

Mark 14:1–11 — Jesus And Radical Love

September 13, 2020

Good morning. While I don't follow pop culture, there is one part of popular culture I enjoy reading about when I see it in the news. It is the unique marriage between Kanye West and Kim Kardashian. They are an over-the-top couple with too much money that are madly in love with one another. That leads them to give one another some of the craziest and most unique gifts you will ever find. For example, when Kanye turned 35, Kim gave him a car. It was not just a car. It was a Lamborghini Aventador worth



\$750,000. When Kim turned 32, Kanye gave her a diamond panther bracelet worth \$73,000.



Their lavish gifts for one another started at the beginning of their relationship. When Kanye West proposed to Kim in 2012, he gave her a 16-carat diamond engagement ring worth \$2 million. He



didn't think that was good enough so in 2016 he gave her a second engagement ring that is a 20-carat diamond that is worth \$4.5 million. Unfortunately, it was stolen shortly after it was given when Kim was robbed in Paris.



When it comes to flowers, Kanye also wanted to go

over the top. Most guys think we are going all out for our wives or girlfriends when we give her a dozen roses. That wasn't enough for Kanye. He gave Kim a thousand red roses.



His next gift to his wife was a neon-green Mercedes SUV. He gave her the SUV because her sister had one and she liked it. He chose that unique color because at the time, that was the same color she was dying her hair. So far, most of the extravagant gifts we have seen this couple give one another are what Kanye gave Kim. Kim is also a giver of big gifts. Her latest gift to Kanye was a 600-acre island. Nobody knows the cost.

While we laugh at these extravagant love gifts because they appear too over the top, there is something we can learn from them. As conservative people in Iowa, who pride ourselves on being frugal, but there is a time for extravagant gifts and extravagant acts of love. There is a time to go over the top when it comes to expressing our love to someone we deeply cherish. As conservative, Midwestern Christians, when should we become extravagant in our expression of love? That is what we are going to find out this morning.

Today, we are at the beginning of Mark 14. Beginning with this chapter, the Gospel of Mark shifts. From this point forward, the Gospel focuses exclusively on Jesus' death and resurrection. The first 11 verses of this chapter talk about preparing for Jesus' death. Next week, in verses 12-26, it will be about picturing Jesus' death, especially through the Lord's Supper. Picturing Jesus' death through the Lord's Supper is such an important part of our faith, we will look at those verses over the next two weeks.

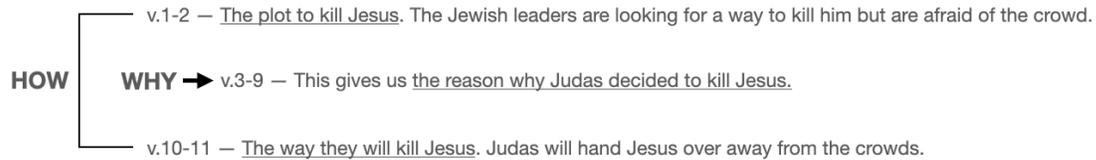
This morning, we are focusing on only the first 11 verses of Mark 14, which teaches us about when we should show extravagant acts of love.

Follow along with me in your copy of God's Word as I read Mark 14:1-11.

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people." And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him. Mark 14:1–11 (ESV)

Before we study these verses, let me take a moment to show you how Mark put this section together. As we learned in our earlier studies of this gospel, Mark didn't throw away his words. He carefully structured his words. He put things together in an order and for a reason. We saw him do that in chapter 13 last week when he talked about the destruction of Jerusalem and Jesus' return. We see him doing the same thing in chapter 14 this week. In these verses, Mark used what is called a structural sandwich. This is two stories put together to give one message. The inside and outside stories in these verses are put together to interpret one another. In verses 1 and 2, we are introduced to the plot to kill Jesus. From this point to the end of Mark, it is all about the death and resurrection of Jesus. At the end of this section, in verses 10-11, we discover it will be Judas that will enable the plot to take place by agreeing to hand Jesus over to the Jewish leaders. While the outside stories introduce us to the plot to kill Jesus and how it will take place, in the middle, we have another story. That

story tells us why Judas decided to betray Jesus. Judas was infuriated to see someone give a lavish, over-the-top gift to Jesus because of her incredible gratitude to Jesus. Jesus accepted this woman's gift. Judas thought that was preposterous and Jesus was not worthy of an expensive gift. That is what pushed Judas over the top and made him decide to betray Jesus.



