

AM Mark 14:1-26 The tale of two rooms

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[0 : 0 0] seeking how to arrest Jesus 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.

Well, there were some who said to themselves indignantly, why was this ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than 300 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.

[1 : 1 9] 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. And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?

And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. And wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, the teacher says, where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

And he will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. There, prepare for us. And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them.

And they prepared the Passover. And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.

[2 : 4 3] Oh, they began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, is it I? He said to them, it is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me.

For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.

And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, take, this is my body.

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

[3 : 49] And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. May God add his blessing to that reading of his word.

Rather provocatively, I titled the sermon today, The Tale of Two Rooms. And if we want a text, it would be Mark 14, the second part of verse 14.

Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? Now, birthday celebrations are mentioned three times in the Bible.

Pharaoh's birthday celebration is mentioned in Genesis 40, and that was the occasion of his cupbearer's reinstatement to public service.

And that was just as Joseph had predicted in prison. But it was also the occasion of the termination of his chief baker's employment and existence.

[5 : 07] And then in the book of Job, chapter 1, we are told of Job's sons holding parties. Feasts to celebrate their birthdays and inviting their siblings.

And it says in Job 1, verse 5, when a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning, he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.

And the third occasion where birthdays are mentioned is in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, where we read of King Herod holding a birthday party, probably fuelled by excess alcohol, and making rash promises which led to John the Baptist's summary execution.

So there is reference in Scripture to these occasions. But there's an edginess to those accounts. And that is really, there's a kind of pointer there to inappropriate and excessive behaviour.

And this made our forefathers rather cautious about birthdays and birthday celebrations. Especially when it came to celebrating the birth of the Lord Jesus.

[6 : 25] Does it command us in Scripture to celebrate this Jesus' birth? No. Does it demand us not to celebrate it again?

No. So how about we use our sanctified common sense? Is the birth of the saviour of this world, the saviour of sinners, of you and me, is that birth something worth celebrating?

Absolutely. After all, a great company of the heavenly host, the army of heaven, appeared with the angel of the Lord in Luke 2 and broke out into a symphony of praise to God at this wondrous arrival into the world.

should we not then break into rapturous praise too? The incarnation, the enfleshment of the divine, of the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, is a manifestation of God's love so amazing, so divine, that it demands my adulation and wonderment.

more than that, when our Lord instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and instructed us to remember, was this not part of what he was telling us to recall?

[7 : 49] But we are to remember it all. The birth in the context of the death, the cradle in the shadow of the cross.

The whole purpose of this fulfillment of God's promises of salvation, this coming of Emmanuel, was that the baby would grow and mature and come to manhood and live a life of perfection that qualified him and only him as the Lamb of God who could and did provide the only possible, acceptable sacrifice for our sin.

And as a result and for that very purpose he died the most cruel, awful, humiliating crucifixion 33 years after that birth. So should I remember my Lord's birth?

Oh yes. But remember it in the context of what followed. And how often should I remember that birth? Once a year? How often should I remember my Lord's death?

I think that gives an indication. In my own childhood the pendulum had swung so far in one direction that in many quarters it seemed that there was such a fear of being seen to approve of celebration in any form that Jesus' birth never actually was marked at all.

[9 : 18] Christmas Day only was recognised as a public holiday in Scotland in 1958. Sadly I can remember back to those days. But we ignore the remembering and the recognition of Jesus' birth at the peril of further confusing and already confused and dying world.

But as and when we do so we must afford this momentous event the dignity and the relevance and the response it deserves.

We must think about it accurately not in a ferment of myth and commercialism. My best ever Christmas does not depend on the sparkle of my Christmas tree or on the cost of my present or the cost of my grandchildren's presents or great grandchildren's presents or the lavishness of the meals that we consume because it isn't my Christmas.

it isn't my anything. This is all about Jesus. He came he was born he died he fulfilled the covenant of grace.

God took the initiative and mankind as the beneficiary but this is Jesus' birth that we remember and it is Jesus' death that we remember and praise God it is Jesus' resurrection and ascension to God's right hand which we also remember and fall down in wonder and love and praise at his feet.

