

Plotting, Preparing, And Prospering

Mark 14:1-11

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Plotting The Death Of Jesus (14:1-2)

It has been no secret that the religious leaders have been seeking to arrest and put Jesus to death. In this time where they should have been focused on the upcoming Passover celebration, they were spending their time plotting for a way to “arrest him by stealth and kill him”. They had openly rejected Jesus, but they saw that he was very popular among many, and so they needed to take care of this nuisance very secretly and quietly, lest they cause a political uprising from among the multitude of people who have traveled to Jerusalem for this most important celebration. They needed some way or someone who could help them find and arrest Jesus at a time that was politically and socially convenient.

Preparing For The Death of Jesus (14:3-9)

Jesus has been speaking with increased clarity regarding his upcoming death for a while, and his statement recorded by Matthew could not be more clear. Matt 26:2 “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified” Yet, it isn’t the 12 disciples who seem to have grasped the significance of this moment in the ministry of Jesus, it is an unnamed woman who shows up, prepared to bring an extravagant gift to Jesus. (Seems like it was roughly worth about a years salary) The disciples scoff at the woman and her gift, yet once again they are reprimanded by Jesus. (Similar to their trying to get rid of the children in Matt 19:13-14) They still are struggling to understand what is going to happen to Jesus, but this woman seems to at least grasp the importance of who Jesus is and what he is doing. She has been moved by her devotion to Jesus to bring this overwhelming gift, and whole heartily sacrifices it for him. Mark notes that she broke the flask, indicating that she isn’t concerned about the cost of the flask, nor is she going to be saving any of this perfume for a later occasion. Jesus not only vindicated her actions but gave this anointing much more significance even than she probably had in mind. “She has anointed my body beforehand for burial”. This nameless woman's act of love and worship of Jesus not only served as a teaching moment for Jesus to his disciples but also would become an integral part of the gospel story going forward (vs. 9).

Profiting From The Death of Jesus (14:10-11)

Mark turns our gaze upon another one of Jesus’ followers, but we find a much different picture. This woman was willing to sacrifice financially for Jesus’ benefit and worship, whereas we now see a man who is willing to sacrifice Jesus entirely for his own financial benefit. Rarely in the scriptures are two more opposite moments so closely juxtaposed. Judas had been selected by Jesus and had followed him for the last 3 years or so. He had been a first-hand witness to the mighty power of God through Jesus, and yet he did not believe. Judas loved money and loved it so much that he is described by John as a thief. (John 12:6) Being a man consumed by the love of money, and having just witnessed this “wasteful” use of valuable ointment, (which no doubt he

would have like to “use” for the poor) Judas heads out to see just what profit might be available to him if he was willing to deliver Jesus over to the chief priests. He knew these men hated Jesus and wanted to arrest and kill him, so like any good thief, he clearly saw the opportunity and took it. The nameless woman sacrificed about a year’s salary to worship Jesus; while Judas was willing to sacrifice Jesus for about a month’s wages.

There are a couple of things that stand out to me as I consider this section of our study. First, it gives us a clear depiction of what can happen when we give ourselves over to any particular sin. In Judas’ case, it was the pursuit of money. But I think it can take many forms. Materialism, power, manipulation, gossip, lust, substance abuse etc. We probably have all seen people do incredibly foolish things when in the grip of a controlling sin. If we are honest, most of us see that person in the mirror. It is a warning to each of us to take sin dead seriously, for if we do not, it can and will devour us. As God spoke to Cain so many years ago, *“And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”* (Gen 4:7) We take sin seriously by first recognizing our need for a savior, then by living a life of confession and repentance.

Secondly, this woman exemplifies a heart that is listening to Jesus and responding in worship no matter the cost. She was moved by her love and devotion to Jesus. I think there is a challenge in there for us today. Do we have our ears in tune with what God is asking us to do? Are we being “led by the Spirit”? Are we seeking first the kingdom of God with all of our resources? Our time, energy, and finances? Sometimes God may call us to an extravagant act of worship of Him, but if we are not in the practice of listening, we may discard the opportunity as a “waste”, thinking rather of something “better” we could do with. I believe this starts with first understanding and practicing our call to “Love God, Love Others and Make Disciples” and secondly, I think we need to develop a life of prayer and listening to God through His Word which will transform how we think about His present kingdom and our role in it.

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