There are a couple of other pieces to this story that are helpful to know. All four Gospels contain a story of Jesus being anointed with expensive perfume by a woman in the home of a man named Simon. Matthew, Mark, and John are talking about the same event. It is the event we are studying this morning. That means we can use Matthew and John's accounts to give us a little more information about what happened that day.

Luke is different. Luke is telling the story of a different woman anointing Jesus with expensive perfume at a different time. How do we know that? The Simon in Luke's story was known as the Pharisee. The Simon in this story was known as Simon the leper. Incidentally, Simon was one of the most common names in the ancient world. When you see one Simon, don't necessarily assume the next Simon you read about is the same Simon. Josephus talked about 30 different Simons in his ancient histories. In addition, we know the woman in Luke's account was different. The woman in Luke's story was a sinful woman.

The woman in this story is an upstanding and godly woman. If you don't realize that Matthew, Mark, and John are telling the same story, while Luke is telling a completely different story with a different woman at a different time, you will end up confused.

As I told you, Mark loved rhetoric. One favorite tool of communicators who study rhetoric is to use contrast. In these verses, we have a huge contrast between this woman and Judas. This unnamed woman sacrificially gave her best for Jesus. The other character in the story is Judas. He was a famous disciple who was one of Jesus' inner 12. He decided to betray Jesus. That contrast is about as strong as you can get.

Let's dive in and look at the text.

The Plot to Kill Jesus — v. 1-2

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people." Mark 14:1-2 (ESV)

As the story begins, it was two days before the Passover. That was probably Wednesday. The language here is a little ambiguous on the timing, but while the time is a touch ambiguous, what happened is abundantly clear. At this point, the religious leaders were furious with Jesus. When we studied Mark 11 and 12, we saw that every time they tried to trap Jesus while he was in front of the crowds, Jesus gave a great answer and made them look like fools. All the different religious groups in the Sanhedrin tried to trap Jesus. That included the Sadducees and Pharisees. Instead of trapping Jesus, every time they ended up

with egg on their faces. At this point, the Sanhedrin — which usually can't agree about anything — agreed about one thing: Jesus has to go. Jesus must die.

While they decided to kill Jesus because he made them look bad, they were afraid to arrest him during the Passover. During the Passover, Jerusalem swelled to five times its normal size. The huge crowds were hanging on every word of Jesus. The crowds were bursting the city. There was no way they could find Jesus isolated and alone to arrest him without the crowds knowing and coming to fight for him. In addition, the crowds just gave Jesus a red carpet welcome at the beginning of the week in the Triumphal Entry. That made the Sanhedrin afraid of the mob. They planned to arrest Jesus after Passover when the crowds were gone.

Having introduced us to the plot that will lead to Jesus' death, Mark shifted gears to go to his second story.

The reason for the betrayal of Jesus. v. 3-9

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table... Mark 14:3 (ESV)

As I mentioned a moment ago, Matthew and John record the same event. We can go to them for a few additional details. The Gospel of John tells us this meal at Simon's house actually took place six days before Passover.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. John 12:1–2 (ESV)

What Mark was doing was giving us a flashback. He was telling us what took place four days before. Mark inserted this story at this time even though it happened earlier, because he was giving us the backstory to explain why Judas

decided to betray Jesus. This story tells us what pushed Judas over the edge into betrayal. What we find is that Judas decided to betray Jesus early in the week, even before the Triumphal Entry took place. What Judas didn't have at the beginning of the week was knowledge of how he would betray Jesus. What he did have was a decision to betray Jesus because of what happened in these verses.

