

Exegetical Paper: Mark 14:1-11

NT622.OA Mark (English Text)

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Date: April 25, 2023

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NT 622.OA Gospel of Mark (English)

Date:

Exegesis Research Paper

I. **Text/Passage:** Mark 14:1-11

14 It was two days before the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus^[a] by stealth and kill him,² for they said, “Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.”

³While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,^[b] as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. ⁴But some were there who said to one another in anger, “Why was the ointment wasted in this way? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish, but you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. ⁹Truly I tell you, wherever the good news^[c] is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹When they heard it, they were greatly pleased and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

II. Observations:

- A. Who is mentioned in this passage? Are they referred to by name, by relationship, or in some other way? Is there any description given for each one? If so, what words are used to describe them?

The chief priests and scribes, Jesus, the people, Simon the leper, an unnamed woman, those who were there, Judas Iscariot who was one of the twelve.

- B. If there are multiple participants, is there any dialogue between the participants? Can one of the speakers be identified as the main speaker in the passage? If so, who is the main speaker?

In verses 4-9 there is a conversation between some who were there who objected to what the woman did and scolded her, and Jesus who responded to them coming to her defense. The main speaker is Jesus. While in verses 10-11 there is report of a conversation between Judas Iscariot and the chief priests but not the actual dialogue.

- C. Were you able to tell when and where the events and/or discussions in this passage occurred? If so, when, and where did these things occur? What places, if any, are mentioned in the passage?

In verses 1-2 it is two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread and the chief priests and scribes are conspiring how to arrest and kill Jesus stealthily as they are afraid of the crowd. The location is Jerusalem where many Jews are coming to celebrate the festival. Where in Jerusalem is unknown.

In verses 3-9 the woman anointing Jesus and the subsequent conversation between Jesus and some of those who were there took place in Bethany while they were at a dinner at the home of Simon the leper. Bethany is two miles from Jerusalem.¹

¹ Craig S. Keener and John H. Walton, eds., *NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 1726.

No location is given in verses 10-11 where Judas goes to speak to the chief priests to agree to betray Jesus to them.

- D. What is happening, or what is being described in the passage? What is being presented or argued for (or against)? What does the writer want the readers/hearers to know, believe, feel, and/or do as a result of what he is saying?

Verses 1-2 of the passage is the conspiracy of the chief priests and scribes to arrest and kill Jesus. They want to do it stealthily and not during the festival as they fear that the people might riot. The Passover and Festival of Unleavened Bread is about to start, and the city is filling up with people from all over the Empire. Jesus is very popular, hence the fear of a riot.

The writer wants the readers to recognize that the opposition of the religious leaders to Jesus has increased after what happened since his triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem and that transpired between Jesus and the chief priests and scribes. The giving of the date before the festival lets readers know that the death of Jesus is imminent.

Jesus is in Bethany where he stayed in the evenings while he was in Jerusalem and he is having a meal when the unnamed woman comes in, pours expensive perfume on him and some of the persons, the disciples, object. Jesus comes to her defense and says she has done a good thing for him, she has anointed him ahead of time for his burial. Again, this confirms for the reader that his death and burial are imminent. And if there is any doubt of that left for the reader, Judas Iscariot going to betray Jesus should make that understanding clear. It also shows the reader how the religious leaders will be able to stealthily arrest and kill Jesus.

- E. What things are being discussed? Are there any commands, promises, warnings, words of encouragement, instructions, etc.? If so, what are they?

Being discussed: The use of expensive oil of nard to pour over Jesus' head for this anointing, whether this should have been used to give a gift for the poor, also discussed the coming the death and burial of Jesus.

The command that is given is that those who are there are to rebuking the woman are commanded to "leave her alone."

Jesus warns that they will not always have him.

Jesus promises/pronounces that wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what the woman has done will told in memory of her.

Also, the chief priests promise to pay Judas Iscariot money for betraying Jesus to them.

