

# Growing Deeper in Mark

## MARK 14.1-11

**VERSES 1-11:** Are you getting hungry? If so, it may be because it's been two weeks since our last Markan Sandwich! I know I said Mark liked to use this technique, but I have been amazed at how often he uses it. This time we have verses 1-2 that tell of the chief priests and teachers of the law wanting to arrest Jesus, and verses 10-11 record Judas making a deal with the chief priests to 'hand him over.' Sandwiched in between those verses is the account of a woman anointing Jesus with an entire bottle of perfume. What do the two stories teach us when we consider them together?

**VERSES 1:** The Passover was the yearly meal that the Jews would share to commemorate their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. This was God's mightiest act of deliverance of Israel which foreshadowed the even greater deliverance that Jesus was about to provide for all of humanity. At the first Passover, a lamb was to be slaughtered and its blood was to be spread on the doorposts and lintel of each home so that the Angel of Death would pass over those homes and not take the first-born son. Now, God's own Son is the one who will die. He will shed his blood so that it might be applied to the hearts of any who would put their trust in him, so that death might not have any hold over them.

**VERSES 1-2:** The chief priests (there were two Annas and Caiaphas) and the teachers of the law are desperate to stop Jesus but they are at a loss. They are still looking for some 'sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him' but they have been failing miserably at that for some time now. That is why there were all those people asking Jesus questions trying to trick him. Not to one-up him, but to have grounds to have him arrested and executed. But they also have to be careful not to start a riot amongst the people, for that would mean Rome would intervene militarily and with devastating consequences. So, they thought they would have to lay low until the Passover Festival was completed. (Jerusalem's population would swell by 3-4 times its normal during the Passover.)

**VERSES 10-11:** Judas give the chief priests exactly what they are looking for, a way to find Jesus and arrest him while the crowds are not around. In their zeal, they give up on trying to have a reason to arrest him and seize the opportunity to snatch him under the cover of darkness, with the help of Judas.

**VERSE 3:** It is interesting that we are told Simon's name (the host of Jesus), but we are not told the name of the woman who becomes the central figure. It was common practice to anoint the head of an honored guest with a drop or two of oil, but this unnamed woman breaks open an 'alabaster jar of very expensive perfume' and proceeds to dump the entire bottle on Jesus' head. Jesus says that she has anointed his body for burial, but I wonder if that was what intentions were. Did she really know that Jesus was about to die and his body would not be anointed before burial? I doubt it. I speculate that this was her way of acknowledging who Jesus was. This was not just an honored guest; this was the one worthy of all honor. He would not receive a drop or two...he would receive the whole jar! That was the way a king was anointed, so that the fragrant oil dripped from his beard. This woman gave her most valuable possession to bless her king!

**VERSES 4-5:** And very valuable it was indeed. Worth a year's wages. What do you earn in a year? Would you be willing to give it all to Jesus? This woman did, and for her tremendous gift she was rewarded with the hostility of the other people present. They rebuked her...harshly. Did they really have such great concern for the poor? Or were they shamed and envious of her amazing act?

**VERSES 6-9:** Jesus affirms the woman's actions. 'She has done a beautiful thing.' Jesus also challenges all those who are attacking her. 'The poor you will always have with you.' If they feel that the poor should be cared for, they have every opportunity to follow the woman's lead. They can sell their greatest possession and give to the poor. (Just as Jesus asked the rich, young ruler to do). Often, we are guilty ourselves at the very point at which we condemn others.

Consider the contrast between the woman and Judas. The woman does a beautiful thing for Jesus, Judas betrays Jesus. The woman gives a year's wages, Judas takes 30 pieces of silver. The woman surrenders to Jesus will, Judas seeks control. We all should ask, 'Am I more like her or him?'