

Pentwater Bible Church

Gospel of Mark

Message 55

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Jesus and the Adulteress by Lucas Cranach the Elder 1532

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The Book of Mark

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Events Preceding the Crucifixion-Religious Leaders Plot to Kill Jesus

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Christ in the house of Simon by Dieric Bouts Cir. 1440s

JESUS IS ANOINTED AND PREPARATION FOR HIS CRUCIFIXION

Mark 14:1-10

¹After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. ²But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

³And 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. ⁴And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? ⁵For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. ⁶And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble you her? she hath wrought a good work on me. ⁷For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. ⁸She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. ⁹Verily 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.

¹⁰And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. ¹¹And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him (KJV).

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS PLOT TO KILL JESUS

Mark 14:1-2

¹After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. ² But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people (KJV).

The events of Passover week had transpired to the point where Jesus was preparing for His sacrifice on the Passover thereby giving His life for the world's people. While His sacrifice would be available to the entire population of the earth it would only be effective to those who would accept His gift of eternal life. Chapter's 14 and 15 of the book of Mark describe the betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus. This has come to be known as the Passion from come the Latin word for "suffer." There is an overriding theme of abandonment that comes out in chapter 14. The prophet Isaiah foretold this seven centuries before the actual Passion of Jesus when he said "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.*"

Isaiah 53:4-6

⁴Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (ASV, 1901).

The events in Mark's narration let us know that this point in time was two days prior to the feast of Passover. One point of differentiation that is important to understand is the two systems of counting time. Roman and Jewish reckoning started the day at different times. The Jews began the day at sunset and the Romans at midnight, which is what is in use throughout most of the world today. This difference in starting the day is somewhat complicating in evaluating the principle events of Passover week linking them one to another. Mark's use of time is observing the Jewish reckoning. Modern precision of reckoning the time of day make it difficult to read back into the gospel accounts, written at a time when no standardization of timepieces, or exactness in recording of hours and minutes was available. The difference between Roman and Jewish days as well as modern time precision render the slight difference between time calculation of the events of Passion week understandable.

The Passover was a festival of the Lord ordained in Egypt about 1445 B.C. when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt. The Passover meal is eaten on the evening of the 15th of Nisan (March/April) and is referred to as Abib. It celebrated the event where unprotected first born of all humans and animals were killed. God promised Moses that He would not harm any of the Israelites, but in order for them to be protected they had to follow a very specific process during the tenth plague in which all the first-born of animals and people would be put to death. If the Jews followed the Lord's instruction explicitly they would delivered from the death that all the first-born would experience. The Children of Israel were "saved" from the death of the destroyer when he would "pass over" their

homes. They were told to “*observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.*” Further they were told “*when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses (from Exodus 12:21-28, 42-49; Numbers 9:1-14; Deuteronomy 16:1-8).*”

In accordance with this the Jews celebrated the Passover, which was one of the three pilgrim festivals wherein all Jewish males were required to attend. As a result there were thousands of Jews in Jerusalem at this time from all over the Roman Empire to comply with the Law. The normal population of Jerusalem was about 50,000 and during Passover week it would swell to more than 250,000. The unblemished lamb or goat to be eaten was killed on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan and would be eaten after sundown, which began the Jewish new day of the 15th of Nisan. No work was to be done on either the 14th or the 15th. The day that Mark refers to is probably Monday or Tuesday of Passion week.

The Scribes and Pharisees of the Sanhedrin had decided to kill Jesus (John 11:47-53). They were fearful that all people who believed on Jesus and followed Him would riot if He were unjustly killed. This then would cause them to lose their powerful political position with the Romans perhaps even losing their meager remnants of their sovereignty. They met in an emergency session to plot Jesus’ death. Their political position with Rome was precarious at best. Their present course of action had been to disapprove of Jesus, seek to excommunicate Him and engage in blasphemous teaching countering Jesus’ truthful exposition of the Scriptures. It was simply not working as thousands of people continued to follow Him and sought His miraculous healing and clear teaching. Not only did they fear Rome taking away their Temple and their nation but also they knew the people would riot if they openly killed Him without a just cause. This would also bring the wrath of Rome quickly upon them as soldiers came to quell the rioting citizens.

Caiaphas the High Priest had been appointed by the Romans and was in the office from A.D. 18 to 36. It was his decision to sacrifice Jesus that had to take place in order to preserve Rome’s favor. He viewed the other Sanhedrin members as ignorant. In offering his direction in killing Jesus he was arguing that the ends justified the means. He stated that if a person were regarded as worthless then that person could be sacrificed for the common good and even handed over to the hostile Gentiles. Otherwise such an act should have been contrary to Jewish principles. This was the crafty manner they decided to utilize in defending their plan to kill Him. So Caiaphas authorized the killing of Jesus not realizing that it was God the Father directing him to sacrifice Jesus for the sins of the world.

GOD PROVIDES AN ANOINTING OF JESUS PRIOR TO HIS DEATH

Mark 14:3

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 (KJV).

