

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 18TH-19TH, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

PLOTTING A MURDER (MARK 14:1-2)

After the Olivet Discourse, Mark's narrative picks up two days before the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

- The timing of Jesus' death relative to the feast is highly symbolic. He is the Passover lamb (Exodus 12) who saves us with His blood.
- When God's wrath and judgment come, we hide under the blood of a substitute sacrifice—Jesus the Lamb of God—and we are saved.

The chief priests and scribes are now actively looking for a cunning way to arrest Jesus and kill Him (v. 1).

- The priesthood in Israel at that time had become exceptionally corrupt. One became (and remained) a priest through monetary bribes, political posturing, and pleasing their constituency. Pleasing people and keeping up appearances were a big deal to these leaders.

As much as the chief priests and scribes wanted Jesus out of the way, they were nervous about arresting Him during the Passover, "so that there [wouldn't] be a riot among the people" (v. 2).

- What we have in the Jewish leaders is a picture of individuals who are in love with power, control, and the approval of public opinion that they are threatened by Jesus.

Receiving Jesus as Lord means that He is the one who holds the power in decision-making and He is the one in control. If we follow Him, we won't always be liked or approved of by people.

- Many of us, like these chief priests and scribes, plot to dispose of His presence in our lives.
- But we can't just come out and say we're opposed to His lordship... so we're cunning.

Intellectual Dismissal: Using intellectualism or "higher criticism" to push faith into irrelevance and uncertainty, rather than honestly pursuing truth.

- Selective Obedience/Belief: Pick-and-choose theology that affirms what is culturally popular while ignoring costly commands (usually for "street cred").
- Busyness and Distraction: Filling our lives with "good things" so there is no room for eternal things (following Jesus as Lord).

Jesus' lordship reshapes our priorities, decisions, and relationships—anything less is a "cunning way" to dispose of Jesus, avoid submission, and try to stay in control over our lives.

- Are we willing to truly relinquish control over these things to Jesus?
- Or do we just want to keep searching for "cunning ways" to dispose of Jesus' lordship while we appear smart, moral, and respectable?

ANOINTING FOR BURIAL (MARK 14:3-11)

Jesus and the disciples are staying in Bethany every night except the last night of Passover week (which is why they are in Jerusalem on the final night, v. 32).

- "Simon the leper" is probably someone Jesus had healed. While they're reclining at the table over a meal, a woman (John 12 tells us her name is Mary) approaches the table and anoints Jesus with perfume (v. 3). V. 5 tells us the perfume was worth a year's wages (300 denarii = \$30,000-\$45,000 USD).
- The disciples are understandably upset and see this extravagant act as wasteful and foolish (vs. 4-5).
- But Jesus is protective and speaks up for Mary (vs. 6-7), telling them they will always have the poor with them (Deut. 15:11).
- Mary is pouring out her love in worship.

What Mary was really doing was honoring Jesus and preparing Him for burial.

- In v. 9, Jesus does something for Mary that He doesn't do for anyone else. He memorializes what she has done and makes her a permanent part of the story.
- When we're captivated by the beauty of who Jesus is, we're willing to spend everything we have to honor Him.

When we worship Jesus for who He is, it will cost us everything we have, but everything else in our lives gets sorted out.

- When we seek to spend our lives honoring Jesus simply because we love Him, He will honor us!
- When we live our lives in a costly manner to honor Jesus alone, we shouldn't be surprised when we're misunderstood or misjudged by other people.

The narrative suddenly shifts to the disciple named Judas Iscariot, who went to the chief priests to sell Jesus out (vs. 10-11).

- Scholars often speculate about Judas' motives, but it appears that at least one of them was greed (John 12:6).
- His deal with the priest netted him around \$5,000 USD (30 pieces of silver, Mt. 26:14-15).
- We have all sold Jesus out for far less.

Many scholars believe Judas might have been a political activist who followed Jesus because he thought Jesus would overthrow the Romans, usher in a new Jewish kingdom, and give money, power, and position to His associates.

- But when Jesus started talking about the cross, suffering, and dying, Judas decided to cut his losses and get out with a profit.

Many of us will follow Jesus because, like Judas, we want what we think Jesus can give us—health, wealth, happiness, miracles, etc.

- But as soon as Jesus' program involves suffering, difficulty, and delayed gratification, we're willing to sell Him out and walk away.
- "Do I love what Jesus can give me more than I love Jesus Himself?"

PRIORITIES AND VALUES

What are you willing to sacrifice to give your love and devotion to Jesus—your time, money, energy, rights, reputation?