Words of encouragement: the rebuke of those who rebuked her and the promise that Jesus made of the memorial to her would have been words of encouragement to the woman for her complete devotion to him that resulted in her action of anointing him with the perfume.

Also, Jesus makes clear that the good news will be proclaimed all over the world.²

- F. Are there any other document or resources quoted, cited, or referred to? If so, which ones and why?

N/A

- G. Are there any Scriptures quoted, cited, or referred to? Are they from the New Testament or Old Testament? If so, which ones and why?

² Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 609.

The writer is giving a reference to The Law in particular as references the Passover Exod. 12:1-13.23-28, Deut. 16:1 Feast of Unleavened Bread Exod. 12:15-20; 23:15:34:18 and Num. 28:17. Deut. 16:1-8 speaks to both the Passover and festival of Unleavened Bread.

The reference to the law in relation to the poor was Deut. 15:11 and there was a custom of giving gifts to the poor on the evening of Passover.

- H. Is there anything else that was unfamiliar to you or that you needed to look up, such as a particular name, the definition of one of the words used, etc.?

The custom of giving gifts to the poor on the eve of Passover.

The difference between anointing on the head with oil and perfume and the fact that this anointing with perfume was also done for burial of a body³, by hosts at banquets⁴, in an ancient Greek custom a woman before intimacy with her husband would anoint his head,⁵ by hosts at banquets and by the sexually available at banquets.⁶

- I. Is there anything that is repeated, that is emphasized, or that stood out to you as being unusual?

³ Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 367.

⁴ Joanna Dewey, 2006. "Women in the Gospel of Mark." *Word & World* 26 (1): 27. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.nyack.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0001490834&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

⁵ Kathleen E. Corley. 2003. "The Anointing of Jesus in the Synoptic Tradition: An Argument for Authenticity." *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 1 (1): 65. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.nyack.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rh&AN=ATLAiGW7200817000528&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

⁶ Corley, 65

The idea and mention of death. I previously only saw the extravagant devotion of the woman but now in its larger context death is mentioned in verses 1, the conspiracy of the leaders, 8 the burial. In 10-11 the word death is not mentioned but Judas goes to high priest to help them in their conspiracy. There is over the passage the idea of imminent death.

II. Interpretation:

- A. Social Context: (What is the social context of the people in the passage? What did they believe about God, themselves, and each other? How did they interact with each of these mentioned? What did they think about and how did they interact with their families, villages/cities, neighbors, etc.?)

It is 2 days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened bread, 2 festivals that are now celebrated as one. Jews are coming from all over the empire to Jerusalem for the occasion/celebration. During the Passover festival the Roman Governor would stay in Jerusalem with a legion of soldiers, so that, in the event of unrest it can be quelled.⁷ The chief priests and the scribes who form part of the Sanhedrin are conspiring to kill Jesus who has challenged their authority, but aware of his popularity, they are wary of arresting or killing him during the festival lest it lead to a riot resulting in the Roman soldiers taking control, which would remove their authority and control over the temple and the people. The Jewish authorities do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus and the disciples are also there for the festival and Jesus is there to complete his mission and go to the cross. Jerusalem is very crowded so they stay in Bethany by the Mount of Olives in

⁷ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 606.

the evenings, some 2 miles from Jerusalem.⁸ On this evening they are at dinner at the home of Simon the leper.

No other information is given about Simon the leper. If he still had leprosy he would have been regarded as unclean and been an outcast in society unable to host such a dinner. There are suggestions that he may have been healed from the leprosy, or, that he became a leper subsequently,⁹ or that he may be deceased.¹⁰ Witherington suggests that even if he had been healed of the leprosy the stigma would remain and make people reluctant to be near him, his house, or his family, but not Jesus.¹¹

Jesus and disciples are at this dinner and while the disciples believe that Jesus is the Messiah, they don't understand what this means or what he is going to endure despite him telling them 3 times. They still don't understand what it means to be a disciple. They seem, like the Jewish leaders, connected to the traditions. So, the woman anointing the head of Jesus with expensive perfume draws their ire. They think the perfume should have been sold and the money given to the poor. They don't understand the significance of what she is doing. There would have been only men eating together and by coming to anoint him in this manner the woman is breaching the normal conventions¹²

⁸ Strauss, 606

⁹ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1991), 328. Logos Edition

¹⁰ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark: An introduction and Commentary* Edited by Eckhard J. Schnabel, TNTC (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 344. Logos Edition

¹¹ Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 367.

