

A Beautiful Thing

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Preacher: Jared Blankenship

[0 : 00] I want you to see now how Mark sets the scene for us. This is another one of those, we've called them literary sandwiches. Scholars call them Markan sandwiches, where he'll start with a story, he'll insert a different story, and then he'll come back to conclude the first story at the end.

That's really what Mark's doing here. He sets the scene with the first two verses. It was now two days before the Passover, in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the chief priest and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.

And so these two verses here introduce this final subsection of Mark's gospel. All of the focus is now turning to the suffering, death, and ultimately resurrection of Jesus.

Remember what Mark stated in the very first verse of the book was his purpose. His purpose is to proclaim that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and the Son of God.

And by God's grace, and through the work of God's Spirit, he has skillfully set forth his argument, which finds its glorious conclusion in these last three chapters.

[1 : 15] And though believers look on these moments with understandable joy, they really are very dark and disturbing.

We're told that the Feast of the Passover and Unleavened Bread are within two days' time from beginning. The ruling body of the Jews here, mentioned as the chief priest and the scribes, probably meant to be a reference to the Sanhedrin.

They are hurriedly and stealthily pursuing the death of Jesus. They've plotted for years. This has been building up all through Mark's gospel, this antagonism of the leaders among the Jews.

They are now at a point where they can wait no longer, and they're waiting for the opportune moment, which presents itself here when one of Jesus' closest friends agrees to help them.

And as they carry out this plan, all of Jesus' disciples abandon him, and he's left utterly alone to face the agony of the cross.

[2 : 27] And it's amid this context that Mark inserts this beautiful story of devotion and worship. We say, well, why exactly is this here?

Why don't we think it's hard for us to see that this story itself carries on the theme that Mark has woven throughout his whole book on the nature of true and genuine discipleship.

We've seen that time and again. And what we see happening here with this woman, it's not so much a picture of that initial decision to be a follower of Christ.

Remember, is it chapter 8 where Jesus says, If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Right? And he sets forth the terms for discipleship.

Well, that's a moment that we may, that's a decision we make at the moment of conversion, isn't it? Our hearts are awakened in faith to the person of Jesus Christ. We respond then with an affirmative action that we're going to leave everything else behind and we're going to follow Christ with our lives.

[3 : 29] But that spirit and attitude and mindset of discipleship does not end in that moment. It's carried on perpetually throughout the entire life of the believer in Jesus.

And what we see really unfolding, the purpose I think for it here in Mark chapter 14 of this story is to give us a picture of what it looks like for a believer in this ongoing spirit and attitude of devotion and sacrifice and worship and leaving all things behind, even precious things, in order to be fully and completely devoted to Jesus.

I really think that's what we're to take from this story. While the Jews are rejecting Jesus and the 12 are abandoning Jesus, this woman's action stands out as a beautiful illustration of wholehearted devotion to Jesus.

And if you want to know how true discipleship is expressed in a believer's life, you need look no further than to this woman.

Even Jesus himself said what she's done is not going to be forgotten. People are going to talk about it forever. Wherever the gospel goes, they're going to talk about this moment.

[4 : 49] And here we are, 2,000 years later, and we're talking about this moment. Four things about this passage I want to point out to you. The first thing is this. I want you to see extraordinary devotion.

Extraordinary devotion. What does it look like for a believer in Christ to continue in faithful discipleship? Well, it begins and ends with extraordinary devotion.

Look at verse 3. 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.

Now, neither Matthew or Mark reveal the woman's identity. Luke doesn't cover this particular event. But John chapter 12, in fact, if you want to write that in the margins of your notes, I want to encourage you to go and read that passage later on this afternoon.

You're going to hear me say some things probably today that you don't find in Mark 14. You're going to find it in John chapter 12, and I just probably won't take the time to tell you to flip back and forth. Okay, so write that in the margins and go and read it later.

[6 : 01] John chapter 12 actually tells us who this is. This is Mary. Mary, who was the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

That's who it is that performs this act. Now, Jesus had been staying in Bethany. We know that already. It's a two-mile walk from Jerusalem, and a group of Jesus' followers were holding a dinner party in his honor.

