



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V23 N24

June 13, 2021

## KING JESUS

"Break a Vase"

Mark 14:1-11

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Life Purpose

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in his kingdom purposes for his glory.

*"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace."*  
**Acts 20:24**



What does memorable devotion look like?

Life Purpose is a matter of *perspective* and *priorities* – *seeing things clearly* and *keeping the main thing the main thing*. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, is, in the words of one commentator, "a good model for all disciples to emulate," in that she "appears in three scenes in the Gospels, and each time she is at Jesus' feet (cf., Luke 10:38-42; John 11:31-32)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Mark," 2021 ed., 281, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf); see also Jn 12:3; cf., Mk 14:3; Mt 26:7). Her devotion to Jesus is enviable.

In her *first* appearance in the Gospels, she and her sister, Martha, are entertaining Jesus, who becomes a regular visitor to their home (Lk 10:38-42). Martha is in the kitchen "distracted by all the preparations that had to be made," while Mary, no doubt the younger of the two, is sitting at Jesus' feet, hanging on his every word. Perhaps Martha has asked Mary for help with the meal – perhaps repeatedly – to no avail before enlisting Jesus' support: "Lord don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" (Lk 10:40). Jesus, of course, does no such thing. Instead he tells her that she's *too* worried about *too* many things that matter *too* little. But "Mary," he says, "has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (v. 42). In other words, listening to Jesus is the main thing, and Mary is keeping the main thing the main thing. Household chores matter, but in the presence of Jesus, listening to him comes first. One commentator remarks: "It is more important to hear and obey the word of Jesus than to be busy with other matters, even though they may be commendable of themselves. It would have been far better for Martha to have made simpler and less time-consuming preparations in order, like her sister Mary, to learn from the Lord" (Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, NIBC, 177).

In her *second* appearance, she and her sister are mourning the death of their brother, Lazarus (Jn 11:17-44). When Martha hears that Jesus is nearing Bethany, she goes out to meet him. Somewhat surprisingly, Mary stays at home. Perhaps Martha has

kept word of his approach to herself. Martha goes out to meet him. Her first words to Jesus are "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Her faith in Jesus is evident in her words, as well as in her following words, "But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask" (v. 21), and even more so in her confession, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world" (v. 27). Jesus then asks to see Mary! And when she is told "The Teacher is here, and he is asking for you," she gets up quickly and goes to him. Her first words to him are identical to her sister's, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 32). What is noteworthy, however, is the *contrast* in their body language. When Mary reaches the place where Jesus is and sees him, unlike her sister, she falls at his feet (v. 32). "In the day of sunshine, when Martha became cumbered with serving, Mary had learned the lesson that there must be time for quietness and discipleship and adoration. She sat *at His feet*, when the sun was shining. Then when the darkness was round about her, and Lazarus was dead, and her heart was breaking, she came when He sent for her, and went straight to His feet" (G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to John*, 207).

In her final appearance, clearly the most dramatic of all, she breaks a fetching flask of priceless perfume and pours it on Jesus' head and feet in a never-to-be-forgotten act of love and devotion (Mk 14:1-11; Jn 12:1-11). According to one commentator, "Except for a kiss from Judas in Gethsemane, Jesus received no other expression of love from anyone else during his Passion" (Garland, 516). She does what she can – perhaps all she can. Her forever example of holy devotion stands in stark contrast to Judas' forever example of unholy treachery. The following words say it all: "Once a woman's touch drew from Him virtue. Here a woman's act gave Him comfort. I would rather be in succession to Mary of Bethany than to the whole crowd of the apostles" (Morgan, 208).

1 Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. 2 "But not during the festival," they said, "or the people may riot."

3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

6 "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. 11 They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "Passover" and "Festival of Unleavened Bread" in v. 1.
- Bracket "two days away" in v. 1.
- Box "but not" indicating *contrast* in v. 2.
- Circle "Simon the Leper" in v. 3.
- Circle "a woman" in v. 3.
- Double underline "jar" and "perfume" in v. 3.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 7.
- Highlight v. 8b.
- Circle "betray" in v. 10.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Jesus' enemies decide to *not* arrest and kill him until *after* Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv. 1-2). Explain *why*.
  
