

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for December 31, 2017

The Agreement and the Anointing
Mark 14:1-11

I. The plot (14:1-2)

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.”

- “It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.”
 - We know that Jesus and several thousand other Jews had made the journey to Jerusalem for Passover
 - Passover was one of the three major festivals where Jewish people traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate (Pentecost and Tabernacles)
 - Jesus and disciples would eat the Passover meal on Thursday evening
 - Thus, these two verses take place either Tuesday or Wednesday
- “And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him”
 - This plotting and evil desire had been present since the Galilean ministry in Mark 3:6
 - **Mark 3:6** “The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.”
 - Notice here that their emphasis was to do this evil deed in stealth
 - Why?
- “For they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.’”
 - Jesus obviously had acquired quite the following based upon the Triumphal Entry and His superior responses to the tests and challenges of the religious leaders on Tuesday
 - Thus, to try anything during the feast would be a stupid move for these religious leaders desiring to maintain any power or control over the people that they still had
- God’s plan prevails over man’s plotting
 - God would meticulously bring about the death of Jesus during the Passover, even if the religious leaders did not desire to do so
 - God would allow Jesus to assume and fulfill the role as the Final Passover Lamb that would be slain on behalf of the people
 - 1 Corinthians 5:7 “... For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”

II. The preparation (14:3-9)

A. The anointing (14:3)

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.

- “And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table,”
 - While it would initially appear that this portion of our text must take place two days before Passover as well, we must slow down to give some consideration
 - **John 12:1** “Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.”
 - It is important to note that the time reference in our text is directly referring to the revived plotting of the Jewish leaders (14:1-2)
 - However, verse 3 gives us a vague introduction
 - “And while he was at Bethany...”
 - Jesus and the disciples were at Bethany every night
 - In fact, they stayed in Bethany for the events of this week
 - Thus, it appears best to take verses 3-9 as a flashback to an earlier event
 - This event was more particularly described in John 12:1-8
- “A woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly”
 - According to John 12, we know that this woman is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead
 - “Highly prized and probably the most expensive perfume mentioned in the Bible (Song 1:12; 4:13–14); made from a plant whose oil was imported at some expense from India.”¹
 - Notice that it is described as “pure nard” indicating that this was not diluted in any sense
- “And she broke the flask and poured it over his head.”
 - Breaking the flask indicated that the pure nard would need to be utilized in this one moment
 - The normal utilization of this expensive perfume (or any perfume) is little by little (a drop or a spray in our understanding)
 - She clearly did not intend to use this nard over multiple occasions
 - She poured out the entire alabaster flask of pure nard over Jesus’ head!
 - The concept of anointing someone was not a foreign concept
 - In a dirty culture where sweat and dirt abounded, perfume would function as an ancient form of deodorant

¹ NIV Study Bible

- What is foreign is the amount of anointing that is displayed in this moment (the entire flask of pure nard!)
- Could you imagine the smell filling the house and following Jesus for sometime after this moment?
- There is no question that Mary pours an excessive amount of perfume upon Jesus
- John 12:3 "... The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

B. The anger (14:4-5)

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.

- Mark does not specifically identify those who respond with anger at this point in the account
- In Matthew's account, he identifies the disciples as the angry ones
 - **Matthew 26:8-9** "And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, 'Why this waste? 9 For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.'"
- John on the other hand, heaps the responsibility solely upon Judas Iscariot
 - **John 12:4-6** "But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 5 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' 6 He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it."
- Apparently Judas was the one leading the disciples to be indignant at this apparent "waste"
- How was this a waste in their minds?
- Consider the value of the ointment!
 - "For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii..."
 - 300 denarii = 1 year's salary
 - Median income in CA in 2016 - \$67k
- In order to justify their anger, they mention the alternative of giving to the poor
 - Some have stated that this was actually a normal practice during festivals like Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles
 - Even if there was a practice of giving to the poor, the reality of Judas Iscariot and his embezzling practices with the money bag still stand
 - There is no legitimate desire to give to the poor here
- They were so swayed by Judas' comments that the disciples are actually described as "scolding her"
 - Since none of the disciples would dare question Jesus' receiving of this anointing, they turn to confront the woman (Mary)

C. The answer (14:6-7)

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.

