

## INTRODUCTION

People of God, here we are in Mark chapter 14, which is the beginning of the Passion Narrative. And here in this section Mark presents us with a story of extreme and costly devotion to Christ, which Christ himself says is beautiful. But this beautiful devotion to Christ takes place in the midst of a hostile institutional elite who are seeking to kill Jesus in order to maintain their power. And they are able to accomplish this because of Judas' betrayal. Judas' - that disloyal disciple who joined the ranks of his Lord's enemies in order to have the benefits of their approval, for but a moment, was the lynchpin needed to kill Jesus.

We can learn much about this story and how it applies to us in our own day, for we too have the power of the institution against us, and there are Judas' on every side who have betrayed Christ and the Church over to the institutions of power all for the sake of being accepted among the cultural elite.

If we are going to be faithful disciples of Christ in our day and age we must understand rightly the context in which we are called to loyalty to Jesus, but we need to also know what such devotion to him looks like in the face of a hostile ruling elite, and with Judas' on every side.

## THE SCENE

Let us quickly examine the context. This portion of Scripture is structured as a Markan sandwich. We have two similar sections of the chief priests and Judas plotting to kill Jesus on the outside as the bread, and then we have a middle section of Jesus being anointed for burial.

We are told that it was now two days before The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These feasts celebrated Israel's Exodus and redemption from Egypt, who had oppressed her and kept her in slavery for many years.

The feast was not just Passover, but it was also the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Leaven, you may recall, was a symbol for growth and maturation. And in the case of The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the significance of the bread being unleavened was that it was a symbol of removing the sin from your homes, throughout all the community of Israel.

So, for Passover they sacrificed the lamb which protected their first born son from the angel of death. When the angel saw the blood of the Lamb he passed over the house. But they also had to remove the leaven from the bread, so as to symbolize that they had removed sin from their homes, and they were removing themselves from the sinful Egyptian culture.

We see great irony here - Jerusalem and her leadership are not cleaning out the sin of Egypt during THIS feast. Instead they are embodying the worst kinds of Leaven that Jesus warns his disciples about - the Leaven of the Pharisees and Herod, which is the Leaven of unchecked institutional power and control and totalitarianism.

Jerusalem's Leaven has matured so much that her rulers are now plotting the death of the Messiah in order to maintain power and control. They are not letting God's people Go. They are now trying to kill the New Moses. Jerusalem has become exactly what God had historically saved Israel from at the original Passover - they have become Egypt. Which is why John, in Revelation 11:8 says Jerusalem - the city where the Lord was crucified, is spiritually Sodom and Egypt.

## **BETHANY**

Let us move on to the meat of this Markan sandwich, and we see that Jesus is in Bethany. Bethany means - house of dates - dates, as in the fruit. So what we have here symbolically takes place in a garden city - and who do we have present - a man, a woman, and a serpent - Judas. But Mark says it was not just Judas who scolded her. It was all the disciples. They are still blind to what true service to the Lord looks like, and so they scold this

woman and make her feel guilty for showing acts of love devotion to her Lord. But Jesus, guards this woman and drives away their attacks, as proper man does.

But notice also it says they and they are in the house of Simon the Leper.

Jesus is preparing to go to his death in the house of a leper, while the ruling elite plot Christ's death in the hallowed halls of the Temple. It is a startling way to show that God is with his people in the humblest of locations where his people are filled with extreme love and devotion to him.

### PSALM 23

While they were reclining at table, a woman came with an Alabster flask of costly ointment of pure nard, very expensive, and poured it over Jesus' head. First, let us notice that this is Psalm 23.

*You prepare a table for me  
in the midst of my enemies;  
you anoint me head with oil.*

Jesus is in fact in the midst of his enemies, with Judas present, but also in the literary context in which the chief priests and Judas are plotting to kill him. But here Jesus is, about to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but he fears no evil, for the Lord is with him.

