

Teaching Plan EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: May 19, 2019
Lesson Title: "Prepares"
Lesson Passage: Mark 14:3-11,32-36

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In our Lesson Passage, a woman anoints the head of Jesus with a very expensive perfumed ointment as he participates in a dinner at a home in Bethany, a village near Jerusalem. Some of the dinner guests criticize her for having "wasted" the ointment, rather than selling it and using the proceeds to help the poor. But Jesus defends what she has done, praising her generosity, saying that she has anointed his body in preparation for its burial. Judas Iscariot, incensed by her generous act, leaves the dinner and goes straight to the Jewish priests, offering to help them in their plot to kill Jesus. The lesson closes with a scene in the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus agonizes over the prospect of his impending crucifixion, but yields decisively to the Father's will.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain the relationship between the anointing of Jesus at the dinner in Bethany and his impending death. (2) Explain how the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane reflected both his humanity and his deity.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Begin with these comments: In Mark 14, you'll notice a striking polarization of attitudes toward Jesus. The first verse pictures men engaged in a plot against his life. In verse 3, Mark describes a lavish expression of love for Jesus; but, in verse 4, he notes that this act of devotion kindled the indignation of some observers whose rebuke implied that Jesus should not have permitted the woman to "waste" expensive perfume by anointing him with it. In verses 10-11, we read about the treacherous intentions of Judas Iscariot who went to the enemies of Jesus, offering to betray Jesus. Then suggest this application: It really shouldn't surprise us when, today, we come across people whose attitudes toward Jesus vary from adoration to open hostility; for, as Mark shows us, this has always been the case.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Let someone read Mk. 14:3-5, then comment: (1) Simon the leper is not mentioned anywhere else in the Gospels. But the very fact that Mark didn't bother to identify him suggests that he was well-known among the followers of Jesus. (2) Read v. 3, then recall that a similar account appears in John 11:1-8, but that Mark might be referring to a different occasion, since the location and the identity of the woman who anointed Jesus are different. (3) The "very costly" ointment used to anoint Jesus was spikenard, a perfume extracted from the roots and spikes of the nard plant. The dinner guests estimated that it was worth more than 300 denarii, a year's wages for a working man. And they reproached the woman, complaining that she had wasted it by lavishing it upon the head of Jesus, rather than selling it and using the proceeds to help the poor.

2. Make three points concerning the response of Jesus to what the woman did (vv. 6-9): **(1) He demonstrated gracious acceptance of an act of love.** (It sometimes takes as much grace to receive as it does to give.) The woman was motivated by such a spontaneous sense of devotion that she never stopped to calculate the worth of the perfume. **(2) He indicated that she had performed a prophetic act,** for she had anointed him with a perfume that was commonly used as a burial ointment (v. 8). **(3) What Jesus says in v. 7 ("For you always have the poor with you") is not to be used today to justify indifference toward the poor.** Jesus meant that while his own time was short, opportunities to help the poor would still present themselves long after his death and burial.

3. Comment on Mark 14:10-11: (1) Throughout Christian history, Judas' motive for betraying his Master has been a puzzle. Some have speculated that, impatient with the inactivity of Jesus in the face of opposition, Judas merely wished to "force his hand," compelling him to demonstrate his messianic power by vanquishing his enemies. Others, taking a less charitable view, have insisted that Judas was a mercenary scoundrel (Jn. 12:6) inspired by the devil (Jn. 13:2). (2) "Chief priests" doesn't necessarily refer to the highest officials in the temple hierarchy. This refers to members of the politically powerful priestly families. The reference might be translated simply as "the important priests." (3) When they heard Judas' offer, "they were glad" (v. 11), because this was a welcome breakthrough for these men who had been desperately seeking a way to arrest Jesus (Mk. 14:1).

4. Finally, in Mark 14:32-36, we are taken to nearby Gethsemane, where Jesus tells his disciples to wait for him while he goes farther into the garden and agonizes in prayer, asking his heavenly Father to spare him the suffering of the cross, but surrendering to the will of the Father. The fact that he was "greatly distressed and troubled" (v. 33) reflects his humanity; but his utter commitment to carrying out the Father's will ("not what I will, but what thou wilt") is evidence of his deity.

CLOSING THE LESSON

Comment once again on the generosity of Mary's gift (John 12:3): She lavished the best she had upon Jesus without stopping to calculate the cost. What an ideal model for Christian stewardship and service!

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