

Gospel of Mark: Jesus, what is he worth?

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[0 : 00] on TV, and I'm sure you've all seen it, or at least you've heard of it. It's called the Antiques Roadshow. Do you know it? No, some of you aren't. Well, let me explain what it is.

People bring along all kinds of items to this show, perhaps an old item they've discovered in the attic, or maybe it's something that's belonged to their family and it's been passed down through each generation.

And what they do is they bring this old item along to the show and it's valued by the experts who tell the owner how much this old picture or this piece of jewellery is worth.

And for the viewer, well, we're trying to guess how much it is worth. What price are they going to put on it? Well, throughout Mark's Gospel, Mark has been introducing us to Jesus.

We've been watching what Jesus does. We've been listening to what Jesus says. Now, chapter 14, verse 1.

[1 : 09] We're told that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a week-long festival to remember the escape, the rescue of God's people from Egypt, that this great festival was only two days away.

Now, that's Mark's little editorial note to tell us that in two days' time, Jesus is going to be killed, crucified on a cross.

Hang on. We've got... Here we go. There we are. So this is this two days' time little note is to tell us that Jesus is going to be killed, crucified on a cross.

In fact, chapter 14 begins what is called as the Passion of Jesus. So as we get close to his death, as we focus in on his death, we're being asked a very important question.

What is the true value of Jesus? It's as if Jesus is standing before us this morning and he's asking me and he's asking you personally and directly, what am I worth to you?

[2 : 34] How valuable am I to you? Well, we're going to look at three things. What Jesus is worth, why Jesus is worth it, and how Jesus' worth is shown.

Why Jesus is... What Jesus is worth, why Jesus is worth it, and how Jesus' worth is shown. So what Jesus is worth?

First, we get the valuation of the religious leaders. Look at the end of verse 1. The chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him.

They simply want Jesus dead, removed, out the way. To them, Jesus has been a constant threat. After all, he's been confronting them and challenging their religious ritual and has exposed it as empty and false.

But it's not until we get to meet Judas that we get to see how much they really value Jesus.

[3 : 46] Look at verse 10. 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.

We know that the price that they were willing to pay for Jesus from the other gospel accounts was 30 pieces of silver. That was the minimum amount of money you would pay for a slave, the lowest of the low.

In other words, he's worth nothing. In fact, he's worth more dead than he is alive. And that's the value that many people put on the head of Jesus today.

He's worth more dead than he is alive. Because a dead Jesus, well, he can't challenge you or confront you.

A dead Jesus isn't going to tell you what's true or what's good or what's right. If we can somehow remove Jesus, if we can push Jesus out the way, if we can kill him off, then that means we can live as we please.

[5 : 04] We're answerable to no one. We might as well just all go home and do whatever we like. In other words, his life is worthless.

It counts for nothing. To these religious people, Jesus has no real value. So they plot to kill him. Next, we get the valuation of a woman. She's a nobody. She's an outsider. We don't even know what her name is.

Look at verse 3. While Jesus was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the leper, we don't know, maybe Jesus had healed him in the past, we don't know, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume made of pure nard.

So ladies, you can forget your Chanel No. 5 or your Dolce & Gabbana or whatever you wear. This perfume was the very best.

[6 : 23] It was made of, look what it says, pure nard. That was an extract from a very rare root which came all the way from the Himalayas in Nepal.

Wow. So you could imagine the costs at that time involved to bring that all the way to a place like Bethany. In fact, we are told it's cost.

Look at verse 5. We're told that it was worth more than a year's wages. So an average wage today, 40,000.

It's worth at least that. And a year's wage then was of much greater significance. So we could even multiply that number. It's a huge amount.

But not only did this perfume have monetary or financial value, it also has sentimental or personal value. You see, it's very unlikely that a woman of that time would have been able to afford such an item.

[7 : 27] They didn't have careers and, well, if they did work, they certainly didn't get paid very much. So it's most likely a family heirloom.

Something that's been passed down over time. Something precious and valuable. Never to be used except perhaps in dire circumstances.

In many ways, to this woman, it was like an insurance policy. And this costly perfume was kept in an alabaster jar which itself was very expensive.