¹² Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1991), 329. Logos Edition

B. Literary Context:

1. Where does this passage occur in the book? The beginning, middle, the end?

This passage occurs near the end of the book, chapter 14 of 16 chapters. It is in the third part of the book, Jesus is on his way to the cross. It is the beginning of the Passion and Resurrection Narratives that mark the events leading to the arrest, death of Christ and the announcement of his resurrection.¹³

2. What has come before it? What comes after it? Insert an outline of the book, and/or a brief summary of what is mentioned before this passage and what is mentioned after it.

What happened before this passage:

In chapters 1:1-13 the readers are introduced to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In 1:14 - 45 we are introduced to the beginning of his ministry in Galilee.

From chapter 2:1 through 8:10 we encounter Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God in parables, which he then explains privately to the disciples, and, ministering to those who follow him, healing the sick, the deaf and the blind, delivering the oppressed from demons in Galilee and in gentile territories. He selects the 12 disciples. He shows his authority over sickness, over demons, over nature as he calms the storm, walks on water and feeds 5000 and then 4000 people. Jesus shows his authority over death by raising the daughter of Jairus a synagogue leader. In chapter. 6 the writer tells of Jesus' rejection in his home town and the death of John the Baptist.

¹³ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 600.

In these chapters there are also challenges to Jesus by the scribes and Pharisees. In chapter 2 the scribes among themselves question his ability to forgive sins, and they inquire why he eats with tax collectors and sinners, and why his disciples don't fast and about what is lawful on the sabbath. But there are more serious challenges thereafter. In chapter 3:6 Pharisees and Herodians conspire together on how to kill him and in 3:22 the scribes accuse him of working through Beelzebul. In chapter 7 he is challenged by the Pharisees and scribes about the traditions of the elders and in chapter 8:11-13 Jesus is challenged by the Pharisees who demand a sign, and he warns the disciples about the yeast of the pharisee in vv14-21.

From chapter 8 onwards some significant things happen even as Jesus continues to teach and be challenged by the Jewish leaders:

In chapter 8:27 Peter declared that Jesus is the Messiah and in chapter 9 Jesus was transfigured before the three disciples Peter, James and John.

Jesus, in 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33 warns them of his pending death and resurrection but in each case the disciples fail to understand what Jesus is saying to them as demonstrated by their selfish self-seeking responses and Jesus on each occasion then teaches them about what it means to be his disciple.

In chapter 11 there is the triumphal entry of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. He curses the fig tree and the following day it was dead. Jesus then cleaned out the temple court where they were selling goods for sacrifices and offering. After this in v18 the chief priests and scribes seek for a way to kill Jesus.

He is subsequently challenged by the chief priests, elders, scribes and Pharisees and Herodians, on his authority, taxes and resurrection. And he tells the parable of the wicked tenants, so in 12:12 they wanted to arrest him but were afraid of the crowd. In chapter 13 Jesus predicts the

destruction of the temple and Jerusalem and the return of the Son of Man and warns the disciples about the need to be alert as the time of these things and the return of the Son of Man is unknown except to God the Father, and he warns them of the persecution that they shall experience for his sake.

After this passage:

14:12-15:47: Jesus and the disciples have a Passover meal together where Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper. He also tells the disciples that one of them is going to betray him and that this is what must happen. After that meal they go out to the Mount of Olives where Jesus tells the disciples that they will all desert him but when he is raised up, he would meet them in Galilee. In response to Peter's objection about deserting him he informs them that that very night Peter will deny him 3 times.

