

Mark 14:1-11

June 16, 2019

“Christianity is all centered around a person. Conversion is not a mere change of human opinion; it is the devotion of heart to a person. A converted man is not a man who just changes his views concerning certain facts, or theories, or doctrines, but he is a man whose heart has become devoted to a living Christ. ‘He is altogether lovely.’ It is ‘he’. Oh, may God take the impersonal pronoun out of our religion! All your religion, if it is worth anything, will just be centered in a living, personal Jesus. Your doctrines will all come from him – your motives will all be found in him, your joys in him, your acceptance in him, your completeness in him.” Archibald Brown

Are you? Devoted to a living Christ?

Does your life broadcast –I’m devoted to Jesus?

What or who are you devoted to?

We should enjoy a great many things: Good food, Good company, time with family, working hard, vacations, hobbies—we should enjoy all of these things and more but we must not be devoted to them.

Does your life broadcast: Devoted to Jesus?

Today we are going to be eyewitnesses to the life broadcasts of one group and two people. Their actions will broadcast their devotion.

What devotion does your life broadcast?

This story is a story of memorable, even haunting devotion.

Today we join Mark again and witness—a story of memorable even haunting devotion.

Let's take them each in turn. First, this group broadcasted—Devoted to Self.

1. The Religious leaders (Mk. 14:1-2)

Mark calls these leaders the 'chief priests and scribes' and we see very clearly they were devoted to themselves.

Vs. 1,

"It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth

and kill him, ²for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."

What do the chief priests and scribes want to do?
They want to detain and destroy Jesus.

All of these plans were clandestine and shrouded behind a dark veil of secrecy. These leaders may have been selfish but they were not stupid (the selfish rarely are) they knew they could not risk detaining Jesus publicly.

They had to wait for the thronging crowd to thin about a bit. These great crowds would evaporate in about a week after Passover.

So, they would bide their time.

Recall from weeks prior, Jews from all over the world traveled over field and dell, rock and stream to make it to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

There were people everywhere. The religious leaders knew they had to be wary of these vast crowds. They knew that Passovertime could be a time for tumult and riot if the something happened to draw the people's ire.

So, they decided not to detain and destroy this popular Galilean preacher but wait about a week. After Passover and after the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Their plans would change, but they didn't know that yet.

One other thing to note: When Mark says that the 'chief priests and scribes' this was not a few people—they represented the governing Jewish authorities.

This plan to detain and destroy Jesus was an official decree and carried the force of law.

Why did they want to detain and destroy Jesus?

Because they were devoted to themselves and all that Jesus taught confronted and challenged them. People who are devoted to themselves don't suffer correction well.

Jesus offered more than just correction—we were with Jesus in the temple in Mark 12—Jesus waged a frontal assault against these chief priests and scribes. He proclaimed to any that would listen that they were corrupt and they had corrupted the temple. Under their leadership the Jewish center of worship metastasized into a center of treachery.

They were thieves hiding behind religious disguises.

Jesus went so far as to tell the people—you can't trust your leaders.

He had to be detained and destroyed.

They wanted to hold sway over the people and maintain their power. They wanted to be revered, respected, admired and distinguished. They wanted to hold all the power and be feared.

These men expected obedience, not accountability.

These very chief priests and scribes should have been the ones planning Jesus' coronation as the coming king; instead they planned to detain and destroy him.

Why?

They were devoted to themselves. They wanted Jesus to serve their interests, they had no inclination to serve his interests. Jesus came and disrupted their world, so he had to be detained and destroyed.

They had no room for Jesus in their lives. They were primarily devoted to themselves.

Why?

Because people devoted to themselves expect Jesus to do what they want for them.

Jesus doesn't fit in around our hopes and dreams. He reorients them. You can't have plans for Jesus you have to submit to his plans for you.

Jesus is not someone you can use to get what you want. He is not someone you add to what you are doing with your life. He is someone who is meant to completely alter your life.

Those devoted to themselves only want Jesus if he can give them what they want.

Is that you?

Jesus does not promise to give you all your hopes and dreams. He doesn't promise to make your life better or give you success.