### ALABASTER

The woman breaks an alabaster flask filled with expensive ointment, made of pure nard, and pours it on Jesus' head. But the disciples are indignant about this. They say, "*The perfume could have been sold...and the money given to the poor.*"

But they didn't care about the poor. Especially Judas, who John tells us was a thief and used to take from the money bag. They only care about the perception of looking good, by making other people look bad. Today we

call this virtue signalling. Jesus puts a stop to their false virtue, he scolds them in return. And instead he shows this act for what it really is - he sees it as beautiful.

Thus, the disciples here, and especially Judas, and the socialists of our day, act as if they care about the poor, and they make a big deal about appropriating money in order to spend it on the poor, but in actuality, they are just like Judas who just want to redirect that money to themselves. But they make a big deal about it and in the process make others feel bad because they want to spend their money on something else. And what does God say about that matter? God loves a cheerful giver.

But this applies to other things as well, and not just to giving money. This is fundamentally about devotion to God. Devotion to God in these wicked days is likewise reckoned as selfish and wasteful by serpent hearted disciples. Even Christians are deceived today and they scold other Christians for wanting to show devotion to Christ, and they try to make us feel guilty for our devotion to Christ because you are supposed to Stay home, stay safe. Which of course is Love for Neighbor.

These Empty platitudes are not designed to help Christians prepare the body of Christ for death. They are propaganda designed to overwhelm you and guilt manipulate you into compliance and make you feel like you are a bad person if you don't obey their indignation. But many of these people who perpetuate this rubbish do not actually care about their neighbor one bit, they only want to be seen by others as though they cared for their neighbor. They are just as self serving as Judas' remark was about how the ointment should have been sold and the money should be given to the poor.

But Jesus says to them "*Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.*" Being told not to go to church out of love for neighbor is equivalent to scolding the woman for her acts of devotion to Christ and

saying she should have sold the nard and given the money to the poor. They are essentially saying, “Show your devotion to Christ some other way, some other non-selfish way which shows you care. Like This.” But again, these are empty platitudes which do not see the value or beauty of devoting ones entire life to Christ, and are designed only to make the person themselves look good at the expense of another. Virtue signalling at its worst is nothing less than Satantic guilt manipulation.

Now, notice, also that she pours the oil on Jesus’ head, but then he says, “*She has done what she could, she anointed my body beforehand for burial.*” Jesus is the head, and we are his body. And his head has been anointed with oil, but it is his body which he says has been prepared for burial.

Thus, we are to do what we can with what we have in beautiful acts of devotion to Christ in order to likewise prepare the body of Jesus – the Church, and ourselves - for Burial. Last week Nathan Brunaugh told you that you are to abstain from sexual immorality because your body is the body of Christ, right?

Well your body is the body of Christ, and as you are surrounded by the threats of institutional power that wants to destroy Christ and the Church, and when you are being harassed by the Judas’ of our day, just remember that your devotion to Christ in that hostile context is itself a representation of the gospel.

What that woman did will always be told in memory of her wherever the gospel is told, Jesus says. So do not be afraid or feel guilty for not conforming to the propaganda of our day which seeks to make you feel guilty for loving Christ more than others approval.

Notice People of God, This woman has embodied the kind of discipleship that Jesus has been telling his disciples to do throughout Mark’s gospel. They need to lay down their lives, they need to give over everything for Christ and the Gospel, they need to carry their crosses, and prepare

themselves for death because they follow Jesus. Her act of devotion is beautiful because she invested everything she had, she gave everything and did not seek to save her life, but freely gave it all to Jesus because she loved him more than anything else.

It is not a waste of your life therefore to live a life of loyalty and love to Christ, and break yourself open and pour all you have into loving Christ and his body while the world and even the other disciples of Christ criticize you for it. Such is the beauty of love for God, and is itself a testimony of the Gospel.

### **APPLICATION**

What does this all mean for us today? I would like to first point out is that history always moves toward this divide that we see here in our passage today. There will always be the faithful and those who persecute the faithful. There will always be the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. There are times when the seed of the serpent tolerates the seed of the woman and allows him to go on his way.