They then go to Gethsemane, where Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. Jesus is arrested, the disciples desert him. Jesus is taken to the home of the chief priest where he was tried by the Sanhedrin who decide he should die for blasphemy. There in the courtyard, Peter denies Jesus three times.

In the morning Jesus is sent for trial before Pilate, he is flogged, mocked and crucified. He is buried by Joseph of Arimathea who wrapped his body in linen cloth and buried Jesus in a tomb. Chapter 16:1-20 On the third day Jesus rises from the dead and the ladies who are on their way to anoint the body are told by an angel that he is alive and gone ahead to Galilee. Jesus then appears first to Mary Magdalene and then to two disciples then to the rest of the disciples and sends them out to declare the good news in all the world and then Jesus ascends to heaven and the disciples obey.

3. Also, how does what we find in this passage relate to what has come before and what comes after?

It fits into what has come before as it again speaks to the plan of the religious leaders to arrest and kill Jesus and here, we also are told how they were able to do so, with the stealth they desired, as a result of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, even before the festival. Further, it confirms once again that what he had said about his pending death was about to happen as he states that the woman has anointed him ahead of time for his burial. It fits into what comes after as shortly hereafter Jesus is betrayed by Judas, tried by the Sanhedrin who send him to Pilate for trial and crucifixion. When he is crucified, he is buried without being anointed. This explains why Jesus said the woman was anointing him ahead of time for his burial. On the third day the women who go to anoint him are unable to do so as Jesus has risen from the dead.

4. How does this passage fit into the overall presentation or argument of the author? What would be lost if it were removed?

The author is showing that Jesus on the way to the cross. The religious leaders want to kill him but they are not in charge of what is happening here. Jesus is on his way to complete the mission for which he came. God is in charge here and Jesus the Christ is moving in accordance with his will and unbeknownst to them the chief priests and Judas are carrying out the plan of God. This all has to happen. At the same time here is an example of devotion to the Lord that disciples should have had. If this passage were removed that example of devotion to Jesus would be lost. But also what would be lost is part of the narrative that people can follow that enables us to see the confirmation of what Jesus said when he told the disciples in chapters 8, 9 and 10 that he

would be rejected by the chief priests and scribes and the elders and undergo suffering and be killed and rise again on the 3rd day 8:31. That he would be betrayed into the hands of man, 9:31 and in chapter 10:33 where he tells them that he will be handed over i.e., betrayed, to the chief priest and scribes who would condemn him to death and hand him over to the gentiles. Here in this passage, we see how that is going to happen as Judas goes to the chief priests to betray him. So, in this passage we see the process start to play out.

- C. Genre: (What type of literature is this, such as a psalm, a proverb, a law text, a narrative, etc.? Does it contain other forms of literature, such as a narrative, a dialogue, a prayer, poetry, a parable, etc.?)

This passage is narrative, and forms part of the continuous narrative that continues to the end of the book.

- D. Language: (Is there a special meaning to the original Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic? Compare various translations at this point. Is there a particular word which may have a special meaning?)

There were no words in the different translations that would change the meanings.

Stealth: δόλος, dolos, “to deceive by using trickery and falsehood, to trick into, treachery”.¹⁴

“Taking advantage of through craft and underhanded methods, deceit, cunning, treachery.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida (ed), “88.153” *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 758. Logos Edition.

¹⁵ W. Bauer, F.W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, & F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 256, Logos Edition.

In the NRSV verse 3 states that Jesus “sat at the table.” However, the ESV, NASB, NLT, NET and NIV all state that he was reclining at table. The Greek word was Κατάκειμαι, *katakeimai*, means “to be in a reclining position as one eats, to recline, to eat, to dine, to sit down to eat.”¹⁶ Strauss states that this is a verb that was usually used for dining at a banquet or dinner party.¹⁷ Normal meals were eaten sitting down but reclining was the position for banquets, formal dinners and Passover.¹⁸

Pour: καταχέω, *katacheo*, “to cause to pour down on – to pour on, to pour over.”¹⁹ Or “to pour out or pour over.”²⁰

