

Mark 14:1-11 "Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. 'But not during the Feast,' they said, 'or the people may riot.' While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, 'Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor.' And they rebuked her harshly. 'Leave her alone,' said Jesus. 'Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.' Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over."

14:1. Jewish literature reports that many high priests bullied those who opposed them. Thus they would certainly not tolerate someone who said that God had directed him to attack their temple cult or who threatened impending judgment on its unwatchful servants.

14:2. Jerusalem was crowded during the feast, with perhaps five times its usual population. Riots were known to occur; Josephus reported that at one Passover several decades after the events of this verse, thirty thousand persons were crushed or trampled. Thus extra Roman troops were garrisoned in Jerusalem during the feast, and the Roman governor came from Caesarea to be on hand in case of trouble. The danger of arresting Jesus at the feast (i.e., during the festal time, in public) reflects an important concern for the temple leadership.

In the house Jesus said these words, "The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me" (v.7). Here he was with the twelve in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper.

Bethany was one of those villages near Jerusalem where Passover pilgrims could spend the night with hosts. One "sat" at normal meals; one "reclined" on couches at special meals like feasts or banquets. If Simon had been a "leper" (nicknames usually had some basis but were not always meant literally; e.g., a tall family was nicknamed the

“Goliaths”), he was certainly not one by this point; no one would have joined him for dinner if he had been. Jesus may have previously healed him.

Into that home came a certain anonymous woman (we don't know if she was invited) and she went right up to him and poured very expensive perfume made of pure spikenard over his head. Though there were many people in that room her loving devotion was focused on just one person - Him!

Mark's gospel is not a novel, nor even a short story. It is a record of God's work in Christ Jesus in our salvation. This woman is anonymous and Mark spends one verse only in telling us what she did: "a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head" (v 3). but the Lord did say, "She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial" (v.8). This narrative is not about her. We know nothing about her. We should not speculate about what she does or does not know about who Jesus is or what her motivations are. Yet, this is an extreme act of devotion or love or at least acknowledgement of something. That we can appreciate. Still, we have to let the text tell us. It is Jesus who interprets the event; it is about him – the Redeemer, the Son of God.

What is occurring in the house of Simon the leper is picture/fulfillment of Christ in his great offices as the prophet and priest and king. All three were anointed before entering into service. Jesus as the New Covenant Prophet, Priest and King is being fully and finally prepared to take on completely, His post resurrection roles regarding these offices.

1. JESUS CHRIST IS OUR PROPHET.

Christ has been living until this moment by the words of Moses and the prophets. He knows the Scriptures and loves them. When Satan came to him in the wilderness he overcame him by the truth of the words of the prophet Moses. Jesus had absorbed into his being the light of God. He had drunk at the spring of divine revelation. He who said that man does not live by bread alone himself lived by the words that God speaks. He

ate and drank God's truth. He received it from God. He saturated his life with Scripture. He knew that he must become the sacrificial lamb of Leviticus, the burnt offering, consumed by the magnificent rectitude of a sin-hating God. He knew that he was the suffering servant of whom the prophet Isaiah had spoken. He knew every bit of Isaiah 53; he was aware that this was God's eternal purpose for him, that he will fulfill in his body all that is spoken of him there. He will bear the sorrows of men, yes, but more, he shall also "sprinkle many nations," and "see his seed," as one to whom gifts will be brought, all the treasures of heaven and earth are going to be his. "He will be raised, and lifted up and highly exalted" (Isa. 52:13). Jesus knew that that was his ultimate destination - the throne of heaven. So those two things, humiliation and exultation, will both be his. Jesus knew it because God had revealed it. The way to the throne was by the cross. The prophet Isaiah says those two contrasting truths nowhere in closer juxtaposition than in these words, "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death" (Isa. 53:9).

The government - Roman and Jewish - would sentence him to a murderer's death and a grave with wicked men. They would take the bodies down from the cross and toss them onto the rubbish heap with the manure and dead donkeys to be picked at and torn by vultures. But God says, "No!". "I assign him a grave with the rich in his death!" Christ would be buried in a freshly cut sepulcher with no odor of dead men's bones, and no rats skulking in the corners because this was a righteous man. This was God's beloved Son in whom the Father was pleased, and all this Jesus was assured of. His own self-consciousness was completely molded by the Bible.