But eventually, as crisis times arise in history and tolerance grows thin, and hostility increases. Just as Jesus gets closer and closer to the seat of power in Jerusalem, the chief priests' plots to kill Jesus likewise moved ever closer to becoming fulfilled. Their loyalty to the cause of Satan must bring them to the point of killing Christ.

Likewise, those who are following Jesus must also learn to become ever more devoted in their loyalty to Him as the enemy progresses in their hostility toward them.

The time for ambiguity and indifference about Jesus and the Church is likewise quickly coming to an end. Choices have to be made. Sides have to be chosen. Acts of love and devotion will be made. Which side will you

choose? The institutional power of the ruling elite who seek to kill Christ and his followers? Or Jesus and his Church? Will you seek the favor of the rich and powerful elite, and embrace their propaganda which serves to destroy the Church and the family? Or are you content to sit at a humble table with Jesus' followers in the house of a leper devoting your life to him?

The world sees such devotion as a waste, and tries to guilt manipulate you into feeling bad for such devotion, for you should be loving your neighbor, which has now become the greatest commandment over Loving God. A subtle Satanic move if I ever saw one. But you should not feel guilty for devoting your life to Christ and His worship, for Christ sees your devotion as beautiful. Which will you choose?

People of God, if we choose to follow Jesus, and I hope we all do, we should then expect to follow the same fate as our Lord. Just as Christ was destined to die at the hands of the elite, being betrayed by Judas', so we should expect the same thing. Now, it may not happen, but I think it better to prepare and expect the worse, than to not be prepared at all.

Now you might think that is a bit extreme, but I am just trying to read the landscape. Our own society is accelerating toward total outright hostility towards the Church. This is inevitable.

Sure, there was a time for awhile when Jesus and his people could be tolerated by the Liberal elite in America. It was Christians after all who built all these institutions of power to begin with. But enemy invaded our institutions and placed people in key positions of influence who then subverted the old Christian order.

While they were planning the overthrow of Christianity's influence in the culture, they were content to play the tolerance game with us until they could weaken the church and the family and erode the Christian culture. And once they have successfully established their Judas' throughout the ranks of America and in once formerly Christian institutions, especially in the Church, their plots for destroying the Christianity comes ever closer to being fulfilled.

And who are those Judas' that I speak of? It is all of those who have embraced the religion of socialism and wokeness.

Antonio Gramsci, the father of Critical Theory, and what has come to be known as Cultural Marxism, has said this - *"Socialism is precisely the religion that must overwhelm Christianity. ... In the new order, Socialism will triumph by first capturing the culture via infiltration of schools, universities, churches, and the media by transforming the consciousness of society."*

And what we are seeing right before our very eyes is the final phases of this socialistic revolution which was only made possible by the Judas' who foolishly bought into the lies of the Devil and allowed these people and their ideas to take hold in key positions of leadership. They used guilt manipulation through the tactics of Critical Theory to get ideas accepted in the institutions of power, like the universities and schools and the media, and of course, the church, ideas such a tolerance. They made Christians feel bad for not being tolerant, because they had convinced us that this was the height of Christian live. Judge not, and all that.

You might recall, Saul Alinski wrote a book called Rules for Radicals wherein he attempted to systematize Gramsci's ideas. And he dedicated his

book to Lucifer. So this is not just a socialist takeover of America, it is Satanic to the core.

The Christians in America, led astray by Church leadership have foolishly given themselves and their children over to socialist churches, sent their kids to socialist schools, and then sent them off to socialist universities, to be disciplined further by socialist professors, and who had their minds and hearts shaped by the socialist culture perpetuated in the socialist media.

Instead of learning Christian discipleship from the Gospel of Mark, they were disciplined by Marx. And now that the culture has been thoroughly deceived and demoralized to such an extent that even the Christians now feel guilty for who we are and what we do, and have effectively stopped going to church in masse, while at the same time we are falling all over ourselves to for white Christian guilt. Those socialist revolutionary chickens are coming home to roost.

The socialistic utopia which these Judas' have betrayed Christ and the Church and the family for, will be found nowhere once their revolution is complete. Which is what the word utopia means, Nowhere. In the end the revolution will devour itself and everyone else, and these useful idiots who gave themselves over to the cause in order to gain a bit of social acceptability in the eyes of the world, they will lead to their own death.