Anoint: the woman breaks the alabaster jar and pours the expensive bottle of ointment of nard over Jesus’ head. In verse 3 the word anoint is not used. But in verse 8 Jesus states that the woman has anointed him beforehand for his burial. The word used there is μυρίζω, *myrizo*, The *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. states that this means to anoint with perfumed oil or ointment often in connection with burial.²¹ “To anoint with perfume, to anoint for burial. The *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* on the other hand states “anoint, of prostitutes and flute girls... Of corpses, anoint a body for burial”.²² Witherington states that in early Jewish culture anointing the

¹⁶ Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida (ed), “17.23” *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 217. Logos Edition.

¹⁷ Strauss, Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014) 606.

¹⁸ Strauss, 622.

¹⁹ Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida (ed), “47.5” *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 522. Logos Edition.

²⁰ W. Bauer, F.W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, & F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 529, Logos Edition.

²¹ Louw Nida, 6.206, 77.

²² BDAG, 661.

skin or scalp of someone with oil was different from anointing them with expensive and fragrant perfume.²³ Anointing with fragrant perfume was done for romantic or cosmetic purposes or it was done for burial rites. Hooker states that it was customary to pour oil on the head of guests at a well to do dinner party.²⁴ Kathleen Corley states that the service the woman did for Jesus was something that was often done at banquets by slave women or male servants who were sexually available.²⁵ She mentions that spikenard may also have used as the name of perfumes used by prostitutes or courtesans. However, she states that Jesus' connection of the anointing with burial rites relieves the issue of respectability of the woman's actions.²⁶ Jesus makes clear that she has done a good thing for him, anointing him for his burial. As it is clear in this gospel that he was not anointed before burial and the women who went to anoint his body after the sabbath got there after he had risen and were thus too late.

Alabaster jar ἀλάβαστρον, alabastros, Louw Nida 6.131 this jar was used primarily as a container for precious substances such as perfumes. It normally had a very long neck that had to be broken off in order to access and use the content.²⁷

Costly πολυτελής, polyteles, pertaining to being of great value or worth, implying in some contexts a monetary scale- valuable expensive.²⁸

Ointment μύρον, Myron, a strongly aromatic and expensive ointment.²⁹

²³ Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 367.

²⁴ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1991), 328.

²⁵ Kathleen E. Corley, 2003. "The Anointing of Jesus in the Synoptic Tradition: An Argument for Authenticity." *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 1 (1): 65. <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.nyack.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rh&AN=ATLAIgW7200817000528&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

²⁶ Corley, 66.

²⁷ Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida (ed), "6.131" *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 68. Logos Edition.

²⁸ Louw Nida, "65.3", 619.

²⁹ Louw Nida, "6.205", 77.

Nard νάρδος, nardos, an aromatic oil that is extracted from nard plant.³⁰

Betray παραδίδομι, paradidomi, means “to grant someone the opportunity or occasion to do something to grant to allow”.³¹ It also means “to deliver a person into the control of someone else, involving either the handing over of a presumably guilty person for punishment by the authorities or the handing over of an individual to an enemy who will presumably take undue advantage of the victim – to handover, to turn over to, to betray.”³² or “to hand over, turn over, give up a person.”³³

Having looked at the NRSV, ESV, NASB, NET, NLT and NIV there were no words that changed the meanings.

- E. Text Criticism: (Is there a debate in the manuscript tradition about this passage? Footnotes in study Bibles and most academic commentaries will pick this up. Does the text variant alter the meaning or interpretation of the passage? If so, how?)

There is debate around 2 matters in this narrative. The first has to do with dating. Mark 14:1 reads “It was two days before Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread.” The question and discussion that arises is whether Mark was Jewish manner of counting days or the Roman manner of counting days. This becomes an issue as it raises questions about the last meal that Jesus had with his disciples, whether it was a Passover meal, or whether Jesus and the disciples

³⁰ Louw Nida, “6.210”, 78.

