

An Eventful Night in Bethany

Mark 14: 1-11

Today we begin a journey through a very eventful and emotional chapter in Mark's gospel. The events recorded cover a span of just over twenty-four hours. At the conclusion of the chapter, we will find Jesus accused and condemned of the Sanhedrin in the early morning hours. The deep-seated passions of many will be revealed as we move through these verses.

Jesus and the disciples have met at the home of Simon the leper. Clearly, Simon must have been healed of his leprosy, or people would not have been willing to come within the home of one contagious and unclean. John reveals that Lazarus was also there, following his miraculous resurrection from the dead. Many had gathered that evening to see those in attendance. Some were there to see the spectacle and others had come out of devotion to Jesus.

As we move through the various [scenarios](#) revealed within the text, I want to consider: [An Eventful Night in Bethany](#). We have gathered today for various reasons as well. I pray that the heart of our attendance is a desire to worship and exalt our Lord. First, we discover:

I. A Hurtful Scheme (1-2) – The opening verses reveal a hurtful scheme planned by the chief priests and scribes. Consider:

A. The Timing (1a) – [After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread](#). The passage before us takes place just prior to the feast of the Passover, which began a week of the Jews eating unleavened bread. For centuries the Jews had observed the Passover, commemorating the deliverance from Egypt through God's mighty hand. At the Passover, a lamb would be offered, without spot or blemish. Sadly, the true Passover Lamb was in their midst and yet they failed to recognize Jesus as the Christ. He had come to offer Himself the sacrificial atonement for the sin of humanity, but the majority would deny and reject Him.

B. The Tactic (1b) – [and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death](#). The hatred of the chief priests and scribes had been brewing for some time. Several times before they had sought to take Jesus in order to put Him to death. Again, they have come together, plotting His demise. They sought to devise a plan whereby they would be able to take Him by craft. This speaks of their desire to “*create a situation where they might take Jesus by trickery and deception.*” It is again apparent that these are committed to getting rid of Jesus at any cost, seeking to kill Him in order to prevent any further influence by this man they hated.

C. The Trouble (2) – *But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.* While the majority of the religious elite shared their sentiment toward Jesus, the Jewish leadership also knew many of the common people followed Jesus and believed in Him. They decided to wait until the feast day had concluded to launch their plan to put Jesus to death. They feared an uprising of the people if Jesus were arrested and condemned during the Passover. Unsure of how the crowd would respond to taking Jesus openly during the day, they decided to wait.

II. A Humble Sacrifice (3-9) – Here Mark records the great and humble sacrifice made by Mary as she anointed Jesus with spikenard. Consider:

A. The Investment (3) – *And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.* When you examine the parallel passage in John's gospel, it is revealed that Mary, the sister of Lazarus, is the woman Mark spoke of here. She entered the house of Simon the leper, as Jesus sat at the table eating, broke an alabaster box of ointment and anointed the head of Jesus. This spikenard was very precious and very expensive. The following verses reveal the spikenard was valued at 300 pence, literally a year's wages for the average person. Mary spared no expense as she anointed the head of Jesus.

- As we consider John's account, we find that Mary was willing to give more than her life's savings in order to honor the Lord – she was also willing to risk her reputation. *John 12:3 – Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.* Washing the feet of others was considered the work of slaves. Only prostitutes and promiscuous women took their hair down in public in that culture. Mary was willing to risk her reputation, not caring what others thought of her, in order to honor and worship her Lord. Her act of worship filled the house with the aroma of the ointment. Surely this brought attention to Jesus and was noticed by those in the house.

B. The Indignation (4-5) – *And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? [5] For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.* Some were angry that Mary poured the spikenard on Jesus, viewing her act of devotion and worship as a waste. John reveals that Judas was among those who murmured against the actions of Mary. They argued this was wasteful and the ointment could have been sold instead of wasted. Their indignation reveals “*to ache within, to be vexed and disturbed.*” Their murmuring carries the idea of “*a scowl, to rebuke and scold.*” Clearly, these were upset with Mary and the waste they perceived. (Don't expect

everyone to be pleased when you seek to worship and serve the Lord. There will always be critics to question your actions and motives.)