[10 : 54] There are many myths that have grown up around the nativity and we are bombarded with these. Indeed the church has been so bombarded with them since the second century AD that we are conditioned to take some of these myths as the truth.

We must just be so thankful to God that we have scripture to guide us and teach us because it is in taking our eyes off scripture that we start to lose our way.

So how about the tale of two rooms? Well you are going to start thinking that I am angling for a job as a first century ADE state agent but I would like to describe to you in attempting to do justice to God's word what a desirable residence in Jerusalem around 10 BC to 10 AD would have looked like indeed looked like up until about 50 years ago because things in many parts of the Middle East have not changed much over the centuries.

When I say desirable residence I should maybe just say residence because by our standards there would have been little to be desirable about it.

The living quarters of the common basic housing unit back in the day was a single room and this room this is a looking down from above but this room would be built on a slight slope for very practical fluid gravitational reasons but this was the single family room where all the living was done for 8 to 10 people and at one end down through two or three steps was a lower area where the animals were kept.

[12 : 51] The pig not the pig oh how could I have said that the sheep the cow and so on the donkey and as Jesus himself said in Luke's Gospel as day would dawn the animals would be laid out for watering but this was the basic family unit 8 to 10 people living in there a lower area where the animals were kept and there were mangers where the animals standing there would put their head over and feed out the mangers that was the basic housing unit now to us with our refined sensitivities we can only imagine the stew and the aroma and the noise the lack of privacy the lack of me space that such an arrangement afforded but that was the way it was these houses were not a four apartment from

Summer Hill these were not high rise flats these were a single basic unit and this was the environment in which Jesus grew up now the residence became a little bit more desirable if either at the end furthest away from the animals or sometimes if the structure was strong enough on the roof an extra room was added the guest room and so we read of arrangements like this in Elijah in the widow of Zapheneth's house we read about Dorcas in the room upstairs where she was laid out and we read about Peter being on the roof perhaps when Cornelius's men came it was this sort of arrangement now I don't know if as any of you were growing up you had a special room like that guest room in your house now both sets of my grandparents poor as they were one in

Easter Ross and one in Glasgow had such a big room in their house indeed my own parents called the front room in our house the big room we would call it the lounge and that was somewhere as a child that you entered at your peril because unless it was a holiday or a holiday or your parents had invited a special guest like the minister to come that place was out of bounds for you but that big room that guest room was special and for special occasions only and so it was in our text today the name for the room where Jesus met with his disciples to celebrate the Passover was a guest room or it's often described an upper room either up the slope or up the roof some Bible scholars and commentators have in fact described what took place there described for us in John chapters 13 to 17 as the upper room and those who have written books about that include

Bishop J.C. Ryle Sinclair Ferguson John MacArthur to name but a few but interestingly the word for upper room the word for this bit in Greek is the word *kataluma* it's used three times in the New Testament and three times only twice it's used to describe the upper room where Jesus and the disciples celebrated the Last Supper once in Mark's account once in Luke's account but you know the other time where this word is used is at the start of Luke's gospel let me read you the verse it may surprise you it may not while they were there the time came for the baby to be born and Mary gave birth to her firstborn a son she wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no room for him in the guest room

Luke 2 6 and 7 many things have been written about Jesus and his birth and many songs written which are not the fruit of ill will but of over enthusiasm and vivid imagination but are simply not true and when we study scripture a whole lot of these myths are readily debunked was there an inn no inn existed at the time as in the parable of the good Samaritan but that was an entirely different word in Greek an entirely different concept that word was translated or we would translate it as a place for everyone not an upper room was there a donkey no word of it was Mary riding side saddle desperately trying in after in nothing says that was Jesus born in the open or in a cave with no protection from the elements

[18:22] I don't see it well was there a stable well only if you call the animal end of the regular residence a stable certainly the animals were there like they were in every house at the time surely there was an innkeeper to turn them away no show me where it says that the version of events that so often portrayed in nativity plays has much of its basis not in scripture but in the imagination of a second century AD playwright and storyteller who made up quite a number of the details for the sake of what they thought was a better story something which outraged the church fathers at the time but it kind of stuck fallen mankind likes a good story the more details the better and what better story than the helplessness and desperation and rejection of this heavily pregnant young woman but that is not what scripture tells us scripture tells us something more beautiful and more enriching than that