³¹ Louw Nida, “13.142”, 163.

³² Louw Nida, “37.111”, 484.

³³ W. Bauer, F.W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, & F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 761. Logos Edition.

celebrated the Passover early.³⁴ It also relates to whether Jesus was crucified before the festival began, as the religious leaders had wanted but thought was not possible.

The second debate has to do how many times Jesus was anointed by a woman. Each of the gospels has an account of a woman who anointed either Jesus' head or his feet. It seems to be the generally accepted that despite the differences that exist in each of the accounts, the accounts in Matthew Mark and John refer to the same incident and that the account in Luke was a different incident.³⁵

- F. History of Redemption: How does this passage relate to the rest of the Bible? (Is it part of the story of Israel prior to the coming of Christ? Does it occur during Christ's time in the world between his birth and death? Does it occur after the resurrection of Christ and giving of the Holy Spirit? Is it a result of the fall, or part of the fulfillment of the Christ-event?)

The events related in this passage occurred during Christ's life, shortly before his death. It is part of Jesus arrival in Jerusalem as he goes in a matter of days to fulfill the mission for which he came. To be crucified and give his life as a ransom for many as he said in chapter 10:45. This all occurred in order that we could all have redemption in Christ through his death and resurrection.

- G. Commentaries (Consult and interact with at least two (2) commentaries here.):

³⁴ Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 364.

³⁵ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 604.

1. What are some of the main issues discussed by the commentators concerning this passage?

The commentaries discuss a number of matters.

- i. How the days were counted by Mark, whether he did this using the Jewish way or the Roman way. Witherington mentions the issue and what this would mean in terms of whether the last meal was in fact the Passover meal, and whether Jesus was seized during or before the festival.³⁶ (364) Hooker also looks at the matter.³⁷ (325).
- ii. The fact that the dinner Jesus and the others attended was at the home of Simon the leper. What it would mean for someone to have leprosy and different ideas as to what happened to him and who he might have been.
- iii. One of the issues that is discussed is the nature of the anointing that the woman did on Jesus. All acknowledge that this was an act of devotion by the woman who was giving Jesus everything she had to give and all that was in that bottle or flask. While they speak to the fact that it was common to anoint with oil the head of guests at a dinner, this was different. Strauss mentions that others view this as a messianic anointing but seems unconvinced.³⁸ It was an anointing for his burial as Jesus said. Witherington states that it is possible that Mark describes an anointing on the head with the perfume as an act symbolizing the preparing a royal figure for burial.³⁹ But he states that it is a prophetic act indicating what was to happen to Jesus. Hooker states that it is likely that Mark saw this anointing for burial also saw it as a messianic anointing since Mark's story shows that it is thru his death that Jesus is shown to be

³⁶ Witherington, *Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 364.

³⁷ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1991), 325.

³⁸ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 607.

³⁹ Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 368.

Messiah or anointed.⁴⁰ However both Witherington and Hooker point out that she anointed him before his death as he would not be anointed after his death as he was resurrected before that could happen.

iv. Another thing that they address is the fact that the woman is not named in this gospel. Strauss states that it is what she did that will be remembered, her devotion so her name not needed.⁴¹ Witherington points out that Jesus is the focus in this chreia form narrative so what she did is important but not her name.⁴² It is interesting therefore that Schnabel states that the at the time when Mark wrote the gospel had she been identified she would have been regarded as a political subversive, and thus be in danger. By the time that John was writing his gospel, he says, he had the freedom to identify her.⁴³

2. What verse or verses, if any, do they seem to focus on more than others?

They focus on verses 3-9 and in particular verse 3 that relate to her pouring the perfume on his head and verses 6-9 that deal with Jesus' response to those who were reprimanding the woman, speaking about the poor and praising her for what she did even as he again reminds them that he is about to die.

3. How do they see what is said here impacting what happens elsewhere in the Old Testament and/or the New Testament?

⁴⁰ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1991), 328.