And what was unique about this kind of jar, it didn't have a screw top or a little spray canister or anything else like that. It was sealed. And the point was this.

Once the seal was broken, it all had to be used up. You couldn't save any. Now look what happens at the end of verse 3.

[8 : 32] She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. The symbolism is as potent as the fragrance that is now beginning to fill the room.

To this unknown woman, Jesus is priceless. He is invaluable to her. The worth that she places on Jesus is infinitely greater than anything else.

He is worth more to her than all she owns financially and personally. And in this act of extravagant love and devotion, she is literally poured out on top of Jesus everything.

Everything. She has held nothing back. It gives us a glimpse of her heart. Her heart is like that of the poor widow.

Do you remember we met her at the end of chapter 12 verse 42. She was the poor widow who had two copper coins worth less than a penny.

[9 : 46] That's all she had. But remember what Jesus said about her? She put in everything. All that she had to live on.

And here we get a glimpse into this woman. Everything else and everyone else fades in comparison to the beauty and the wonder of who Jesus is.

He is invaluable to her. So you see at the very beginning we're faced with these two extreme contrasts to the one Jesus is worth nothing.

He's worth more dead. But to the woman he is invaluable. Which brings us to the second why Jesus is worth it.

Why Jesus is worth it. Like the disciples we might think come on this is a bit over the top isn't it?

Look at verse 4. Some of those present they were the disciples by the way were saying indignantly to one another why this waste of perfume?

[11 : 02] It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor. What's she doing? And they rebuked her harshly. And to our minds this is absolutely crazy.

This is financial suicide. It's even unchristian. It's a nonsense. Who would do such a thing? Verse 6 leave her alone. Why are you bothering her?

She has done a beautiful thing to me. Jesus saying she has come to see how valuable I am. She knows what I am worth.

What she has done for me this is how you should treat me. Her extravagance isn't wasteful it is beautiful. So once again Jesus is having to take the opportunity to teach his disciples through an outsider why he is of infinite value and he's teaching us why he is worth what he is.

Look at verse 7. The poor he says you will always have with you and you can help them anytime you want but you will not always have me.

[12:27] She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Now in those times funerals were very different than what they are today.

In those times it was the practice well to put perfume and spices on the dead body to cover up the smell of all the decaying that went on. So this act of this woman the pouring of the perfume on the head is to remind us that Jesus is going to die.

As Jesus says she's preparing for my burial. Don't you get it? I'm going to die. And this is what makes Jesus worth everything.

This is why Jesus is priceless. Because he died for us. The disciples they haven't got it.

They're concerned for the poor. But Jesus wants them and he wants us to see that he is the one who became poor for us. He was the one who became a slave for us.

[13:44] Treated as the lowest of the low. Coming to serve the world. Coming to serve people like you and me. He came and he was treated as a sinner.

He was judged in my place. He was condemned in your place. He was punished. He was killed. He was buried. He died for my sin and your sin.

But it's so much more than that. The burial of Jesus is the link between his death on the one hand and his resurrection on the other.

Constantly we're told that he would die, he would be killed, that he would be buried, and on the third day he would rise again. And through his resurrection he's defeated and destroyed death, our greatest enemy.

We all know that Halloween has been celebrated over this past week. It's the great irony, it's the great tragedy that people mock and laugh about death, but for the rest of the year they live in fear of death.

[14:58] They can't even talk about it. Yet here's the one who defeated it and destroyed it. And that's what makes Jesus priceless.

That's why Jesus is invaluable. Nobody offers what he can offer. In fact, you can't buy what Jesus offers.

No amount of money will get you forgiveness of all of your sin, past, present and future. No amount of money is going to buy you into the eternal kingdom.

Nobody's going to give you the life that only he can give. That's why Jesus came, to die our death, to rise again, to secure our eternal security forever.

That act is priceless. That act is invaluable. And we must be clear, this woman is not trying to buy Jesus.

[16:04] She's not trying to earn his favour. This is simply an expression and an outpouring of her faith in Jesus, her love for Jesus, her devotion to him.

She's come to see who he is. She understands who Jesus is. and she is simply entrusting her whole life to him. By giving of all that she has, she knows that in Jesus she has everything.

