

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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Jesus is Worthy
Mark 14:1-11

- Go to a tomb just outside the city of Qufu, China, and you will find the body of Confucius.
- Go to several religious sites throughout India, and you will find the cremains of Buddha.
- Go to a shrine in Delhi, India, and you will find the memorial place of Ghandi's cremation.
- Go to a tomb in Madinah, Saudi Arabia, and you will find the body of Muhammed.

But go to Jerusalem and then search the whole world over, and you will look in vain to find the body of Jesus Christ. Do you know why? Up from the grave He arose with a mighty triumph o'er His foes. He arose. He arose. Hallelujah, Christ arose!

Friends, there is no one like Jesus, and no day reminds us of that more than Resurrection Sunday when He demonstrated His power over sin, satan, hell, and the grave. He is God in the Flesh, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. He is worthy of all worship and honor and glory and praise.

And that's what the next passage in our study of the Gospel of Mark is all about. We learn some of what it looks like to worship and honor Jesus.

Mark 14:1–11

1 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." 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. 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. 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. 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." 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.

One of the first challenges of this text is figuring out how these three different scenes fit together.

Verse 1 begins by telling us that we are 2 days from the Passover. That means we are on Wednesday of Holy Week. And the chief priests are looking for a way to arrest Jesus and have Him killed. And, you can see how that connects with the last two verses, verses 10-11. Mark tells us that Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and sold Jesus out for a sum of money. So, the opening and

closing verses of our text reveal how the religious leaders were finally able to get their hands on Jesus, He was sold out and betrayed by someone in His inner circle of friends...someone who valued money more than Jesus.

But, in the middle of those details (verses 3-9), Mark tells a story about Jesus being anointed at a dinner party. And, if you're a student of the Bible, you might know something about that event. It didn't happen 2 days before Passover. The Gospel of John tells us it happened 6 days before Passover.

So, what's going on here? Why does Mark insert this story about Jesus being anointed in the middle of the account of Judas betraying Jesus to the religious leaders?

Well, Mark is using a technique we've pointed out multiple times during our study of Mark. It's called a "Sandwich Technique." Often, Mark will "sandwich" something in the middle of a narrative that is intended to highlight a greater truth. He wants his readers to see a contrast or a comparison that draws their attention to the broader story of Jesus. So, what is Mark highlighting here?

Well, think about what we are seeing. The text begins and ends with the religious leaders and Judas foolishly rejecting Jesus and valuing things like power, money, and their way of doing life more than they value Jesus.

But the story Mark chooses to include in the middle of our text shows us a totally different kind of person who has a totally different approach to Jesus. She values Jesus more than anything else, more than her greatest earthly treasure and more than the opinions of those around her.

So, let's dig into this story a little bit more and see what there is for us to learn from this woman who worships at the feet of Jesus.

Mark 14:3 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.

Like I said earlier, this event happened before the Triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. It's mentioned in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and John 12. And each account includes unique details that help us get a more complete picture of what took place here.

Jesus is in the house of a man named Simon who was a leper. We don't know his full story, but leprosy was a terrible issue in the first century. If you were diagnosed, you were an outcast for the rest of your life. You had to leave your home and your family and live outside the city walls so that you didn't contaminate the rest of the town. But, for some reason, the home of Simon the leper was the scene of this Jesus party. You don't have to be a scholar to fill in the blanks. Why would the family of Simon the leper want to throw a party in honor of Jesus? Jesus healed people with leprosy, and Simon was no doubt one of those people.

So, there at the table is “Simon who used to be a leper,” sitting next to Jesus, whole and healthy, maybe telling the story of the day he met Jesus, and his life was changed forever.

But John 12 tells us that Simon isn’t the only person at the table with Jesus. Lazarus was there, too. What’s so significant about Lazarus? Well, prior to this dinner, Lazarus had been deathly ill. His two sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Jesus to let Him know that Lazarus needed Jesus to come and heal him. But Jesus intentionally delayed coming to Lazarus and allowed him to die. Lazarus was dead and buried for four days before Jesus arrived. He wasn’t merely dead; he was really most sincerely dead.

But then Jesus showed up and stood outside the grave of His friend. And everyone around learned the truth we celebrate on Easter; Jesus is stronger than death and the grave. He calls out to Lazarus and the man that had been dead four days comes strolling out of the tomb. Can you imagine how difficult it would have been to tell a story around Lazarus? “Oh, that’s a great story, Jim. Did I ever tell you about the time I was dead for 4 days?”