So when this woman modestly and holily came up to him, and when he saw her snap the neck of the bottle full of the costliest perfume and, standing over him as he reclined at the table, begin to pour it over his head, he made no protest; he showed no signs of disapproval; he did not stiffen in tension, rather he accepted the homage and worship she brought to him. It represented the savings of a lifetime and she gave it all

away to him, and when Jesus came to speak he linked the action with his burial. "She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial" (v.8). He knew that his cruel death and this luxury were appropriate to one another. There in Bethany he was seeing what Isaiah had written that God would assign him a grave with the rich. Men would treat him as a monster and drive nails through his hands and feet, but God was assuring him that everything was under control. God had drawn lines across which the greatest powers on earth could not go. They would have dishonored his body in death, but God was going to show his love for his dear Son's obedience even to the death of the cross by giving him the most splendid of burying places. As Isaiah had prophesied, he will be "with the rich in his death" (Isaiah 53:9).

Let's consider another prophet, Zechariah, and the light his life casts on what was happening in the house of Simon the leper. This is what Zechariah says about his flock,

"8 Then I annihilated the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me. 9 Then I said, "I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another's flesh." 10 I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples. 11 So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the LORD. 12 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. 14 Then I cut in pieces my second staff Union, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." Zechariah 11:8-14, NAS95.

Zechariah had been the servant of the Lord as pastor and preaching to these people, and they detested him. So he symbolically marks the end of this relationship by breaking his pastor's staff." Let's officially end my duties to you. But if you decide not to give me anything, it will not trouble me - keep it!" They chose to pay him 30 pieces of silver. According to Exodus 21:32, that was the sum to be paid for a slave who had been gored by an ox. It was not even the price of a free man but an outcast. They considered God's prophet Zechariah to be no more than a common servant. God raised

up this brilliant preacher; he had faithfully brought this message to them with these wonderful visions, but they esteemed him so little.

Jesus Christ is the greatest of the prophets, greater than Zechariah, and he accepts this value the women puts on him without hesitation, here in the house of Simon the leper, but immediately there are the voices of protest, indignation and rebuke. He wasn't worth all that, and we are told in the account in John 12:4 that it was Judas who complained and asked why this ointment wasn't sold and the money given to the poor. He was willing to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver but this woman had paid many times that for this costly perfume. It was a year's wages (v.5). and all poured over Jesus' head. The bottle was not unscrewed so that you could keep some for later. Its stem was broken, and the entire contents poured on.

This must have been an interesting scene for Jesus' disciples. He has just been teaching them about suffering for him, laying down their lives for his sake, fleeing to the mountains to survive. He has repeatedly told them that he must go to Jerusalem and be betrayed and arrested and condemned and crucified and buried as one despised by the elders and the people. What is all this?

2. JESUS CHRIST IS OUR PRIEST.

Notice that it is Jesus who makes mention of his death. It was customary to anoint the heads of important guests, but this woman's action is extreme, in one way because she is not the hostess of the house. She doesn't come in and say, "I am doing this as a symbol of the frankincense and myrrh with which your precious body will be embalmed in two days' time." According to the text we don't know her motivation or reason, but we do know God's purpose in using her.

So this woman breaks the jar and pours it over his head, and this was the reaction: "Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, 'Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor.' And they rebuked her harshly" (vv. 4&5). Immediately he leaps to her defense and gladly accepts her loving gift. And says "They are going to bury me."

"She has done a beautiful thing to me" (v.6). Then he tells her something else, quite extraordinary, that "wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (v.9). People will talk there of what she did for Christ until the Bible is no longer read.

What is Jesus telling us here? That whatever in love, devotion, proper understanding of worship, faith and so on, is given to Jesus, is going to last for ever. On the day of judgment it will not be forgotten. Your labors for him are not in vain; your costliest devotion rendered to him is not in vain. Your weariness and heartache gained in serving him is not in vain. It will be told. The day will reveal it! In Christ we are at the throne of God, He presents in the fullness of His glory, He has brought us into the presence of the Godhead. Our Lord Jesus here shows he is a great High Priest.

3. JESUS CHRIST IS OUR KING.

No, who but some extraordinary king would say, "The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me" (v.7). Always he has the priority.

Once Elijah visited a place called Zarephath and approached a poor widow. He said to her, "Bring me a piece of bread." Then there is an interesting dialogue; "'As surely as the LORD your God lives,' she replied, 'I don't have any bread - only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it - and die.' Elijah said to her, 'Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son.'" (1 Kings 17:12&13). The king's ambassador comes first. Elijah tests her faith; what is her priority in life. Is God the first thing the last thing, the only thing to her?

