

Introduction

Last week we covered the widow's mite. She gave two leptos or coins that were worth about a cent. It was all that the poor widow had to live on, and she gave it all. Jesus had stationed Himself in the Women's Court at the temple, which is where the thirteen trumpet offering boxes were located, and He had watched many rich people put in large sums of money. Then, He saw this poor widow put in her two copper coins and He used it as a teachable moment and told His disciples that she had put in more than all the rest of the people. He was not comparing dollar amounts; He was looking at the offerings in terms of what people had to give. The wealthy had given out of their surplus, but the poor widow had given everything she had to live on, so her offering was more from God's perspective.

In our passage this week, we have another woman giving an offering, only this time it is a very extravagant offering. A woman broke a vial of costly perfume that cost about a year's wages. If you used the average income for a wage earner in the United States in 2019, that offering would have been \$51,916.27. If you used the median household income in the US in 2019, that offering would have been worth \$68,703.00. So, there is a huge contrast in the offering of the poor widow, and the offering of the woman in our text today. Jesus' response to the poor widow's giving was that it was more than all the rest; God had high regard for her offering. Jesus' response to this woman's perfume offering in today's passage is that "she has done a good deed to Me... Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken in memory of her." God had high regard for this offering also.

Our text today is sandwiched between two paragraphs about plans to put Jesus to death. In the first paragraph the chief priests and scribes were preparing to put Jesus to death. They were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him. In the last paragraph, Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and cut a deal with them to betray Him. He joined in on their plans to put Jesus to death. In the middle of these two thoughts is the story of how Mary breaks a vial of costly perfume and pours it over Jesus' head. Some of the disciples scolded her for wasting this expensive perfume, which could have been sold and given to the poor. Jesus responded, "she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial." This part of the passage is also about preparations for death. This morning we will look at all three preparations: 1) the preparation and planning to put Jesus to death; 2) the preparation for his burial; and 3) the preparation to betray Jesus so He would be put to death.

Preparations for Jesus' Death

1. Preparing for Putting to Death (Mark 14:1-2)
2. Preparing for Burial (Mark 14:3-9)
3. Preparing for Betrayal to Death (Mark 14:10-11)

(Mark 14:1-11) "Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill *Him*; {2} for they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people." {3} 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. {4} But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted? {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. {6} But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. {7} "For you always have the poor with

you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. {8} "She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. {9} "Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her." {10} Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. {11} They were glad when they heard *this*, and promised to give him money. And he *began* seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time."

1. Preparing for Putting to Death (Chief priests and scribes) (Mark 14:1-2)

Our passage begins by giving us the time frame, which is very significant. It is two days away from the Passover and Unleavened Bread. The Passover Feast was one of three feasts and most Jews tried to go to Jerusalem for this feast. There may have been two to three million Jews there for the Feast.

(Mark 14:1) "Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread were two days away; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill *Him*."

In Exodus 12, we find that the Lord told Moses that in the first month of the year, which is Nisan, they were to take a lamb on the tenth of the month. Then, on the fourteenth day they were to slaughter the Lamb at twilight. This is the 12th of Nisan, or two days before the Passover Lamb was to be slaughtered. (This year the Passover begins March 27, 2021, and ends April 4, 2021.)

(Ex 12:1-6) "Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, {2} "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. {3} "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. {4} 'Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons *in them*; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. {5} 'Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. {6} 'You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight."

The chief priests and scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him. In the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, the Jews were supposed to get rid of any leaven in their houses. From the fourteenth of Nissan to the twenty-first of Nisan, they were to only eat unleavened bread. (Exodus 12:14-20) The leaven represents sin, and they were to cleanse themselves of sin during this Feast. What these religious leaders were doing is planning evil, not cleansing themselves of evil. They were seeking a way to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him. The word stealth is *dolos* in the Greek, and it literally means bait. They were trying to be crafty and deceitful and trap Him so that they could put Him to death.

In their thinking, they were saying, "not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people." They wanted to kill Jesus and get Him out of their way, but they did not want to stir up the crowd and be guilty of causing a riot. That might put them at odds with Herod.

(Mark 14: 2) “for they were saying, "Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people.”

What they did not realize is that by putting Jesus to death, they were taking away the sins of the world. Jesus was the Lamb of God who was going to take away the sins of the world. They did not realize that God had a predetermined plan and that Jesus was going to give His life as a ransom for many. He was the Passover Lamb that would be sacrificed on this Passover.

(John 1:29) “The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

(Acts 2:23) “this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.”

(1 Cor 5:7) “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.”

2. Preparing for Burial (Mark 14:3-9)

The second preparation in our text is done by a woman. Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper. Bethany is where Jesus has been staying, and it is the town of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. Jesus is reclining at the table at the home of Simon, the leper. Simon is obviously someone that no longer has leprosy. He is someone that Jesus has healed, and has become a disciple of Jesus. This dinner was being hosted by Simon, and most commentaries state that Mary is the woman who anointed His head with oil.