Simon the leper had been healed of his disease. If not he would have been quarantined and kept in a leper colony. It is quite probable that the Lord Jesus healed him. The woman is identified in John’s gospel as Mary of Bethany the close friend and admirer of Jesus. Simon was either a relative of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, a very close friend or perhaps

their father. They were having a last meal of friendly fellowship when Mary had a desire to anoint Him. She must have realized that He would soon suffer and die as He had been telling His disciples and probably His close friends. She brought out an alabaster perfume flask with a slender neck containing about a pint of perfume. Alabaster, which is gypsum, often white and translucent, is used for special ornamental objects such as perfume containers, figurines or bottles. The perfume she used is spikenard also called nard, which was a highly desirable precious perfume in this elaborate container. It was a breach of etiquette for Jewish male fellowship to be interrupted by women unless they were servants. Jewish societal values are not necessarily to be equated with Jesus' values. In this instance, the woman's intrusion is commended as a demonstration of faith. There was a custom at that time to anoint an honored guest with oil (Luke 7:44-46). The customary anointing would not use such a precious perfume and would probably be administered by a male. This clearly was a Messianic anointing of the highest order. Mary in an unannounced manner broke the slender neck of the bottle and poured its contents on Jesus' head and feet. By smashing the bottle itself it meant that the vessel could never be used again, thus symbolizing the totality of the gift. She knelt down at His feet and began to wipe it off His feet with her hair.

FALSE INDIGNATION SURFACES

Mark 14:4-5

⁴ 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 (KJV).

Some of the guests were indignant that this expensive perfume (300 denarii about one day's wage) was wasted upon Jesus. Interestingly the Greek word used here for indignation is *enebrinonto*, which means they were snorting with anger so that they rebuked her harshly. Some of the people were in concert with Judas who did not agree with this practice and thought it wasteful. Actually Judas was only falsely indignant because he had control of the apostle's treasury and had embezzled funds already (John 12:6). So this indignation was born out of greed for himself. He no doubt wanted the perfume sold so he could control the money and continue to embezzle. Greed, which is borne out of a love of money, can precipitate a lot of unsavory activities (I Timothy 6:10). This event may have been the one that caused him in his greed to betray Jesus.

JESUS REPRIMANDS THE DISCIPLES

Mark 14:6-8

⁶ And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble you 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 (KJV).

Jesus immediately rebuked her critics and defended what she had done. He comforted Mary saying it had been a good thing for her to do. He does not address appropriate conservation in spending and giving to the poor. He simply says, "Let her alone." She did

not do a wasteful thing on the contrary. She did a good thing for Jesus. It was an act of love, beautiful and acceptable to Him. He says, “*She hath done what she could*” to provide for Him as He approached His death. This was a Messianic acclamation. Jesus was in no way saying to forget the poor. He simply said that there will be other opportunities to help the poor but this is the *only* occasion they will have to show Him love and anoint Him for His burial in advance. She was willing to worship Him and provide a very precious offering to Him as a demonstration of her love. He would not be with them much longer and the poor would always be with them and there would be a lot of opportunities to assist them.

MARY’S UNSELFISH ACT WOULD BE REMEMBERED

Mark 14:9

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 (KJV).

Jesus words ring true today as we retell this story in the gospel accounts of His anointing. The disciples misunderstood this event in their worldly nature and greed. They constantly argued over who would be the greatest in the Kingdom while the religious authorities plotted to kill Jesus. Mary gave all she had in unselfish devotion to Jesus. She is an example to all of us of the degree of devotion we should have to Jesus. He should affect our daily lives including our thoughts. We should not be operating in the flesh as Paul describes in Galatians.

Galatians 5:16-21

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (ESV).

We who follow Jesus must be led by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-24

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (ESV).

JUDAS AGREES TO BETRAY JESUS

Mark 14:10-11

¹⁰ And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. ¹¹ And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him (KJV).

Mark reports with remarkable restraint the unspeakable treason that Judas showed toward Jesus. As Judas approached the chief priests they were delighted to find an accomplice within Jesus circle of followers to betray Him. This was an answer to their question of how to charge Him. Determining the motive behind Judas' betrayal of Jesus is an age-old question. It is quite likely that Judas expected Jesus to establish the Messianic Kingdom during His lifetime. When Mary broke the bottle of perfume and anointed Jesus for His death he realized that this would not occur. He might have been looking for a position in the new government and now realized that the Kingdom Jesus spoke of was Spiritual not physical at that time. In his greed and love for money he decided that the best course of action was to sell the opportunity to the chief priests so they could capture Jesus. One way to detect evil in any matter is to ask who profits from it financially, and Judas profited from the betrayal. So if we follow the money we can see Judas' motive.

The Sanhedrin were only too pleased to provide him with some money for the opportunity to capture Him. It is important to note that Judas was the only non-Galilean member of the apostles. He may have actually been a spy for the Sanhedrin all along. This would give him some additional reason to believe that he remained an outsider. In actuality God was orchestrating the events using the sins of Judas as well as the religious authorities to accomplish His goal of providing the perfect sacrifice to cleanse the heavenly tabernacle and provide for the salvation of all of the human beings on this earth. The plan of God does not excuse the perpetrators sins even though God used them to accomplish His goal.

Merrill Unger has observed a unique fusion of divine sovereignty and human free will in Judas as he carried out his own greed and animosity as well as God's plan in the execution of Jesus. It is important to note that it was Judas who went to the Sanhedrin not the other way around. Nevertheless it is quite apparent that the divine grace of God uses even human evil for His saving purposes.

The plan was set to capture Jesus at the perfect time. Until now Jesus was leaving the city of Jerusalem each night and spending the night in Bethany presumably with Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Now with Jesus staying in the city the authorities could capture Him at night without arousing the ire of the general population and thereby preserving the peace.

NEXT WEEK: MARK: PREPARATION FOR THE PASSOVER

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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