  2. Nevertheless, they change their minds. Explain *why* (vv. 10-11).
  
  3. *Contrast* the day of their scheming (v. 1) with the day of Jesus' anointing (v. 3; cf., Jn 12:1).
  
  4. What does "reclining at the table" indicate Jesus is doing when he is anointed?
  
  5. Mark *underscores* the value of the perfume. How so?
  
  6. What do you infer from the fact the woman "broke the jar" containing the perfume?
  
  7. Does she deserve the *harsh* rebuke she receives? Explain *why* or *why not*.
  
  8. Explain the *contrast* in verse 7.
  
  9. Explain the *significance* of the anointing.
  
  10. **Discussion:** Talk about what made what the woman did so memorable and so exemplary.
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### Commentary On The Text

Mark 14-15 describes Jesus' suffering and death in Jerusalem. Chapter 14 opens with an account of his anointing in Bethany, which actually occurred on Saturday evening before Passion Week (cf., Jn 12:1). Mark's reference to "the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread . . . two days away" (14:1) pinpoints the time of Jesus' enemies' "scheming" that took place on Wednesday of Passion Week, not the time of Jesus' anointing by Mary (Jn 12:3) that took place earlier (see Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 91). Here is another example of Mark's use of *intercalation* or "sandwiching," the insertion of one narrative into another (cf., 5:21-43; 11:12-21). In this case, the story of Jesus' anointing (vv. 3-9) is inserted into the story of the chief priests' and the scribes' "scheming" (vv. 1-2) and Judas' treachery (vv. 9-10). Mark's use of this *literary* technique serves, in this case, to *contrast* Mary's unique act of devotion to Judas' act of treachery.

According to verses 1-2, Jewish leaders, who have wanted Jesus dead for a long time, continue to look for a way to arrest him—that is, without inciting a riot. The chief priests and the teachers of the law of verse 1 appear side by side in Jesus' predictions of his arrest and execution (8:31; 10:33) and are identified as the two groups plotting his death after he cleared the temple (11:18). Having decided to arrest Jesus and put him on trial, they choose to take him *by stealth* (cf., "secretly," NIV, making use of deceit, cunning, and treachery). One commentator explains why: "The leaders fear seizing Jesus before all the people because it might precipitate a riot (see Luke 22:6). If they are going to retain their position of power as puppets of the Romans, they need to keep the streets peaceful and to suppress quickly any disturbances. That is why they arrest Jesus in the dead of night in the more secluded Gethsemane. If 'in the feast' means 'during the Feast of the Passover,' then the authorities do not want to kill Jesus at this season." According to verses 9-10, "Judas's treachery, however, causes them to change their minds and expedite Jesus' arrest" (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*, 515).

Judas goes to the chief priests "to betray Jesus to them." In other words, he goes to them to arrange for Jesus to be taken into custody away from the eyes of the crowd. Did he do it for spite; did he do it for money (cf., Mt 26:15; Jn 12:6)? Commentators speculate, but in the words of one: "We must acknowledge that no clear explanation is given in Mark as to why Judas chose to betray Jesus. In the sovereign plan of God, he does so, but his personal reasoning and thinking was either not known to Mark or considered unimportant for the telling of the story" (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 636).

According to verses 3-9, an unnamed woman, identified as Mary in John's account (Jn 12:3), anoints Jesus' head, as well as his feet in John's account (v. 3), with precious perfume, while he is eating in the house of Simon the Leper. Mark emphasizes the practically priceless value of the ointment. It is contained in an alabaster jar. "The very best perfumes and other precious unguents were often contained in alabaster vessels (cf. Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 13.3.19)." What's more, "Nard was among the most costly ointments" (Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34B, *Mark* 8:27-16:20, 360). And in this case, the perfume is "pure nard" worth "more than a year's wages" (v. 4). "The value of the perfume, and its identification as nard, suggests that it was a family heirloom that was passed on from one generation to another, from mother to daughter" (William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, 492). As an indication of her total devotion, Mary breaks the jar and pours its entire contents on Jesus. "The neck of the perfume bottle was sometimes snapped off. In this case, the breaking of the flask and the pouring imply that no portion of the ointment was held back; all was poured out on Jesus' head. The extravagance of the woman's action is thus underscored" (Evans, 360).

