



THE GREAT EXCHANGE: Don't Miss Jesus

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As I think about Palm Sunday and the time leading to Easter what has caught my attention is how different people responded to Jesus. You might say that Jesus caused quite a stir and people reacted! As you consider these bible passages, think about which characters in the story you relate to the most.

READ John 11:47-53 to get the context of what was going on.

1. What were the Jewish leaders so worried about?

Think about some of the other people that Jesus encountered leading up to the crucifixion. On Palm Sunday we especially think of the CROWDS who were shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" They were right to honor Jesus, but they were expecting him to take on the Romans- they were expecting a new earthly government. But Jesus wasn't swayed by the crowds...he was on a mission! A crowd can change their mind quickly as we see a short time later when the crowds are shouting "Crucify! Crucify!"

In the middle of all of this we have a different story to focus on... This event is in Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John, although each is a little different. This story comes just days after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. READ John 12:1-8)

In Matthew & Mark, Jesus adds, "Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." (Matthew 26:13, Mark 14:9)

2. What sticks out to you about this story?

Why did so many people miss Jesus? The Jews were even looking for the Messiah, yet many of them missed Jesus even though he walked among them and performed numerous miracles and signs! Part of the issue was pride, especially for the Jewish leaders that we read about earlier. They saw what a great leader Jesus was, but instead of seeing their Messiah, they started plotting to kill Jesus!

It's like when you are driving and you think you know where you are, you might not notice the road signs as much. However, when you are lost, you suddenly pay better attention! Many of the Jews knew the scriptures that prophesized about the Messiah, but they had the wrong expectations of how they would be fulfilled. Many of them, including the Disciples, were expecting Jesus to somehow overthrow the Romans and establish an earthly kingdom with

power and strength. Instead, Jesus was humble and talked in parables that they often didn't understand.

3. Why do you think so many people missed Jesus, even after encountering him and seeing miracles?

Judas was one of the Disciples, at least by name. The Bible tells us he is more concerned about helping himself to the money bag! He missed Jesus because of his selfishness and greed. What's amazing is how Jesus continued to include Judas, even washing his feet and eating with him. Judas can be contrasted with Mary, who may not have had the title of "Disciple," yet she followed Jesus and didn't miss him when it counted!

The act of Mary anointing Jesus is powerful for many reasons. Anointing another person had much symbolic meaning and is reminiscent of various people being anointed as kings in the Old Testament. Again, Jesus is not acting as you would expect! Rather than being anointed by a priest at the temple, he's anointed by a woman at the home of Simon the Leper. Matthew's version of this story tells us that the disciples were indignant when Mary anointed Jesus and they said, "Why this waste!"

The Disciples saw it as a waste, but Jesus celebrated what Mary did. She gave Jesus a very expensive gift. Like Luke 14:33 said last week, she gave up everything she had to follow Jesus. She was a true disciple!

But the others missed Jesus. They didn't understand. They misinterpreted what was happening and missed this incredible moment.

4. How would you act if you knew someone close to you would betray you?

5. Why do you think Jesus was so patient with Judas?

It's worth noting how often the women that followed Jesus were great examples for us to follow. Not only Mary in this story, but there were many women that had significant roles, whether they were following Jesus to the cross discovering the empty tomb.

6. What are some of the unexpected things about the mission of Jesus that surprises you?

There's a fad going on right now where people are placing tiny plastic Jesuses around churches. It seems to have started at a youth group. The point was not to hide Jesus, but show that he can be found in places where we don't expect him! Not hidden, but unexpected!

Jesus was like that. He wasn't hidden, yet many people simply missed who he was.

7. What are things we can do so that we make sure we don't miss Jesus?