

## Counter-Cultural Worship

### *Mark 14:1-9*

Good morning.

***John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." NKJV***

Worship and praise are what we use to express our amazement and thankfulness to the Lord for His mighty acts.

King David in the *Psalms* tells us that Praise is the response to the Lord's glorious splendor of His majesty (His Kingship), along with His awesome deeds and His greatness.

Praise also recognizes the Lord's abundant goodness, righteousness, His grace, mercy, and patience. We should train our hearts to think of who He is and what He's done for us.

Worship is not just a time of singing; it is a life style where we express our praise and love to God in **response** to who He is and what He has done.

Our response to who Jesus is and what He's done for us should result in an expression of worship that engages all that is within me to bless His Holy Name!

Please open your Bible to *Mark 14* as we continue in that study.

Last time we were in *Mark*, was our final lesson in our mini-series on the End Times where Jesus taught about His physical second coming as He warned not to guess the time of His return.

When those who will be left behind see these signs and wonders described in *Mark 13*, they can know for sure the **end** is coming.

Then Jesus said that no one knows the hour of His physical return except the Father.

On earth, Jesus submitted to human limitations and chose not to exercise some of His heavenly attributes. Yet there were other times where He did things only God can do.

We ended *Mark 13* with Jesus telling His followers to be watchful. The readiness Jesus was speaking of, was not a logistical readiness like a homeowner, but a **spiritual** readiness.

This morning, we will hear about a woman who loved the Lord so much, that she broke all cultural norms to serve and worship Jesus in a very radical way.

## **I. Passover.**

Read *Mark 14:1-2*

Jesus had just finished warning His Disciples about future events and then *Mark* records a timeline for us; after two days, and what was happening in Jerusalem at this time was Passover.

*What was Passover?* It was a feast, celebrating the redemption of Israel from bondage and death in Egypt, under Pharaoh.

After Moses pronounced the plagues on Egypt, Pharaoh refused to allow the Israelites to go free so, the final plague was the death of all of the first born in Egypt.

Even during that judgment, the Lord provided a way of salvation for the first born if the family would do as the Lord required.

Each household was to take a Lamb to be used as a sacrifice. The Passover Lamb was to be **without blemish** because the sacrifice to the LORD had to be as perfect as a Lamb could be.

The Lamb was a picture of the Lamb of God who would later be given for the sins of the world, to free us from sin's bondage.

On the original Passover, the Lamb's blood was to be applied to the door posts of the house. This demonstrated the house was purchased by blood. Sin cannot be atoned for, without **blood!**

*Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. NKJV*

The only part of this sacrifice that was given to God was the **blood**; and the rest of the Passover Lamb was eaten by the family or discarded.

In order to have their firstborn spared from the angel of death, the people had to put blood exactly where the Lord instructed.

If an Israelite home didn't believe in the power of the blood of the Lamb, they could sacrifice the Lamb and eat it, but they would still be visited by judgment from the Angel of Death.

But catch this: Even if an Egyptian trusted in the power of **the blood** of the Lamb, they would have been saved.

As the blood was applied to the top and each side of the doorway, the blood dripped down, forming a figure of a cross in the doorway.

The Passover Lamb also had to be **roasted in fire, not boiled** with **bitter herbs** and unleavened bread served the meal.

The Passover Lamb had to come in contact with the fire, just as Jesus had to come into direct contact with the "fire" of the Father's **judgment** on sin, on our behalf.

***Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. NKJV***

The bitterness of the cross is reflected in the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread represented the sinless Bread of Life, Jesus.

Passover was very important to the Jewish community during this time. Josephus said the population of Jerusalem during Passover went from a normal population of 500,000 to 3 million.

During the Feast of Passover, the people always had the hope of the arrival of the Messiah to liberate them from the power of Rome, similar to Moses delivering the Israelites from Egypt.

It was during Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that the Chief Priests and scribes sought to take Jesus by trickery and put Him to death, but they had a second thought.

Some people who traveled to Jerusalem, who heard of the signs and wonders, and **believed** Jesus was Messiah, may have gotten mad at the religious leaders so, they decided to wait to kill Jesus.

The anger and plot to kill Jesus from these religious leaders had been nurtured in their hearts for a long time.

**Mark 3:6** *Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.*

*John 11:47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.*

*John 11:48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." NKJV*

The religious leaders did not want to kill Jesus during Passover, for fear of the people, yet they ended up doing it anyway.

It was not only the religious leader's idea for Jesus to die but, it was also planned by the foreknowledge of God.

*John 10:17 I lay down My life that I may take it again.*

*John 10:18 "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" NKJV*

*Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;*

*Acts 2:24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.*

Jesus gave His life on the Passover holiday, because He is the Passover Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

## II. An extravagant gift given at dinner.

Read *Mark 14:3-5*

Jesus was in Bethany at the home of **Simon the leper**, where Lazarus, Martha and Mary lived, having dinner there. *John 12* says this woman was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha.

