**Uniquely Jesus** May 7, 2017

Mark 14:1-11

Read the passage.

This is a well-known story.

The challenge of well-known stories, is that because they are familiar, we can read them too quickly, without careful attention, and in doing so, miss the opportunity for God’s Spirit to take familiar truth and apply it to our lives in fresh ways.

How amazing is it that the Creator, whose words are able to shake the heavens and the earth; who lives in unapproachable light, has spoken to us verbally, in language we can understand?

How incredible is it, that there is supernatural life in his word –

that it is like a fire… that burns in our heart when we read it or hear it;

that it is like a sword… that penetrates to the deepest parts of our soul;

that it is like a hammer… that shatters strongholds of sin in us;

that it is like a light… that reveals to us who God is, as well as telling us the truth about who we are;

that it is like water… that quenches our inner thirst.

Neither God’s word, nor God himself is boring.

Even though, we will live forever with him in the new heaven and earth, forever will not be enough to fully and completely know him.

For all eternity, we will continually find ourselves being surprised by God’s beauty, his goodness, his power, his faithfulness, his mercy, his holiness.

There are several challenges to this story.

You and I need to be aware that in these eleven verses there are multiple story-lines.

The obvious one is about the woman who poured expensive perfume

on Jesus.

But what she did, won’t make sense unless you realize that she had profoundly experienced the amazing love and grace of Jesus.

Hers was an act of costly worship.

But there is a second story line.

The religious leaders were scheming together to find some way by which they could arrest and kill Jesus. And we are told that their efforts were surprisingly rewarded when Judas agreed to help them.

But why did Judas turn on Jesus?

There are a number of reasons, but the major one was part of the third story-line.

At the supper banquet, some took offense with what they considered to be the woman’s extravagant wastefulness. And then that anger towards her, got transferred onto Jesus, when he spoke in her defense.

Choosing to be offended, in addition to opening Judas’ heart even further to dark influences, was also the last step whereby he crossed a line; a line where he was able to justify betraying Jesus.

2 Corinthians 2:11 says, *“We are not unaware of Satan’s schemes.”*

Provoking a sense of offense, and then persuading a person to harbor that offense in their heart, is a common tactic of Satan and the fallen angels.

I think this story presents a unique challenge for us men.

We can view it as a “girly story.”

Let me explain.

Have any of you men, ever gone to another man, and poured super-expensive perfume on his feet as an act of love and devotion?

No. And why not?

Because that would just be weird.

I know this is not any man, we are talking about – it’s Jesus.

But men, and maybe some of you women, may skim over this story, thinking the story and its application is for women.

But is it?

Coffee/Question

Are there any reasons you can think of it that might help to explain why this story could be applicable to men?

When we talk of loving Jesus, we are not talking of a love that is romantic.

This story reminds us, it teaches us, it emphasizes to us, that love for our Savior is a whole- hearted devotion that is expressed in radical and extravagant ways - whether you are a woman or a man.

Let’s look deeper into this story.

**v.1** – it’s now only two day until the Passover, which was immediately followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Remember, Mark 9-16 tells the story of Jesus’ last week.

**Sunday** – triumphant entry – Mark 11:1-11

**Monday** – cursing of the fig tree, and the cleansing of the temple – Mark 11:12-19

**Tuesday** – intense dialogue with the religious leaders; followed by teaching to his

disciple on the Mount of Olives – Mark 11:20-13

It would seem that this supper described in Mark 14:1-11 was held on Tuesday night. But was it? How do we reconcile the details with John 12?

Six days/two days?

Before the triumphant entry/after?

Mark’s insertion of the story of the anointing is a flashback.

**Saturday –** banquet and anointing in Bethany

**Sunday** – triumphant entry – Mark 11:1-11

**Monday** – cursing of the fig tree, and the cleansing of the temple – Mark 11:12-19

**Tuesday** – intense dialogue with the religious leaders; followed by teaching to his

disciple on the Mount of Olives – Mark 11:20-13

**v.2** – the religious leaders continued to scheme together, looking for some way, whereby they could arrest and kill Jesus. Even with Judas on their side, the events of the last few days, had reluctantly convinced them they would have to wait until the feast was over – there were just too many people in town (400,000+) who were pro-Jesus.

**v.3** – the supper took place at the home of a man known as Simon the Leper.

We know nothing more of this man, except that his name was Simon and that he had been a leper.

Had Jesus healed him? Probably.

**v.3** – the alabaster jar of pure nard.

*“Nard grows in the foothills of the Himalayas. The part of the plant growing underground has the appearance of a fibrous spindle, and is rich in precious essential oil.  From India, nard traveled, in the form of a dry rhizome (tubor) or as an oil extract, via Persia, under the name nardin.*

*Though nard is now rare on the shelves of the western perfumer, its name stood for centuries as an evocation of the perfume of the lost Garden of Eden, and in literature, nard came to refer to any perfume, as long as it was exquisite.”* https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20060823214449AANzXKJ

**v.5** - this perfume was expensive – more than a year’s wages.

Today, it would cost - $25,000+

Show the Nalgene bottle.