A few other things are important to realize. This meal took place at Simon the leper's house. I guarantee you he was not Simon the current leper but Simon the ex-leper. We studied leprosy at the beginning of this Gospel. It is a dreaded disease. It makes body parts like fingers, noses, ears, and lips rot and fall off the body. There was no cure. At this time, lepers were outcasts from society. They lived outside of the cities in the wilderness or in leper colonies. Everywhere they went they were to yell, "Unclean," so people stayed away from them. It was worse than wearing a mask with the coronavirus.

Jesus was famous for healing lepers. He healed them with just a word or a touch. He healed them completely, not just stopping the disease but even recreating the body parts that had rotted off. When Jesus healed a leper he supernaturally re-created fingers where they were gone, noses where they no longer existed, and ears that were rotted off the head. Here was Simon, the ex-leper, with his family, in his home, with his restored body and a restored life. Are you catching how grateful Simon was to Jesus? Do you understand why Simon wanted to be part of throwing a banquet to honor Jesus? Simon's heart was filled with love and gratitude to Jesus and what he had done

The parallel accounts from the other Gospels tell us that at this banquet were also Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Like Simon, did they have a reason to be grateful to Jesus? Yes, they did. Just a few days earlier, Lazarus was dead. Jesus raised him from the grave. They were at this banquet for Jesus and their hearts were also filled with extreme gratitude and love for Jesus because he raised Lazarus, the brother Martha and Mary loved, from the dead. Imagine how you would feel about Jesus if your son or daughter died and was buried, but Jesus raised your child back to life and you had the opportunity to host Jesus for a meal. What would you serve? How much food would you serve? How much gratitude would be in your heart if the child that was in the grave was helping you slice the bread for the meal? That is what it felt like for the people in that room.

Some scholars think Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were the children of Simon the ex-leper. While that is a nice idea, I am not sure it is true. While we don't know the biological relationship between Mary, Martha, and Lazarus with Simon, we do know they all shared extreme gratitude to Jesus for restoring their lives.

When you know those are the feelings of the people in the room, what happens next begins to make sense.

...a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. Mark 14:3 (ESV)

The first thing we should consider is the act of pouring perfume on someone. The sounds like a strange and extravagant act. If you try pouring perfume on someone today in public, it will not go well. While that would be a strange act in our day, in that day, it was actually normal. It was a normal part of

hospitality. This was a hot climate. People sweated. Nobody took showers in the morning. Deodorant had not been invented. A common courtesy to your stinky, smelly, unshowered guests was to give them a little perfume to mask their body odor. Ladies, think about how bad men smelled in this day when they were sweating, had no deodorant, didn't have clean clothes and had leather sandals and sweaty feet. People stunk. Pack a house full of people for a banquet and you better get the perfume out if people are going to tolerate the body odor in the room.

While Mark doesn't tell us the name of this woman, when we go to the parallel account in the Gospel of John, we learn her name.

Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. John 12:3 (ESV)

The unnamed woman in Mark was none other than Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, the one that Jesus raised from the dead. If you remember, Jesus frequently spent time at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Like Simon the ex-leper, they also lived in Bethany.

The Gospels tell us Martha and Mary were sisters but had very different personalities. Martha was the doer who was always in the kitchen cooking. She showed her love through actions. She fed people food. She was in the kitchen cooking her best meal for Jesus at this meal. Mary was different. She was the contemplative sister. She was the more emotional of the two sisters. We always find her sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him and learning from him, while Martha was the action-oriented sister, showing her love for Jesus through cooking.

We can see the difference in the way these woman were wired by the way they responded to Jesus after their brother Lazarus died. Martha was the practical one. Mary was the emotional one.

When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. John 11:31–32 (ESV)

We have Mary emotionally running around not telling people where she was going. She was a basket case. When she saw Jesus, she fell at his feet. She could not stand. She literally hit the ground, crying out to Jesus, "I wish you were here so my brother would not have died."

Compare that to Martha, the other sister.

Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." John 11:39 (ESV)

Martha was the planning, calculating woman who looked at the practical details. "Don't roll away the stone. He will smell." Mary was the emotional woman. She could have cared less about the smell. She was in tears. She lost her brother.

In these verses, things are different. Lazarus was not dead. Jesus raised him to life. Lazarus was eating at the dinner table with them.

