

Introduction: Pg. ____

Examples.

The Power of Examples.

Athletes.

Teachers.

Church Leaders.

In today's text, we see not one, but two examples of extravagant devotion.

"Extravagant Devotion"

Mark 14:1-25

We find the first in verses 1-11.

Mark 14:1-11 (text displayed)

1. Imitate the extravagant devotion of true followers of Jesus (14:1-11).

SETTING..

- The final chapters of Mark record the final week of Jesus' life. Travelers from all over Israel have arrived for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, which provided the religious leaders an opportunity to plot his arrest and eventual death, but verse 2 tells us they did not want to execute it "during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."
- Jesus and his disciples stayed nearly two miles from Jerusalem in a little village called Bethany.
- On Tuesday evening, a man named Simon hosted a meal for Jesus, his disciples and possibly others in the community.
- Verse 3 tells us he was known as "Simon the leper," likely identifying him as someone who had been healed by Jesus!

An Act of Extravagant Devotion (3-5)

- During the meal, an unnamed woman approached Jesus. If Mark 14 and John 12 record the same account, the woman's name was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.
- Mark does not want us focused on her identity but her devotion.
- He tells us she came with an alabaster flask. The flask alone would have been expensive, made of soft marble-like stone imported from Egypt. The fragrant ointment was "pure nard," probably imported from India. Mark tells us it was the "good stuff," emphasizing the high quality and value.
- She takes the flask and breaks it open and begins pouring it over the head of Jesus.

Some "Critics" (4-5)

- As the amazing fragrance fills the room, those who gathered were shocked, not primarily because of the gesture, as this was a common sign of devotion or hospitality, but because this alabaster jar, possibly a family heirloom, was worth a lot of money!
- Verse four says some of them were indignant! Upset! Angry!
- While she anoints the head of Jesus, they pull out their calculators and begin doing the math: one ounce... that's a lot. Two ounces... does she know what she's doing? Three ounces... Ahh... what a waste! As she exhausts the whole jar, verse 5 says they began to scold her. I mean, they are letting her have it. 300 denarii would have equaled wages for 300 days, nearly a year's salary!
- "Why are you wasting such precious ointment!"
- "You could have sold this for \$50k! 60k! \$80,000!!"
- "Think about how many poor people could have been fed and cared for with that money!"
- BUT. NOT. JESUS.

Jesus (6-9)

- Look at verse 6! Jesus said: "Leave her alone. Why are you troubling her?" And then he piles up reason after reason why she should be applauded, rather than criticized:
 - 1) Jesus doesn't call her act good, but beautiful! This is worth appreciating and applauding! Just as you take in a beautiful sunset or night sky, so you should take in what this woman is doing for me!
 - 2) Then in verse 7 he says, "You always have the poor with you" (echoing Deuteronomy 15:11 which calls for generosity to those in need). He says, "You can help them anytime you want!" Jesus certainly cared for the poor. We see that all throughout the stories of his life.
 - 3) Then he contrasts the presence of the poor with his coming departure. "You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me." Now, Jesus is once again pointing to his death. He says her act was to anoint his body for burial beforehand. The woman would not have known that Jesus would die just three days later as a criminal, and criminals under Roman law did not receive the customary anointing for their burial.
 - 4) Jesus says in verse 8: "She has done what she could." In English, that kind of sounds like, "She gave a good effort. She did what she could." But a literal translation could be rendered: "What she had she did." Jesus is saying, "She gave everything she could." She, like the widow two chapters earlier, poured out an extraordinary sacrifice, so much so that he goes on to say in verse 9:
 - 5) "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."
- Those in attendance were silenced.

Jesus holds her up as an example of true discipleship!

- To be extravagant is to "lack restraint." To be extravagant is to hold nothing back! To be extravagant is to give it all!
- Through this act of sacrificial love, the woman reveals how she treasured Jesus more than her greatest possession.
- While others held back, she gave everything!
- What others deemed wasteful, Jesus praised as completely appropriate!
- When others harshly criticized her zeal for Christ, (which by the way, typically arises from jealousy or insecurity), she remained undeterred!

Maybe you are hearing this woman's story today, and you are thinking: "I wish that was me."

Maybe you are thinking: "That should be me."

Maybe you are thinking: "That used to be me."

Let me tell you something: It can be! It can be! It can be again!

How Tanner? Bring Jesus what you've got.

Jesus, I'm offering you my relationships. Jesus, I'm offering you my children. Jesus, I'm offering you my finances, offering you my work, offering you my time. Jesus, I'm offering you MY LIFE!

"What I have, I give!"

We need examples of extravagant devotion in our church! We need examples of godly people (yes, men, but here we have such a pointed call to the women in our church) to live their lives in such a way that no one questions the level of their devotion to Jesus! Women, we need your example to inspire and encourage us.

