

MESSAGE TITLE: Jesus is Worth It!

SCRIPTURE: Mark 14:3-11

KEY TRUTH

The beginning of Passion Week reminds us that no matter the cost or what we would have to trade, Jesus will always be worth it.

GETTING STARTED

The Old English spelling of the word Worship is Worthship. This word conveys the idea that the greater the worth something or someone possesses, the greater the honor or renown that person or object should receive. Today, we will explore the worth or value that two people, Mary and Judas Iscariot, placed on Jesus' life. In this passage, we will read that both biblical characters valued Jesus differently and for different reasons. Note the contrast of their motivation and actions as you move through this passage. May this study stir your soul to worship God as He deserves. Let us worship Jesus with all that is in us for who He is and for what He has done for us. Jesus is worth it!

OBSERVATION

Read Mark 14:3.

John's account of this story (John 12:1-8) reveals that it was Mary who anointed Jesus. What do you know about Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, from other Gospel accounts? How does her act of obedience in this passage compare or contrast with those other stories?

From what we know about Mary in Scripture, her life is a picture of obedience and worship. In the two occasions other than Mark 14, Mary is seen seated at the feet of Jesus listening attentively to His teaching (see Luke 10:38-42), and she is seen grieving the death of her brother, Lazarus. But even in that grim scene, she acknowledged Jesus' power to heal (see John 11:17-45).

In Mark 14, how did Mary choose to show her obedience to Jesus? What was significant about her action?

What message does Mary's example of lavish worship and obedience to God hold for us today?

Mary took an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, snapped the vial's neck, and poured the contents on Jesus' head. The costly perfume Mary used was nard, an expensive fragrant oil derived from the roots of an herb found mainly in India. The perfume's value and its identification as nard may indicate that it was a family heirloom. Mary's action expressed her complete devotion to Jesus and her gratitude. She saw an opportunity to be obedient through generosity and worship.

Read Mark 14:4-9.

How did those present respond to the situation? How did their response compare with Mary's?

When have you faced criticism for worshiping God through obedience in a way others didn't understand?

Mark did not identify those who reacted so indignantly over the use of the costly perfume. Matthew identified them as the disciples (see Matt. 26:8), and John referred specifically to Judas Iscariot (see John 12:4-5). The disciples again revealed their lack of understanding in their responses. The enormous value of the perfume prevented them from appreciating the unselfishness of the woman's gift. The disciples' response shows their insensitivity in comparison to the great love Mary had for Jesus. Mary shows that Jesus deserves our best. The more we love Jesus, the more we will show it by what we offer to Him.

What was Jesus' response to Mary's anointing Him with costly perfume? Why did Jesus respond in that way?

What does this event teach us about worship and obedience?

The selfless act of Mary challenges us to give our best to Jesus. God will not overlook any service for Him. We should not allow others' critical attitudes or our own self-consciousness to hinder us from expressing our love for the Lord. Ultimately, the example of lavish, immediate worship and obedience that we follow is not Mary's, but Jesus' own example. By leaving heaven and coming to earth to be a sacrifice for us, Jesus demonstrated that obedience is rooted in love for God and worship of Him. When we obey God, we follow Jesus' lead.

Read Mark 14:10-11.

Mary demonstrated how much she valued Jesus in the previous passage when she anointed Jesus with costly perfume. What do these two verses reveal about the value Judas placed on Jesus' life? Take a few minutes to contrast the worth-ship of Mary (vs. 3-9) and Judas (vs. 10-11).

How did the religious leaders respond to Judas' intent to betray Jesus? What does their response reveal about the value they placed on Jesus' death?

Read Matthew 26:15. How much did Judas receive for betraying Jesus? This amount was equivalent to about 4 month's wages.

APPLICATION

Take a few minutes to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anything or anyone you value more than Jesus. Ask Him to grant you repentance for placing something above Himself. Thank Him silently for His forgiveness.

Share with your group how God has stirred you or someone you know to demonstrate a love for God that led to making a sacrifice. Sometimes God will ask us to sacrifice something dear to us that we might cling more tightly to Jesus.

Read Romans 12:1-2. How does Paul appeal to his readers to demonstrate their belief that Jesus is worth our sacrifice? How well does your life align with this passage? Only God can awaken our souls to just how priceless Jesus really is.

PRAYER

Pray that the members of your group would worship God with whole hearts by giving Him their very best. On a personal level, ask Him to reveal areas where you need repentance so you can glorify and honor God through every area in which you're called to be obedient. God is completely worth our worship and obedience! See Psalm 29:2.

SHARE POINT

Read and review the application questions. Share with someone in your life how God's Word is changing you into a growing disciple. Encourage that person to do the same. That person could be a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a neighbor.

COMMENTARY NOTES

14:1-2 Chapter 14 opens with the Jewish Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This means the Sanhedrin plotted Jesus' death sometime between sunset on Tuesday and sunset on Wednesday. The Sanhedrin hesitated to act because of Jesus' popularity among the people who had flooded into town for the Passover.