From John’s gospel, we learn that the alabaster jar contained about half a liter of perfume – John 12:3.

**v.4** – the reaction of some of the guests.

Their anger towards this woman went beyond whispering to one another.

They expressed their anger by “rebuking the woman harshly.”

Why this response?

There was the obvious reason stated – *“this perfume could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.”*

But that actually wasn’t the truth.

John in his gospel tells us, *“[Judas] did not say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.”* 12:6.

**v.6** – as you can imagine, the supper was quickly spinning out of control.

It was an extremely awkward situation…. until Jesus intervened.

*“Leave her alone.” “Why are you bothering her?”*

What Jesus said next, put this woman’s act of extravagance in context.

Listen carefully to what he said.

*“She has done a beautiful thing to me.”*

Jesus saw the intent of her heart.

He saw her action for what it was – grateful worship.

And he received it from her.

He didn’t shush her away.

He didn’t rebuke her, saying, “Stop that!”

*“The poor you will always with you, and you can help them anytime you want. But you will not always have me.”*

In telling her accusers to leave her alone, Jesus wasn’t saying that he didn’t care about the poor.

He put her act in context.

It wasn’t an either/or situation.

It is a good thing to help the poor.

But it is also a good thing to extravagantly worship Jesus.

Jesus teaches his followers to do both.

*“She did what she could.”*

That’s what it’s all about.

Each of us is to worship Jesus extravagantly.

It isn’t about comparing who does what; and whose devotion is better.

*“She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.”*

I don’t think this woman knew that as she poured out this perfume on Jesus,

that she was preparing him for burial.

But Jesus did…he knew that in two days, his lifeless body would be taken down from the cross, too late in the day, and that there would be no time to properly prepare it for burial.

*“Wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will be told, in memory of her.”*

First of all, Jesus didn’t approach his looming death with a sense of despair and defeat. He was confident that the good news, the gospel of his salvation, would be announced and preached… throughout where?

Throughout the world.

Why was the act of this woman so significant that it would be forever remembered?

Here we circle back to this theme of extravagance.

Our worship of Jesus is to be extravagant because of… his supreme worth.

Why did this woman poured out a year’s wages on Jesus?

Because he was worthy of such a costly gift.

One of the songs of heaven is: *“Worthy is the lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”* Revelation 5:12

This is why Jesus’ followers spend their lives on him; why they re-order their priorities; why they invest their time and energies and resources into his cause.

Listen to this story told by Matt Papa - The Reward of His Suffering

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXTYsY7XqNU> 00:00 - 01:45

**“May the Lamb who was slain receive the reward of his suffering.”**

On the one hand the actions of those two young men can seem so wasteful.

But when seen through the lenses of Mark 14, was it?

Theirs was a response of costly worship, deemed appropriate in light of what Jesus had done for them.

Jesus loved us extravagantly.

This is what we remember as we come to the table this morning.

Yes, it is grape juice and bread that we eat.

But together they represent what Jesus gave for us – his life.

This passage asks of us – how do we extravagantly love and worship Jesus?

What in our actions; our devotion…. points to extravagance?

There is one other emphasis that I want to point out to you from this passage that connects to our lives.

We must not overlook the contrast between the woman’s extravagant worship and the deviousness and hard-heartedness of the religious leaders and Judas.

This is how it is in this present time.

The gospel of Jesus in addition to uniting people; also divides.

To meet Jesus is to be presented with a choice– to keep him out of one’s life; or to invite him in. And the choice made, has real consequences.

One choice leads to a soul progressively rotting.

The other leads to an act of God where a soul that is spiritually dead,

is made alive!

It wasn’t that the religious leaders or Judas lacked knowledge.

They’d had numerous opportunities to interact with Jesus.

So, what happened?

The religious leaders and Judas’ journey “away from God” happened each time they said no, eventually, taking them to a place where murdering an innocent man didn’t seem like a bad thing.

Their example speaks warning.

The choice to compromise; to cut corners, no matter how small, sets a direction to a person’s life; forming within them habits that not only control, but open up their lives to dark influences.

But here’s what’s amazing; astonishing about the gospel of Jesus.

No one is too far gone to be saved by Jesus.

The gospel of Jesus provides the way for anyone to come home to God.

The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

The gospel reverses… inner corruption.

The gospel makes alive… deadened hearts.

The gospel quiets… guilty consciences.

The gospel removes… the burden of sin.

The gospel renews… a blinded mind.

*“...[Jesus] is able to save completely those who come to God through him…”* Hebrews 7:25

What a Savior!

The Blessing

*“...[Jesus] is able to save completely those who come to God through him…”* Hebrews 7:25

Philippians 1:6:

**“…**being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”