

The Prepared King

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- [0 : 0 0] I've been involved in ministry now for about 25 years. And one of the things, the overwhelming hurts that happens in ministry that I don't think, even after 25 years, you don't get over and it hurts every time, is people who make decisions, who are putting Jesus clearly to one side in their life.
- And you see people making decisions for something against Jesus. Or people who are confronted with real difficulty in their life and who walk away from Jesus as a result of that real difficulty because of the assumption that God's not in control or that he's not good in that moment.
- Either way, it's someone who once confessed a relationship with Jesus who would move away from him because of decision or because of difficulty in some way.
- As a pastor who wants to see people flourishing in a relationship with Jesus and putting Jesus at the center of life, that is a pain that just endures. And it has happened so much over 25 years.
- One thing that it's taught me is that presumption is always dangerous for anyone who follows Jesus. I, as many have done so as they've sat in churches and been Christian for years, have seen many fall away over that time because they've ultimately not understood what it is to follow Jesus, not actually understood what it means to actually be a Christian.
- [1 : 4 4] That's partly because in the Western world especially, there's this dangerous assumption that to follow Jesus or to be Christian means that you have to work hard at being really good.
- And it means that you believe that God exists to serve me by helping me feel good and feel happy and feel secure and at peace in life.
- That's God's goal for me. That's his job for me. And also believing that even though God made the world and he controls everything in the world, he's only active and involved in the world whenever I need him to resolve a problem for me.
- And the rest of the time, his job is to stay out of my way, except for a Sunday, for an hour or so on Sunday, and it may be a Bible study group and stuff like that, but predominantly stay out of my way except when I need him to help.
- Now, the technical term for those three things is moralistic therapeutic deism. That's the technical term for it, and it's actually an heresy that has dominated in the Western world.
- [3 : 0 0] That view of Christianity is ultimately a rejection of Jesus and a rejection of the Christian faith. It's a total misunderstanding of who Jesus is and what Jesus came to do.
- And so to be clear on what it means to be a follower of Jesus, we must be clear on who he is, what he came to do, and what he requires of me.
- You need to be clear on those things. And we've seen it in 13 weeks now, or 12 weeks now in Mark's gospel, we've seen it again and again and again. The answer to those questions.

And so I'm going to kind of wrap it up as we bring a closure to this series and bring clarity on that once again. So if you've got your Bibles open, Mark 14, we're going to begin in chapter 13.

And chapter 13, verses 32 to 37, set the scene for 14, chapter 14. And what you notice there is the repetitiveness of statements like, be on your guard, be alert, keep watch, don't sleep.

[4 : 17] Be ready, be alert, because what Jesus is saying here to his disciples is it's going to be tough. Now, these are the disciples who have been with Jesus and they were saying, we're with you, Jesus.

And they're with you, especially Jesus, when all this powerful stuff has happened in Mark 1 to 9, where he's healed dead people and he's driven out demons and he's raised the dead and done miraculous things, powerful things and people have gone, wow, this is amazing stuff.

And the disciples have kind of followed Jesus like, Jesus is with us, we're with him kind of thing, we're just kind of almost as powerful as he is. And now he's saying to them, kind of switching tone a little bit now and saying, keep watch, be on your guard, don't be afraid.

Now, when everyone says, don't be afraid, you go, what do you mean? We're afraid of what? You know, and this is, don't be afraid when you're persecuted and put on trial for my sake. It's like, well, this is a tone, change, shift the gear for Jesus and then straight away, what you see as you come into chapter 14 is that the chief priests and the teacher of the law are waiting to do exactly to that, to Jesus that.

They're wanting to kill Jesus. So have a look, verse one there. Now, the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which are the two major, or the major collected feasts for the highlight, if you like, of the Jewish religion.

[5 : 56] This is the pinnacle for them. This is their Christmas, Easter kind of thing. And they were two days away and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him, but not during the feast, they said, or the people may write.

That's their major concern is that people may write during the feast. Not the fact that they're going to murder someone, they're just concerned that people might write. Now, we already know in Mark 4, throughout Mark, that Jesus is on the death list of the power brokers.

And this became their particular passion in Mark 11 when Jesus pronounced judgment on the temple and the religious establishment. And so the time has now come for them to put their plan into action, but because of the feast, because they've got this major religious ceremony they've got to be partaking in, they've got two days in order to do their dirty work.

It's kind of like, come on guys, quick, quick, hurry up the plan, two days to murder Jesus so that we can get to communion. Kind of seems like a bit of a disconnect here a little bit. And while they're plotting this, Jesus and his mates are in Bethany for a pleasant evening or so it would appear.

And as they're reclining at the table, they witness a remarkable event. It says, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made a pure nard. She broke the jar and she poured the perfume on his head.