Joseph was not unknown in Bethlehem it's where his roots were he was from the house of David Bethlehem was the city of David he would have been well kent in Bethlehem the same way I would be if I went up to Inverness or Easter Ross where I have oodles of relatives if I went up there I could find a dozen houses where I could stay the relatives might be quite distant but they would say oh you're the son of John Akai who was son of Humach oh yes come in moreover the culture of the region and the time was one of accommodation and welcome to travellers and pregnant women would have been right there at the top of that list scripture does not tell us they couldn't find a place to stay it doesn't what it says is that there was no room in the upper room the guest room well of course there was no room in the guest room there were lots of people milling around

Bethlehem lots of relatives would have made their way there as commanded by Caesar Augustus to be registered for the census the guest room would have been packed full but the host of the house the owner couldn't evict all the other guests into the main living room area with the animals or out into the cold when Mary's labour began the only practical solution would have been for the guests and the men to be closeted off in the guest room Joseph almost certainly included he was no midwife but there were midwives we can find that when we read even back as far as the book of Exodus and they and other women would have attended Mary as she laboured and delivered the Lord Jesus the Saviour of the world flesh of our flesh DNA of our DNA but son of God but it couldn't have been more humble delivered in the living room come kitchen with indeed the family livestock looking on and what more suitable receptacle for the swaddled baby than the baby sized animal trough the manger but yes

Jesus was born in the humblest of circumstances into the dirt and smell and poverty no king's palace here and the first visitors to see him were not foreign emissaries or dignitaries but shepherds from the nearby fields and viewed by pharisaical eyes you couldn't come up with a more disreputable untrustworthy group of miscreants than shepherds they weren't even permitted to give evidence in court they were so unreliable in those days allegedly they were the very low life of their age the vagrants the nobodies but these were the very people for whom Jesus came into this world and for whom he died on the cross of Calvary and let us never forget that it was our sin that held Jesus to the cross and when we set aside our foolish and utterly unjustifiable pride we are those ruffraff shepherds are we not there are so many other nuances that we could bring out about this but there we have it

Mary and the Lord Jesus would certainly not have been welcomed into nor would they have wanted to share the birth experience with a crowd of distant relatives or strangers in the upper room in that house in Bethlehem but Jesus the Lord of glory was born in the living room in the humblest of circumstances with the bare minimum necessary to bring him into this fallen world of ours so Mary gave birth to her firstborn a son she wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because though there was an upper room there was no upper room availability for them but let's wind forward 33 years and then we find the

[24 : 22] Lord Jesus asking that stunning question where is the guest room where is the upper room is this upper room available let's read those verses from Luke's account this time Luke 22 reading at verse 8 so Jesus sent Peter and John saying go and prepare the Passover for us that we may eat it and they said to him where will you have us prepare it he said to them behold when you have entered the city a man carrying a jar of water will meet you follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house the teacher says to you where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples and he will show you a large upper room furnished prepare it there and they went and found it just as he had told them and they prepared the Passover in this upper room room we have and he was with his disciples before he was wrongfully arrested and brutally humiliated and tortured and crucified in this in this upper room there were contrasts as well as similarities with the

Bethlehem upper room he wasn't welcome in the Bethlehem one he was in the Jerusalem one indeed it had been set aside for him in Bethlehem an assortment of distant relatives and friends were making the most of Caesar Augustus decree by sharing together and having what we might call a right good catch up in Jerusalem there was a sharing of a different sort going on there was sharing of the Passover meal the sharing of fellowship the sharing of humble service the sharing of thoughts sharing of agape love of comfort of promises and of prayer remarkably this Passover meal jumped the gun if you like because John 13 1 begins it was just before the

