

## 一份奢侈的奉献——马可福音 14:1-11

### An Extravagant Offering—Mark 14:1-11

#### *Introduction and Outline*

- Scripture Reading: Mark 14:1- 11; 1 Chronicles 29:10-19

#### **Mark 14:1-11** (NASB1995)

1 Now the Passover and Festival of Unleavened Bread were two days away; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest Him covertly and kill Him; 2 for they were saying, “Not during the festival, otherwise there will be a riot of the people.” 3 While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the Leper, He was reclining at the table, and a woman came with an alabaster vial of very expensive perfume of pure nard. She broke the vial and poured the perfume over His head. 4 But there were some indignantly remarking to one another, “Why has this perfume been wasted? 5 For this perfume could have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they were scolding her. 6 But Jesus said, “Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a good deed for Me. 7 For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. 9 Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the entire world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her.” 10 Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them. 11 They were delighted when they heard this, and promised to give him money. And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.

- What is the most extravagant thing you have ever done in your life? Is there anything for which you willingly paid such a high price that no one else could even understand why in the world you’d spent so much on it?
- **Matthew 13:44-46** “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; **and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has** and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and **sold all that he had** and bought it.”
- Entering the Kingdom of Heaven is indeed an extravagant thing because it will cost you everything! The offering God demands of us is our whole life, not just an extra portion from what’s left on our plate after we’ve satisfied our own selfish desires. What does such a life look like? Today's passage is an excellent example.
- Outline:
  - Title: An Extravagant Offering – Mark 14:1-11
  - 1. The Context—Jesus to Be Murdered (vv. 1-2)
  - 2. The Content—Pure Nard the Perfume (v.3 )
  - 3. The Counteraction—Sneering Criticism (vv. 4-5)
  - 4. The Consequence—Highly Praised by Jesus (vv. 6-9)
    - 4a. Mary Knows the Proper Priority
    - 4b. Mary Has Given What She Could
    - 4c. Mary Listens Closely to Jesus’ Word

## 5. The Contrast—Betraying Jesus for Money (vv. 10-11)

### The Context—Jesus to Be Murdered (vv.1-2)

- “were seeking how to seize Him by stealth and kill Him”: This isn’t the first time they did that (cf. Luke 4:28-28; Mark 3:6; John 5:18). None of the previous murderous plans succeeded because God’s appointed time had not yet come.
- “Not during the festival”: The Passover festival is the only time they did not want to kill Jesus.
- “Otherwise there might be a riot of the people”: The people had just welcomed Jesus triumphantly into the city (11:1-11), and so killing Him now would surely start a riot with them. In reality, they completely overestimated the people's loyalty to Jesus. It is exactly the cry of these people that eventually caused them to have to crucify Jesus at the Passover.

【Conclusion】 The whole timetable was in the hands of neither the leaders nor the people, but of God. The Passover was a remembrance of God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, where the slain lambs directly foreshadowed the salvation of Jesus by His blood and death.

### The Content—Pure Nard the Perfume (v.3)

- “Simon the leper”: His leprosy had apparently been healed by Jesus. This is his thanksgiving feast for his Savior.
- “There came a woman”: Mary, the sister of Lazarus (cf. John 12:2-3).
- “An alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard”: Nard is an amber-colored aromatic essential oil extracted from the plant *Nardostachys*, a member of the honeysuckle family, which grows only in the Himalayan mountains in Nepal, China, and India. This plant is only found in that small area of the Himalayas in the world, and is very rare and costly to transport, which is why the Scripture says it is “very costly”. Historical evidence shows people often mix cheap substitutes with real nard, so the Scripture emphasizes this is “pure nard,” 100% authentic, without any adulteration.

【Insight】 See the pure, untainted love Mary has for Jesus!

【Consider】 How in the world did this exotic Himalayan product get into the Bible? What does this local extravagance have to do with the gospel? What can a bottle of oriental perfume contribute to the advance of God’s Kingdom? What was Mary thinking? What’s the value of doing this? Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples, would you have appreciated Mary for doing a beautiful thing? Or would you have reacted like the other disciples and chastised Mary for wasting money?