[7 : 28] If you flipped over to John chapter 12, verse 3, you will notice that this woman is Mary, the sister of Lazarus. Mary unexpectedly approached her reclining lord carrying a priceless jar of imported perfume, possibly a family heirloom.

She breaks the neck of the flask. She pours a generous portion on Jesus' head which is anointing him as both king and for burial and then poured the rest on his feet as an act of cleansing his feet, acknowledging that she is his servant.

John 12 tells us that she then humbly wiped his feet clean with her hair. She evidently had enough. this moment here was an intensely fervent expression of devotion to Christ.

And in fact, as strong as an act of devotion as you will find anywhere in the Bible. this woman takes her greatest earthly treasure and with it she reveals that in fact Jesus is her greatest treasure.

We can assume that she gave no thought at all to what others thought of her actions. But in verse 4 we find out some of those present were saying indignantly to one another why this waste of perfume.

[9 : 18] It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor and they rebuked her harshly. Again, if you go over to John 12 it helps us to see that the first person to respond to this moment is Judas the man who knew the price of everything but the value of nothing.

he instantly calculates in this moment wastage a year's wage possibly something in the order of \$35,000 to \$40,000 in today's terms.

What a waste they rebuked this woman harshly and the original language means that they snorted their disgust like angry horses. they saw something very different than fervent devotion.

Jesus comes to her defense in verse 6 leave her alone why are you bothering her she has done a beautiful thing to me. Jesus was fully aware of her motive of love it was simply done and to for Jesus with no thought at all given to whether it was practical or even seen as being sensible and in fact Jesus defends Mary's action because it placed him before everything else.

In fact verse 7 have a look at that the poor you will always have with you and you can help them anytime you want but you will not always have me.

[11 : 02] Now Jesus is not saying in any sense you're not to help the poor in fact that's far from it. What he is commending this woman for here at this moment is that she put him first totally first she gave everything she surrendered everything to Jesus and her act of worship is insightful verse 8 says she did what she could her giving her everything is going to be different from the person beside her on either side of what it looks like for them to give their everything she did what she could and Jesus throughout Mark's gospel has repeatedly talked about his death but it would seem the disciples have passed it off Mary on the other hand yielded to that teaching accepted that teaching about what was about to happen to Jesus and therefore she did what she could in devotion to Christ and in fact verse 9 tells us that Jesus sets her up as the model of devotion what it actually means to be a follower of Jesus he says

I tell you the truth wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world wherever the good news is proclaimed what she has done will also be told in memory of her see what Jesus is saying there throughout the world the gospel will be proclaimed the good news of Christ and this woman will be the prime example of what it means to respond to that gospel what it means to be my disciple to put Jesus fundamentally first now the stark opposite of Mary's devotion in this text we start getting a picture of this in verse 10 it says then Judas Iscariot one of the twelve went to the cheap priests to betray Jesus to them and they were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money and so he watched for an opportunity to hand him over you see all this talk about

Jesus dying and glory coming through serving is not the sort of kingdom that Judas is looking for he goes to the chief priest makes a deal to betray Jesus now it is very very important for us to see here in this text that Jesus is not a victim of circumstance his death is not a victim of circumstances Jesus in this text is in total control his mission is on target it is being fulfilled he controls the environment of the Passover Meal as you look into verses 12 to 16 onwards especially note verse 16 where it says the disciples left went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them as I said last week Jesus is leading his disciples to Jerusalem his plan is to die it's not an accident of history it is his agenda and this meal that is happening here with his disciples was possibly the most important meal eaten in the history of the world because it historically identified

Jesus as the Passover Lamb who would deliver God's people this meal would graphically explain the centrality of Jesus to salvation this is historically the meal and the night that the devout Jew were filled with hope that God's intervention for their salvation and Jesus was not a victim of bad circumstances he was directing everything to reveal that in fact salvation is in him he is the Passover lamb in fact the words of the last supper take it this is my body this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many make no sense at all if Jesus is not the master of his own death his mission is clear glory it is glory by way of the humiliation of the cross and it's what

Mary understood and it's what the rest of the disciples still are coming to terms with they still haven't grappled with that he breaks the bread gives a peace and says in verse 22 this is going to be this is what's going to happen to my body and he passes around the wine and he says this is what's going to happen to my blood it's going to be poured the Lord's Supper which we're going to participate in tonight is so familiar to us that we do it without being moved often at all but try being sitting there in that table for the first time this is the Jesus this is an eerie event this is frightening even to hear the one who you have pledged yourself to as your king talking about his body being broken and his blood being shed this is not what they thought was going to happen at all so they finish the meal and they head out into the darkness to the