Passover festival you see Passover the feast of unleavened bread lasted seven days from sundown on the evening of the meal that we read about today for seven complete 24 hour periods and the next day the very day Jesus yielded up his life on the cross was the day when the paschal lambs were killed for the Passover meal Jesus knew this would come to pass and so in a time of unparalleled poignancy and grace the son of God served and encouraged and taught and supported and comforted these uncomprehending disciples who for all their protestations of loyalty and support within hours would all forsake him and flee we are so privileged to be allowed in in this private gathering you see we've been able to have only a glance in the upper room in

Bethlehem but here in Jerusalem just as Jesus arranged it for his disciples he's arranged for us to be there to see it all to hear it all to feel it all and what a precious place it is this is where Jesus having loved his own who were in the world now began to show them the full extent of his love that full extent led to the cross and beyond but it started in the most amazing way Jesus knew it says in John 13 that the father had put everything absolutely everything under his power and he knew that he had come from God and was returning to God so as a consequence of that because of that knowledge so he did what did he chastise the disciples for their lack of faith did he leave them in the lurch the way they were about to leave him did he call time and fickle faithless mankind there were a thousand thousand things he could have done but what he did do was to take off his outer garments wrap a towel round his waist and he got down there like the lowest servant and he washed the dirty smelly feet of these disciples whom he loved and for whom he was going within hours to die greater love has no man than this he went on to tell them than that a man lay down his life for his friends he tells them true agape love for one another marks them out as his followers he tells them of a heavenly home prepared for them he tells them of the comforter the holy spirit who would come after he himself had gone to lead them into all truth he tells them that they have to live in him just like branches live in the vine he assures them that when those who love him obey his teaching his father will love them and God the father and God the son will come to them and make their home with them

John 14 23 he warns them that just as the world hates him and his love so the world will hate his disciples they shouldn't be surprised because they're no more of the world than he is he encourages them that their grief at his departure will turn to joy with the arrival of the holy spirit and Jesus prays that God will be glorified in all that is about to take place he prays for his disciples he prays for all believers and that includes us how precious is that we are in that upper room silent observers there and what we hear among all the rest is the son of God praying for us please be encouraged my friends that that is something which our Lord continues to do Romans 8 tells us that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with wordless groans but it also tells us that

[31 : 34] Christ Jesus is seated at the right hand of God making intercession for us so let us never think that no one prays for us as individuals when God the Son and God the Holy Spirit assuredly do as we draw our thoughts to a conclusion let's dwell for a moment or two on how the gospel describes this room five words or phrases are used to define it upper or guest we've thought about already the second thing is this room was large room for everyone that's the thing about our Lord when he invites you you'll not be turned away at the door there's room for you in his company just as we have enjoyed in the upper room today come unto me all you who labour and are heavy laden says

Jesus and I will give you rest remember that carol that finishes oh come to my heart Lord Jesus there is room in my heart for thee the very last verse there says when the heavens shall ring and her choir shall sing at thy coming to victory let thy voice call me home saying yet there is room there is room at my side for thee so this room was upper it was large it was furnished everything we might need is there already Jesus would not invite us into a bare room mind you the joy of his presence would illumine any room but this room is indeed as indeed is the case with every one of the Lord's provisions is fulsome lavish abundant the fourth thing is it was ready it was prepared has it ever struck you how nothing catches our

Lord short so to speak even the man with the water pot a prepared man or an angel was part of the plan that brought this last meal to foundational to our future as well as our present that there is indeed a prepared place for God's prepared people and lastly it was as advertised it was just as Jesus had told them is that not the way of it our saviour is the way and the life but he's the truth also every word that proceeded from his mouth was true and because of that we can have complete and eternal confidence in his very great and precious promises that what he's promised will come to fulfilment as indeed Paul says in Philippians 1 and 6 being confident of this that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of

Christ Jesus and it was also as advertised because have you noticed how Jesus in his birth and life and death and resurrection fulfilled scripture it was all just as it had been told by the prophets all as advertised so as we focus these days on those scriptures surrounding the Lord's birth his incarnation let us think about the other upper room too and marvel at the height and depth and breadth of the words and thoughts and purposes of our God compared to our own let's join together in prayer God ■■■■■■ just prz i have to know■■■13 what is