14:3. Between the accounts of the plan to arrest Jesus, Mark contrasts the betrayal and treachery of Judas and the religious leaders with the love and devotion of Mary. The Gospels of Mark and Matthew do not report this woman's name, but the Gospel of John tells us it was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (see John 11:1-2). Mary is mentioned three times in the Gospels; each time she is at the feet of Jesus (see Luke 10:38-42; John 11:31-32; 12:1-8). Mary loved Jesus.

Mary was at the home of Simon the Leper in the village of Bethany. Simon may have been healed by Jesus. Perhaps they were celebrating his healing. The expensive perfume, made of pure nard came from the root of a plant that grew chiefly in India. Mary broke the neck of the white jar and began to pour this sweet-smelling perfume over Jesus' head.

14:4-5. The phrase, "some of those present were saying indignantly to one another," seems to describe the disciples (see Matt. 26:8). Yet, Judas, who was the treasurer for the disciples, may have been the most vocal (see John 12:4-5). His value system, as we shall see later, centered on money. The more he had, the happier he was, since he served as the group's treasurer.

The phrase, “it could have been sold for a year’s wages,” shows the incredible extravagance of this sacrifice by Mary. The critics of Mary’s extravagant expression said the perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor. The disciples estimated the value of the perfume as over three hundred denarii. Since a denarius represented a day’s wage for a common laborer, the perfume was worth about a year’s wages. It was natural for the disciples to think in terms of giving to the poor. The Jews had a custom of giving gifts to the poor on the evening of the Passover. Mark indicated the disciples were scolding Mary. The word translated “were scolding” means “to demonstrate violent displeasure.” This term describes the disciples’ feelings toward Mary. Their insensitivity was surprising since they often had enjoyed the hospitality of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus while in Bethany.

14:6-9. Jesus defended Mary’s actions by saying, “Leave her alone ... Why are you bothering her?... She has done a beautiful thing to me.” Jesus received Mary’s gift for what it was—an unselfish act of love and devotion. Jesus pointed out to Mary’s critics that He would not be with them much longer. In this context, Mary’s expressing of affection toward Him was quite appropriate. The opportunity to help the poor would always exist. Jesus cared for the poor. This is evident in such passages as Matthew 5:3; 6:2-4; Luke 6:20, 36-38; 21:1-4. Yet, this was a very special occasion. It is so important for us to give flowers to those whom we love while they can appreciate them.

The phrase, “she poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial,” was a reminder of Jesus to His followers about His upcoming crucifixion and burial. The motivation for Mary’s act was love and devotion. But Jesus interpreted her act of sacrifice as a fitting preparation for His death and burial. Jesus would not be physically present with the disciples much longer. Time to express devotion and love to Him before His death was brief. In contrast, opportunities for helping the poor would continue because, as Jesus said, “You always have the poor with you.” Jesus’ statement did not mean that He lacked concern for the poor. Other passages show His concern for their interests and needs. Jesus simply wanted the disciples to know they had few remaining opportunities to minister directly to Him.

Did Mary intend to anoint Jesus’ body prior to His death and burial? The answer to that question remains uncertain. Possibly Mary had a greater sensitivity to what was about to happen to Jesus than the disciples did. Luke portrayed her as an attentive listener (see Luke 10:39). Perhaps Mary wanted to do for Jesus what she knew would not ordinarily be done for one who would die a criminal’s death. In recording this account of Mary’s devotion, Mark may have wanted to show that Christ, the Anointed One, was anointed King in connection with His death and burial.

For Mary’s dedication Jesus honored her by stating that wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, people would recognize her act of loving devotion. He authoritatively made this announcement by means of a solemn vow: “Truly I say to you.” Obviously Jesus’ prophecy was fulfilled with the record of Mary’s deed in Scripture. Before the account was written, it was shared orally. In an indirect way Jesus

predicted His resurrection with the statement in this verse because the preaching of the good news presupposed the resurrection. Jesus had made it clear that He would die in Jerusalem. Fear had begun to grip His followers' hearts. Although it may have looked like the end of everything for the disciples, Jesus declared it was only the beginning—the gospel would be preached in the whole world. That assurance looked beyond the humiliation of crucifixion and death to the vindication of resurrection.

14:10 The Jewish authorities had issued orders seeking the arrest of Jesus. Judas Iscariot could help them because he was one of the Twelve and would be able to tell them where Jesus could be found when there were no crowds present. Judas is to identify Jesus to his opponents by night. Without modern lighting systems, finding and identifying someone at night would be a difficult task.

14:11 The Gospel of Mark like the Gospel of Luke is more general in its reports and simply says Judas was given money in exchange for betraying Jesus. Only the Gospel of Matthew reveals the exact amount Judas took for turning on Jesus, thirty pieces of silver. In the OT, this was the price of a slave accidentally gored to death by an ox, probably equivalent to about four month's wages.

SOURCES CONSULTED

ESV Study Bible

www.smallgroup.com

HCSB Study Bible