- If your relationship with Jesus costs you nothing, it is probably worth very little in your life.
- When we understand the sacrifice Christ made for us, the only appropriate response is a life of service and sacrifice to Him.

PREPARATION AND BETRAYAL (MARK 14:12-21)

The Passover feast was an integral part of Jewish life, and it was celebrated every year to remember Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

- It was necessary for a Jewish household to purchase and prepare the materials needed for a Passover meal (bread, bitter herbs, lamb, wine, etc.) and to find a place in crowded Jerusalem where the feast could be held (v. 12).

Jesus directs His disciples to go into the city of Jerusalem and find a man carrying a jar of water (a bit of an unusual sight).

- After following the man into whichever house he entered, they were to tell the owner of the house about their need (vs. 13-14).
- The owner of the house would then show them a large upper room that would be completely furnished and ready (v. 15).

"... JUST AS HE HAD TOLD THEM." (V. 16)

Could it be that Jesus knows about every need His disciples have, whether big, small, significant, or insignificant?

- When we trust and obey Him in the everyday, ordinary, seemingly insignificant things, we often find that He goes before us.
- His provision and plan for our lives can be trusted. He knows what He's doing; we're just to obey!

That evening, they reclined at the table to eat the Passover meal together (v. 18).

- At the first Passover, God commanded His people to eat standing up and ready to leave Egypt.
- Since Israel had arrived in the Promised Land, they would eat the meal reclining or sitting because they were now at rest in the land God gave them. During the meal, Jesus makes a stunning announcement (v. 18).

"ONE OF YOU WILL BETRAY ME..." (V. 18)

To eat together in the Ancient Middle East (to "[dip] bread in the bowl with me") was a sign of intimate friendship.

- One of Jesus' students, who was also one of His close friends, would betray Him.
- This would be the worst kind of betrayal and treachery imaginable!
- Who would be capable of such evil?

A few times in Mark's Gospel, we've seen the disciples arguing about which one of them was the greatest. Now they begin to discuss which one of them was the vilest.

- Jesus tells them that it would be one of them sharing the meal that night (v. 20).
- As horrifying and heartbreaking as the betrayal would be, this was according to divine plan (v. 21a).

Judas was neither a hero/martyr ("somebody had to betray Jesus!") nor a helpless victim of merciless predestination.

- Judas was a responsible human being who made his own sinful decisions. But, by doing so, he fulfilled the Word and plan of God.
- Judas was lost and faced judgment for the same reason as anyone else: He didn't repent of His sins and believe on Jesus Christ.

"WOE TO THAT MAN... IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR HIM IF HE HAD NOT BEEN BORN" (V. 21B)

Imagine being Judas and hearing these words.

- You have left everything and have been following Jesus for three years.
- Jesus has just washed your feet (John 13) and has broken bread with you.
- You're going to betray Him. This is your last chance to turn back from your wicked, treacherous plot.
- Now, as an act of love towards Judas, Jesus warns Him of God's judgment.
- Those who reject Jesus and end up in the Hell of God's judgment will wish they had never been born, too.
- This is Judas' chance to stop, repent, and run to Jesus for mercy, forgiveness, and new life!

JESUS LOVES THE JUDASES.

- Jesus loved Judas. He chose Judas as a student, spent years teaching him, washed his feet, and called him His friend.
- Jesus never controlled or manipulated Judas. He left him free to choose to love or reject Him.
- As an act of love, Jesus warned Judas of God's horrible judgment if he did not repent and turn back to God.

JESUS LOVES THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES.

- Jesus died for those who accused and crucified Him—and who weaponized religion to do so.
- Jesus loves the self-righteous religious crowd that loves tradition more than people, the "keyboard theologians" who critique everyone else's ministry but don't have their own, and the churchgoers who know all the verses but have never truly surrendered.

JESUS LOVES THE MARYS.

- Jesus never forced Mary to worship like she did. He moved her heart until she wanted to. Real love can't be demanded; it must be offered.
- Jesus delights in those who worship with abandon even when others don't understand.
- Jesus honors those who bring their best to Him—time, attention, and affection—because they have been loved and forgiven of much.

WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE TO HIS LOVE?

- Whether you're a Judas, a chief priest, or a Mary, Jesus loves you. But He will never force you to love Him back.
- You can reject Him like Judas, hardening your heart and walking away from His love.
- You can resist His lordship like the chief priests, hiding behind your religion and cunning excuses.
- You can receive Him like Mary and give Him your heart.