Are you beginning to get a window into Mary and her emotional world right now? Are you beginning to understand how much she loved Jesus and how grateful she was to Jesus right then? Mary could barely contain her love for Jesus. Jesus takes broken lives and broken families and puts them back

together. Jesus cured Simons leprosy and returned him to his family. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and restored Mary and Martha's family.

When it comes to putting a few drops of perfume on their honored guest's stinky feet, because Mary loved Jesus so much and was overwhelmed with gratitude, a few drops of perfume was just not enough. She couldn't help herself. She didn't just pop the cork on the bottle. She broke the neck right off the bottle and poured the entire bottle of perfume over Jesus. After what Jesus had done, only a lavish, over-the-top gift that cost her dearly seemed like it would be enough.

The text says the perfume was pure nard. Nard comes from India. It is very potent. This was not toilet water. It was not watered down. It was as potent as it gets. Typically, only a drop was necessary because it was so pungent. Mark says Mary poured this perfume on Jesus' head and his beard. John says she poured it on his feet and wiped his feet clean with her hair. Which one is right? The answer is both. Even though only a drop of perfume was needed, when you look at the value of the perfume, you quickly realize there was a lot of perfume in the bottle. Mary covered Jesus with this perfume. She began by pouring it in his hair and beard and continued pouring it on his feet. Then in humble gratitude, she wiped his feet clean with her own hair. Mary was trying to go as extravagant as she could in her gift to Jesus, because only wild extravagance began to show her appreciation and love for Jesus. John said in his Gospel that the fragrance filled the room. That is a massive understatement.

Cindy has purchased cologne for me to use. The bottle has lasted a long time. One of the reasons it lasts so long is if I use more than one or two sprays, Cindy says it is too overpowering for her. That is cheap cologne. This was the entire bottle of pure nard, a bottle that was big enough to pour over Jesus' hair, beard, and feet. Can you imagine the potency of the smell in that small room?

In a moment, we will see the value of this perfume is 300 denarii. One denarii is the day wage of a worker. This one bottle of perfume was worth one year salary. Think a \$45,000-\$50,000 bottle of perfume. Mary likely couldn't afford this. It was probably a family heirloom passed down to her. Because of its size, it could have lasted for decades. Remember, Mary broke the neck on the bottle and poured the entire thing on Jesus. Let me say it again. A lavish gift is the only kind of gift she could give to Jesus after what he did for her and many others.

There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. Mark 14:4-5 (ESV)

While Mary was going over the top in a lavish expression of love because that was the only way she could begin to express her gratitude and love for Jesus, others in the room were infuriated with what she was doing. The Greek word used to describe the anger of some people toward her is very strong. They were angry at her because of what she was doing. They were literally yelling at her saying, "That was an incredible waste."

The parallel account in the Gospel of John tells us who was especially angry at her for doing this. It was Judas.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. John 12:4–6 (ESV)

Judas saw what Mary did with that perfume as a total waste. In Judas' mind, Jesus didn't deserve such extravagant love. Judas was so angry at Jesus for not stopping her that he decided to betray Jesus.

While the scolding of Mary originated with Judas. It didn't stay with Judas. Others in the room ganged up on Mary. How do you think that made her feel?

John tells us Judas and others in the room cloaked their anger at her and their lack of love for Jesus under the guise of practicality. They said this perfume should have been sold and the money given to the poor.

The truth is Mary would have never let them sell that bottle of perfume and give the money to the poor. It was meant as a gift of gratitude to Jesus, not to someone else. It was Jesus she loved. That is why she poured the perfume on him.

Why did Judas think the perfume should have been sold and the money from the sale given to the poor? John tells us. Judas wanted the money from the sale of perfume, which was a year's wages, to be put in the money bag. That way, he could help himself to it and steal from it. Judas was motivated by money. He was motivated by greed. He said it was all about giving to the poor but he didn't care about the poor. He cared about stealing more money for himself.

Think about this. John tells us that all along Judas was embezzling money from the group to line his own pockets. Where did the money come from? The Bible tells us many of the women who followed Jesus gave sacrificially to him.