Do you understand this?

The chief priests and the scribes did not. They were devoted to themselves. So, Jesus had to be detained and destroyed.

What did the lives of the religious leaders broadcast?

Devoted to self!

We've met the religious leaders devoted to themselves—now we meet an anonymous woman devoted to someone altogether different.

2. The Woman (Mk. 14:3-9)

This anonymous woman is devoted to Jesus. Lets read. Vs. 3,

³ And 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. ⁴ There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? ⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹ And 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.”

The scene shifts from secretive meeting of the religious leaders to Jesus.

We join Jesus about 2 miles from Jerusalem in the hamlet of Bethany. He and his 12 disciples are having dinner at the home of a man named Simon. Since Simon was the most common name at that time—Mark tells us which Simon—Simon the leper. We don’t know why he had that nickname, maybe Jesus healed him?

Out of nowhere comes an unidentified woman—she bursts into the room uninvited—and her actions rivets everyone’s attention to her. Along the way she jumps into history and the page of scripture.

What did she do?

She anointed Jesus. That just means to pour something on someone’s head.

In that day, it was typical for guests to given a bit of oil for their head when they came over for dinner. It was their way of getting the dust off their hair, covering up unwelcome odors and get rid of bugs.

She does something altogether different.

She anoints Jesus but not with common olive oil. She uses something Mark calls, "pure nard." The nard plant from which the ointment was taken came from the distant lands of India, Nepal and the Himalayas. So, this potion was costly.

So expensive that some in the room recoiled with collective indignance. Their thoughts were scathing and they flared into a scolding assault against her.

The reason that some scolded her is that they thought pouring this nard on his head was an extravagant and unnecessary waste of money. The value was 300 denarii.

That is about a year's wages for a day laborer. Clearly, that is no small sum.

What does Jesus think? Was it a waste?

Vs. 6,

"Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me.

⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.

She did it for him. She anointed him for burial. That is a strange thing to say. Kings were anointed before they were coronated. Jesus was a king but he was coronated prior to his destruction.

This woman may not have understood everything about Jesus or all of what he was going to do but she understood one thing—this man is worth any sacrifice.

She showed her devotion to Jesus by devoting to him her most costly possession. All in that room on that day knew that she was devoted to Jesus.

Her action broadcasted her devotion to Jesus.

Do yours?

- Are you willing to be scolded or shunned as an outsider for the way you devote so much time to Jesus?
- Are you willing to have people react in indignation as you devote so much time to Jesus by serving in the same church for years?

- Are you willing to show your devotion to Jesus in how you spend your money in ways that others will misunderstand?
- Are you willing to have people look at your life and the way you live for Jesus and have them scold you?

Are you?

Jesus said she did a beautiful thing for him because she didn't just say she was devoted to him—she showed it.

We've seen two broadcasts:

- Religious leaders devoted to themselves.
- Anonymous woman devoted to Jesus.

Lastly, we meet someone devoted to himself like the religious leaders with a different twist.

3. The Traitor (Mk. 14:10-11)

The next man we meet was close to Jesus but not devoted to him. He was devoted to himself.

Vs. 10,

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to

them. ¹¹ And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.”

Even if you are new to the Bible you have probably heard the name Judas Iscariot. This Judas was close to Jesus but clearly not devoted to him.

We don't know why he turned away from Jesus—but we do know he was not devoted to Jesus even though he gave every appearance he was devoted to Jesus.

Judas had lived and worked and followed Jesus for three years.

- He had come when Jesus said, “Follow me.”
- He had heard his preaching.
- He had seen his miracles.
- He had talked to him in private.
- He had experienced his love.
- He had seen Jesus calm the storm.
- He had seen Jesus feed the 5000 thousand.
- He was there when he called Lazarus back.
- He was sent out to preach in the name of Jesus.
- He had countless conversations with him.
- He saw Jesus love for others.
- He experienced Jesus love himself.

Being close to Jesus is no guarantee of devotion to Jesus.

And yet, he sought for an opportunity to betray Jesus to the very people who wanted to detain and destroy him.

Why?