That's the purpose of the gathering here together. It's not at Mary's house. It's actually at another man's house named Simon. And it's during this gathering that we're told Mary interrupts the dinner, and she has this unusual but extravagant display of honor.

I mean, it is unusual, isn't it? Maybe even for their culture it would have seemed somewhat unusual. Certainly for our culture, this is kind of a weird thing. She brought in a box of very expensive perfume or oil.

She broke its container open and then proceeded to pour its contents on the head and on the feet of the Lord Jesus. That's kind of strange.

[7 : 20] The oil that's used here, we're told, is pure nard. Your translation may say spike nard. It's the same thing. It was an aromatic ointment probably from the Himalayan mountains in Asia.

It was especially pungent. And its most common use in this particular culture of Jesus' day was as an oil to anoint dead bodies.

It covered up the stench. The smell of it was so aromatic and strong. It covered up the stench of decomposition in dead bodies. That's what people would most likely use this for. And the value and purpose of the perfume is what made Mary's action actually so extravagant.

Ironically, it's actually also what made people so offended by what she did. There's more to this action than just the giving of a luxurious gift.

In fact, there's four things I want to point out about Mary's worship here that show us that this really was an extraordinary act of devotion. First thing is this.

[8 : 33] It was costly. Her act itself, her worship itself was costly. The cost of such a bottle of ointment was, we're told, equivalent to at least 300 denarii, which is a year's salary.

Now, can you imagine, just in the monetary value of this perfume, can you imagine men taking a year's worth of your salary, going this Christmas, and buying the equivalent of whatever your salary is in perfume for your wife?

A single bottle of perfume worth a year's salary. And then can you imagine if your wife then comes to church next week and decides she's going to pour the entire contents of that bottle of perfume on me?

You might be a little offended by that, right? Why? Partly because of the sheer value of it. It's very expensive. Oil, very expensive ointment.

But the value here, what cost Mary so much, was much more than monetary value. You understand that, right? It likely had tremendous sentimental value.

[9 : 46] Mary's likely not the type of person that would have had the means just to go and buy this. Most likely it was an heirloom passed down from her family. Perhaps it had been passed down from generation to generation.

Maybe they would even break open maybe the stopper of the bottle and just use a few drops at a time whenever a loved one would pass away and they continued to pass it down. Maybe that was the circumstance for Mary.

I don't know. Typically a gift like this would have been given as a part of a woman's dowry. And we don't know the nature of all of Mary's relationships. All we know is that she's probably not the type of person that could have just gone out and bought this.

It had sentimental value. It's been given to her probably by somebody that loved her very much and that she loved her very much as well. But it also had value in the security that it provided to her.

Right? It's not only sentimental. If it's really worth a year's salary, she knows that if Mary ever gets into a tough spot in life, she knows she can at least sell the nard.

[10 : 53] And in the process of selling that, she can at least buy herself a year's worth of comfort, a year's worth of time and security. It's not just about the money.

There's an emotional attachment to this gift. There is a securing attachment to this gift. But the purpose of it as well gives it really great value.

Like a family who wants to honor the death of a loved one in the most meaningful possible way, this object had an honorable purpose reserved for the people that Mary loved the most.

In other words, it cost Mary significantly to lavish this worship on Jesus, something we should all take careful note of here in this story.

It wasn't just about the money. There was a lot more value to this object than just that. And she was willing to give up all of it. The money, the security, the sentimental nature, the purpose for another person that this would have had.

[12 : 03] She's willing to give all of that up in order to give it to Jesus, in order to express this devotion to Jesus. And isn't this the nature of true worship? True worship always cost us something.

Always. And when I say worship, I don't mean just merely the gathering on a Sunday morning.

When we talk about worship, we're not boxing it up into an event.

We're talking about the overflow of our life in response to the goodness of Jesus and the person of God and his character. Our whole life is to be lived as an act of worship to him. That always cost us something.

In fact, it always cost us everything. As is exemplified here in Mary. But it wasn't just costly. It was calculated. Her worship, her devotion was calculated.

We shouldn't be quick to accuse her of being careless or rash. The unusual nature of what she did, I think, communicates that her actions were actually very thoughtful.

[13 : 07] They were thought out. But then consider this. They're not in Mary's house. This party's at someone else's house. So it's not like they're in the middle of the party and Mary just gets this idea that up in the closet, I've got this thing.

