

## “Three Divergent Scenes”

November 13, 2016

Mark 14:1-11

### I. Introduction

In [1 Timothy 1:15](#) the Apostle Paul wrote, “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Jesus didn’t come to the earth to give humanity some nice mottoes to live by—sayings like “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” ([Matthew 7:12](#)) or “Love your neighbor as yourself” ([Matthew 22:39](#)). He didn’t come to the earth to start a new religion—Jesus’ sole purpose was to die for the sins of the world. Turn to [1 Corinthians 15:1-5](#). Above all else, “of 1<sup>st</sup> importance,” the Christian gospel is the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no salvation, no gospel, no biblical Christianity without the cross of Christ.

While thousands of Passover pilgrims were preparing for the joys of the coming Passover feast, Jesus was preparing for the ordeal of His trial and crucifixion. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Mark recorded three scenes that don’t seem to have anything in common—we might call them divergent scenes, but they actually converge to the death of the Son of God. In this longest chapter of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is no longer performing the action. He is being acted upon by others—both friends and enemies: Mary anointed Him, Judas betrayed Him, the Sanhedrin arrested Him, and Peter denied Him. The time had come for Jesus to be delivered up. His earthly ministry would be concluded in the fulfillment of the prophesy from [Isaiah 53:7](#), “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter.”

### II. Three Divergent Scenes

**A. The Plotting of the Leaders of Israel** Mark wrote that the first scene, the plotting of the leaders of Israel, occurred two days before “the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.” We can find more information in Matthew’s account—turn to [Matthew 26:1-5](#). The chief priests were primarily Sadducees. Led by the high priest Caiaphas, they represented the wealthy and influential *religious* leaders. The teachers of the law, who were mostly Pharisees, were experts in both Old Testament law and rabbinic traditions. Together the Sadducees and the Pharisees made up the apostate leadership of Israel. With the elders, representing the wealthy and influential *political* leaders of the Jewish nation, the total leadership of the Jewish nation was represented.

These leaders gathered in Caiaphas’ house for one purpose—to plot how they could arrest and kill Jesus. They wanted to destroy Jesus because they feared that He was a threat to their position and

their power over the Jewish people. They had taken more from Jesus than they could tolerate. They had had it up to here and they wanted to get rid of Him. But they were afraid to arrest Him openly. Jesus' triumphal entry on Palm Sunday had just happened. It was obvious that He was very popular with the mass of people who had gathered in Jerusalem for the annual celebration of the Passover. From the viewpoint of the leaders, Passover was the worst possible time for them to take action against Jesus. Since many from the uncouth masses felt that Jesus was the promised Messiah, to arrest Him and then put Him to death would lead to a major uprising and their fall from power. So the plan was to wait until after the Passover, but Passover was the time God had chosen for the sacrifice of the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29) and contrary to their plans, Jesus would be crucified in 2 days not 8 days. As Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails." After Passover, they wanted to arrest and kill Jesus.

**B. Jesus' Anointing at Bethany** The second scene is a flashback to an event that took place a few days earlier—Jesus' anointing at Bethany—turn to John's account of Jesus' anointing at Bethany, turn to John 12:1-8. This anointing in the house of Simon the leper took place "6 days before Passover," i.e. the Saturday before Palm Sunday. Since lepers were not allowed to live in town or to associate with non-lepers, Simon must have been cleansed. Most likely he had been healed miraculously by Jesus and Simon had invited Jesus and others to his house for a meal.

Neither Mark nor Matthew name this woman, but John writes that she was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. The anointing perfume she used was a very expensive perfume—it was worth about a year's wages; the alabaster jar that was broken was also very expensive. Mary's act was very costly. Notice that she didn't just give a few drops of perfume; she gave it all to Jesus.

Mary had always been very attentive to Jesus' teachings—the three times she appears in Scripture, she is at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42; John 11:31-32; 12:1-8). Mary had had a close fellowship with the Lord as she sat at His feet and listened to His Word. Because of her anointing Jesus, it would seem that she understood and accepted the significance of Jesus' coming death better than the 12 Apostles did. She showed her love for Jesus while He was still alive.

Mary's anointing of Jesus must not be confused with a similar event recorded in Luke—turn to Luke 7:36-38/50. The anointing recorded by Luke took place in Galilee, not Bethany. The unnamed woman "had lived a sinful life"—most likely she was a prostitute. This anointing happened much earlier in Christ's ministry at the house of Simon the Pharisee, not Simon the leper. This was a totally different anointing.

Returning to the anointing by Mary and combining the Gospel records, we see that she anointed both Jesus' head and feet and that she wiped His feet with her hair. She willfully surrendered her glory and her dignity to worship and glorify Jesus with the precious gift she brought. She didn't seek a visible or some kind of tangible reward for her generosity but offered her most expensive earthly possession to the Lord in an act of adoring worship. What she did was an act of love and worship. Although she may not have known it at the time, instead of anointing His body after His death, she did so before His death. After watching Mary's dramatic act and smelling the scent of Mary's perfume, the reaction from those gathered there was mixed. "Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, 'Why this waste of perfume?'" John tells us that the primary instigator was Judas. Since the rest of the disciples didn't know of the true character of Judas until later and since his criticism of Mary sounded so spiritual, they joined him in attacking her. But the real reason for his attack wasn't the supposed waste of precious funds, Judas wanted the ointment sold so that the money would go into the treasury where it would be available for him to use on himself. So following Judas' lead, Mark writes that the disciples "rebuked her harshly." Here was crowd dynamics at its worse.