Mark doesn't tell us directly, but he does give us a hint. When he went to the chief priests and the scribes they were excited and they promised to give him money.

We don't know why Judas made the decision to turn on Jesus but we do know what he got as a reward—money. Judas showed himself to be devoted to money instead of Jesus.

Clearly Judas saw his relationship with Jesus as an asset, as something to be traded on. He chose to sell Jesus out. His devotion to himself and money outstripped his devotion to Jesus.

He valued silver more than the savior.

It could be that he said, "If I can't get what I want from Jesus, I'll make my own opportunity and make a profit anyway."

What could money do for him? Give him power and control. That appears to be what he wanted.

It could be that he thought following Jesus would mean he would have a cushy job in his kingdom. And when he saw and understood that this king would not sit on a throne but would be hung on a cross he realized what that meant for him.

It was not good business to follow someone destined for a cross. His followers would be treated the same way. It was time to cash out.

And that is just what he did. He was devoted to himself.

Just because you have been close to Jesus for years does not mean that you are exempt from becoming disillusioned and cashing out.

Being close to Jesus is not the same as being devoted TO Jesus. You can:

- Read the Bible
- Pray
- Serve others
- Give
- Go to church

- Sing

You can do all these things and be devoted to yourself. Judas did.

Judas did not get what he wanted from Jesus and plotted his escape. Are you? Silently? Secretly? Maybe you are thinking of leaving him because:

- Your marriage isn't great
- Your health declines
- You don't have extra money
- Your husband is thoughtless
- Your wife is distant
- You are still afraid
- You think others have it easier
- You are just disappointed
- You just thought things would be easier
- You don't like the idea dying daily following a crucified savior

And Jesus doesn't seem to be making any of these things better.

And you are tempted to cash out.

Is that where you find yourself today?

We've met:

- The leaders who wanted to kill Jesus
- The woman who was devoted to Jesus
- The man who would betray Jesus

At the beginning we talked about this story as being a story of memorable, even haunting devotion. Am I talking about the devotion of the woman?

Look again at verse 9,

⁹ And 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.

Her story of devotion is wonderful and worthy of repeating and celebrating.

But her story cannot change us. It can challenge us and make us ask some questions about our measure of devotion. But there is another story of devotion in this passage we need to consider.

What did Jesus say?

"Wherever the gospel is proclaimed." This is the one time in Mark we hear the word gospel coming out of the mouth of Jesus.

What is the gospel? The gospel is the greatest story of devotion that the world has ever known.

The gospel is THE story of devotion. This is the story that we must see and understand here.

How is the gospel a story of devotion?

The answer is always—look at Jesus.

Who was Jesus devoted to? His Father by the power of the Spirit—yes.

Who else? Mankind.

You and me.

- This woman broke a flask of nard for Jesus.
- Jesus was broken for you.
- There were some who scoffed at her devotion—they said, "What a waste."
- There were some who scoffed at the idea of a crucified savior—they said, "How can a king die?"
- The ointment was valuable.
- The savior was invaluable.

Look at this man and try if you can to measure his devotion for you. You can't. He is devoted to you with an eternal devotion.

Not only that.

But he does not merely say he is devoted to us.
He does not write notes proclaiming love.
He does not paint pictures announcing his love.

He shows his devotion by dying in our place.

How could someone have that kind of devotion?

Only one reason. Boundless love.

At the beginning we talked about this story as being a story of memorable, even haunting devotion.

Look at Jesus and you see one who has boundless love for you.

The gospel is the story of the all-surpassing love of Jesus for sinners. There was absolutely no reason that Jesus deserved to be murdered in the place of sinners.

His life broadcasted devotion at every turn:

- Obeyed the Father.
- Loved the Father with all his heart, soul, mind and strength.
- Loved his neighbor as himself.

Has anyone loved his neighbor like this man?

No.

But the story of devotion goes further back. Not only was there no reason that Jesus deserved to die, but also there was no reason for him to come.

He departed paradise for earth.

He came to us out of love, not because we are deserving but because we were undeserving.