This would be pretty cool to do. And she just does it spontaneously. That's not the picture that we get here. Mary has thought about this ahead of time. She has seen in this act a way to express her love for the Lord.

And she goes home. She gets the ointment. And she brings it along with her. It was calculated. It was intentional. She did it on purpose. Nobody shows devotion to Jesus on accident.

It doesn't happen. You don't just wake up one morning and say, you know what? I think I'm going to live my life for the Lord today. No, it's the buildup. It's a calculated response to who Jesus is and what he has done.

And it's daily, intentionally living out our lives in this expression of devotion. It's costly. It's calculated. Third, it was unreserved.

[14 : 19] It was unreserved. Mary didn't break the box's seal in order that she might pour some of the oil on Jesus.

She broke the neck of the flask itself. The word here indicates crushing. She has crushed the container itself.

Why? In order that she might empty all of its contents on the Lord. When it came to her worship and devotion, she held nothing back for herself or for anyone else.

She gave it all to Jesus. A consistent picture of discipleship in Mark's gospel, isn't it? Are you seeing why Mark is including this now? Look at what she's doing.

She doesn't pour a few drops and then save the rest for Lazarus or for a future husband. No. She gives all of her devotion to Jesus.

[15:22] Any other devotion in her life would have to flow first out of her love for Jesus. Do you see? Fourthly, it was humble.

It was humble. Now, how can we know that Mary just wasn't showing off? Because that's easy to do, isn't it? It's easy to find a public way to demonstrate what you believe is an expression of worship.

We see that happen in churches all the time. People stand on a platform and put on a good show or whatever it is that they're doing. How can we know that that's not what Mary was doing? After all, it's a room full of men in a male-dominated society.

Maybe perhaps she had this thought that said, I'll show these men. I'll do more for Jesus than what any of them have ever done. I don't think that's what she was doing.

And the reason I don't think that's what she is doing is because of what John 12 emphasizes to us. Matthew and Mark both say that she pours this on the head of Jesus.

[16:27] John emphasizes a different part. She pours it on the feet of Jesus. John says that after she pours it on the feet of Jesus, she takes her hair and she begins to wipe the feet of Jesus.

You know what she's doing? She's literally washing his feet. She's washing his feet. An act reserved for slaves. She was doing for Jesus in this moment what the 12 were going to refuse to do for Jesus in just a couple of days.

He was going to have to go through this extreme example of servant-heartedness for his disciples that they could have learned the lesson if they had just paid attention to Mary a few days before. It's humble service. Her worship wasn't about herself. It was about serving Jesus. Even in the most humiliating of ways if necessary. Such is our worship to the Lord.

Four things this communicates to Jesus in this moment. What is it that Jesus thinks as Mary does this? What is it that we are to look at this act and say this is what her act communicates?

[17:38] First, it communicates this. Jesus, you are more precious to me than my most precious possession. Nothing, Lord, that I have is more valuable than you.

Everything that I have is yours. Even the thing that I love the most. Now you fill in the blank of whatever that is for your life. It may not be a material object like it was for Mary.

Maybe it's a person. It's a person. Those of us who are parents, we understand this, right? We love our children so much. Sometimes we love them too much.

So that we love them even maybe more than what we love our spouse. Or perhaps even that we love our Savior. Is your children more precious to you than even Jesus is precious to you?

Maybe it's a job. I will do this thing. I'll get to Jesus when I can. But this is what's really important to me. Maybe it's a hobby.

[18:52] Maybe it's something else. What is it that's so precious to you in your life? Could you legitimately communicate to Jesus in the devotion that you express to him on a day-to-day basis that, Jesus, you are more precious to me than anything else in this life?

That's what her act expresses here. Communicates that. It doesn't just communicate that. She says, I'll hold nothing back as I follow you, Lord. I'll hold nothing back.

I'm not just giving you a few drops. I'm not just giving my kids to you on Sunday. I'm giving my kids to you every day. I'm not just counting on the Adventure Club people to teach my children.

I'm going to teach them. Why? Because Jesus is more precious to me. And I want them to know his preciousness. The treasure that he is.