Just as Judas' betrayal of Christ lead to his suicide, so too will all these woke Christians who are falling head over heels to say Black Lives Matter, and to promote critical theory, all of them who got woke, and all those millions of Christians who likewise voted for a Biden presidency because of no other reason than Orange Man Bad, they will find that this very thing they put

their hope in will be their own destruction. At least Judas got 30 pieces of silver out of the deal. And what have our Judas' got to show?

This is why Jesus warned his disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Once you get a taste of the power of the world, you will be willing to give up everything to hold onto those power structures and have the comforts and conveniences of social acceptability that the enemies of Christ have in a culture that is hostile to Christ. And so allegiance to Jesus and His gospel is quickly abandoned, because the cost of following Christ in opposition to the power elite becomes too much. Such is the case with Judas, and such is the case with our Judas' today. Too many Pastors want to sit with the cool kids.

The only thing left for the chief Priests to do once Judas has sold out Christ, is to kill them. A society can only tolerate Jesus for so long. Where Christ is present and his way of life is lived and loyalty to Him and his gospel is paramount, there remains a threat to their revolution. Dissenters must be sent to re-education camps, even outright killed, for the sake of the revolution. This is what we have seen in every Marxists revolution.

The last remaining institutions which could effectively keep this at bay is the Church and the family. Covid is a helpful tool for the socialists to further divide the Church and the family. Why do you think they keep telling you to not spend time with your family, to stay home and to not go to church? The natural bonds that keep allegiance to God and family higher than that of the State must not be tolerated. And if they can get the people to foolishly go along with their agenda, it makes their job a lot easier.

Such is the condition the church is in in America today, and sadly, in much of the rest of the world. Make no mistake about it. The goal of socialism is to destroy Christianity. The goal of Lucifer is to kill Jesus and his people.

Now the good thing about times like this is, that these Judas' have played their hand. They have shown themselves to be traitors. The lines are drawn.

Although we be betrayed into the hands of our enemies and be given over to die, although we be treated with contempt and slandered, and men speak all kinds of evil against us falsely for Christ's sake and the gospel's, although all the power of the socialist state might come crashing down upon us because we are dedicated to establishing strong families and strong churches, we are not to fear.

We are to take comfort in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

*Although we walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
we will fear no evil,  
For God is with us,  
His rod and his staff they comfort us.  
He prepares a table for us in the midst of our enemies,  
and he anoints our head with oil,  
our cup overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy will follow us  
all the days of our life,  
and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

People of God, be like the woman in this passage who gave everything she had to Christ. Just as the enemy is giving it their all to destroy us, we must be willing to give Christ our all, and trust that he will save us. For in this way, Jesus has told us, *For whoever would save his will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.*

But what does that mean? What does that look like to give everything to Christ, to live a life of extreme love and devotion to Christ in the midst of a hostile culture? Jesus says, *"she has done what she could."*

In the last book of C.S. Lewis' Space Trilogy, That Hideous Strength, After the NICE is destroyed, McPhee, the Scottish sceptic, is talking to Dimble, and he says that when the history is written up about all that happened there, there will be no mention in it of them and Merlin and Pendragon and the Planets. "Aye", says McPhee, "and it could be right good history without mentioning you or me and most here present. I'd be greatly obliged if anyone would tell me what we *have* done – always apart from feeding the pigs and raising some very decent vegetables."

"You have done what was required of you," said the Director. "You have obeyed and waited. It will often happen like that. As one of the modern authors has told us, the altar must be built in one place in order that the fire from heaven may descend somewhere else."

All I am asking you to do people of God, is to do what you can, do what is required of you. Obey and wait. Build up the altar of faith in your lives as individuals, as families, and as the Church, and God will send the fire from heaven that we all long for.

Jesus said that the woman poured oil on Jesus body to prepare him for his burial. We are the body of Christ and we have the oil of the Spirit given to us in our baptisms to prepare us for our burials. First of all, we have already been buried with Christ in baptism, in order that we may walk in newness of life. And so the best way for us to prepare Christ's body for burial is to live by the Spirit and to live according to spiritual disciplines.

