

Mark 14:1-11 | The Beauty of Christ in the Will of God

Tyler Velin | April 30th, 2015

Welcome to the second to last week of Grizzly Christian Fellowship. For those of you who have not been with us all year, we have been working through the gospel of Mark. What this book is, is an account of the life of Jesus. Our theme in it has been, “Who Is Jesus?” That’s been Mark’s goal. He wants us to know who Jesus is because that is the most important question you will ever answer.

Tonight Mark is going to show us who Jesus is, by portraying for us why Jesus came to earth. This past weekend we had a women’s conference with a number of other churches. And I came to drop of the speaker, but I had to wait for my wife to get there before I left because we were switching cars. So it was kind of awkward at the beginning of this thing, but as more and more women began to file it, it compounded in awkwardness. And the number one question I got, among a sea of women, is: “Why are you hear?”

I didn’t belong there. There was a gap between our two identities. And I was only there because of poor planning. But Jesus came to a place where he didn’t belong. He was divinity who took on flesh and it wasn’t by accident, it wasn’t by poor planning, but it was according to the purpose and will of God.

And what we are going to see tonight is this: **Jesus was willing to die because he saw the beauty in the cross-centered plan of God.**

This is big. We will get into the implications of this a little later on, but the three stories we are going to read tonight are in Mark’s book because he is preparing us for the death of Christ. Mark is framing our thoughts on the cross.

My grandpa had cancer for probably two decades. I knew, my family knew, that he was going to die at some point because of it. And I didn’t really put much thought into it. I knew it was coming. I knew it would happen. And I remember the day I finally got a phone call, and I was completely unprepared for it. I didn’t know how to respond, largely because I didn’t want to think about it.

Mark is writing these stories, and Jesus did what he did in these stories, because he wants us to think rightly about the cross. Next week we see the story of the cross, but this week we will learn why it is important. Let’s **pray**.

Like I said, tonight we are going to see that Jesus was willing to die because he saw the beauty in the cross-centered plan of God. And we are going to see this by looking at three stories. The first story highlights: **The Desire of the Religious Officials.**

Now bear in mind. If anyone had book knowledge on who the Christ should be, it was these guys. But look at their view: **Mark 14:1-2.**

These guys, having vast amounts of Old Testament knowledge and an understanding of messianic promises don’t look at Jesus and respond in worship, they look at Jesus and respond in hate. They want Jesus dead.

Let me give some cultural background to what is going on here because it is going to be important a little later on. Even though these guys want Jesus dead, they want to do it stealthily because it is the time of the feat of the Passover, and they feared a response from the people.

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Here's the deal. The annual Passover was celebrated by all devout Jews every year in Jerusalem. It was this religious pilgrimage. So much so that Jerusalem's natural population was around 50,000, but during the time of Passover it swelled to 250,000. That population increase would be proportional to Missoula swelling the size of Seattle, during a two to three week period.

Because of this population increase, there were lots of people there who had witnessed Jesus while he was traveling around the region. The last thing they wanted was 250,000 angry Jews mad that they killed a local celebrity.

Even bigger than population transfer, Passover was a Jewish feast which was required by God because it symbolized the most significant event in Jewish history: the exodus from Egypt. You see long ago the people of Israel were enslaved by the Egyptian empire. So God saw his people, heard his people and loved his people so much so that he sought their freedom. So he took this reject Jew named Moses and went to set the Israelites free. The Pharaoh said, "No." So God used ten plagues to change his mind.

Now why did it take 10? Couldn't the God of the universe just do it in one? Yes, but God wanted to get to the tenth plague because it served a greater purpose. You see tenth plague was the death of the firstborn sons. God was going to pass through Egypt and he was going to kill the first born son of every family. But, because God is gracious he made a way of salvation.

God said that each family should go and find a spotless lamb, take it, kill it, eat it. But more importantly, they should take the blood of that spotless lamb, and they would paint its blood on the doorpost of their house. That night, when the angel of the Lord came through Egypt wherever he saw the blood of the lamb, he passed over that house, and spared them from death.

This Passover feast memorialized this salvation and deliverance from Egypt. God prescribed this as the ultimate feast to be done annually because it spoke to the ultimate deliverance. Deliverance from death and slavery by the blood of the lamb.

You see this feast was a celebration of life and deliverance, but the only thing on the heart of the religious officials is death and hatred.