So we can go on down the line and we can point to things. He says, I'm not going to hold anything back from you, Jesus. I'm going to give you all. What else does it communicate? I'm willing to serve you, Jesus, in the humblest of ways if necessary.

[20:00] If no one ever notices me. If no one ever cares. If everyone thinks that what I'm doing is pointless and useless.

I don't care. I will serve you in whatever way you want me to serve you. The big picture of what this communicates. I believe in you.

I believe you are who you say you are. I believe you've done for me what you said you would do. And in response to that, I give you all of my worship and all of my devotion to the Lord Jesus.

Extraordinary devotion is what we see here. Number two. We see surprising opposition. Surprising opposition. Verse four. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, Why was the ointment wasted like that?

This ointment could have been sold for more than 300 denarii and given to the poor. And they scolded her.

[21 : 11] This is quite the turn of events, isn't it? If you weren't familiar with this story, and I'm sure all of you are familiar with it, but if you weren't familiar with this story, you would probably step back at first and say, Wow!

That's incredible! And how was it that the people in the room responded? They scolded her. How dare you do that, Mary, they say.

You could have done so much more with that than give it to Jesus. Now we expect this kind of opposition from the world.

We're not surprised by that. At least we shouldn't be. But the indignation toward Mary here came from people who claim to follow Jesus.

It's amazing how quickly Christians resort to devouring one another. It's no wonder the apostles so often in the New Testament had to exhort the churches to stop with the pettiness and focus on the unity that is found in the gospel.

[22 : 24] As wonderfully gracious as Jesus is, his people are routinely schismatic. And the problem is that too many of our divisions find their source in the unloving, hypercritical way that we scrutinize one another's service for the Lord.

Can I remind you what Paul said to the Galatians? Galatians chapter 5. But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

If we just continually go after each other and one another's service through the Lord, eventually there won't be any of us left, essentially is what Paul says.

The truth is that the others in the room should have applauded Mary rather than scold her. I don't mean to insinuate that all divisions are unnecessary.

It's not what I mean. I think you understand what I'm getting at here. But some are unnecessary.

What they should have done for Mary is said, Wow, I wish I would have thought of that.

[23 : 34] What an act. Think about who's in the room. They're at the house of Simon the leper, which we know nothing about him except one thing. At one time, he had leprosy, and now he doesn't.

And most likely, the reason he's hosting this party in his house is because Jesus is the one that cleansed him from the leprosy. But it's not Simon the leper that we see lavishing Jesus with such extravagant worship.

I'm not saying that he was a part of the crowd that was condemning her, but he's not the one that's highlighted here either. Who else is in the room? Lazarus is in the room. And let me just remind you, just a few days before this, Lazarus was dead.

And because of Jesus, now he's alive. But it's not Lazarus lavishing this worship. All the disciples are there. Look at all the things Jesus had done for them and allowed them to see and allowed them to understand what he was going to do with their lives.

Yet it's Mary is the one. They should have applauded her. They should have joined her in this act of worship, but it's not what they did. And so that begs the question, why? Why would they condemn her in this way?

[24 : 49] I came up with three reasons. Maybe you'd come up with more. First, I think they have misplaced priorities. Misplaced priorities. I'm going to say more about this in a minute, but the basis of their reaction is that they judged her act as a waste.

So in one sense, they're virtue signaling in a way that we're very accustomed to in our own culture. Rather than judge her action for what it was, they judged it for what it wasn't.

So they paid no attention to the fact that what Mary was doing, she was doing for Jesus. They only focused on who she wasn't doing it for, which in this case was the poor.

And the irony in that is that by regarding her worship as wasteful, they implied that Jesus was undeserving of this act of devotion.

They put their social agenda above their gospel agenda. Okay? I think that's part of the problem.

We're going to come back to that in a moment. The second part of this is deceitful influence.

[25 : 57] Deceitful influence. We refer back to John chapter 12 in this. John tells us that the ringleader of the whole ordeal was Judas Iscariot, which isn't surprising if you understand the way the rest of the story unfolds necessarily.

John says that it was Judas who first brought this up, and he persuaded the others in the room to come along aside him, but that he was a deceiver in the process. He didn't tip them off to his true motive.

What they came to find out later was that Judas wasn't concerned for the poor at all. Judas was the keeper of the purse for the group. John says in John chapter 12 that he would help himself to the purse.