(Mark 14:3) “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.”

The text does not mention that this woman is Mary. It says, “there came a woman with an alabaster vial,” but it does not say Mary. In Matthew’s account (Matt 26:6-13), Mary is not mentioned as the woman who does this. Why do people believe it was Mary? Let me give some answers to the confusion about the passage. I believe it will help us understand the passage and the significance of what this woman has done.

First, there are four passages that speak about Jesus being anointed during this Passover week. Many people try to reconcile the differences in the passages, and there are some differences. In our text, this happens two days before the Passover. And in our passage, the woman breaks open the vial of costly perfume and pours it on Jesus’ head. In Matthew’s account, it also states that the Passover is coming after two more days (Matt 26:2), and the woman pours the vial of perfume on Jesus’ head. These two accounts line up very well.

(Matt 26:1-7) “When Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, {2} "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is *to be* handed over for crucifixion... {6} Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, {7} a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined *at the table*.”

When we look at the accounts in Luke and John we find some marked differences. In Luke's account, the dinner was at a Pharisee's house (Luke 7:36), and his name is also Simon (Luke 7:40). It could be that Simon the leper, was a Pharisee and Jesus had healed him. It could be a different Simon; we are not sure of that. But, the two Simons are identified differently. Second, we see that the woman is identified as a sinner. The third thing that we see in Luke is that this woman anointed Jesus' feet. She did not pour the vial of perfume on His head.

(Luke 7:36-39) "Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined *at the table*. {37} And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining *at the table* in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, {38} and standing behind *Him* at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. {39} Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

In John 11, we see some that it was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother was sick. So, this passage clearly identifies this woman to be Mary. In John 12, we find the parallel passage, and it specifically says six days before the Passover, they made supper for Jesus and Mary took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair.

(John 11:1-2) "Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. {2} It was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. When we look at John's account,

(John 12:1-8) "Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. {2} So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining *at the table* with Him. {3} Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. {4} But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, *said, {5} "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?" {6} Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. {7} Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. {8} "For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."

So, there are notable differences in the accounts that need to be reconciled. To get started, let's turn back to the instructions given in Exodus 12 about the celebrating the Passover feast. In the first month of the year on the tenth, they were to take a lamb for themselves. Then, four days later on the fourteenth day of the month, they were to kill it at twilight. The account in John 12 and Luke 7 occur six days before the Passover. The Jews would choose a Passover Lamb six days in advance. They would bring it home and inspect it for five days. They started this inspection by anointing the feet, ankles, and legs to make sure they were free from any blemish. They would anoint and rub in the oil. Then, two days before the Passover, which would be on the 12th day of the first month, after having inspected the Lamb to make sure it was free of any

disease, they would anoint the head of the Lamb and announce that it was clean. Then, on the twilight of the 14th, the Lamb would be slaughtered.

(Ex 12:1-6) "Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, {2} "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. {3} "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household... {6} 'You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight."

Now, let's apply this to our text. Six days before the Passover, Jesus is at the Pharisee's house in Bethany and Jesus' feet are anointed by Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. The anointing of His feet signifies that He has been chosen to be the Passover Lamb. This was the first anointing to prepare Him for the sacrifice. The accounts in John and Luke describe this first anointing.

The account in Mark 14 and Matthew 26 are a different occasion. These two accounts happen four days later and two days before the Passover, and they are about the second anointing, where the head of the Lamb is anointed, signifying that it is free from disease and any blemish. After Jesus was arrested and brought before Pilate, he said to the chief priests and officers, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." Jesus was anointed a second time, and a declaration was made that He was free from any guilt or sin. Our account today is about the second anointing, where His head was anointed and He was declared an acceptable Lamb to be sacrificed, that would take place two days later.

(John 19:6) "So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate *said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him."

We don't know who the woman was that anointed Jesus' head; it may have been Mary again, or it could have been some other woman. In both cases, the perfume that was used was costly, and made of pure nard. This is an aromatic amber-colored essential oil from flowering plants that can be found in many places in Asia. It was used as a perfume, but usually a drop at a time. It was common to wash the feet of guests and put a drop of the oil in the water that was used so that the feet would smell fresh. It was very unusual to take a whole vial of this and use it. Mark records that this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, which was a year's wages. I mentioned earlier that in today's wages, this may have cost between \$50,000 and \$70,000. This was pretty expensive. Because of the cost of this perfume, some were indignant and said that this was a waste of the perfume, and that it should have been sold and the money given to the poor. Remember that this is the second time this week that this expensive perfume was used. In the first anointing, Mary used a pound of this expensive perfume. John wrote that Judas Iscariot, who was intending to betray Jesus, was the primary person making this statement. John also tells us Judas' motivation. Judas was a thief and he was the one that kept the money box for the group, and he used to pilfer the money that was put into it. Judas did not care about the poor; he was thinking that there would be a whole lot more money for him to steal and put in his own bank account. It is important to have a trustworthy bookkeeper and accountant. We are blessed to have one at the Connection Church.