More than what money could ever buy. The woman, this unknown outsider, we don't even know her name, but we know she's got Jesus right.

She's come to see his true value, his true worth. The disciples, on the other hand, the privileged insiders who's been with him all this time, they're still struggling.

They still don't get who he is. So how is Jesus' worth going to be shown in our lives?

[17:20] So let's ask ourselves the question we asked at the very beginning. What is Jesus worth to you? What is the value that you place on Jesus?

What do I place on Jesus? Well the true value that we place on Jesus will be shown by the kind of lives that we live.

First, we can simply use Jesus. Look at verse 10 again. Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priest to betray Jesus to them.

They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. You see, for Judas, well Jesus was just simply a means to an end. His approach to it all was, what can I get out of him? And that's how we can treat Jesus. We don't value him, we just use him.

[18 : 30] Jesus, if you make me better, then I'll follow you. Jesus, if you get me that job and you ease my financial worries, then I will love you.

Jesus, if you provide a spouse for me, then I will do whatever you ask of me. In other words, Jesus, if you are really worth it, you will do what I tell you to do.

You see, we can simply measure the worth of Jesus by what we think we can just get out of him, what we can squeeze out of him. We don't love him for who he is.

Jesus is only there to meet my wants and my desires. the tragedy of this valuation is it leads to death.

Look what Jesus had to say about Judas in verse 21. We'll get on to this next week, but let's just have a preview. Chapter 14, verse 21, the second part of it.

[19 : 39] This is what Jesus says about Judas, but woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man. It would be better for him if he had not been born.

You see, we know that Judas squeezed what he could to get out of Jesus, but it destroyed his life. it left him empty and broken and to treat Jesus in that way, he's just there to meet my needs, it will break you, it will destroy you, it will leave you separated from God.

So we can use Jesus, or second, we can preach Jesus, or if you like, proclaim Jesus. Look at verse 9. I tell you the truth, Jesus says, whenever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.

If we really value Jesus, or if we see his true worth, we will proclaim Jesus. We will begin to tell the gospel story, the good news that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again from the grave.

On one episode of the Antiques Roadshow, and I don't want you to think this would be bad for my image, that I'm an avid follower. You can look it up on the YouTube, by the way.

[21 : 10] A lady bought this ordinary glass vase. she got it at a car boot sale, not because she liked the vase, but because she liked the plant that was in it.

She bought it for one pound. They'd kept it for years and wondered what it was worth, and they brought it along to the Antiques Roadshow. They discovered it was made by some French designer, I can't even pronounce his name, but here's the point, it was worth £25,000.

And the story of that event has travelled far wide. It was in the newspapers, it's all over the net. They came to see the true value.

And when they saw the true value, they couldn't help but tell the story. And now Jesus is saying to us, what this woman has done is to tell the story of the gospel.

She came to understand who I am, that I must die. Did you see what she did? She poured perfume on my head to prepare for my burial. By her very action, she was proclaiming the good news of Jesus, his death and his resurrection.

[22 : 33] She came to see the true value and worth. And Jesus is saying to us, if you understand who I am, if you know what I have done for you, if you understand my true worth and value, then you will begin to live and you will begin to tell the gospel story.

You see, the value, the only way of telling the value we place on Jesus, will be shown through our lives. We will either use him or we will begin to proclaim him.

We need to stop and wonder at the saviour and see how beautiful he is and all that he has done for us.

Learn the true value and tell the story. Let's pray. Father, we confess that at times we treat you like, or rather we treat your son like an old pitcher, just this item that's been hanging around and we just forget or we fail to see your true value and worth.

Help us afresh to see you through your eyes. May your Holy Spirit open up our eyes to see who you are and what you have done.

[24 : 28] to be amazed afresh the glory of your death, of your resurrection, of the life, the new life that it gives us.

Father, please help us to take that in and please would you fill us with the power of your spirit so that we may be people who go and begin to tell the story of your true value and your true worth. And may our lives reflect it also in how we use our time and in how we give. Help us to learn from this woman and help us to see Jesus in all his greatness.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[25 : 48] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.