Now the scene changes in the gospel of Mark. Here is our next story **Mark 14:3-9**.

There is some irony in all of this. Here we just read about the religious officials, ones who should have been the welcome mat for the Christ, but they want to kill him. Then here we have the disciples who are rebuked by Christ. And then we have this random woman who has the clearest picture of Christ. You see book knowledge, theological language, or even close proximity to Jesus is secondary to a right understanding of who Jesus is.

Knowledge and proximity to Christ are only relevant if we have a right relationship to him.

This really is a beautiful story here. In the gospel of John, we are told that this woman is Mary. But I love how Mark keeps her nameless. You see in Mark's recitation of this story this woman find her identity not in herself, but in her service to Jesus. In these days it was shameful in many cases for women to interact with men. Especially in male only business meetings like we see happening here, and yet Jesus not only allows her to come in, but he allows her to interrupt their dinner with this great gift.

This second story is **An Unrivaled Offering**.

The disciples are all miffed at what is going on. Maybe because she is a woman, maybe because it was unexpected, but we know they were also indignant at the perceived waste of this woman's resources.

But look carefully at how Jesus responds to his disciples: **Mark 14:6-9**.

Did you see that last verse? Wherever the gospel is proclaimed this story will be done in memory of her? As I was dwelling on this text this weekend I was shocked at this statement. Jesus saw this event as so important that he promised that it would be proclaimed wherever the gospel was proclaimed. And in keeping with Jesus' words, this story is recorded in the three of the four gospels.

So why is this story so important? Let me give you four brief things we can learn from this story.

First, we see **The inestimable worth of Christ**.

Mary came in with this expensive ointment in an expensive jar and she drained all of it upon the head of Jesus. The disciples are shocked at this waste, and I think we would be too. They said it was worth over 300 denarii, that's a full year's wages. I just looked today at the average annual individual income in the US, that's \$26,000. Can you imagine someone coming in and lighting that much money on fire in front of you?

That's basically what happened her jar was shattered the oil ran from Jesus' head to his feet and the whole worth of that jar was completely absorbed in a onetime offering to Jesus Christ. Yet what Jesus says is that there is not a single drop of it which was wasted.

In fact, Christ is worth even more than this anointing. You've often heard it said: "What gift can you give the person who already has everything?" Well with Jesus the question is "What gift can you give the man who is worth everything?"

Jesus is the son of God, God in flesh, the prince of peace, the king of kings, the true ruler of the whole world. Paul says from him and through him and to him are all things. There is nothing we can give Christ which is of equivalence of his wonderful worth. The best we can give Jesus is a trifle in the hand of the almighty and yet he graciously and humbly accepts it from us.

Secondly we see **The Beauty of the Cross**.

Look at the second half of **Mark 14:8b**. She was anointing Jesus for his burial. She was preparing him for his death. You see for the whole story of Mark, Jesus has bluntly been telling his disciples that he is going to die, but they don't get it. And yet this woman understood what Jesus was saying, and she saw it as a beautiful thing.

There was a Jewish custom back then where people would anoint the already dead body with spices and oils. They did this for two reasons. One to keep the stink down, and two, in order to prepare the body for the resurrection. You see the Jews looked at the Old Testament and they saw that there would be a time where all those who were dead would be raised and they would be judged. But it would happen to everyone, together.

What I love about this woman's offering is she didn't yet see the full beauty of what she was doing. Where normally it was the dead who were anointed, here a living Christ is anointed, but ever since he was born Jesus knew he was born to die. In addition to this, she anointed him in hopes of a resurrection, but what she didn't realize is that Jesus would have a different resurrection.

He wouldn't be raised on the last day like the rest of us. He would rise again before all of us. And in his resurrection death would be defeated so that those who raise later may be able to have the life of Christ.

Look at how this plays out in **Hebrews 2:9**. In the sovereignty of God, we are seeing Jesus prepared for both his death, and his resurrection. And there is nothing more beautiful in the plan of God than the cross of Christ.

Third, we see **A Right Response**.

Remember last week we saw the offering of the widow. She gave two coins worth a mere twenty thousandth of what this woman just gave and yet both of them are judged not off their amount given, but the capacity give.

Look back at **Mark 12:43-44** and now look at **Mark 14:8a**. This woman saw the coming death of Christ and she knew the only right response was to lay everything she was, her identity, her money, her hopes, and her worship at the feet of Christ.