[16 : 55] Mount of Olives Judas sees this as the opportunity to slip away to betray Jesus it is quite literally the darkness it's not just that the sun has gone down but that spiritual darkness has now descended on to Judas and he's awaiting Jesus now waiting for darkness to have its moment notice the conversation on the way to the Mount of Olives again we're thinking about this issue of what it means to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Mary devotion and then you've got the rest Judas the betrayer and now you've got the rest of the disciples conversation is this Judas is not the only one who's going to run away they all will and Peter rejects that claim and says no not me Jesus you know me I am tough I'm not afraid

I will die for you I will never disown you I will die for you and all the others say yeah yeah yeah we're the same we're not going to deny you and then they arrive at Gethsemane and Jesus takes Peter James and John a little bit further on to pray and it says in verse 34 that Jesus is deeply distressed and troubled now we must never minimise what Jesus went through in this moment he knows what is about to happen Jesus is in deep deep distress this is greater distress than any of us could ever imagine you see he saw with clarity the full full horror of what lay ahead Peter and James and John are standing a bit back and they could see the prostate Jesus they could see his body convulsing they could see his tears and the sweat falling to the ground like blood that was dripping out of his forehead so physically anxious was he in that moment that blood was coming out as tears of sweat the terror he felt was not just simply that he's body is going to go through excruciating pain being nailed to a cross but because he saw the cup he saw the cup of human sin he saw the brutality of a thousand holocausts all all all all all the prostituting all the idolatry of human civilizations the blasphemy the profanity it was a cup of

God's judgment that was filled to the brim of jealousy of racism of hatred of discord bitterness of unkindness of gossip of disobedience of greed of anger and he knew that it was his job to drink it all of God's judgment for the history of the world is going to be focused on him he doesn't want to do that he falls to the ground and he prays he pleads father if it's possible take this hour from me so that I do not have to suffer in this way the time has come for him to face the cup of God's anger

God's white hot anger for your sin for my sin it's where he takes the punishment that Israel should be taking for all of its centuries of rebellion where he soaks up the punishment for the sins of the world for your sin and mine and he pleads this is there's any other way but there is no other way this hour and this moment cannot pass from him and so in the greatest display of obedience that will ever be known Jesus took the full cup of human sin and God's wrath and he looked shudderingly into its depth and a stealing act of the wheel and in a total dependence on the sovereignty and the goodness of his father he drank it that's why his body is convulsing in

Gethsemane because he knew this moment is hours away and so he says to his disciples the same thing that he says back in chapter 13 dark times are here be ready keep watch do not slumber and verse 37 then he returned to the disciples and found them sleeping three times in fact to verse 41 are you still sleeping on the night where you could imagine it would be good for these disciples to comfort and support him he is all alone it is hardly the picture of worship and devotion we see at the beginning of the chapter with Mary and then the moment arrives verse 41 enough he says the hour has come look the son of man is betrayed in the hands of sinners rise let us go here comes my betrayer and just as he was speaking

[23 : 15] Judas one of the twelve appeared and with him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs sent from the chief priest the teachers of the law and the elders now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them the one I kiss is the man arrest him and lead him away under guard and going at once to Jesus Judas said Rabbi and kissed him the kiss of death the betrayer has come with a mob armed with swords and clubs it is quite clear that Judas had not learned a single thing about the nature of the kingdom Jesus was leading but he wasn't the only one have a look at verse 47 then one of those standing near which we know to be Peter drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest cutting off his ear moments ago these are the guys who have been sleeping just moments ago they were asleep and now here they are with

Jesus standing beside him with their swords drawn ready to fight off this crowd and protect Jesus and do what Peter said we will do I will die for you Jesus you see the disciples had not scattered they didn't abandon Jesus because they were afraid they were there with their swords ready to die ready to do battle for Jesus they hadn't abandoned him if Jesus said they would they were ready to die until Jesus says this in verse 48 am I leading a rebellion he said that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me every day I was with you teaching in the temple courts and you did not arrest me but the scriptures must be fulfilled that that's the game changer for the disciples it seems that in this moment they have finally understood who

Jesus is and what he came to do and what it means to follow him what Jesus says to Peter and what he says to us is my kingdom is not of this world it's completely different than what you think it is I'm going to change things by putting others ahead of myself I'm going to serve and sacrifice for others I'm going to reap I'm not going to repay evil for evil I'm going to overcome evil with good I will give up my power not grasp of power I'm going to give up my power and I'm going to saying have

I come to lead a rebellion with a sword verse 50 happens then everyone deserted him and fled they didn't desert Jesus because they were afraid to die they deserted Jesus because of ideological disillusionment they deserted Jesus because of ideological disillusionment the kingdom that Jesus was leading was not the kingdom they thought he was leading they were with Jesus providing that the kingdom that they were committing themselves to involved a march into Jerusalem it involved capturing the throne and the palace and the temple and that they had glory and honour at Jesus right hand men even if it meant that we gave our lives for that goal but when your king surrenders himself to death and calls you to do the same thing well that's not what they were signing up for they were with

