

Remnant Life Church
August 11, 2019
The Condition of the Heart Revealed
Matt 26:6-16; Mark 14:1-11

Leaving the OT and coming into the New to look at an account involving Jesus and a woman who pours oil on his feet.

- It is recorded in all 4 Gospels
 - not as common occurrence as you might think
 - what is the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all the Gospels?
- Some read all 4 as the same account
- Luke's account, however, is too different in detail
 - In Galilee, home of Simon the Pharisee, earlier in Jesus' ministry, a "sinful" woman
- The other three Gospels provide the same details (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-9)
 - During the final week of Jesus' life (Passion week), in the town of Bethany, the home of Simon the Leper, the woman is named Mary in John's account (John 12:3), time just prior to Jesus' arrest
- Takes place near the town of Bethany – a very familiar location
 - A town found on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives
 - About 2 miles east of Jerusalem
 - Very near the road to Jericho - heavily traveled (Mark 11:1)
 - Jesus spent at least one night in this town during the final week at the home of his 3 friends (M/M/L) (Matt 21:17)

READ – Matthew 26:6-16

First, notice not only the words of the story, but how they are written and arranged

- Realize the wonder of the Bible
 - 66 books written by over 40 authors
 - Traversing a span of over 1500 years
- Context – verses but also specific meaning or emphasis
- i.e. – 'running around with your hair on fire'
- Both Matthew and Mark arrange this story in a very specific way with regard to what is written before and after the account of the woman
 - Understandable since a very large percentage of Matthew is taken directly from Mark (the first Gospel written)
 - Matthew includes 90% of the stories from Mark with contextual editing according to his perceptions, experiences, and the leading of the Holy Spirit
- In Mark's account of the woman, he utilizes a method of storytelling that, for lack of a better term, can be called a sandwich style
 - In other words, the story of the anointing is placed between two other stories of similar theme or content to each other
 - In this case, between the Pharisee's conspiracy plot to kill Jesus, and Judas' plan to betray Jesus

- By doing this, the middle portion becomes the main focus and is emphasized by its stark contrast to the other two

READ – Mark 14:1-11

Let's take a few moments to look at each of these three story segments in Mark

1. (14:1-2) *Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. "But not during the festival," they said, "or the people may riot."*
 - a. Passover was one of three compulsory feasts for the people of Israel (meaning required to celebrate) the other two being Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles
 - i. Every adult male within 15 miles of Jerusalem was required to attend with those living further away making it a priority to make the trip at least once in their lifetime
 - b. During Passover, the city of Jerusalem would be packed and overflowing with people
 - i. A passage written by the Jewish historian Josephus gives us an idea of how many pilgrims came: He writes that Cestus, who was the governor of Palestine, around the year 65 AD, was having difficulty persuading the Roman emperor Nero of the great importance of the Jewish religion to the people of that region. As a way to impress this upon him, he had the Jewish high priest take a census of the number of lambs slain at Passover in that one year. The number, according to Josephus, was 256,500. The law stated that there must be a minimum number of 10 people to each slain lamb. That would have put the number in Jerusalem for Passover at close to 3 million people.
 - c. This also meant that during this time the Romans were obviously on high alert
 - i. Not only because of the tremendous increase in the number of people
 - ii. The feelings of nationalism were running very high during this time as the people longed to be free again -the Romans had become their "Egypt"
 - iii. A great deal of talk of a coming Messiah during Passover to free the people from Roman rule
 - iv. During Passover, the Roman Tower of Antonia, built by the Hasmoneans and later refurbished by Herod which directly overlooked the temple area, was filled with additional garrisons of soldiers dispatched from Rome
 - d. This is why the plan to arrest and kill Jesus had to be done in secret
 - i. *...or the people may riot (14:2)*
 - ii. The concern was not for the people's safety, but their lost opportunity to do away with Jesus
 - iii. They feared the people, not God
 1. How very evident is that same thinking in so many churches today?
 - e. During this particular Passover, the people thought they were preparing to celebrate their deliverance from Egypt, but God was preparing His Son to deliver them from their sins

- f. The Pharisees, on the outside, appeared very devoted to the things of God, but their actions revealed the true condition of their hearts
2. The main story is that of a woman's extravagant devotion and love for Jesus
- a. **Mark 14:3-5** - *While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.*
 - b. Set the physical scene
 - i. We know Jesus is in Bethany as he is staying with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus
 - ii. Many believe that Simon the Leper was the father of the 3
 - iii. They are eating at a table – not seated but reclining as was the custom
 - iv. The women did not eat at the table with the men but served the food
 - c. The woman (named as Mary in John's account) brings a very expensive spice
 - i. Nard was a very expensive ointment made from the Indian plant of the same name
 - ii. Because of its great expense, it was often used as an investment in the same way people might invest in gold today
 - iii. It was easy to transport and easy to sell
 - d. Look at the response of "those present"
 - i. Matthew/Mark – Indignant
 - 1. Mathew specifies it was the disciples
 - 2. The original language translates their response as very displeased
 - ii. John, however, reports Judas' response
 - 1. **John 12:5-6** – (Judas says) *"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He 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.*
 - iii. In all three cases, the disciples placed more value on the ointment than on Jesus
 - 1. Look at how fast the calculation was done
 - 2. The value of the oil was set at over 300 denarii (a year's wages) – **Mark 14:5**
 - 3. One denarius for a day's labor