## **BIBLE READING**

What is an act of devotion to Christ that you can do? Nothing big and amazing and all that hard. Again, do what you can. But I would say the first place to start would be Read your bible. Develop a plan to read the Bible, and even begin to memorize Scripture. As an individual and as families, you need to be learning the Scriptures. Learn some theology too. Listen to

podcasts or lectures or sermons. Read a theology book. And talk about the Christian faith openly in your homes and with other Christians.

In other words, disciple your families in the faith. I have made my visits to just about every family at the end of the year, and there are many of you who do not know what the Gospel is. I say this, not to embarrass you, but to exhort you.

If you are to follow the same fate as other Christians who have lived in countries with Marxist revolutions, how will you defend the perpetual onslaught of lies and propaganda and God forbid, the re-education in the camps, how will you or your children come out with their mind and soul intact if they do know not the one thing that can save them?

If your family members do not know what the Gospel is, then you need to fix that, ASAP. And that falls on your shoulders Men. Do what you can, be obedient and teach the faith to your families. Start with the catechism questions I post on the back of the bulletins. Use the creeds of confessions, Ask me and I will give you resources.

Mom's you can help too, since most of the Mom's here are the ones who spend all day with the children teaching them in the home. Get the tools to teach your children the faith while your husband is at work. Believe it or not, it is more important for your child to know the 1 Questions and Answer to the Heidelberg Catechism than he needs to know  $2+2=4$ .

Men, if you are sitting at home watching TV when the doors of the church are open and the word of God being taught and the saints of God are praying, then you are not doing a good job discipling your families.

## **PRAYER**

What else could you do? Establish a pattern of Morning and Evening Prayer. Memorize the prayers from the Prayer book, for example, or better

yet, the Psalms. So that you can have something to hold on to and which will sustain you when times are tough.

## **FELLOWSHIP**

Also, I actively encourage you to not social distance. Instead devote yourself to establishing strong communal bonds with people in the Church. Fellowship of the Saints is one of the strongest weapons against propaganda and the lies of the Devil. The Devil wants the Church to be scattered and isolated. We must stay together and be in each others homes encouraging one another and building up one another, even all the more as we see the Day drawing near.

## **EUCCHARIST**

I will talk more about this next week, but let's just mention this - Christians, the most radical thing you can do today in America, the first step towards an extreme act of devotion to Christ is to obey God by simply going to Church. Many Christians today have to now be convinced that going to Church is a Christian duty. Watching church services on this YouTube video is not church. You need to be with physical people who will keep you encourage you in the faith, keep you accountable to God and who will lift you up in prayer and who will love you with their body and soul and substance.

But even more so, you need to be with a body of people who are worshipping the Lord and having the Lord's supper every week, and who are teaching the word of God and who are praying together and who are fellowshiping with one another. Be obedient in coming to worship. This is something you can do. Might it take some sacrifice? I may. But is Christ worth it?

Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together. You cannot be the Body of Christ if you are not actually with any other members of the Church worshipping God together around the Eucharist.

So, Ask yourself - Where are your allegiances? What are you teaching your family about the important things in life if you do not make it a priority to obedient to the worship of God and the studying of His word, the fellowship of the saints, and the habits of prayer? How are you equipping your families to be strong in the coming years if you are not dedicating yourself to the teaching of the apostles, to the fellowship of the saints , the breaking of the bread, and the prayers?

Now all this might sound pretty bland and ordinary, and it is. But we live in an age where just doing the ordinary means of grace are considered radical. And so let it be. Now is the time for extreme and radical and costly acts of devotion to Christ. Read the signs of the times, People of God.

Sanctify in your heart Christ as Lord, and commit to living for him with these your brothers and sisters, and sitting together at his table, in the midst of your enemies. Do what you can, and give your all to Christ. For this Christ reckons as beautiful. And as these altars are built in our lives, one day God's fire will come down somewhere else and he will save us all. Amen.