In other words, he was stealing from the group. Later they find this out. What Judas is concerned about in this moment is not the poor people who need some food for the evening. What he's concerned about is 300 denarii getting added to the purse so that he can take his cut without anybody realizing what he's doing.

And here's what Judas does. He begins to persuade others in the room. There's a deceitful influence here. He wins them over to his position that he doesn't even hold, which is a warning for us, isn't it?

[27 : 12] It's a warning for us. Don't get carried away in judgment on the basis of someone else's opinion. Start first with the word of God and make your judgment against the measurement of God's truth, not what someone else thinks about any given circumstance.

We would do well to remember this. When it comes to spiritual issues, when it comes to social issues, don't get carried along with the mindset of people around you without first looking at the truth of God.

If they had stopped and thought for a moment, they would have seen the folly of what they were saying. But they were carried along by a man who in his heart just wanted to steal the money. It's amazing how many Christians have too quickly followed another person's influence only to find out later that it was all a selfish ruse.

Be careful of that. I think the third thing is probably fairly common even among us today and it's just simple envy. It's hard not to imagine that pure jealousy was at the root of some of the criticism. Maybe not, but we know the easiest way to minimize our own weaknesses to others is to diminish the strength of other people around us. We try to build ourselves up by tearing other people down.

[28 : 37] If we're embarrassed that Mary did this and we should have done it but we didn't, the first thing we're going to do is try to criticize what she did so it doesn't make us look quite as bad.

Perhaps there's some of that happening in the room. Either way, it was surprising opposition. And I just want to encourage you through this to persevere through such opposition. Every act of devotion is going to hit some form of obstacle.

Persevere. I want to also remind you to be careful that you are not the opposition yourself.

Encourage people to lavish on Jesus all of their devotion and worship and let's encourage them and join them in doing so.

Main point number three, divine commendation. Divine commendation. Look with me at verse six. Jesus said, leave her alone.

Why do you trouble her? She's done a beautiful thing to me. I don't want to read emotion into the text unnecessarily.

[29 : 50] But when have you ever known someone to casually or nonchalantly intervene to protect another person? We don't do that.

No, this is, this carries with it a sternness, a passion. Leave her alone. Why would you ever condemn her for doing this of all things?

Why would you try to stop her? They had judged Mary's action as wasteful. Jesus saw it as beautiful.

And the bottom line here is that if God is pleased, it doesn't matter who isn't. Let me just say that again for the people in the back.

If God is pleased, it doesn't matter who isn't. Of course, that doesn't give us an excuse to just do what we want and claim that this is at God's pleasure.

[30 : 54] We do it based on the word of God. But when we faithfully live according to God's word, we can be at peace when people hate us for it.

Please the Lord. Worship the Lord. Live for Him. Give your devotion to Him. Two quick things Jesus commends her for. The first is her priority of devotion.

Her priority of devotion. Look at verse 7. You always have the poor with you, Jesus said. And whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me.

Her critic said she was fanatical. Jesus declared that her priorities were right where they needed to be. Sinclair Ferguson said, here were men who were more interested in their service than their master.

Which is an interesting thought here. There is a danger in becoming more concerned with Christian mission than with Christian worship. In fact, this has led many churches to replace the true gospel with a social gospel that links salvation to efforts in social reform and mission as primarily social engagement.

[32 : 16] Now, to be sure, Christians will inevitably engage in ministry to their community. James said it, James chapter 1, religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Clearly, the action of a Christian life that's devoted to Jesus is going to be involved in social engagement. We understand that. But Jesus' statement even implies it.

He implies that there is this ongoing necessity of serving the poor around us, but the priority of the Christian life must first be worship of God, devotion to His truth.

And our social engagement must flow through our devotion to Jesus, not eclipse it. The purpose of Lakeside Bible Church is to glorify God first through worship and through making disciples and then through mission to the community around us.

But as soon as we start to deceive ourselves into thinking that the true purpose of our church is to engage with the poor in the Cornelius area, then we'll start to diminish the necessity of the gospel.

[33 : 27] We'll start to diminish the necessity of doctrine. And we mustn't do that. It's a recipe for disaster in churches that will immediately follow in liberal theology.

