wages for a labourer, the gesture seemed excessive and exuberant to the disciples who were watching this take place. But Mary was worshipping Jesus with all that she had, loving him with all her heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:38). True worship is costly and unreserved.

- I. The significance of Mary's actions:
 - Unbeknown to any of those eating dinner with him, Jesus was going to be killed on Passover, and so there would be no time for a proper burial afterwards. Jesus saw Mary's act of worship as if she were anointing him for burial.
 - It cost her a fortune at a time when the Jews should have been giving generously to the poor, as was the custom during Passover. The disciples could not fathom why she would be "wasting" it on Jesus, and they were furious. But Jesus used Mary's act of pure devotion to teach the disciples, yet again, that they did not see things as they really were. They were the ones in the wrong and had judged her incorrectly. Mary had worshipped extravagantly, and it had been worth it.
 - II. We first need to worship God before we can love others:
 - By loving Jesus above anyone or anything else, Mary worshipped him appropriately. Jesus was not saying that giving to the poor was not important. It was incredibly important to him. The law in fact required God's people to give to the poor (see Deuteronomy 10:11). But Jesus was making the point that he was *more* important than the poor. The same principle applies directly to us today: Jesus needs to be the highest priority in our lives. That does not mean that other things are not to be important or significant to us, but they need to rank in second place. Jesus wants every part of us and not just the left overs or a dedicated portion of our hearts and lives.
- ❖ Q: Why were the disciples so furious with Mary when she poured out the entire bottle of nard over Jesus? What do you think the underlying heart-issue was for them?
 - ❖ Q: Why do you think that it is important for us to understand what Jesus is saying about the poor in this passage?
 - ❖ Q: Why do you think that it mattered to Jesus that Mary's worship cost her significantly? What is the take away in that for us?

¹ Good Reads. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Quotes. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/779560-we-must-be-ready-to-allow-ourselves-to-be-interrupted>. [Date accessed: 20 March 2015].



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3. Are You Worshipping Jesus Or An Idol?

- Read Mark 14:10-11

We have to wonder whether, if Judas had truly understood why Jesus had come, he would still have betrayed him. He wasn't the only disciple who did not quite understand that the Messiah had come to die. Even Peter was rebuked for that. The gospels do not explain exactly why Judas betrayed Jesus. All we know from the other gospels (Luke 22:3 & John 13:27) is that Satan entered Judas, and it was at that point that he went off to strike the deal with the religious leaders. John 12:6 does tell us that Judas was a thief who did not have any real concern for the poor, and who used to help himself to money from the moneybag. So, though he was a follower of Jesus and invested time and energy in him and the disciples, he was also walking in sin, which made him an easy target for Satan to tempt and deceive. Whatever the cause, Judas had lost his love and devotion for Jesus. He was no longer what Judas expected or wanted, and it seemed more desirable for him to have money than to follow someone who was going to die.

We need to ask ourselves if we are worshipping Jesus, or some idealistic version of him that we have created in our own minds, like Judas had done. The version of Jesus we create in our minds helps us to continue worshipping our idols instead of him:

- I. If our hearts long after money, then the Jesus we create will be one that gives us financial prosperity.
- II. If our hearts long to continue walking independently from God and to do our own thing, living without integrity and without restraint, then the Jesus we will create in our minds is the "Jesus, meek and mild", the God who will not call us out on our sin, and will allow us to live as we please.
- III. If our hearts crave the ability to perform and prove our worth, then the Jesus we will create in our minds will be one that allows us to believe that our morality and good deeds will gain his favour. This Jesus will allow us to be our own judges, determining where the moral bar is, and will also allow us to beat ourselves up when we fail.

Our idols are our hearts desires that take priority in our lives. If we are not sure where our idols lie, the first place to look is our bank statements. Where we spend our resources is a sure sign of where our hearts lie. But we should also look at what consumes our time, our energy and our thought lives. These all reveal our heart's true priorities.

Without even realising it, many of us worship a Jesus of our own imaginations. We need to be careful that, when we are confronted with the Biblical picture of Jesus, we do not run off and betray him, because he is not what we had hoped for. Judas' sin and desire for money was deeper than his desire for Jesus, and it cost him his own life and significant emotional torment. There is only one true Jesus and the alternative will never compare. We need to examine who it is we are truly worshipping, and repent if we are following a Jesus of our own imagination. He is the only one who is truly worthy of our devotion.

- ❖ Q: How can we know if we have been worshipping a Jesus of our own imagination rather than real person of Christ that we find in scripture?

We have looked at idols a number of times, but the exercise never gets old because our hearts are "idol factories"².

Have a think about what idols consume the following areas of your life:

- Finances?
 - Energy?
 - Time?
 - Your thought life?
- ❖ Q: How do these idols impact your devotion to Christ? Be specific.
 - ❖ Q: Would you still worship Jesus (giving him your ALL) if he removed the things you that devote your life and hope to?
 - ❖ Q: If God has shone light into your heart about some false worship, what will repentance look like for you?

² John Calvin. Good Reads. <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=idol+factories&commit=Search> [Date accessed: 20 March 2015].