

True Worship vs. True Wickedness

Mark 14:1-9

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 14 picks up the narrative at the end of the Olivet discourse where Jesus privately taught His disciples about His 2nd Coming.

Matthew records that Jesus brings them back to the reality of His 1st Coming. He tells them of His death, which will occur in two days → **Matthew 26:2** “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is *to be* delivered up for crucifixion.”

READ Mark 14:1-11

Proposition: 4 **bad** examples to flee from...3 **good** examples to follow after

So That: we would recognize the difference and flee from the bad examples (true wickedness) and follow the good examples (true worship)

Four Bad Examples to Flee From

1. **Blasphemy** **Mark 14:1**

Point – the Chief priests and scribes were cunning and plotting a blasphemous plan to murder Jesus, thus showing

- an utter disregard for God
- a lack of fear of God

Proof – **14:1** – “**Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread was two days off; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth, and kill Him;**”

Who were the “chief priests and the scribes”?

Matt 26:3 – “and the elders” –

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these three groups formed the Sanhedrin

As Jesus is speaking to His disciples this Wednesday evening on the Mount of Olives, the Sanhedrin are gathered together in the court of the palace of the high priest, Caiaphas.

Plotting - also seen in **Mark 3:6; 11:18; 12:12**

Consider the blasphemous timing of the plotting:

- during Passover week, a pinnacle time of worship in Israel - **Exodus 12:14-20**
- the very time they should be closest to God feeding and caring for the flock God has given them
- they have no problem plotting murder during the Passover
- the timing, the hypocrisy and wickedness of it is horrific
- recall they had been concerned with Jesus breaking Sabbath → Hypocrisy!

2. Deceit

Mark 14:1b

Point – Liars, conniving manipulation subterfuge

Proof –

“by stealth” – δόλ, λογ – the Greek word means lure or a bait, deceit, trickery, cunning, guile

Psalm 64:2 – “Hide me from the secret counsel of evildoers, from the tumult of those who do iniquity,”

Proverbs 6:12-14

Proverbs 10:9-11 (LXX v. 10 – “causes trouble”)

Proverbs 16:28-30 (LXX v. 28 – “a slanderer”)

The above verses remind us how God demands that His children, God’s people, are to be characterized by truthfulness.

Consider the illustration: The protein shake called “Muscle Milk” contains no milk. The government is directing the company to change the name of the product because it is misleading.

In the same way, God’s children are to strive for authenticity.

3. Cowardice

Mark 14:2

Point – The Sanhedrin were cowards – they feared man and had no fear of God

Proof –

Mark 14:2 – “for they were saying, “Not during the festival, lest there be a riot of the people.””

Luke 21:2 adds – “for they were afraid of the people”

Note their cowardice:

- their concern is merely pragmatic
- they were not concerned with guarding the purity of Israel
- they were concerned about themselves

What we see in these first three bad examples:

Blasphemy, Deceit and Cowardice → True Wickedness

Compare this to what we now see in three good examples:

Denying self, declaring loyalty and demanding all → True Worship

Three Good Examples to Follow

1. Denying Self

Mark 14:3a

Point – Denies self and esteems God! This is the heart of discipleship.

Proof – Mark 14:3 – “And while He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head.”

What we have in this passage is called a Marcian sandwich
Consider that:

- vv. 1-2 took place on the Wednesday evening of Passion Week
- vv. 3-9 actually took place on Sunday before the humble entry (John 12:2-11 → chronological)
- vv. 10-11 took place on the Wednesday evening of Passion Week

Mark here presents a flashback to the previous Sunday, when Jesus came into the area of Bethany and Bethphage, just east of Jerusalem near the Mount of Olives (see **Mark 11:1**). He was having supper in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper. Bethany was about 2 miles from Jerusalem (**Mark 11:1,11,12**). Simon the leper is not mentioned elsewhere and it is probable that he was healed by Jesus.

We see other accounts of this in John’s gospel:

John 12:2 – “So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him.”

John 12:3 – “Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair.”

At the time, perfumes were best preserved in vessels made of alabaster, a finely textured, translucent marble and were often bottled in a flask shaped with a long neck

“**nard**” plants were native to India and a source of finest perfumes of the day

The repulsive deeds done in vv. 1-11 are done by men.
The praiseworthy example in our passage is a woman.

2. Demanding All

Mark 14:3b

Point – We must surrender all! God owns all of you → all of your affection, all of your loyalty and all of your obedience.

Proof – “**she broke the vial and poured it over His head**”

She snaps the narrow neck of the flask so she can pour out all of it

A little perfume on the head was a common treatment of an important guest, but to pour the entire contents and anoint the feet is extraordinarily high esteem and sacrifice

Application: We should measure what we do for Him not by what we have given, but by what we have left; and if we have a lot left over then we haven’t given as much as Mary

Consider the illustration of the Red Hand Of Ulster

In 1015 B.C. a Norse chieftain named Heremon O'Neil organized a competition to take possession of the northern coast of Ireland. The contest was arranged in competition with another Viking chief. The two leaders agreed beforehand that the crown would be placed on the one who would be first to touch the new land.