We must focus our worship of Jesus understanding His truth and then allow our service to the community and the people around us to flow through that and from that, not the other way around.

Her priorities were right in the right place. Jesus commends her for it. The second thing here is He commends her for the proportion of her devotion. Verse 8, she has done what she could.

The implication, she has done all that she could. Notice it's, the commendation here is not based on the amount Mary gave, but the proportion of her gift to the whole.

What pleased the Lord is not that she gave so much. What pleased the Lord was that she gave everything. Which reminds us of the last story we heard in chapter 12.

[34 : 36] Jesus points to the widow woman in the temple, the two small copper coins that she gives and He's so impacted by her devotion to God.

And He uses a very similar statement here about Mary. But their gifts are on two different extremes as far as their monetary value. God doesn't judge your devotion based on what others do.

He judges your devotion based on what you can do. And He's pleased whether it's two lepta as a widow woman or whether it's a year salary from Mary.

He is glorified and pleased in what they did. Which brings us to our final point. We'll be finished. Gospel connection. Gospel connection.

Verse 8. She has anointed my body beforehand for burial. 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.

[35 : 42] Now this is interesting here. Jesus had foretold His crucifixion and resurrection to the disciples on at least three occasions and they just couldn't come to grips with what that meant.

We've looked at that extensively in Mark's gospel. Is it possible that Mary had begun to understand what the disciples continued to miss?

Maybe. Let me make the case for it. There's only two other places in the scriptures that we find Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. First one's in Luke chapter 10, I think.

Jesus comes to their home and there's a bit of a dramatic event that unfolds. Mary started helping Martha with the meal and eventually she finds herself seated at the feet of Jesus.

That's where she wanted to be. Martha gets upset about that. She runs to Jesus and she says, would you please do something about Mary? I'm in here serving all by myself and she's just sitting out here and what does Jesus say?

[36 : 45] She's chosen the good portion. I will not take that away from her. He didn't condemn Martha for her serving but he wasn't going to take away Mary's worship either. Where does she find herself routinely?

At the feet of Jesus. Listening to Jesus. Taking in what Jesus had to say. Watching what Jesus did with his life. The next thing we see is when Lazarus is dead.

John chapter 11. Jesus finally makes it to Mary and Martha. Most of the exchange happens with Martha. But what is it that Jesus says to Martha which inevitably would have been passed on to Mary?

I am the resurrection and the life. whoever believes in me though he be dead he will rise. He will live again and then they witness the miraculous power over death that Jesus had in Lazarus.

Now I'm not saying Mary had it all put together. I'm just saying she spends her time with Jesus listening to him. She's witnessed his resurrection power in her own brother's life.

[37 : 49] She's heard him say himself I am the resurrection. Is it possible that Mary listened well enough to understand something's about to go down with Jesus and I want to make sure I show him my love and worship now?

I think so. Whether or not she understood it all is up for debate. But what is certain from the text is that Jesus affirmed that her act was symbolic of his coming death on the cross.

she has anointed my body beforehand for burial he says. Then he proclaims that her actions would be perpetually remembered wherever the gospel is preached through the whole world.

Now memorializing Mary wasn't about Mary. It was meant to bring our thoughts back to the cross because Jesus says what she's done really has a lot to do with my death.

And when we think of Mary we're not supposed to just think about Mary we're supposed to think about Jesus what he has done for us. Jesus takes this act of devotion and he connects it to the gospel of his death and resurrection which screams off the page to us this truth that Christian devotion begins and ends with the gospel of Jesus.

[39 : 08] It begins and ends with the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord. Think about it. What did Jesus do on the cross? He makes a full atonement for the sin of all who will believe.

He suffers our death. He suffers our hell. He takes the wrath of God in our place. And then his resurrection shows that his atonement was satisfactory to God the Father and that he alone has power over life and death.

Why do we gather on Sunday? Not to feel better about all the stuff we did wrong during the week. We gather to celebrate the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Why do we express devotion to the Lord on Sunday or any other day? Because of the cross and the resurrection. It's all about the gospel of Jesus. Everything brings us back to him and to what he has done for us and it provides the motivation for us every day.

Why will I live holy today? Because Jesus died for me. Why will I go to church today? Because Jesus died for me.