The money Judas was stealing wasn't extra money. It was money sacrificially given by women to help Jesus and the disciples. It is one thing to steal a little money from a rich person who will never miss it. It is terrible to steal money that was sacrificially and lovingly given by the poor. That is about as low as you go.

My opinion is that Judas' heart was already turning against Jesus before this even. He was figuring that when everything fell apart with Jesus and the disciples, he wanted to be the guy left holding the money bag. He wanted to have an entire year's worth of money in the bag from the sale of that perfume to compensate him for his wasted three years with Jesus.

While Mary was being scolded by Judas and others for her lavish act of love and gratitude, Jesus didn't scold her. He rescued her from those who were humiliating this precious, tenderhearted woman.

But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me." Mark 14:6-7 (ESV)

Jesus told everyone to leave her alone. "Stop giving her a hard time. She has done what is good. She has done a beautiful thing. Yes, it is an extravagant thing. Yes, in some ways it is a waste, but it was the appropriate response of her heart because she is filled with gratitude and love for me. To sell the perfume and give it to the poor would not have been the right thing to do."

Jesus then quoted Deuteronomy 15:11 which says, "You will always have the poor in the land." It is not wrong to love the poor. It is not wrong to give to the poor, but you can always give to the poor. Jesus said, "You will not always have me and be able to express your love and gratitude to me."

What is going on is a simple principle. Care for the poor is important but sacrificial worship for Jesus that comes from a heart filled with gratitude to Jesus is more important.

Giving to help the poor is good. Sacrificially giving to Jesus because your heart is bursting with gratitude to Jesus is better.

“She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.” Mark 14:8–9 (ESV)

This is interesting. Jews never cremated a body. That was symbolic of the fires of hell, and God’s people don’t go there. That is why they buried bodies. The Jews also didn’t embalm bodies like the Egyptians. The Jews, and the early Christians, buried bodies intact. When they buried bodies, they wrapped them with perfumes and spices to mask the scent of the decay. I wonder how much Mary realized she was preparing Jesus’ body for burial when she did this. At least three times in this gospel Jesus told his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem to die. The disciples were pretty dense and didn’t believe Jesus. Maybe Mary was much more in touch with what was about to happen to Jesus. She understood what would happen to Jesus and that is another reason why she put so much perfume on Jesus. I don’t know.

If you have been to a campfire and had the smell of smoke get in your clothes or in your hair, you know the smell of smoke can permeate a garment or someone’s hair and it will last for weeks, even years. You can smell smoke on clothing that was exposed to a campfire even a year after the fire is over.

Even though this event took place early in the week, given the pungency of nard and the fact an entire bottle of pure nard was poured onto Jesus’ beard

and his hair and upon his feet, and combine that with people not taking showers to wash the smell away, that means the smell of Mary's nard — the smell of a heart filled with gratitude for all Jesus for saving and restoring people's lives — was with Jesus for the rest of the week. When Jesus was arrested, when he was whipped, when he was beaten, when he was bloodied and sweat dripped into his beard, what did he smell? What did other people who were near him smell? They smelled Mary's incredible gratitude to Jesus for saving and restoring people's lives that were broken by sin.

As Jesus was tortured by the Roman soldiers and nailed to the cross, what could everyone who was near Jesus still smell? They smelled the nard of Mary's gratitude to Jesus for restoring lives that were broken by sin. The smell of Mary's gratitude encouraged Jesus as he went to die on the cross. He was dying on the cross not just so he could restore a leper for a few more years of earthly life. He was dying on the cross not just so he could raise the dead like Lazarus for a few more years of earthly life. He was going to the cross to completely destroy sin once and for all and give all of us who trust in him eternal life forever! If Mary extravagantly gave herself to Jesus out of gratitude for what he did in her life, how much more should we be giving ourselves extravagantly for what he has done in our lives?

As Jesus lay in the tomb, while Matthew tells us Jesus was buried with some spices, Luke tells us women came on the Easter morning with the rest of the burial spices because nobody had been able to give Jesus' body the proper

perfumes and spices on the day he died. But that is not completely true. Mary had prepared him with perfume a week before hand.