Again, think of Jesus' words in the parable of the servant: "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after

that you may eat and drink'? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Lk. 17:7-10). You see this hungry servant who all day has been working in the fields entering the house and very hungry, but before he can make something for himself first he must obey his master. It is hard to be a servant. Who ever said it was going to be easy following Christ? Every week ought to have far too many demands on time and energy; every task seems too great to do it well for God's glory. You see what Jesus says? "When you have done everything you were told to do, you should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Luke 17:10).

Now we must consider what Jesus meant about the poor being with us and that we cannot forget the poor nor could the Israelites.

"11 "For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'" Deuteronomy 15:11, NAS95.

This may be the most direct reference or allusion to Scripture that Jesus had in mind. There are 64 references to the phrase "the poor" in the OT from Exodus to Zechariah.

"31 He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, But he who is gracious to the needy honors Him." Proverbs 14:31, NAS95.
"27 He who gives to the poor will never want, But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses." Proverbs 28:27, NAS95.

Let me say a few words about Proverbs to help us understand the references.

Often righteous people were promised a long life in the land. In the Old Covenant that was a physical land and physical long life. As this is brought over into the New Covenant, the land pictures heaven and long life is eternal life in Christ, not because of your own work. The Wisdom is still true, just not the same way as in the Old Covenant.

We can say that Proverbs is what Deuteronomy looks like in wisdom form, especially Deut. 4-8 (Prov. 3:5 is the greatest commandment recast as a proverb).

Because Proverbs is grounded in the law/letter-covenant (the law in wisdom form), we have to be careful “how” Proverbs is implemented in the life of the believer.

For example, women will struggle and stumble and fall under the prospect of performance and living up to the Prov. 31 woman. Just like the law, they must understand they will “never” live up to the Prov. 31 woman, on their own and that there was only One who ever did, living up to those expectations in their place because they couldn't. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. The Spirit now works out the Prov. 31 woman in them, imputing the Wisdom that comes from above. The same would be true of any of the rest of the Proverbs.

So concerning the poor, even for the OC Israelite, not necessarily an OC believer, God was first even in regarding the poor because the command came from God, this compassion and mercy and goodness was rooted in His character and not to help the poor was equal to not fearing God. It did not have to be part of the character of the people of Israel but those who were regenerate would have a heart to do right by the poor, just as we do,

The two great commandments of Jesus have continuity from the Old Covenant to the New - love God/love neighbor. The Law and the Prophets are hung on these two as Jesus reiterates this truth in the Gospel.

But our focus is always to be first on King Jesus. He is our Savior and Lord. They cannot be separated. So he accepts what is his due in the home of Simon the leper in the meal Simon brings him and in the costly perfume the woman pours on his head. Then he brings order to his disciples when they fall out and quarrel. "Leave her alone," said Jesus, "Why are you bothering her?" (v.6). The King orders his subjects to obey.

Now concerning Judas, if there were no specific reason other than the power of indwelling sin and the activities of Satan for Judas selling out Jesus, then let me watch that I don't betray Christ. In that room there was a struggle between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman and as always it was clear who the victor will be.

So, why were prophets and priests and kings anointed with oil during the old covenant?

It was to mark a man and to encourage him inwardly as the new bearer of this office.

Those were all types and shadows, but now the reality, the substance has come so that after Jesus' days there will no more kings, and no more priests, and no more prophets.

Jesus is the Anointed one, the Christ of God. When the woman poured the oil onto his head it is a great confirmation of his calling. He is receiving that anointing from God the Father. It is Heaven that directs this woman to break the jar and pour out the oil on that blessed body. Christ was doubly anointed: first by the Spirit at the beginning of his ministry and here by the symbol of the oil which she poured over him.

It is right that he take this name of Messiah the anointed one. God has anointed him with the oil of gladness above his own.

Heb 1:9* "YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS."

The joy that was set before him enabling him to endure the cross and despise its shame is now eternally his. Christ takes the oil ,which the Father has poured out on him and in turn he pours it forth on all his blessed people with the Holy Spirit.

But all this was nonsense to Judas. He went at once to the chief priests to find out how much money he could make out of betraying Jesus before it was too late. In the Bible, Judas has no high or patriotic motives; sheer love of money was his downfall, as it has been of many church leaders since, whether in rich or poor countries. That is why Jesus warns so often against the love of money. If Judas could not understand the woman's action, then he would not understand the cross either. We cannot serve God and Money at the same time