- Jesus tells the disciples to back down in their scolding of this woman
 - Jesus does not just tell the disciples to take it easy and then proceed to teach the women about stewardship and not wasting valuable items
 - Jesus actually supports this woman and endorses her decision!
 - "She has done a beautiful thing to me."
- Jesus' statement in verse 7 initially strikes us with some surprise
 - Jesus seems to speak well and often of giving to the poor and needy
 - Matthew 6:2-4 "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."
 - Matthew 19:21 "Jesus said to him, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.'"
 - Luke 19:8 "And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.'"
 - Thus, Jesus is making a judgment call
 - Jesus is giving full approval of Mary's decision to "waste" all the pure nard on Jesus rather than giving it to the poor
- Why?
 - Jesus is acknowledging the uniqueness of the time in which they were living
 - While the poor are a constant throughout society and the rise and fall of nations; Jesus, on the other hand, only came once to offer forgiveness of sins
- Jesus zooms out to give the disciples the big picture
 - Giving to the poor is a great thing to do alongside of several other good works like helping orphans, widows, etc.
- However, what is most significant in life?
 - What demands our full attention?
- Jesus points to the greater goal of His life and God's goal all along
 - Jesus came to bring salvation for the lost souls of mankind
 - Jesus did not come to merely feed the poor and heal the sick
 - All the good works that Jesus did were secondary to **the work** He came to do

- He came to offer Himself as a perfect, spotless, Lamb once and for all
- Why was Jesus' work on the cross more significant than feeding the poor?
 - Because the poor, the sick and the downcast are all symptoms of the problem
 - Since mankind's tragic leap into sinfulness, everything has fallen apart
 - Man experienced sickness
 - Man experiences pain
 - Man experiences grief
 - Man sinfully responds to all the above, only making things worse
 - Depression, anger, anxiety, fear flood the hearts and minds of man
 - Additionally, man continues to speak and act in more sinful ways and patterns that estrange his relationship with others
 - This happens through envy, gossip, slander, hatred, coveting, theft, adultery, murder, etc.
 - Why paint this vivid picture of mankind's existence since the Fall?
 - Because it helps us identify the problem!
 - Poverty is not the problem, sin is!
 - "Jesus' point is, 'You can (and should) help the poor anytime at all... *but something more important is at work here.*'"²
 - "Poverty is a symptom of a much greater problem – the fallenness of humanity and all creation."³

D. The acknowledgment (14:8-9)

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."

- "She has done what she could"
 - Jesus acknowledges Mary's wonderful sacrifice and devotion unto Him
- "She has anointed my body beforehand for burial."
 - Jesus actually gives the significance of this anointing
 - He describes this anointing as preparation for His burial
 - This is another moment where Jesus predicts His death
- "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."
 - Jesus acknowledges again that the good news will be proclaimed unto all the world

² Strauss, 608.

³ Strauss, 608.

- In that proclamation, there will be memory of this woman's devotion and sacrifice unto Christ
- Notice how the emphasis will be upon the action itself as opposed to the person, since Mark does not even give us her name
- Instead, the story of such devotion and sacrifice will be well known as that which is fitting and proper for the Savior and King, Jesus Christ

III. The plan (14:10-11)

10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. 11 And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

- Mark, more than likely, returns to our present moment on the Tuesday or Wednesday of Passion Week
- What a contrast we have before us!
 - In verses 3-9, we have a wonderful example of worship and devotion that involved sacrifice of great financial amounts
 - In verse 10-11, we have an example of an intimate traitor who would give Jesus up in exchange for money