

Mark 14:1-26 – Loving the One who lays down his life

Chapter 14 returns to the story of growing conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders. They had opposed his authority publicly (Mk 11:28) and tried to trap him in his words, only to come off looking foolish and rebellious themselves (Chapter 12). Jesus then warned his disciples of the judgement to come on Jerusalem within a generation, urging them to faithfully wait for his return rather than be deceived by pretenders or false signs of 'the end' (Chapter 13). Now Mark explains that chief priests and the teachers of the law were still scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him, but they feel they need to wait till after the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened bread, which were only two days away (14:1-2).

These were rituals and community celebrations to remember God's rescue of Israel from Egypt. The Passover was a meal to remember the lamb that had to be sacrificed in the place of every firstborn Israelite, lest they be killed like the Egyptians during the terrible and final plague (see Exodus 12:1-30). The Feast of Unleavened bread was kept for the 7 days following the Passover, and was a reminder to the Israelites that they were redeemed from Egypt by God with such urgency that they didn't even have time for their bread to rise - they had to eat unleavened bread whilst they fled from Egypt.

The leaders are afraid that the crowds might side with Jesus (given the response so far!), and so they are content to wait till after the Festival. We see in this passage however that it is God's plan for Jesus to be handed over during the Festival - he is to be sacrificed as the true Passover Lamb.

Read verses 1-11

Why does Jesus describe what the woman does as a 'beautiful thing'?

What does it reveal about her understanding of who Jesus is and what's about to happen to him?

How do her actions and attitudes towards Jesus contrast with...

- The religious leaders?
- The people present at the meal?
- Judas Iscariot?

How does this episode challenge our own devotion towards Jesus?

Have you ever reacted to a person's act of devotion to Jesus in a similar way to the people present? Why might we react like that?

What can and should it look like for us to make such extravagant shows of devotion to Jesus today?

Read verses 12-26

The religious leaders and Judas are scheming to betray and kill Jesus. They believe they are orchestrating events toward their own goals. But who does the passage present as the one in control of what is happening? (v13-21)

How does this relate to what Jesus has said about his death previously?
(compare Mk 10:33-34 with 10:45)

Jesus says that the bread was his body and the drink was 'my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many'. Bearing in mind the meaning of the Passover meal that Jesus was sharing with his disciples, what do you think Jesus was really saying to his disciples?

What does it mean for us to participate in the Lord's Supper, and why do we do it?

Reflection & Prayer

What reasons and encouragements does this passage give us to express *faith in* and *devotion to* Jesus?

What could that look like for you over the coming days and weeks?