Being aware of their attacks, Jesus rebuked them and praised Mary for doing "a beautiful thing." Jesus didn't criticize the disciples because they were concerned for the poor. He *was* concerned about the poor, and we should be too. He was cautioning them against missing their opportunity to worship Him. They would always have opportunities to help the poor. But they would not always have the opportunity to worship at His feet and prepare Him for burial.

Genuine worship is the supreme service a Christian can offer to Jesus Christ. There is a time for ministering to the hungry, the sick, the naked, and the imprisoned. There is a time for witnessing to the lost and seeking and helping them grow in the faith. There is a time for careful study and teaching God's Word. But the thing above all else that the Lord requires of His people is their true worship. As Jesus told the teacher of the law in [Mark 12:28-31](#) the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." Without this, everything else we do in His name is empty and worthless.

Mary had the right priorities. Jesus said, "She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial." Though Mary could do nothing to prevent her Savior's death, she was able to demonstrate her love for Him in a lavish and a sacrificial way. Knowing her heart, Jesus commended her and accepted her gracious gift. He explained that "Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Almost two thousand years later, Mary's example of giving sacrificially to worship Christ is

still being remembered and continues to provide an example of selfless, extravagant praise and worship that honors the Savior. The Lord's prediction has certainly come true.

**C. Judas' planned betrayal.** The 3<sup>rd</sup> event or scene is Judas' planned betrayal. Compared to Mary's demonstration of love and worship, this act is one of hypocrisy and the lowest infamy. As one of the Twelve, Judas had seen and experienced the powers of God 24/7 for more than 3 years. He himself had received the power to heal when he, along with the rest of the disciples, had gone out on their missionary journeys. But in spite of all he had seen and heard, Judas was not a true believer. Like many "so-called" Christians today, Judas was "in" the group of believers but not "of" them (1 John 2:19).

Sometime after the Saturday dinner at Bethany—probably after the meeting in Caiaphas' house, Judas "went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money." Matthew 26:15 says "So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver." They bribed an eager Judas to sell out his Master, his teacher, his leader, his friend. For 30 pieces of silver, Judas betrayed the Son of God who had come to die for him. From that point on, the traitor "watched for an opportunity to hand him (Jesus) over." Judas knew that the best time would be when Jesus was away from the multitude, so he waited.

Many reasons have been suggested why Judas would seek to betray Jesus: love of money or greed, jealousy of the other disciples, disappointment with the direction Jesus' ministry was going, or perhaps he was just trying to force Jesus' hand and get Him to move faster. The tragedy of Judas is that he thought he knew better than God. We may not be able to understand why Judas did what he did, but Jesus never gave up on him. Even in the Upper Room on the night He was betrayed, Jesus warned Judas as He washed Judas' feet along with the other disciples' feet (John 13:1-18). But Judas refused and turned against Jesus and allowed himself to be used by Satan.

### III. Conclusion

**A. Mary's Response** In these "Three Divergent Scenes" we see 2 different attitudes or responses towards Jesus. First, there's Mary's response: she gave her best in worshipping her Lord and Savior. She gave all she had. The perfume was just a symbol of giving herself completely and totally to the Lord and He accepted it. As one commentator writes, "Nothing given to Jesus in love is ever wasted."

Have you ever noticed that every time Mary tried to do something for Jesus, she was misunderstood? In Luke 10:38-42 her sister Martha misunderstood her when Mary sat at Jesus' feet to hear Him teach the Word. In John 11:28-32 her friends and neighbors misunderstood her when she came out of the house to meet Jesus after Lazarus had been buried. And here in Mark 14, Judas and

the other disciples misunderstood her when she anointed Jesus. When we give Jesus Christ first place in our lives, we can expect to be misunderstood and criticized by those who claim to follow Him as well as those who don't know Him. But just like that didn't stop Mary, we need to continue, too. Like Mary, we need to give our all.

Like Mary, the true worshipper of Jesus doesn't ask, "*How much is it going to cost me?*" or, "*Do I have time?*" Or "*What will others think?*" The true worshipper gives Jesus whatever he has, knowing it is nothing compared to what Jesus has given him. We need to give Jesus Christ our most valuable possessions—He gave His all for us. No gift is too great in response to His divine love.

**B. Judas' Response** The 2<sup>nd</sup> response is seen in Judas' response. Judas' life, as well as those of the Jewish leadership, is a warning to those who pretend to serve God but whose hearts are far from Him. They are also a warning to those who waste their opportunities and their lives. When he saw Mary's response to Jesus, Judas asked, "**Why this waste of perfume?**" Sadly, Judas' response was to waste his opportunities, his life, and his soul!

So what about you? Are you wasting your life and your soul? Have you, like Judas, fooled everyone into thinking that you belong to Jesus—that you are a Christian? **Hebrews 9:27** says, "**People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.**" Someday you are going to stand before God and answer the question, "*What did you do with Jesus?*" God is going to look at your heart and not just your actions. Why not accept Jesus' sacrifice for your life? Give Jesus the best thing that you have—yourself—**Romans 10:9** says, "**If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**"

If, on the other hand, you have made Jesus your Lord and Savior—what kind of worship do you offer God? Are you like Mary—do you give Him your best—all you have—or do you give Him your leftovers, stuff that you really don't need? When you consider what Jesus has done for you, what is the reasonable response? What is your response? Let me close by reading **Romans 12:1-2** from the New Living Translation: "**And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice-- the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.**"