So, here we are at a party in honor of Jesus. On one side of Him is a man whose life and family were changed because Jesus healed him from leprosy. On the other side is a man whose life and family were changed because Jesus had raised him from the dead.

And that’s when it happens. A woman steps into the room. John tells us it was Mary, the sister of Lazarus. She has a container filled with expensive ointment. Verse 5 of our text says it was worth 300 denarii. That was one year’s salary. The average salary in the United States is nearly \$60,000. So, think of it in those terms. Mary is holding a flask of ointment worth \$60,000. It may have been a treasured family heirloom or a gift for her wedding, no doubt it was the most valuable thing she could have owned.

In the first century, if you were honoring a person in your home, it was customary to take a small amount of perfume or ointment and put a little bit on the forehead of your guest of honor. It seems like Mary is stepping forward to do that for Jesus.

But the closer she gets to Jesus, the more it seems to dawn on her. Jesus isn’t just an honored guest. He’s the resurrection and the source of life itself. In verse 8, Jesus says she was anointing his body for burial. Remember, at least three times in Mark, Jesus has told His followers that He is going to Jerusalem to die. It seems likely that Mary was one of the only people who really understood that Jesus was actually going to give His life for us in death.

So, as she goes to anoint Jesus, she realizes a little bit won’t do. She doesn’t simply put a little bit on His forehead. She breaks the flask and pours it all out. In our text, she anoints His head. In John 12, we find that she even poured it out on His feet and wiped them with her hair – an act that would have been considered undignified. In a shameless and extravagant act, she pours out every last drop on Jesus. \$60,000, gone in an instant. Her nest egg, gone in an instant. Her greatest earthly treasure, gone in an instant. And notice how the room responds.

Mark 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.*

The room explodes. People think she completely wasted a fortune on Jesus. John 12 tells us that Judas was the one who said it out loud. This may have been the straw that broke the back of Judas' greed, the moment he realized that he wasn't going to get rich following Jesus so long as Jesus let people do crazy things like this, pouring out a small fortune in honor of Jesus.

But what does Jesus have to say?

Mark 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 knows that most of His followers think Mary just wasted a treasure. But Jesus says she got it right. He says it wasn't a wasteful thing, it was a beautiful thing. Loving Jesus and treasuring Jesus is more important and more valuable than anything else in the entire world. He says that it's even more important than feeding the poor. He isn't diminishing the goodness of caring for the poor. He's simply saying that if you feed the poor and don't love Jesus, you've missed the boat.

And that gives us the point that Mark is making in this text. He contrasts the foolishness of the religious leaders and Judas with the wisdom and beauty of Mary and her extravagant gift. He's showing us a picture of Judas trading Jesus away for treasure and Mary trading her treasure for Jesus. But the point isn't about Judas or Mary. The point is about Jesus and it's our big idea for today:

Big Idea: Jesus is worthy of our highest honor.

On this Easter Sunday morning, when millions of people around the world will attend a religious service like this, this is a great word for us to hear: Jesus isn't deserving of one day a year, He's deserving of every moment of every day for the rest of our lives. He isn't just deserving of a little honor; He is worthy of all honor and all glory and all praise.

- He is the God who Created the heavens and the earth and everything in them.
- He is the Savior who became a man so that he could live and die in our place on the cross, providing forgiveness of sin and restoration to God for any and all who will place their faith and trust in Him.
- He is the Lord of Lords who exercised His power and authority over sin and Satan and death itself by rising victoriously from the grave.
- He is the King of Kings who is coming again to establish His eternal Kingdom.

There is no one like Jesus. He is worthy of all honor and glory and praise.

And it begs the question: Is that how you live your life? Is your marriage poured out in honor of Jesus? Is your parenting? Is your career? Is your pursuit of pleasure and joy and significance poured out in honor of Jesus?

My prayer is that, even now, the Spirit of God would stir our hearts to want Jesus to be honored like that in our lives. And, in the time we have remaining, I want to quickly point out three quick things we learn from our text about a life lived in honor of Jesus.

1. Honoring Jesus is expressed through no reserves.

Mark 14:3... and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.