The one who clothed himself with light put on the flesh of mankind. The one to whom the heavenly host sang and bowed departed to have the earthly host spit and mock. The one called galaxies into being departed to call mankind to himself. The one who had all power over all things departed to give up all power for the good of mankind. The one who surpassed all beauty departed and bore the scorn of God surpassing all others.

Why? Boundless love.

This is a love that in some measure should haunt us. By that I mean that it should be something we can't just easily shake off.

How does Jesus call us?

- By frightening us?
- By befriending us?
- By threatening us?
- By consulting us?

No.

By loving us.

I do not think that most Christians think enough about the boundless love of Christ for us. We can be so aware of remaining sin (its there; its real) but it pales in comparison to his love for us.

We can't afford to be oblivious to his unbounded love.

The gospel story is a story of unbridled devotion for his people. Jesus knew love. He knew what it was to be loved by his Father. For all eternity he experienced love from and love to God.

And he left, so we might experience that kind of love ourselves.

Jesus has come to bring God's love to us.

You might say, "I don't deserve this kind of love."

If Jesus were here, he might say, "Exactly."

"Consider from whom Jesus came. Was it to his friends? No! He came for sinful man—who had defaced his image, and abused his love, and rebelled against him. Yet, he came to man resolving to conquer our obstinacy with his kindness." Thomas Watson

Jesus devoted himself to death to give us life.

When you see and understand and begin to grapple with the fact that Jesus is devoted to you—being devoted to him is no chore.

Remember the question we asked at the beginning—What does your life broadcast? Devotion to Jesus?

Before you answer that question—remember the broadcast of his life. Devoted to the Father? Yes! Devoted to you? Also yes.

Be devoted to Jesus. He is devoted to you. It is no chore to love someone who loves us like Jesus. There is no one who loves you like Jesus.

“Oh, what love! Christ would not entrust our redemption to angels, to millions of angels; but he would come himself, and in person suffer; he would not give a low and a base price for us clay. He would buy us with a great ransom, so as he might over-buy us, and none could over-bid him in his market for souls. If there had been millions of more believers, and many heavens, without any new bargain his blood should have bought them all, and all these many heavens should have smelled one rose of life; Christ should have been one and the same tree of life in them all. Oh, we under-bid, and undervalue that Prince of love, who did overvalue us; we will not sell all we have to buy him; he sold all he had, and himself too, to buy us.” Richard Sibbes

Be Devoted to Jesus on his terms.

He doesn't promise to give you—

- The marriage of your dreams
- Robust physical help
- Extra money, money, money
- A thoughtful husband
- A respectful wife
- A life without temptations
- An easy life
- A life without disappointment

I recently read a heart-rending account of a man who was a pastor and served in various positions walking away from Jesus—He said in part,

In 40 years I never witnessed a single event that was supernatural. Not one. Time and again I watched people die of cancer. I did funerals for 47 people from the age of 4 to 96. I prayed in faith with hundreds of people for healing to no avail. God didn't answer prayers

My devoutly Christian parents were abusive, my marriage was a sham, prayer was never answered, miracles were never performed. People died, children rebelled, marriages failed, addictions occurred - all at the same rate as non-believers. The system just doesn't work.

I pastored mega churches & tiny churches. I did college ministry, camp ministry, youth ministry, music ministry, preaching ministry, church planting - everything in the church except work in the nursery. And what I saw was people desperate for the system to work for them.

Do you hear the angst? I do.

If I were to talk to this gentleman, as gently as possible, I would try and point out that he is coming to Jesus on his terms.

He doesn't promise answered prayers or miraculous healings. He promises himself.

He is devoted to his people.

He offers:

- Forgiveness to the sinful.
- Hope to the outcast.
- Love to the unworthy.
- Righteousness to the profane.
- Life.
- A home.
- Himself.

His devotion to you will never flag or fail. It won't always make sense but he is devoted to you.

Let me ask what I asked at the beginning—

What does YOUR life broadcast? What are you devoted to?

Don't look at the woman and say—I wish I could be more like her—Look at this savior and say—I'm glad he is devoted to me.

Then you can ask—how can I be devoted to him?

How?

PRAY

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." 2 Peter 3:18