The two armadas came within sight of land at the same time. O'Neil's rival put on a burst of speed and began to go ahead of his opponent's ship. Realizing the country was about to slip from his grasp, O'Neil performed a desperate act. He cut off his own right hand and threw the bleeding hand onto the shore. It touched land a moment ahead of the other chieftain and O'Neil became the first king of what is now the province of Ulster, on Ireland's northern coast.

With him began the O'Neill dynasty which lorded over Ulster for many centuries. And his Red Hand is immortalized in the provincial coat of arms featuring a red right hand.

Ask yourself:

- "What have I done for Christ?"
- "What am I doing for Christ???"
- Am I breaking my alabaster vial of a year's income worth of perfume and pouring it **ALL** over my Savior's head?

Or ... am I giving Him "two pumps of a K-Mart deodorant"?

NOW ... BE AWARE:

→ What this looks like is between you and God

- Don't assume that your sacrifice, your passion, is supposed to be someone else's!!
- We must measure ourselves not by what we give but by what we have left to give

Mark 14:4 – "**But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted?"**

- In Mark's account, he describes "some"
- In Matthew's account, he describes "the disciples"
- In John's account, he identifies "Judas Iscariot"

"**indignantly**" – pained angry reaction (cf. 10:14)

14:5 – "**"For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and *the money* given to the poor." And they were scolding her.**"

Their rationalization:

- three hundred denarii was a whole year's salary for a common laborer
- think of all the poor pilgrims in Jerusalem during the Passover
- think of how many could have been helped
- they think of it as wasting a year's worth of wages

"**scolding**" – very strong term – it literally means to speak harshly to someone – comes from a root used to describe the snorting of a horse!

→ notice that they go after the woman and not Jesus who received the anointing – this shows more cowardice

So, we see denying self, demanding all, and ...

3. Declaring Loyalty Mark 14: 6-9

Point – You know where they stand!

Proof –

Mark 14:6 – “**But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me."**

“**Let her alone!**” – this command is known grammatically as an ‘aorist imperative’ which means it requires immediate obedience

- Jesus protects the woman
- Jesus rebukes the disciples
- Jesus knows why they bother her
- He wants to expose their wrong thinking

Literally, “a good deed she has done to Me” – forward for emphasis

- a noble work
- beautiful in its insight
- courageous in its faith
- Mary’s act is a beautiful act of true worship in the eyes of God!

14:7 – “**For the poor you always have with you, and whenever you wish, you can do them good; but you do not always have Me.**”

“**the poor you always have with you**” – understood fact of history

- you have a constant opportunity to help the poor
- Christ’s time of sacrifice is coming

Point – A need does not always mean a call!

14:8 – “**She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.**”

Mary’s love and faith sees what the disciples still are unable to see

- she gets it!
- she has a deeper understanding than the apostles
- she recognizes, embraces, and seizes the opportunity to serve Him
- she denies self
- she declares her loyalty
- she is an example of courage!

Application: True Worship does not ask:

- “How much is it going to cost?”
- “Do I have the time?”

True Worship gives Jesus whatever one has.

True Worship knows it is puny compared to what has been received from Christ.

Reward of True Worship!!!

Man's condemnation is met with God's commendation

Mark 14:9 – “**And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of in memory of her.**”

No one else ever receives a promise like this from Jesus!

We see the fulfillment of the promise every time you pick up your Bible and read this passage

→ signed, sealed, and delivered!

Chrysostom – “The Persians, the Indians, Scythians, Thracians, Samaritans, the tribe of the Moors, and the inhabitants of the British Isles celebrate a deed, performed in a private family in Judea by a woman.”

Application:

Charles Spurgeon – “Seek to do something for Jesus, which will be above all, a sacrifice of pure love to Jesus. Do special work towards your Lord. You might ask, "What can I do?" I refuse to answer. Mary does not say to Peter, "What shall I give?" nor to John, "What shall I do?" but her heart is imaginative!!”

In verse 9, Mark places this here for a reason: to contrast the worship of Mary with the wickedness of the religious leaders and Judas. Redeemed human nature at its best shines the brightest when it is in contrast with unredeemed human nature at its worst.

Imagine your Savior, who has bought you with his blood, standing in this pulpit for a moment. He lifts up his hands, once shredded with nails, he exposes to you his side, pierced with a spear. Now picture him. See him! And he puts to each one of you the question—“I suffered all this for you, what *have you* ever done for me?” Answer him now! Like honest followers of the Lamb of God, look back and see what you have ever done.

Some of us have done well in this thing; but think, how much have we given in proportion to what God has given to us?

(note: the fourth bad example follows in next week's sermon)

9/4/11