(Mark 14:4-5) "But some were indignantly *remarking* to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted? {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."

(John 12:4-6) "But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, *said, {5} "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor *people*?" {6} Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it."

Jesus stepped into the conversation and told them to "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me." This past week my manager in Houston was involved in a discussion that started to get heated and out of order. He stepped in and took charge. That is what good leaders do; they don't let things get out of hand.

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

Then, Jesus made an important statement. He said that you always have the poor and you can do whatever you wish for them, but they were not always going to have Him. He said that this woman has done what she could, and has anointed His body beforehand for the burial. He went on to say that her actions would be remembered everywhere in the world where the gospel is preached. Jesus knew that this account would be included in the scriptures.

(Mark 14:7-9) "For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. {8} "She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. {9} "Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

3. Preparing for Betrayal to Death (Mark 14:10-11)

Our passage today ends with Judas Iscariot going off to the chief priests in order to betray Jesus. The first anointing in John probably had Judas upset enough, and he spoke up about it. This is now the second time that all this expensive perfume has been wasted, and this was the last straw. I can just see him so upset that he decided right there to betray Jesus. When the chief priests heard that Judas was going to betray Jesus, they promised to give him money, which is what he wanted in the first place. And from that point on, Judas was seeking an opportune time to betray Jesus.

(Mark 14:10-11) "Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. {11} They were glad when they heard *this*, and promised to give him money. And he *began* seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time."

Judas' betrayal was prophesied in Psalm 41:9, where David said, "He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me." It was also prophesied in Zechariah 11:12-13, where the exact amount of thirty pieces of silver was stated.

(Ps 41:9) "Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me."

(Zech 11:12-13) "I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give *me* my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty *shekels* of silver as my wages. {13} Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter, *that* magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty *shekels* of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD."

Conclusion and Applications

The chief priests and scribes were preparing to put Jesus to death. The two women were preparing the Passover Lamb for death. Judas Iscariot joined with the religious leaders in putting Jesus to death. At the same time, Jesus had been telling His disciples for months that He was going to Jerusalem where He would be arrested, turned over to the Romans, and put to death. This was God's pre-determined plan being fulfilled. The Passover Lamb was being sacrificed and the sins of the world were being taken away.

As we close this morning, I want to talk about this extravagant offering, the fragrant perfume that Jesus was anointed with. In the first anointing of this perfume, where Jesus' feet were anointed six days prior to the Passover, John recorded that the house was filled with the fragrance of that perfume. Jesus had this perfume rubbed into His feet and ankles. I think this fragrance stayed with Jesus all week. When He had the whole vial poured on His head in our text today, He had a strong aroma coming from His body. Everyone around Him could smell it. His disciples could smell it all week. The soldiers that arrested Him could smell it. The chief priests and scribes could smell it when He was brought before them. Pilate could smell this aroma.

(John 12:3) "Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."

In 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, Paul wrote, "*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?*" There is a sweet aroma of Christ, a fragrance of Christ. To the people that Jesus was around that week it was either an aroma from life to life, or it was an aroma from death to death. The aroma was there; it was just whether someone accepted Jesus as the Passover Lamb or not. Jesus was anointed for death and burial. The reason that He laid His life down was to take away the sins of the world. Let me ask you today, have you accepted Jesus as the Messiah and Savior? Have you accepted the sacrifice that He made for us? The aroma and fragrance of the nard perfume that was put on Jesus is an aroma that reminds us why Jesus came. If you would like to receive Christ this morning, pray with me. "Jesus, thank You for coming as the Lamb of God and taking away the sins of the world. I believe that You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, and I ask You to take away my sins. I confess You as the Lord of my life this morning. Help me to manifest the sweet aroma and fragrance of Christ to those around me. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen."

(2 Cor 2:14-16) "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. {15} For we

are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; {16} to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?"

Let me ask some questions.

In Ephesians 5:1-2, we are exhorted to be imitators of God, and to walk in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

- Is your life like Christ, a fragrant aroma?
- Are you walking in love, just as He walked in love?
- Does your life reflect that you have died to sin?
- Does the aroma of your life reflect that you have been buried and raised from the dead to a new life in Christ?
- Does the aroma on your life point people to Christ?
- What kind of aroma is on your life?

(Eph 5:1-2) "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; {2} and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."

Introduction (Mark 14:1-11)

1. **Preparing for Putting to Death (Chief priests and scribes)** (Mark 14:1-2, Ex 12:1-6, 12:14-20, John 1:29, Acts 2:23, 1 Cor 5:7)
2. **Preparing for Burial** (Mark 14:3-9, Matt 26:1-7, Luke 7:36-39, John 11:1-8, Ex 12:1-6, John 19:6, 12:4-6)
3. **Preparing for Betrayal to Death** (Mark 14:10-11, Ps 41:9, Zech 11:12-13)

Conclusion and Applications (John 12:3, 2 Cor 2:14-16, Eph 5:1-2)