For this woman this was not a mere act of anointing, it was a heartfelt act of worship. The only right response to the cross of Christ is worship. I love how Mark mentions the jar, and he goes on to say she broke the jar. You see in those days, because of the worth of the oil, it was sealed completely in a jar, this way if you dropped it, or if it slipped, it wouldn't spill. So by emphasizing the breaking of this jar, Mark is showing that she held nothing back. She didn't get a ziplock and save some for later. She poured the whole of her offering to Jesus because he was worth it.

Lastly, we see **The Reaction of Men**.

The disciples were upset with this offering because they saw it as wasteful. We can learn two things from this. First, the chief end of man is not to serve the poor, the chief end of man is to worship Christ.

Jesus talked a lot, the Bible talks a lot, about serving and loving your neighbors. But here Jesus raises himself above loving your neighbor as yourself. We have the poor still today, we ought to be serving the poor, loving the poor, we should be concerned with social justice, inequality, and rights to life. But we should ultimately be concerned with the worship of Christ.

It is often easy to make Christianity about digging wells, and feeding the poor. And we should do that. But ultimately our lives, and our ministries, should be drenched in the worship of Jesus. We must learn to hold the two together, but at the same time we must learn that one is of far greater importance.

Secondly, for those who see the true worth of Christ...you will be seen as foolish by this world. When we have a right view of what Christ accomplished on the cross, it will naturally impact our lives, and people sometimes will find us foolish. Even inside of the church.

Look at what Paul says in **2 Cor. 5:13-14**. To be out of our minds is what the gospel does for us, but when we are out of our minds in the gospel we are of most use to those who are around us because we are driven not by the commands of culture but by the compulsion of Jesus' love.

Briefly we see the last scene, **Mark 14:10-11**. This is where we see **The Plan of God**.

Remember, what I want us to see in this text is that Jesus was willing to die because he saw the beauty of the cross-centered plan of God. Now for those of you who have been following along, how is this the plan of God?

Here we see the religious officials planning to kill Jesus with great stealth, then we see one of Jesus' own slip away to betray him, having done this (for what we see in other books is 30 pieces of silver) Judas looks for any opportunity to betray Jesus.

It looks like God's plan is being derailed. Is the cross just God's response to a horrible turn of events? Is Christianity a mythically optimistic recitation of a murdered cultic figure? But did you see what was happening here?

In verses 1 and 2 we see the plans of the religious officials. But look at verse 3, "and while." You see while the religious officials were trying to figure out how to kill Jesus, Jesus is in Bethany already preparing himself to die. Jesus was one step ahead of the scribes even in his death. Why? Because it was the will of God to crush Jesus on the cross.

Judas and the scribes are seeking to kill Christ with great resolve but look at what Jesus said four chapters earlier **Mark 10:45**. They aren't going to take Jesus' life in a tragic turn of events, Jesus is going to give his life.

Why? Here is the thing: The disciples were upset because the worth of the oil could have served the poor. But the oil wasn't the unrivaled offering. The three hundred denarii would serve some of the poor. But the 30 pieces of silver, that would save the world.

Ephesians one says that the will of God since before the world began was to bring sons and daughters to himself through the cross of Christ. Before the cross was the desire of sinful men, it was the predestined as the glory of God.

Again, look at the time stamp at the beginning of the chapter: two days before the Passover. God told the Israelites that they had to find their Passover lamb four days before the Passover, and here while the rest of Israel had already secured their Passover lamb, God was securing his.

Through the blood of this lamb the world we be delivered from slavery and death. And that is the plan of God.

I have one question for you tonight: How do you think of the cross?

Do you think of it as just a historical event? One which is true, but bears little impact outside of space time history?

Do you view it as an important event? Perhaps this is the majority of those who claim to be Christians. The cross of Jesus is important because we know it should be important. On the cross Jesus died so that we can be forgiven.

Or do you see the cross as *the* event? The event which defines all other events. The event which not only shapes how God views you, but the event which shapes how you view you. The event which compels you to lay down your life in worship laden service to the one who died on it.

The defining event of your existence which will be impressed on your minds as you wake, established in your hands as you work, and inscribed upon your hearts as you live. This cross is Christ's cross but he took it because he saw the beautiful plan of God in it.

As ISIS as persecuted Christians in the middle east, they have coined a term which they use derogatorily as they murder Christians. They call them: people of the cross.

What a glorious title to die under. What an even more wonderful one to live under.