⁴¹ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 607,

⁴² Witherington, *Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 366

⁴³ Schnabel, Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark: An introduction and Commentary* Edited by Eckhard J. Schnabel (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 344.

In relation to the rest of the New Testament in verse 9 these commentators see what happened here referencing the world-wide proclamation of the good news, the gospel, that the church would be doing. This would include not just what Jesus said and did but also include his death and resurrection.⁴⁴ Hooker states that the story of woman's anointing Jesus with the perfume is "a proclamation of the good news that is to be proclaimed of the good news that is to be preached throughout the whole world."⁴⁵ This is what happened in the rest of the New Testament and is the role of the church today.

III.

⁴⁴ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 609.

⁴⁵ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1991), 330.

IV. Application(s):

- A. Summary: Summarize in two paragraphs/ten sentences what is being presented and/or taught in the passage. Then, in one concise statement or sentence, state in your own words the main thrust of what the passage is teaching.

1. Summary of two paragraphs/ten sentences:

This passage is the beginning of the Passion Narrative dealing with the last week of his life, leading to the arrest, rejection, suffering and crucifixion of Jesus. It teaches that Jesus knew what he came for and he was on his way to do it no matter what. Though man thought he was in charge of what was happening God was in charge and man was only doing what God had intended. Jesus came to die on the cross and to give his life as a ransom for the sins of many and this passage is carrying the reader on the journey in the last week of his life to do so.

Additionally, the passage is teaching that the most important thing we can do as his disciples is to be like that woman who anointed his head with the perfume. She was completely devoted to him so that she gave him what was precious and valuable to her, including potentially her reputation. It was to her the best thing that she could do for him. We are not to be like the chief priests who were enemies of the Lord accepting him as messiah though they were the religious leaders of his people. Or like Judas who betrayed him. Further we are not to be like those who were there, identified as the disciples in Matthew, who though his disciples, just didn't understand and were so out of tune with him that they were more concerned about the money that could be had for the perfume than about participating in, or appreciating, her devotion and what her anointing him meant.

2. What is the main thrust of the message/teaching to the original audience in their context?

For the original audience the main thrust of the message would have been that Jesus though he is God, became man for the purpose of dying so that they could be saved. That he, in the plan of God, went through suffering and pain and humiliation on their behalf. This would give them hope and encouragement to face the hardships and persecution that they were going through, following the example that he had set going thru his passion. It would also have them look at the devotion of the unnamed woman who poured the oil on his head anointing him for his burial, standing in sharp contrast to the chief priests and scribes, Judas Iscariot and even the other persons that were having the meal with Jesus, and help them to recognize that her example of devotion is what they should follow and not that set by any of the others.

- B. Impact on/Importance to Believers, Unbelievers, and Me: (What is the importance/significance of these events to people today? What applications might we make to our own lives, such as what we believe, how we treat others, what we do, etc.? In other words, how should knowing what is in this passage then change us now?)

1. Believers: (What does this passage teach a new Christian, a mature believer, etc. about who God is, what He has done, what He is going to do, etc.? Is there a promise to be relied upon, a truth to be known and trusted, a command to be obeyed, etc.?)

It teaches that God was very deliberate and clear on what he was doing with and through Jesus. None of what Jesus was going through or was going to go through was accidental or arbitrary. God was fully in control, Jesus was very clear about what was going to happen to him. In the same way so it is that God is fully aware and understands what is happening with us and he is in control of that too. Once we are like that woman who was devoted to him and trusted him, he

was able to tell what was going to happen in memorial of her, and we know her story it has been told to us 2000 years later. So, we too can trust Him.

There is also the servant heart of Jesus as he deliberately goes to complete his mission on the cross. And there is the servant heart of the woman in how she anoints him in her devotion. She did this when she could and broke conventions so she could do so. That is the kind of devotion that we should have towards the Lord and the servant heart that believers are to have as they love and serve others in community and ministry.