Some of Simon's dinner guests are appalled by this "waste of perfume" (vv. 4-5). After all, alms giving is important and Passover season is a time for charity. The perfume could have been sold and the money used to feed hundreds of poor people. It's true. Their concern is legitimate, but here "it concealed the disciples' insensitivity and Judas' greed (cf. John 12:6)" (John D. Grassmick, "Mark," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 175).

Jesus sees things differently and comes to Mary's defense (vv. 6-9). Her unique act of total devotion is a beautiful thing in Jesus' eyes. The *contrast* in verse 7 is not between "the poor" and "me," namely, Jesus, but between "always have," namely, "the poor" and "not always have," namely Jesus (v. 7). Unlike the opportunity to do something for Jesus before his departure, opportunities to do something for the poor will never end (Dt 15:1-11). So Mary does *what* she can, *when* she can. She anticipates his suffering and anoints his body beforehand for burial—for death afforded no such opportunity (cf., 16:1). Perhaps, she understands Messiah's destiny better than any of the disciples reclining at the table. "Her action was spontaneous and impromptu and would not have been interpreted in any official sense, to be sure, but anointing the head of one whom she and the disciples regarded as Israel's Messiah would in all probability have been perceived in a messianic sense" (Evans, 360). Her act of devotion amounts to an open invitation for Jesus' disciples to follow her example.

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## Word Studies/Notes

**v. 1 *Passover and . . .*** “Passover commemorated the Israelites’ redemption from slavery in Egypt through the Exodus (Exod. 12:1–13:16). It anticipated a greater deliverance from the consequences of slavery to sin. The Jews began to celebrate Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread followed on the fifteenth through the twenty-first of Nisan. Mark dated the events that follow immediately as occurring ‘two days’ before Passover. This would have been Wednesday, April 1, A.D. 33. Passover, like the feasts of Tabernacles and Pentecost, was a pilgrim feast. Many Jewish families from all over the world traveled to Jerusalem to observe these feasts as the Mosaic Law required (Deut. 16:16). The Jews could observe the Passover only in Jerusalem (Deut. 16:5-6). Consequently mobs of people choked the city. One writer claimed that the population of Jerusalem swelled from 50,000 to 250,000. Jesus enjoyed a large popular following, so the religious leaders wanted to avoid a riot by executing Jesus inconspicuously. Evidently they wanted to postpone further confrontation with Jesus until after the feasts when the pilgrims would have returned to their homes. However, Judas’ offer to betray Jesus (vv. 10-11) was too good to refuse” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Mark,” 2021 ed., 280, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf)).

**v. 1 *two days away*** Cf., “Six days before the Passover” (Jn 12:1). “Most commentators agree that the anointing should be dated six days before the Passover and that the story of the anointing in Bethany is inserted into Matthew (26:6-13) and Mark (14:3-9), and thus the time reference of two days in Matthew 26:2 and Mark 14:1 is not dating the anointing but the plot to seize Jesus” (Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 91). Jesus apparently stayed in Bethany throughout Passion Week. The insertion of the “anointing” (that occurred on Saturday) narrative into the middle of the “plotting” (that occurred on Wednesday) narrative is another example of Mark’s use of intercalation or “sandwiching,” a literary trait of his Gospel (cf., 5:21-43; 11:12-21). “To the Jews, with their inclusive way of counting, ‘after two days’ would mean ‘on the day after tomorrow.’ Reckoning from Nisan 15 (Friday) two days prior would be Nisan 13 (Wednesday), and ‘after two days’ means ‘after Wednesday and Thursday’” (John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 174).

**v. 2 *but not*** The chief priests and teachers of the law do not want to arrest Jesus during the “festival,” i.e., the full eight-day celebration, Nisan 14-21.

**v. 3 *Simon the Leper*** “The phrase reclining at the table signals dining in the context of a banquet (cf.

2:15). Simon may be the (deceased?) father of Lazarus, Martha and Mary (cf. John 12:1-2). He had the nickname the Leper (*ho lepros*; cf. 1:40) since, presumably, he had a skin disease and was cured, presumably by Jesus” (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 344).