Jesus said that instead of Mary being mocked for her great act of extravagant love for Jesus, she would be remembered. Everywhere the story of Jesus is told, her story would be part of the account of Jesus' final days. That is what we find today, 2,000 years later. Like Mary, our hearts should be overwhelmed with gratitude to Jesus for what he has done for us. She was overwhelmed with gratitude when he raised her brother from the dead for a few more years of earthly life. How much more gratitude must we have for Jesus freeing us from our sin and giving us eternal life? The appropriate response in our lives to what Jesus has done for us is not a few safe, meager acts of love but extravagant acts of love for Jesus. When we are deeply in love with someone and grateful for what he or she has done, an extravagant act of love is the only right way to respond. Extravagant acts of love are not just for Kanye West and Kim Kardashian. That is the way Christians should live and express their love for Jesus.

Judas, the Betrayer of Jesus. v. 10-11.

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him. Mark 14:10–11 (ESV)

This is what tipped Judas over the edge. He may have had other reasons, but if Jesus would accept praise from a foolish woman who threw away an expensive bottle of perfume all over him, it is time for Jesus to go. For Judas,

lavish acts of extravagant love for Jesus were uncalled for. Jesus didn't deserve it.

Let's talk about Judas. He was one of the 12 disciples. He spent the last three years with Jesus 24/7. The name Judas is a form of Judah. Iscariot means he was from the village of Keriot, 23 miles south of Jerusalem. He was the only non-Galilean among the apostles.

He joined the group for selfish, proud, and materialistic reasons. For the entire last week of Jesus' life, even before Jesus entered Jerusalem in the Triumphal Entry, Judas had planned to betray Jesus for money. Judas' betrayal of Jesus was not a last-minute decision. This was a premeditated and planned decision.

So the plot of the Jewish leaders to do away with Jesus and Judas' decision to betray Jesus fuse together. The Sanhedrin promised to give Judas money, which is what he wanted. Judas promised to give the Sanhedrin the opportunity to quietly arrest Jesus away from the crowds, which is what they wanted. For the entire week, Judas was waiting for the opportune moment when he could report to the Jewish leaders a time when Jesus would be in Jerusalem and away from the crowds so they could grab him.

Matthew 26:15 tells us Judas agreed to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. According to Exodus 21:32, that was the price of a slave. It was a very low price, especially for someone's life. Jesus wasn't worth much to Judas, or he would have demanded more money.

Luke 22:3 tells us Judas didn't operate alone. Satan entered Judas. This was not just demonic possession. This was Satanic possession. Notice that when Judas was possessed by Satan, he wasn't running around looking like a Marilyn Manson-type. He looked like a good and godly man. He looked like an apostle, because he was an apostle. He looked pious. He looked trustworthy. He looked so trustworthy the disciples put him in charge of the money.

Note to self, some of the most wicked people on this planet look like normal, healthy, and even godly people. If they looked like nut cases, they would be very ineffective at leading people astray. How can you recognize them? Watch the decisions they make in life. That will tell you the true orientation of their souls.

The saddest thing about Judas is he was one of the 12 disciples and was a man of great privilege and opportunity, yet he was willing to walk away from the living God and turn his back on Jesus after spending 24/7 with Jesus for three years. Judas is one of the greatest illustrations of how people can be exposed to the good news of Jesus but still turn their backs on Jesus and as a result suffer a bitter end.

That is something that can happen to anyone. Judas is a great reality check. Just because people are exposed to Jesus, doesn't mean they won't walk away from Jesus. What caused Judas to fall was he began living a double life. He looked like a pious godly apostle in his public world, but he was stealing from the money bag in his private world. Instead of repenting of his sin, he chose to tolerate his sin and live a double life. That persistent double life of unrepentant sin is what allowed Satan into Judas' heart. It is what led to his fall.

This is a great reminder to all of us about the danger of living a double life of sin and not repenting of our sin and confessing our sin.

Conclusion

Let's look at these two stories together. Let's look at the contrasts between them.