How easy it is for us to put things in a place of priority where they do not belong

- e. Look at the dynamics of the woman's actions
 - i. The guests would recline on a low couch or large pillow resting on the left elbow and eating with the right hand
 - 1. Right side a symbol of honor and strength

- ii. It was the custom that when a guest arrived, the feet were washed by the servant at the door and then a few drops of oil would be sprinkled on the head of the guest as a way of saying “welcome, you are valued”
 - iii. The Bible does not specify why the woman broke the jar – but 3 possibilities
 - 1. Perhaps to clearly indicate it would all be used, not just a few drops
 - 2. In that day when an important or distinguished guest finished eating in a home, the host would break the glass they had used so no one of a lesser station would use it after them – a gesture of respect and honor
 - 3. When preparing the dead for burial, the body would be washed then anointed with oils and perfumes
 - a. The flask would then be broken and the pieces remained in the burial vault or cave as a symbol of the finality of the act
 - iv. This last one is what Jesus refers to when he responds to the disciple’s displeasure
 - v. **Mark 14:6-9** - *“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”*
 - vi. Before we come back to that...
3. Finish the “sandwich” story with Judas and his actions of betrayal
- a. **Mark 14:10-11** - *Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.*
 - b. Notice that the Pharisee’s did not go to him, Judas went to them
 - i. How do you find yourself at a place to betray your rabbi, your teacher, your friend after spending 3 years with Him and seeing all that had happened?
 - c. Not only did he go to the Pharisee’s, but afterward he schemed and planned how to make it happen
 - d. What of Judas’ heart do we see in his actions?
 - i. He was covetous and greedy
 - 1. He approached the Pharisees’ with one question – how much?
 - 2. His greed led to his identification as a thief
 - ii. He craved power and position
 - 1. There is every likelihood that there were issues among the disciples
 - 2. John and James’ mother asking for the seats of honor in heaven for her sons

3. **Matt 20:20-22** - *Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered.*
 4. **Matt 20:24** - *When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.*
 5. Indignant – the same word used for how the disciples regarded what Mary did with the oil
- iii. But consider something else... Judas wanted the people of Israel to be free of Roman oppression and saw the “revolution” Jesus was going to lead as the way it would begin
1. Might Judas have been thinking he would “help” the cause along by forcing Jesus’ hand?
 2. What Judas was not, was filled with faith and trust in Jesus

The condition of the heart in each of these is revealed by their actions...

1. The Pharisee’s spoke of their love of God and the importance of following the law
 - a. But their actions revealed their hearts
 - b. Greed, jealousy, fear, self-centeredness
2. Judas had a heart filled with those same issues
 - a. He may have convinced himself that what he was doing was a good thing giving Jesus a reason to rise up against the oppressive Romans
 - b. It would be the spark to ignite the flame of revolution
 - c. He never expected Him to give Himself up even denouncing the single act of violence that took place when Peter cut off the ear of Malcus (**Luke 22:50-51**)
 - d. Perhaps this was the reason he was so quickly overcome by grief and took his own life (**Matt 27**)
3. Mary demonstrated a fervent love and devotion to Jesus
 - a. She did not care about custom or what was “right”
 - b. She did not care about the cost
 - c. She did not care what others might or did say
 - d. **Mark 14:6** - *“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.*
 - i. In the original Greek, there are two words for the word “good”
 1. The first is agathos which means morally good
 2. The second is kalos which means not only good, but lovely
 - e. Jesus says that what Mary had done is lovely and beautiful in her expression of love
 - f. For love to be truly expressed there should be a certain extravagance in its action
 - g. Mary was willing to exhaust what very well might have been a family heirloom given the expense and the beautiful alabaster jar the oil was in

- i. But that did not matter – why?
- ii. Because she was willing to love wastefully!

What are your actions revealing about your heart?

- Your words are fleeting
- Words today have less and less meaning given all the outright lies being told and reported every single day
- Your witness for Jesus Christ cannot be about words, it must be demonstrated by your actions

Let your actions show how you love wastefully the people in your life with no thought of cost, or return, or convenience.

Jesus said in [Mark 14:9](#) – *I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.*

Is how you live your life, and what that reveals about your heart, worth remembering?