**v. 3 *a woman*** “Between AD 30 and 50 when the passion narrative took shape, or when Mark wrote his Gospel, ‘the woman’ would have been in danger were she identified as having been complicit in Jesus’ politically subversive claim to messianic kingship. When John writes, at a later date, he has the freedom to mention her name (John 12:3, Mary, the sister of Martha) since she no longer needed the anonymity” (Schnabel, 344).

**v. 3 *jar, perfume*** “The stone referred to as alabaster is onyx-marble . . . a limestone with swirling bands of cream and brown admired as a decorative stone . . . The perfume was made from the aromatic oil of the spike-nard plant; nard was imported from India, but it was also produced in Italy, and Corinth specialized in the production and export of fragrant oils . . . (Pliny, *Nat.* 12.26.12: ‘Pure nard is distinguished by its lightness, its reddish-brown colour, the sweetness of its fragrance, its pleasant flavour’). The woman broke the jar, that is, the neck of the jar, rather than pouring the perfume, which was technically not necessary. It was a dramatic gesture which demonstrated the woman’s unreserved devotion to Jesus, holding nothing back” (Schnabel, 344-45).

**v. 7 *but you*** “The contrast developed through an allusion to Deut. 15:11 is not between Jesus and the poor, but between ‘always’ and ‘not always.’ The opportunity to benefit the impoverished continues to offer itself but the situation in which a profound expression of love could be extended to Jesus was confined to a fleeting moment” (William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT, 494).

**v. 8 *prepare . . . burial*** “Jesus is hurriedly buried by a stranger in a borrowed tomb, with no mention of any anointing of the corpse. This anointing before his death will have to suffice. The later attempt by other women to anoint the body after Jesus’ burial (16:1) is not realized” (Garland, 517).

**v. 10 *betray*** If the preceding incident happened on Saturday evening, and Judas betrayed Jesus on Wednesday, then Mary’s act of extravagance did not lead Judas to betray Jesus immediately. The Gospel writers did not explain Judas’ reasons for betraying Jesus explicitly. It was evidently Judas’ initiative, in offering “to betray” Jesus, that led the Sanhedrin (“chief priests”) to move up their timetable for Jesus’ execution” (Constable, 282).



## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Mary's remarkable act of love and devotion to Jesus amounts to an open invitation for his disciples to follow in her steps.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



## 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

At the beginning of every of summer I launch what I call “Operation Reclaim.” I have three solid months to reclaim my kids in which I try to undo any bad behavior picked up throughout the year and steer them back on right track. Three months of fun-in-the-sun intentional time to spend with my little darlings. Three months of work travel with Dad, adventures to local parks or attractions, visits with neighbors and friends, and most importantly, three months to instill solid Biblical truth and shore up their foundational beliefs in God’s Word. Each year we make a list of *100 Things to Do this Summer*, which might include bake bread, Star Wars marathon, or Hawaii (sadly, this still hasn’t happened). With every moment, I try to drop nuggets of teaching into what we’re doing: passing a random field on a road trip – talk about Joseph’s dream with the wheat bowing down, baking meringue cookies – talk about the empty tomb (not just for Easter, ya know), going on a nature walk – talk about God’s mind-blowing creativity. By the end of the summer my hope is to deepen their love for the Lord and give them a glimpse into the greatness of our God. This summer, join me in a time of intentional, dedicated parenting. I know you’re wondering about the coveted “me time” you were hoping for, and I completely understand. Ask God to make a way. Ask Him to help you stay in a worshipful mindset and not waste a moment of the gift you’ve been given. We have a few short months; let’s not waste a single second of that time. Praying for you!

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 14:1-11.

1. What did the woman have and what did she do with it?
2. What did the people that were there think about what she did?
3. How is this woman different from Judas Iscariot?

### What Do You Think?

How did this act of worship prepare Jesus’ body for His burial?

### What Do You Do?

How are you being wasteful or worshipful with what you do this summer?

## CORE COMPETENCY: Worship

I celebrate God for who He is and what He has done for me.

## MEMORY VERSE: Hebrews 12:28

*“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.”*

## KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- \_\_\_\_\_ I completed my Bible Study
- \_\_\_\_\_ I memorized this week’s verse
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought my Bible to church
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)  
*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)  
*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)  
*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)  
*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)  
*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)  
*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)  
*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)  
*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)  
*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)  
*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)  
*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)  
*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)  
*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)  
*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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