[40 : 21] Why will I teach my kids the Bible? Because Jesus died for me. Why will I live my life for him? Because Jesus has done so much for me.

It all comes back to the gospel. It's the gospel we proclaim. It's the gospel we believe and it's the motivation for our total devotion as faithful followers.

Now in conclusion let's look at these last two verses. Okay. I don't want any Eutychuses falling out of the window this morning. All right. Burst in. Then Judas Iscariot who was one of the twelve went to the chief priest in order to betray him to them.

And when they heard it they were glad and they promised to give him money and sought an opportunity to betray him. Here's the back half of the Mark and Sandwich here in Mark 14.

He began with the chief priest and scribes trying to figure out how they're going to kill Jesus. He ends with how Judas betrayed the Lord to them. Matthew and Mark both sandwich Mary's story in between these two things.

[41 : 39] Could it be that Jesus' response to Mary is what finally pushed Judas over the edge? Had he finally had enough?

I think so. Sinclair Ferguson again points this out. He says it's significant that this particular event seemed to act as the catalyst to bring Judas and the chief priest together.

The one thing that he could not tolerate was such wholehearted devotion to Jesus which had no other motive than love for him. And I think part of Mark's motive here is to contrast the difference

between true and counterfeit discipleship.

I believe Judas truly believed that Jesus was the Messiah. I think Judas was unwilling to accept what Jesus taught was the true purpose of the Messiah so that in following Jesus he was looking to gain something from Jesus that he wasn't actually offering.

Track with me. Judas thinks Jesus is Messiah that means power and wealth for all who follow him. I'm going to stick in close to this guy because when he rises to the top I want to be right there with him.

[43 : 06] And for three years he patiently endures the teaching he patiently endures the hardship thinking that when they finally get to Jerusalem this is what's going to unfold and I'm going to be a part of that process.

But as they got closer and closer to Jerusalem in this third year he quickly begins to realize that Jesus is not who I think he is or at least not he's not the Messiah that I think he is.

I'm not going to get from him what I thought I was going to get. So Judas cuts his losses and he gets whatever he can out of it which ends up being just 30 pieces of silver the cost of a slave and he betrays the Lord and he runs away.

Why? Because he thought Jesus was an imposter? No. Couldn't have. He witnessed all the stuff. He knew there was something significant about Jesus.

What he refused to accept is what Jesus was offering. Jesus wasn't ending up going to do for Judas what Judas actually wanted. So he follows that as a disciple for a while and eventually he runs away.

[44 : 17] Mary stands in stark contrast to this. Here Mary out love for Jesus gives up the thing that is most precious to her probably.

Judas on the other hand runs away from Jesus because he did not receive some precious thing from Jesus in a material sense that is.

Do you see the difference here? One is a true follower of Jesus. One is a counterfeit. one has truly come to faith in who Jesus is and what Jesus actually came to do.

One has been entertained by Jesus intrigued by him for a little while but eventually falls away.

That's the difference between the two. I think Mark's pointing that out to us here in this story.

Judas represents a host of people in each generation I think who come to Jesus not in faith but in hopes of leveraging his power and his compassion into a better life for themselves and eventually when they realize that Jesus is different than what they supposed they betray him to pursue some other thing in the world.

[45 : 31] It's easy to desire the benefits that may come from Jesus' hand more than desiring Jesus himself and I think this is the key difference between Mary and Judas between the true disciple and the counterfeit which leads us to ask a few questions.

Is your profession of faith and devotion based on who Jesus is and what he has accomplished in his death and resurrection or are you coming to Jesus for some other thing or for some other reason?

That's an important question we need to ask. Is my devotion to him based on the gospel or something else? Only the one who comes to faith and follow Jesus as Lord will actually come to see his true worth and will persevere through that hardship.

But then if you're a believer there's other questions we can ask this morning. Piercing questions perhaps that aren't related so much to whether or not I'm a true believer.

I know I'm a true believer. But is my devotion to Christ costing me anything? The passion that I had for Jesus in the beginning hasn't seemed to wear down.

[46 : 52] Am I as faithful to him as I have always been? Am I intentional, calculated in the way that I live my life for him?

Am I holding anything back from him? Thank you.