C. The Intention (6-8) – *And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.* ^[7] *For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.* ^[8] *She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.* While others murmured and complained, Jesus knew the intent of Mary's heart and the motivation behind her actions. Of all those who were there, she appears to be the only one who realized the enormity of the moment. She had come to anoint the body of Jesus prior to His death and burial. Jesus defended her before her accusers.

- Others may not agree or appreciate our acts of devotion and worship, but Jesus knows our hearts and is aware of the motivation behind our actions. Mary was not there to be seen of men or gain recognition – she came to honor Jesus. Genuine acts of worship will always be welcomed and received by the Lord.

D. The Influence (9) – *Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.* Jesus declared that Mary's act of worship would not soon be forgotten. He revealed that this gracious sacrifice would be remembered and shared throughout the world, being an influence on others to worship and serve the Lord with gladness. We are nearly 2,000 years removed from her actions and yet we continue to talk of them. This deed is recorded eternally in the Word of God.

- It is impossible to know the impact our obedience will have in the lives of others. If we will serve the Lord with gladness, seeking to honor Him in all we do, we will influence others!

III. A Hateful Secret (10-11) – As this eventful night comes to a close, we discover the final scenario – a hateful secret that will soon be carried out. Consider:

A. The Participants (10) – *And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.* The opening verses revealed the desire of the chief priests and scribes to put Jesus to death, and here Judas joins them in their devious plans. It is interesting to consider those involved in this plan were men who should have recognized and embraced Jesus as the Christ. The chief priests and scribes were familiar with the Word and the prophecies concerning the coming of Messiah. Judas had walked with Jesus, being one of the twelve, experiencing His miracles and life as proof of His deity. Yet they conspired to put Jesus to death.

B. The Plot (10) – *And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.* Judas agreed with the chief priests to betray Jesus. No doubt they felt as if their plan had finally come together. Instead of having to pursue Jesus among the people, one of His own had come with the promise to betray Him. Judas knew where Jesus would be, and he could lead them unto the Lord in order to arrest Him.

C. The Promise (11a) – *And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money.* The willingness of Judas to betray Jesus pleased the chief priests and they agreed to pay him for his act of betrayal. *Matt.26:15 – And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.* Judas agreed to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, the price of an average slave at the buyers' market. For Judas, this was not a lucrative deal. Thirty pieces of silver would have amounted to about four to five months' wages on average, but that was a small amount for the enormity of his betrayal. (Many have sold out for much less.)

D. The Pact (11b) – *And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.* After agreeing to betray Jesus with the promise of payment, Judas began to plan how he might betray Jesus. No doubt this plan consumed his thoughts until he led them into the Garden in order to arrest Jesus. He had made the deal and Judas was determined to see it through. He will soon eat with the Lord in the Upper Room, filled with hatred, seeking an opportunity to betray Jesus into the hands of sinful men.

- The life of Judas is one of the saddest and most tragic accounts in all of Scripture. This man walked with the Lord, being in the very presence of the Christ. He experienced enough to lead to saving faith and yet he chose to deny the Lord and reject salvation. While many do not plot their denial and rejection as Judas did, many deny the truth and refuse to accept Jesus as the Christ. It is dangerous to reject truth and turn away from the grace of the Lord that leads to salvation. I am thankful I heard the truth and responded in repentance and faith!

Conclusion: On this fateful night there were varied motives and actions. Some denied Jesus and sought to destroy Him. Mary recognized Jesus as the Christ and was determined to worship and honor Him. What is your desire today? Do you want to serve the Lord and honor Him or do you desire to live according to the pleasures of the flesh? He is our only hope and the sole means of salvation!