- As you honor Jesus, Jesus will honor you!
-
- T: But as extravagant as this woman's devotion may be, we find the greatest example in the example of Jesus.

Mark 14:12-25 (text displayed)

2. Receive and remember the extravagant devotion of Jesus (14:12-25).

We have come to Thursday, the day Jews sacrificed the Passover lamb. Verses 12-16 show us the composure of Jesus. He is in total control. He appears to be relying on both divine knowledge and human preparation when it comes to the logistics of where he would eat the Passover Meal with the disciples. In any case, Jesus gives them specific instructions about the man carrying a jug of water who will meet them (probably divine knowledge) and the master of the house who has prepared the upper room (probably orchestrated by Jesus before. We can't be sure).

What we know is that it unfolds just as Jesus says.

Verse 17 tells us Jesus arrived in the city with his disciples. Mark records two key moments in the meal. First, Jesus speaks of his betrayal in very clear terms. Second, he redefines the Passover Meal in light of himself!

BETRAYAL (17-21)

- Verse 18 tells us they were reclining at the table. This normally would have been a festive occasion. In fact, ancient Jewish documents (The Mishnah) "says even the poorest of Israelites must recline at Passover and be given four cups of wine to drink."
- But on this occasion, Jesus knows his death is coming and he knows it will be executed through the betrayal of one of his disciples, one of the men who walked with him every day over the past three years! He says in verse 18: "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me."
- As we would expect, this shocking and somber word brought sorrow to the hearts of the disciples. They began to ask, one by one: "Is it I?" "Is it I?" "Is it I?"
- Look at what Jesus says in verses 20: "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me (highlighting the intimacy and friendship that should be present and yet in reality is the hypocritical act of an enemy)." These words echo Psalm 41:9: "Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me." (NIV) This is the worst kind of betrayal.
- Then in verse 21, Jesus shows us the gravity of Judas' betrayal: "For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him (with this words Jesus highlight the prophetic promises about his life and death to reconcile people back to God), 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."
- These words, which apply to the unnamed Judas, apply to everyone who betrays Jesus in our day as well. They apply to everyone who rejects Jesus in our day as well. Why? It would be better to not have existed than to spend eternity separated from God!

NEW PASSOVER (22-25)

- The Jewish Passover commemorated God rescuing his people out of Egyptian oppression.
- This is recorded in the second book of the Bible, the Book of Exodus, chapters 11-12.
- Because Pharaoh, the evil leader of the Egyptians, would not release Israel from slavery, God sent 10 destructive plagues against Egypt. In the 10th, climactic plague, God sent his angel of death to kill the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, but he "passed over" the homes of the Israelites, which had followed his instructions to sacrifice a lamb and smear its blood over the door frame of their home.
- It is against this backdrop that Mark wants us to understand Jesus' final meal with his disciples. This is unquestionable given that he refers to the meal as Passover three times in vv 12, 14, & 16.

Jesus, as the Leader of this meal, would have recounted the story of the exodus. They sang songs from Psalm 113-118, celebrating God's saving work, but as the meal went on, Jesus began to offer a more complete understanding of God's plan of salvation.

- Traditionally, the words spoke over the bread at the Passover Meal would have said something like this: “This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let everyone who hungers come and eat; let everyone who is needy come and eat the Passover meal.”
- But now in verse 22 it says this: “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.”
 - He is saying: “This is my body, given for you.”
 - What is Jesus doing? He is pointing to his death. He is pointing to the moment, just hours later, when he will give his body on a Roman cross for the sin of the world.
- Then he took the cup of wine, which would have reminded them of the sacrificial lamb whose blood poured out so that the people of Israel might escape God’s judgment, so that they might not experience death.
- Verses 23-24: 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.”
 - With these words, Jesus not only points to his coming substitutionary death which was “poured out for many,” he is also pointing us to the new covenant he is establishing between God and his people forever.
 - Jeremiah 31:31-34 says prophesies the words of New Covenant: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Lord's Supper Slide

What began as a meal of sorrow has now suddenly turned into a meal of hope! Jesus makes this undeniable in verse 25. “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.”

After darkness, LIGHT (post tenebras lux)

His friendship with his disciples will continue, because death cannot stop him.

He will fulfill all of God’s promises by ushering in a new kingdom, the world we all long for where there will be no more sorrow, no more pain, no more sin, no more death! Complete joy, complete harmony, complete life and life forever in the presence of God!

Conclusion:

This is extravagant devotion. Jesus, did not simply pour out precious oil with limited value, he poured out his infinitely valuable life!

In light of the extravagant devotion of Jesus...

The Point: Let your life be marked by extravagant devotion. [To Jesus]