

## **Mark 14:1-9**

## **ANOINTING at BETHANY**

PRELIMS. In our cursory run through Mark, we are at the last few days or so of Jesus life - His last visit to Jerusalem. We are jumping ahead and 'skipping' chapter 13, the discussion regarding the Destruction of the Temple as we have 3 sermons on it (18 yrs ago)!

### **IN the PUBLIC SQUARE**

Mark tells us about what was going on outside in the **public square!**

*It was now **two days** before the **Passover** and the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** [1] That meant that the **population** of Jerusalem was at least **5 times** larger than normal! Jerusalem had 50,000 people. Josephus says it increased to 3 million - but must be a mistake. Others say it was definitely 250,000. Another source says 250,000 lambs slaughtered! So a strong **smell of blood!** A ditch was dug to allow the blood to flow from the Temple! Blood was very **significant** to the Jewish faith, thus - *by the shedding of blood...**

**APP** They **prepared** for the Passover! And then the very next day there was the Feast of Unleavened Bread which lasted for 7 days! Leaven was a symbol of sin, and leaven, even a crumb of leaven had to be swept out of the house! Do you think it is right that the Church has not instituted some day/s of preparation for the NT sacrament?

Being an annual Feast everyone in the street would be making **small talk** as we do at **Xmastime**, re the busyness of the shops or the weather in connection with the feast - and like us, probably a **secular** comment!! \*But there was **one thing** which they commented about which was not simple secular, but very significant! John tells us *They were **looking** for Jesus and **saying to one another** as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That He will not come to the feast at all?"* [J11:56] Ie, **because** the *chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to **arrest Him by stealth** and **kill Him*** [1] However, they came to the conclusion that they would not apprehend Him at the Passover time *lest there be an uproar from the people* [2]

So, in the Public Square, Jesus **was** on the **agenda!** But, as is so often the case, **not** for **spiritual nourishment**, but **political** discussion! So

often our interest in religion, even in X, is **not** for **edification** but for **intellectual stimulation** and political interest and information.

The situation was that **an ‘official’ announcement had already** been made *the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should let them know, so that they might **arrest Him*** [J11:57] Just as we discuss the contents of the newspapers in company, so in Jerusalem, the political situation and public opinion regarding it, would have been discussed!

### **INSIDE the HOUSE of SIMON the LEPER**

Inside the house of Simon Jesus and His friends were **relaxing** or *reclining at table* as it was called [3]. Jesus **did** go to the Feast. Jesus was **no coward**. He did not go when ‘His time had not yet come’, but when it did come there was no holding Him back!

The **real nature of courage?** Courage is only courage when there is **danger!** If there is no danger, there is no need for courage. Ignorance is **bliss**, because there is no fear. It is the **consciousness** of danger that **creates** fear - where there is no consciousness of danger there is **no bravery!** What makes **bravery** a **virtue** is the fact of danger and the courage to meet it and defeat it, if possible! Jesus went to Jerusalem **knowing** the **very worst** about His fate! Most people who take risks, **believe** they will **not meet** with the danger and **EXPECT** to **avoid** the danger - Jesus knew He would and could **NOT AVOID** the pain and suffering of the Cross! That’s courage!

Despite knowing what was going on outside, Jesus and His faithful friends were what? **Celebrating!** John tells us *they made* (Grk) *Him a supper* [John 12:2] Jesus approved of celebrations - but not to excess! Luke tells us Levi also *made Him a great feast* [L5:29]! The OT is full of Feast Days and celebrations - appointed by God!

Simon and his friends may have been **celebrating** - but it is difficult to think of Jesus, fully aware of what lay ahead being able to **enjoy** the celebration, although He no doubt **properly celebrated** the Passover. Being **human** in every conceivable way, He **must** have been trembling at the thought of the horrors of the Cross.

**APP** This sort of thing of course can happen among ourselves. Someone in our company may be facing a **tremendous trial** that none of the others know anything about! It is only **afterwards**, when it is revealed that we wonder 'How was he able to hide that from us!' So, we ought always to remember when we are in **company**, that someone present **may** be undergoing some trial and not therefore be able to join in the celebrations to the same extent as ourselves!

## **A VERY KIND DEED**

Have you noticed that **important** people who have done great things in the Bible are **nameless**? Here is a woman who did a great thing for Jesus and we are not even told her name! Now John Tells us it was Mary - most people think it was the same incident as [John 11:1-8, and Mat 26:6-13] but it is by no means certain that it is the same occasion. However, Mark and Mat see **no need** to mention her name which teaches us that our **good deeds** should be done **anonymously**!

Mark here says: *a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard* [3] Nard = an **East Indian plant**, a small slender stalk but a heavy thick root, with several ears and spikes (hence **spikenard**). She **broke** the **seal** of the box - precious ointment had seals of wax, breaking the glass was **impractical** and could cause injuries!

**VERY COSTLY** [3]! Do you know how costly 300 denarii is? A **year's wages**!! £15,000? £20,000? £25,000? Have any of us even **seen** perfume as expensive? Was she a rich person? Don't know! Did she save up for this? Don't know! Whatever the cost, it **belonged** to this woman. It was her's! She had a **right** to do with it as she wished.

She *poured it over His head* [3d]! Probably all of it - else the 300 denarii would not have been the cost! In that culture we need to remember that servants were constantly 'attending' to the needs of visitors and having people 'fussing around' was common practice. **All this expense** was poured out on Jesus by this woman!! Just imagine the cost - a year's salary, without any return? Well, that was just the point - she was **returning** what Jesus **had** spent on her!

\*So we must look at the what was the **root** of this very fine act? Ans:

**Appreciation of who and what Jesus was about to do** for her! She had **insight!** Jesus said *she has anointed My body beforehand FOR burial* [8]! She must have had some knowledge/understanding of Jesus mission! Mat says *she has done a beautiful thing...she has done it to prepare Me for burial* [Mat 26:12]

Her **love** for the Lord was such that she **had** to do something **unique**, something **original, creative, demonstrative!!** He was **so worthy** that the **ordinary, every day** appreciations did not do justice! It was something **novel** for the culture, but altogether **appropriate!**

God was so concerned for Israel that he instructed Ezekiel to do **bazaar** things, sleeping on his side for 390 days, etc [Ezek 4:4]! He instructed Hosea to marry a **prostitute**, Isaiah did something novel - he sang a **love-song** [Isa 5] Jeremiah **dramatised!** All this to **shock** the nation into the reality of their serious condition of their spiritual relationship to God! It takes the 'bazaar' to get noticed!!

She was **not afraid** of what **others thought** of her extravagance! She was bound to have **known** that there **would** be objections! And, so, she was prepared to take the slack that would be thrown at her! How did she manage? By focussing her eyes on the Lord Jesus! **APP** So often we may think of a good way to bring 'home' some needy point to a friend but immediately we think 'Oh, it will offend, so and so', so we **back off** - and the opportunity is lost! **Fear of man!** Not so this woman! She was an excellent example to us all.

Note: it was the **people of God** who **objected** the most!! Mat says *when the disciples saw it, they were indignant saying 'Why this waste?'* Waste!! **APP** Tell me, do **you honestly** think it was too much money to spend on **anyone** - your wife, husband - Jesus?

Our **evil thought** can be **made** to appear **honourable!** *this ointment could have sold...and given to the poor!!*[5]! It was made as if to sound like they really **did care** for the poor - but its reckoned that at bottom, the disciples were **jealous** of this godly woman's **sacrifice!**

Her extravagance matched Christ's extravagance! *She has done what she could!!*[8] Do **you/I** realise what we '**COULD**' do?