2. Unbelievers: (What does this passage teach someone who has not yet trusted Christ?)

Jesus was on his way to the cross fully cognizant of what was going to happen to him. He knew that he was going to be betrayed to chief priests and that he was going to be crucified yet he continued on the path. He knew his death was imminent and he reminds those with him of this when he says that she has anointed him for his burial.

That the woman's devotion to him was a total devotion, such that she would break convention going into a room of men eating to do what she did with this most expensive perfume.

That Jesus could, and did, defend her from the others who were there and commended her and declared that she would be remembered wherever across the whole world the good news of Jesus is proclaimed, just as that person is hearing it now. In her devotion to him she could trust Jesus. That this was done by Jesus and recorded by Mark that they might believe the good news and trust and be devoted to Jesus as this woman was.

3. Me: (What does this passage teach me about God, His ways, and His actions in the past, present, and future? How does this instruct and/or challenge me?)

This passage teaches me that God and Jesus were very deliberate about what he was doing with Jesus for me. There was nothing accidental about what Jesus was going through or going to experience. That tells me about the kind of love that God has for me and it tells me about his grace. So, this challenges me to remember that love and grace like that, I need to not take it for granted and be as devoted to Christ my Savior as that unnamed woman was. To love Him and be devoted to him and give him always my best, my all, and not take his grace and his love and what he did for me for granted. It also teaches me to trust God with everything. He is in control, even when I don't understand or I am down. Despite my greatest desire, both of these things can be challenging.

Additionally, the woman had a servant's heart. She seeks to show her devotion to Jesus in this way and is chastised by angry men. There is no indication that she responded before Jesus defended and commended her. That is idea of serving and not responding when chastised for doing a good thing can sometimes be hard and challenging.

C. Preaching/Teaching:

1. What essential elements would you want to include when preaching/teaching this text in your faith community/ministry context?

That this is the beginning of the passion narrative, about the arrest and suffering that Jesus was going to go through. Give a quick idea of the cultural context both in the time of Jesus that Mark is writing an account of and the cultural context of Mark's original audience. One would also want to give an overview of the book of Mark (unless this is part of a larger study on the

gospel of Mark) so that they have an idea of what happened before and what is going to happen hereafter.

With regard to the passage itself, it would indicate that this is 2 days before the Passover and festival of Unleavened Bread so Jesus' death is imminent. I would also want to show the contrasting reactions to Jesus as shown on the one hand by the chief priests and scribes in vv1-2, joined by Judas Iscariot in vv10-11, and that of the others who were there in verses 4-5 with that of the woman in her devotion to Jesus on the other.

Also looking at Jesus and recognizing that he willingly went through this event, and the whole passion, knowing exactly what was going to happen and he did not change his mind or his course. This is clear from his words in verses 8-9.

I would want to examine the actions of the unnamed woman in her devotion, her willingness to break convention to serve him and show her devotion to him, to put up with rebuke, to give him her very best, what was of great value to her. I would have those in the class consider whether they are willing to be like her for Jesus and are they willing to love others, and each other as clearly Jesus loved those who were with him and the woman and us.

2. Are there any parts of it that might require special explanation to help your ideal/target audience understand?

I would want to give them an understanding of the cultural context in which this was happening. Why the chief priests and scribes were reacting to Jesus that way. And also give them a bit of understanding about the time that Mark was writing what was happening to his audience, and explain why the woman's name may not have been given even as I explain a bit more about the style of Mark, that his focus is always on

Jesus and everyone else is mentioned only to help the reader understand the central figure who is Jesus. Also explain the burial practices and that part of that involved women anointing the body with perfume and spices.

There may also be questions with regard to what Jesus meant when he said the poor always with you? How does he regard with the poor and how they should be treated. This could be explained with regard to putting him first, and look at the account of the rich young man in chapter 10. And generally look at how Jesus treated with the poor and marginalised in his ministry.

3. Are there any parts of it that might be especially challenging or disturbing to some in your ideal/target audience?

Other than the idea that one who was so close to the Lord could go and agree to betray him in this way, there is nothing that should be particularly disturbing to that audience.

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