We need to understand, a good Jewish man would never eat with a leper unless they were sure that person had been healed because lepers were considered unclean and had to live alone.

In the culture of that day, it was customary to share loaves of bread and dip them in the same sauce bowl with your hands.

Most commentators believe since Jesus is eating at Simon the leper's house it tells us Jesus had healed Simon from his leprosy.

Simon realized he literally owed his life to his dinner guest.

Martha was also there. This is the same Martha who asked Jesus to tell her sister Mary to help serve on another occasion.

*Luke 10:39 Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.*

*Luke 10:40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me."*

*Luke 10:41 And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.*

*Luke 10:42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." NKJV*

Lazarus was also at that dinner. In the *Gospel of John*, we find the account of Lazarus being raised from the dead.

*Can you imagine being a dinner guest there that night; wow, what a great conversation they must have been having?*

I wished I could have been there but, while this conversation was happening another remarkable event took place.

Mary enters with a grateful heart, and brings a costly gift of worship to Jesus, a bottle of very expensive perfume. Breaking open the perfume, Mary **anointed** Jesus with a very costly gift.

Some in the room were embarrassed and outraged but Mary didn't care because she loved the Messiah, who had forgiven her, saved her, and allowed her to sit at His feet as He taught.

By Mary worshipping the Lord in this way, we learn true worship is always **costly**.

Sometimes true worship can cost you relationships, dignity, money, or even your pride; but true worship is costly, because true worship is all a matter of the heart.

Many believe this alabaster bottle of perfume was Mary's dowry. Mary comes into the room, with no forethought of the cost, and breaks open her alabaster jar and anoints Jesus.

In an act of true worship, she humbly pours the perfume on His head as an act of worship.

Some rebuke her; even the *Gospel of John* says Judas specifically was quick to rebuke her...

### III. But Jesus.

Read *Mark 14:6-9*

Some were quick to rebuke her...BUT then Jesus is even quicker to honor her! **Jesus blesses her** for her gift and made sure her selfless act would be remembered forever.

*Mark 14:9 Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." NKJV*

Mary was concerned with honoring Jesus with authentic worship. Judas was concerned with personal greed as the treasurer of the group, because he was also a thief.

Judas had a personal agenda and wanted the gift to go into the treasury so he could get his hands on it.

Like a lot of people who have hidden agendas, Judas disguised his motivation with some religious concern; "*The money could have been given to the poor*", this was not his real motivation.



The very costly oil was worth almost a year's wages, but Mary displayed a Love that was a response from a changed life and a grateful heart.

Notice Jesus said, *she has done a good work for Me*. The Disciples said this extravagant gift was a waste, but Jesus called it a good work.

***“She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial.”***

In Israel, a dead body would be anointed with spices to control the smell of decomposition, because they didn't use embalming.

I don't know if Mary realized she was anointing Jesus for burial or not but, Jesus says that Mary will be remembered for this great service she provided to the Lord.

David Guzik said, *“Mary's act was all the more precious because it was planned (she has come beforehand). This wasn't a spontaneous action. It was carefully planned beforehand.*

*Mary listened and believed the teaching of Jesus in a way the other disciples didn't.*

*When He said He would be delivered into the hands of wicked men and mocked and scourged and crucified, she believed it.*

*“Mary said, “If my precious Jesus will be mocked and tortured like this, then allow me to give Him some **special** honor.”*

We can learn to live and love this way as well...let's look at 4 facts about Mary's offering:

**1. Love for Jesus will motivate us to offer Him something dear to us.**

You see, Mary's alabaster jar was precious to her; it was the equivalent of a year's salary, but she poured it out onto the Lord.

The offering was way beyond what many thought was reasonable, but Mary believed Jesus was worthy of the cost.

**2. Love for Jesus within our lives will be attractive to others.**

In *John 12:3*, we are told, "*And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.*" *NKJV*

Notice the whole house was filled with the fragrance, not just the room where they were seated.

Mary's gift had an effect on everyone who was present.

Sooner or later, everyone would know that something was special about Mary's worship. When we offer ourselves to Jesus, the aroma from our hearts is powerful!

Jesus is very attractive and if people aren't attracted to Jesus through our lives and offerings; it might be because they are not seeing the real Jesus of the Bible in us.

We are to represent Jesus to non-believers; He is very attractive.

The people outside of the walls of the church building are starving for the real sweet aroma that comes from truly following Jesus; they want something real.

People were created to worship...and if they are NOT exposed to the truth, they can end up settling for some counterfeit.