She poured it all out. She held nothing back from Jesus in reserve. And that's a valuable lesson in honoring Jesus. Jesus receives our highest honor when we keep nothing back from Him, when we lay down all we are and all we have before Him.

So, is there anything you are holding back from Jesus? A decision? A relationship? A dream for your future? What would it look like today if you laid your whole life down before Jesus and said, "Jesus, it all belongs to you."

2. Honoring Jesus is expressed through no retreats.

Mark 14:3... and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.

She broke the flask. There was no going back. Once her heart was turned toward Jesus, there would be no retreat. In other words, there was no plan B.

And that's how Jesus is honored in our lives, as well. He is honored when we see Him in a way that says He is the only way and there is no plan B.

He is honored when we see that

- only He can provide forgiveness of sin.
- only He can provide eternal life.
- only He can provide true and lasting pleasure.
- only He can provide meaning and significance and transformation.

And there is no plan B. There is no substitute for Jesus. And He receives the highest honor in our lives when we see that truth and don't turn back from it.

So, have you seen that truth and are you living as though Jesus is your only source for life and joy and significance and transformation or, has there been a retreat to the things of this world to provide for you what can truly come from Jesus and only Jesus?

3. Honoring Jesus is experienced with no regrets.

Mark 14:9 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."

Jesus not only says she did the right and beautiful thing, but He says she did something that outlast her life on earth, something that will be eternally significant. The story of her life would last forever as a monument to the worth and glory of Jesus.

And that's true for every person who bows before Jesus and honors Him as Lord of all. He makes our lives last forever and we get to be an eternal monument of praise to the worth and glory of Jesus.

Romans 8 tells us that the day is coming when God will reveal the fullness of His work in everyone who treasures Jesus Christ above all. It will be glorious. It will be the day when He wipes away every tear from every eye. It will be our Resurrection Day when He raises us up to eternal glory. The day is coming when Jesus descend from Heaven and His people will be raised from the earth. And we will be like Him, no more sickness, no more sadness, no more sorrow, no more pain. The former things will have passed away and God will make all things new, including you. And all that will enter into His glorious kingdom from this life here on earth is what is done in us by the power and for the glory of Jesus.

Careers and bank accounts and earthly pursuits of worldly pleasures will all pass away. And, on that day, there will be no regrets for any sacrifice we made in this life in honor of Jesus. Do you want a life that you won't ever regret living? Then, live your life in honor of Jesus without reserves and without retreats.

In 1904, William Borden graduated high school. As heir to the Borden Dairy estate, he was already a millionaire. For his high school graduation present, his parents gave him a trip around the world. As he traveled and saw the great need for the gospel among the nations, he felt a growing desire to be a missionary. One of his friends expressed surprise that someone with so much money and potential for worldly success would throw himself away as a missionary.

In response, Bill wrote two words in the back of his Bible: "No reserves."

The following year, Borden began attending Yale University where he thrived, both as a student and a leader among his peers. He began a bible study and prayer groups on campus. At the end of his first year, 150 students were involved in at least one group. By the end of his senior year, nearly 1,000 of Yale's 1,300 students were part of the bible study groups Bill Borden had started.

You can imagine that Bill was becoming an extremely popular and influential young man. He already had a fortune. Now, he had influence among some of the most powerful families associated with Yale. Upon graduation from Yale, Borden received plenty of high-paying job offers. He turned them all down. His calling wasn't to a lucrative career. It was to honor Jesus as a missionary among the nations. At this point in his life, Bill knew he was at a crossroads. So, he opened his Bible and, next to the words "no reserves" he wrote down two more words: "No retreats."

William Borden went on to graduate work at Princeton Seminary in New Jersey. When he finished his studies at Princeton, he sailed for China. Because he was hoping to work with Muslims, he stopped first in Egypt to study Arabic. While there, he contracted spinal meningitis. Within a month, 25-year-old William Borden was dead.

When news of Borden's death was cabled back to the U.S., the story was carried by nearly every American newspaper. In the introduction to his biography by Mary Taylor, she wrote, "A wave of sorrow went round the world. Borden not only gave (away) his wealth, but himself, in a way so joyous and natural that it (seemed) a privilege rather than a sacrifice."

Was Borden's untimely death a waste? Not in God's plan. Prior to his death, Borden had written two more words in his Bible. Underneath the words "No reserves" and "No retreats," he had written: "No regrets."

No life is wasted when it's poured out in honor of Jesus.