

Holy Week Reflections: Tuesday

Jesus Anointed

Reading: Mark 14:1-11

14 It was now two days before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and kill him. ² “But not during the Passover celebration,” they agreed, “or the people may riot.”

³ Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head.

⁴ Some of those at the table were indignant. “Why waste such expensive perfume?” they asked. ⁵ “It could have been sold for a year’s wages and the money given to the poor!” So they scolded her harshly.

⁶ But Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me? ⁷ You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. ⁹ I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman’s deed will be remembered and discussed.”

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests to arrange to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹ They were delighted when they heard why he had come, and they promised to give him money. So he began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

Setting the scene: Here we have a threefold story unravelling – the plot to arrest and kill Jesus, a woman’s love and devotion for Jesus and Judas’ planned betrayal of Jesus. I want to focus on just one element of the story and that is the act of devotion we see from the woman.

Let’s hear her account of the story in the following video.

Video: Use the link or search ‘Mary at Bethany’ on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqFWIDwOm9A>

Reflection: Here is a woman who hears Jesus’ words and understands. Her response to Him is to give Him her most precious belonging. She worships Him with all that she has. She acted out of her love for Jesus, crossing social barriers, disregarding the abuse that followed from the others who were with Jesus. She knew Him. She delighted to sit in His presence, to know His extravagant love for her.

This sounds okay so far, but notice what happened next. The woman is criticised for her use of the perfume. She was scolded harshly.

Now, can we even begin to imagine how Mary felt in the midst of this? Put yourself in her place. She comes with the most precious thing she had and freely, willingly gives it to her Lord. And all of sudden her fellow believers are against her, criticizing her, accusing her, and coming up with their better ideas. Have you ever done something you believed to be so right and have it interpreted as being so wrong? For a moment, don’t even think in terms of spiritual things, just the things we do for others; and right when we think we will receive commendation, instead condemnation.

But then Jesus says, "Leave her alone; why do you criticise her for doing such a good thing to me?"

The disciples were wrong in intruding into another's adoration and appreciation of the Lord. How many Christians have had their enthusiasm stolen, their love for God lost, their desire to serve subverted, by the critics?

Jesus says to the disciples in verse 7 that there will always be people to help and serve but they would not always have Him. Jesus was not decrying the needs of the poor. He was rather pointing out His uniqueness, and that Mary responded to His uniqueness while she could. His very words about the poor remaining with them allude to Deuteronomy 15:11, where the context demands caring for the poor.

Jesus responds by honouring her actions. By telling the others there that she had done a beautiful thing for Him, He teaches us the importance of being devoted to Him.

Mary's gift comes from her heart. She cannot think of a better way to worship Jesus than to give her most precious possession to Him, doing so in a way that went against the cultural and social norm of the day. She teaches us about true worship. Her response is an extravagant overflow of her love for Him.



Something to think about:

So what does this say to us? What questions does this ask? It made me think:

- Do I know the Jesus that Mary knew and loved so deeply?
- What is the motivation for my service and worship?
- Am I calculated in my devotion to Jesus?

Mary's actions and Jesus' response reveal the importance of us pursuing His presence. Jesus is Mary's first love. He is the first in her heart.

As we contemplate those questions for ourselves we might want to listen to some worship music to help our response.

Song Suggestion: *Extravagant* by Bethel Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6BRS2Wlh0Y>

or *How Deep the Father's Love for Us* sung by Austin Stone Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZSirSqpM54>

Prayer: Let us be amazed by and thankful for Jesus' extravagant love for each one of us. Let us consider our devotion to Him as we draw near Him again.