This is why we see so many men and women who are highly educated, are falling for the false teaching of the cults of this world...and chasing after the counterfeit.

They are starving for Jesus; (not just stories about Jesus!)

When God's people die to themselves and offer the Lord their very best; the aroma of true worship; will draw the lost to Jesus!

### **3. This sort of Love for Jesus is puzzling to some.**

*Mark 14:4 there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted?"*

I have found out not everyone feels blessed when I start to live as an offering of love unto Jesus. Even something beautiful and fragrant can be a stench to other people who are against Jesus.

*Mark 14:5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." NKJV*

*Didn't it sound so spiritually mature? But we can see right through his hypocrisy!*

There are some people who have personal agendas, and our sacrifices unto the Lord will cause them to question us.

Those people who get disgusted by our sacrificial worship to Jesus, because it seems to be too much; are typically more concerned with themselves rather than what Jesus cares about.

Mary's sacrifice had drawn all the attention towards Jesus...

Judas, by his arrogance and self-centeredness, turned the attention away from the Lord.

#### **4. Our gifts of love are pleasing to the Lord.**

The only voice in favor of what Mary had done in this story; was the only voice that really mattered; the voice of Truth!

***Matthew 26:10 He said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. NKJV***

When we bring gifts to God with the right motivation He knows.

The Lord said Mary's gift was for Him! Nothing we give God goes unnoticed; Jesus said, ***she has done what she could.***

We may not be able to ever make up for what Jesus did for each one of us but, with proper motivated worship, we do what we can to show our gratefulness to Jesus.

***Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints NKJV***

Don't give the Lord your leftovers when offering your time, talents, or treasures. Notice what Jesus said, ***"Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, as a memorial to her."***

Jesus knew He was going to die, but He did not waver in confidence one bit. He also knew He would rise from the dead that this Gospel would be preached in the whole world.

The Disciples longed for fame and influence, but this woman found an enduring memorial. She found it not by longing for a position, but simply by loving Jesus and serving Him.

Think about how **God tested** Abraham by offering Isaac.

*Genesis 22:1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."*

*Genesis 22:2 Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." NKJV*

This was not so much a test to **produce** faith, as it was a test that would prove he had faith.

God knows if our faith will stand, but He also knows we need to be reassured at times and here the Lord was revealing how deep Abraham's fellowship was.

The Lord was also showing a picture of His future suffering and Sacrifice through His only Son Jesus Christ.

Notice, God said, "***Your only son Isaac***", when in fact Abraham had another son, Ishmael.

Since Ishmael was the son of the sinful act of the flesh, he was put away from Abraham's family; as far as God was concerned, Abraham had only one son, the one born to his wife by promise.

God told Abraham to offer Isaac, as a **burnt offering**. This was not an offering that was burned alive, but one first sacrificed and then completely burnt before the LORD.

Abraham might have wondered if Yahweh, the God of the covenant and creator of all things, was like the pagan gods the Canaanites worshipped, but the Lord is the only true loving God.

This test was especially hard because it seemed to contradict the previous promise of God. God had already promised *in Isaac your seed shall be called* (**Genesis 21:12**).

It seemed strange to kill the son who was promised to carry on the covenant when it had not yet been fulfilled in him.

If Abraham followed God's command, it seemed Abraham would be killing the very promise God made to him.

Abraham had to learn the difference between trusting the promise and trusting the **One** who made the Promise.

Sometimes, we can put God's promise ahead of Him, and try make the promise happen, even if we disobey God to do it.

We should trust the One who made the Promise no matter what, and the promise will be taken care of, because He is faithful.

#### **IV. Practical Application.**

Authentic worship is not about people being excited about their favorite worship leader, a great musician, great lights, and projection, or even singing their **favorite** songs.

Authentic worship is all about people truly being moved because Jesus is the God of **infinite** worth. Worship is more than singing songs, worship is telling Jesus what He is worth!

Jesus alone is worthy of praising Him for all that we are, all that we do, all that we can ever hope to become.

Worship is living our lives, pouring out our hearts to Jesus individually and corporately, as living **sacrifices** for His glory.

Worship and praise are what we use to express our amazement and thankfulness to the Lord for His mighty acts.

Praise also recognizes His abundant goodness, righteousness, His grace, mercy, and patience.

We should come to church **prepared** to worship the Lord, as we tune our hearts, to His heart.

Knowing the Lord God of scripture both intimately and personally, will cause us to *worship Him in spirit and in Truth!*

Then we will learn to live and love the way Mary did as she had Counter-cultural worship!

We will have love for Jesus that will motivate us to offer Him something dear to us. We will have love for Jesus that will be attractive to others.

This love for Jesus will be puzzling to some people, but our Love for Jesus will be pleasing to the Lord.