- The story on the outside about Judas and the Jewish leaders tells us about the plot to kill Jesus. The story on the inside, with Mary, tells us the reason Judas chose to betray Jesus. Judas didn't think Jesus was that important. Jesus was not worthy of extravagant acts of love from grateful hearts.
- In the outside story, they were preparing for Jesus' death by plotting to kill him and deciding to betray him. On the inside story, Mary prepared for Jesus' death by anointing him for burial. A week later, when he was in the grave, the sweet smell of Mary's gratitude still lingered.
- The Jewish leaders spent money, but it was a cheap sum, to arrange for Jesus' death. Mary spent money, but it was an enormous amount, to prepare for Jesus' burial.
- The Jewish leaders acted secretly because they were afraid of the crowds' reactions. Mary showed her love and appreciation for Jesus publicly and faced people's reactions.

These stories raise a tough question all of us need to ask ourselves this morning.

Which character am I in the dining room?

Would we join Judas and others in berating Mary and telling her she should never do something so extravagant because of her love for Jesus? Would

you tell Mary she shouldn't spend her money on a wild act of love but she should save it? If she insisted on giving it away, would you have insisted it be given to the poor instead of Jesus? Would you have disapproved of Mary's reckless love for Jesus, or would you understand Mary's reckless love for Jesus and out of gratitude to Jesus give sacrificially to him as well?

Are you like Mary? Do you love Jesus so much and are you so grateful to Jesus for what he has done for you by dying for your sin and rising from the dead to give you new life that anything less than an over-the-top extravagance for Jesus seems like it wouldn't be enough?

Ask yourself. Am I more like Judas because my love for Jesus is cold, calculated, and safe or am I like Mary? Is my heart filled with so much gratitude to Jesus that extravagant acts of love for Jesus are the only things I can do?

Yes, there is a time to be calculated, planned, and reserved,. but it is not when we are expressing our love and gratitude to Jesus. That is the time when Christians must go extravagant, because Jesus doesn't deserve anything less.

How does extravagant love show itself in everyday life?

When it comes to talking about Jesus and what he has done for you, are you like Judas? Are you cautious and playing it safe so you don't offend people? Are you like Mary and willing to risk your reputation, and even be laughed at because you love Jesus so much you are not afraid to talk about him?

When it comes to making time to worship Jesus, when it comes to your financial giving to Christ and his kingdom, are you extravagant and generous or safe and cautious?

Why is it only Kanye West and Kim Kardashian that are known for extravagant expressions of love? As Christians, shouldn't we be known for living the same way when it comes to our love for Jesus?

In previous generations, we would hear stories of people like Eric Liddel, who won a gold medal in the Olympics but turned his back of fame to be a missionary in China because Jesus was worth making that huge sacrifice for. We would hear stories of Adoniram Judson. He was a missionary to Burma. He was imprisoned for Jesus and had children die on the mission field for Jesus, but getting the good news of Jesus to people who had never heard it was worth it to him because his heart was filled with love for Jesus. Extravagant sacrifices for Jesus were a normal part of his life. Do you remember Jim Elliot? He and his four friends tried to reach the Auca Indians with the good news of Jesus and all of them were killed by those Indians. To them, after all Jesus had done for them, it was worth sacrificing and even losing their lives for him.

Where is that kind of love for Jesus in our lives today? Why are we like Judas and always playing it safe and not like Mary and sacrificing for Jesus all we have? Is it because we are like Judas and we don't think a sacrifice for Jesus is worth it?

In less than a week, Jesus will demonstrate the full measure of his love for us. It wasn't a measured love. It wasn't a cautious love. It wasn't a frugal, safe love. It was extravagant. It was over-the-top love. Jesus loved us so much, he went to the cross. He took all of our sin and filth and all of the disgusting things we have done and put them upon himself. He died the most brutal death

possible. He experienced all of the sufferings we deserved to endure an eternity of time in the lake of fire. The one who had enjoyed the closest relationship with God the Father experienced the unrestrained wrath of God the Father against our sin. Jesus' love for us was extravagant and over the top. The only proper response to the extravagant love Jesus has for us is for us to give all of ourselves in over-the-top love for him. How can we keep playing it safe when it comes to talking with our friends about Jesus because we are afraid we will be laughed at? Safe love for Jesus is never enough. Extravagant love and life for Jesus is the only right way to live. What kind of life will you live this week?



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