- “Broke the vial”: This long-necked bottle made of jade is a valuable and exquisite handicraft in itself. Its tiny mouth only allows for slow dripping so as to prevent spillage, but this design prevented Mary from fully expressing her love for Jesus, so, without hesitation, she broke the bottle neck and poured out the entire content of the perfume. Verse 5 says the perfume is worth “over three hundred denarii,” that is, a year's wages for the average laborer. This indeed is **an extravagance!**

### The Counteraction—Sneering Criticism (vv. 4-5)

- “They were scolding her”: We can totally imagine what they would’ve said. ”What a waste! No love for the poor! Bad stewardship! Totally ignorant of how one should serve the Lord!” Can you feel the pressure Mary was under?

**【Application】** When other believers sincerely want to do something for Jesus and sometimes their ideas don't fit our judgment of priority, let us be extra careful not to respond like the disciples did. Just because we don't see the value in their acts of love doesn't mean Jesus can't see their value. If a bottle of exotic perfume is acceptable to Jesus, I don't think there is any offering that is unacceptable simply because its form doesn't fit into our rigid thinking.

- “... might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor”: Judas said this because he was a lover of money, not of Jesus (cf. John 12:4-6); the other disciples said this because they were narrow-minded and did not understand the heart of Jesus, but they still loved Him in their heart of hearts.

**【Insight】** What Judas did here, true believers sometimes do also: this is making spiritual excuses in order to cover up real motives of the heart. Such cannot be judged from the outside, but in the end nothing is outside of God’s sight.

### **The Consequence—Highly Praised by Jesus (vv. 6-9)**

- “A good deed”: The original Greek is “a beautiful thing”; not just good in a basic moral sense, but something to be appreciated for its aesthetic value. Mary’s act of offering, even if no one else can appreciate, is appreciated by Jesus as a beautiful thing! And, for Mary, that is enough! Yes, others may criticize, so what?
- “you always have the poor with you ... but you do not always have Me”: Not to deny the value of giving to the poor, Jesus’ point here is the order of priority. When Jesus is present, the emphasis should always be on Jesus, not on the poor.

**【Principle】** When we devote so much to doing good works of service, to a point we neglect even to enjoy the very presence of the Lord through reading His Word and prayer, then something must be seriously wrong with our priority.

*“There is a time for ministering to the poor, the sick, the naked, and the imprisoned. There is a time for witnessing to the lost and seeking to lead them to the Savior. There is a time for discipling new believers and helping them grow in the faith. There is a time for careful study and teaching of God’s Word. But above all else that the Lord requires of His people is their true worship, without which everything else they may do in His name is empty and powerless.” — one pastor*

- “She has done what she could”: She’s done her best! Her offering is according to the resource and ability God had given her, and she’s given what she had. Why do you still find fault with her? God would never force us to give what we don’t have.

**2 Corinthians 8:12** “For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable **according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.**”

- “For the burial”: This indicates that she listened carefully to Jesus' teaching. Jesus had foretold His death many times, and none of His disciples took it seriously. Only Mary listened carefully and actually believed His word.

**Luke 10:39, 42** “... Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. ... Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

- “Wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her”: What we are doing today is exactly the fulfillment of this prophecy. Two thousand years have passed, and we are still remembering Mary's act of loving devotion on that evening.

### **The Contrast—Betraying Jesus for Money (vv. 10-11)**

- “Judas Iscariot .. went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them”: for three years he had not done so, for he had always held out a glimmer of hope that he might somehow gain glory and honor for himself through Jesus; and now, that illusion was utterly shattered.
- “... promised to give him money. And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time”: Matthew says they paid him thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. Judas betrayed Jesus for money, while Mary sacrificed money for Jesus. A very stark contrast.

### **Concluding Application**

If you ever come to the cross, when persecution stands right in front of you, would you choose Mary's response or Judas'? If you want to make the right choice then, you must prepare yourself now. What we need to do is to offer up ourselves entirely to the Lord, every single day, reserving nothing for ourselves.

What is **the most extravagant thing** you have done **in your whole life**? Now, **since you’ve come to the Lord**, what is **the most extravagant thing** you have done **for the Lord**?