Jesus for over three years but they were not really with Jesus I think this has got something very significant to say to our consumeristic culture and the way it bears on church a consumeristic culture says first and foremost what's in it for me what's in it for me that is at the core of that culture is I'm here to consume for my glory for me for me centeredness my agenda it's me getting something it is possible in fact to come to church to sing songs of praise to pray to nod your head when the sermon's preached and yet make decisions in life that are all about pursuing my agenda it's about making much of me as opposed to making much of Jesus and I think that often for Christians it's a subtlety rather than being blatantly obvious we are so often happy to pursue

[29 : 16] God's glory so long in the process he makes much of my glory makes much of me and the subtlety is that we can be so involved in church activities that it looks like we're doing it for the glory of Christ but secretly harboring a hope that some of his glory radiates on us in such a way that other people can see it and the way you can tell the difference is when you shift the spotlight off you and how you respond it's a struggle for church leads it's a struggle for me what are my motives in wanting God to be glorified through the mission and vision of this church the reality is if we even achieve half of what we hope to achieve here as a church at St.

Paul's people will make much of St. Paul's and that is the consumeristic culture we live in we don't automatically give thanks and praise to God we look to the leaders who have made this happen or the people who made this happen and praise them and elevate them instead what we must always remember is that Jesus says put away your sword and take up your cross and follow me my guess is that if we search our hearts we'll discover that it's so much easier to take up our cross and follow Jesus and be a servant when other people are watching and applauding so much easier if the way to be glorious really is to make Jesus look glorious by being a servant of others do you really want to be glorious in that way do you feel more loved by God when he makes much of you or because at great cost to himself he frees you to enjoy making much of him forever now the good news here is that Jesus knew that his suffering in death wasn't going to be the end of the story and he knew that these disciples he knew that they weren't going to take the heat he knew that they were going to abandon him he said that on the way to

Gethsemane you guys are all going to abandon me the great news is with Jesus there is he's so gracious that there is always plenty of room to put things right even for Peter the great deserter the one who was defiant if you look back at verses 27 and 28 you'll see it it was subtle initially as we went through it but he says here you will all fall away for it is written I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered but after I have risen verse 28 after I have risen I will go ahead of you into Galilee this is the Jesus who is leading as I said last week his disciples to the cross to Jerusalem and what he's saying is beyond the cross I'm going to continue to lead you that is you're going to abandon me of the cross but I'm going to gather you back up see the resurrection changes everything after the resurrection there is a new start it changed everything changed the perspective of the disciples in such a way in fact it is the it is the major evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is how else do you explain these deserting pitiful disciples who become men within six weeks become men who are willing to give their lives for

Christ how do you how do you justify that change these disastrous disciples become courageous bold disciples for Jesus their failures are forgiven and that is significant significant good news for failures like you and me weak disciples like you and me and so friends we've come to 13 the end of 13 weeks of looking at Jesus through Mark's eyes and Mark is pretty clear Jesus demands an extreme response from every single one of us Jesus forces our hand here at every turn in this story this man who throws open the gates of the kingdom to everyone then warns the most devout insiders that their place in the kingdom is in very real jeopardy without fruitfulness this is the

Jesus who is constantly closing down our escape clauses and options this man is the one who is weakened by the touch of a woman in a crowd while on the way to bring a little dead girl back to life this is the man who you dare not take your eyes off the depths of his personal restraint and the heights of his power are truly incomprehensible to us he is both the rest and the storm he is the victim and the wielder of the sword and we must reject him or accept him on the basis of both of those things either you kill him or crown him it is simply not good enough to just like him on his facebook page that just simply means you have not seen him for who he is the teachers of the law at the beginning of this passage who were plotting to kill Jesus at the beginning of today's in this passage here were in my opinion dead wrong about Jesus they were dead wrong about Jesus but their reaction to

[35 : 39] Jesus makes absolute perfect sense you either bow to this man or you kill him there's no middle ground with Jesus no middle ground you cannot just simply say what an interesting guy you cannot just keep Jesus at the periphery of your life holding him there inviting me in pushing him out inviting me you either have to kill him at the periphery of your life or you have to crown him at the center of your life so give yourself to him that's the thrust of these 13 weeks of mark center your entire life on him this is the message for the devout Christian who has followed Jesus for years continue to give him everything continue to invite him into every nook and cranny of your life this is the message of those who are holding Jesus on the periphery of their life and think that Jesus job is to answer them and provide for them whenever they want him to come and fix things and mostly stay away so I can get on my life

Jesus says I do not play that game this is the message for the unbeliever Jesus calls you right at the beginning of Mark's gospel and he calls you right at the end of Mark's gospel repent and believe the good news center your life on the servant king and I want to say as we finish up Mark do it today all of us in one way or another do it today take steps today to surrender all of your life or another part of your life to Jesus Christ the servant king of kings he is sovereign and he is good and he every man and he is