

We've been working our way through the Gospel of Mark, and we're really getting to the business end of it now. It's only **two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread**. And of course, that's when Jesus was arrested – it's coming up to His crucifixion fast....

And the Chief Priests and the Scribes have already made their decision: they're going to kill Jesus – they're just trying to find a way to do it secretly and preferably **not** during the feast, because they didn't want to have to deal with a riot ...

You see, with all the interactions between Jesus and the religious leaders (at the Temple), Jesus has been making a bit of an impression, and He's becoming reasonably popular... And so, they wanted to be able to secretly arrest Him, and take Him behind closed doors to try Him...

So, that sets the scene.

In the message last week, as Jesus left the Temple, He made **His** judgment, "*Not one stone will be left upon another – they'll all be thrown down*"... And it's with those words, that Jesus walked away from the Temple, never to set foot in it again.

No longer, would the worship of God be tied to a building – the Kingdom of God was going to break into the world... And the Kingdom of God was going to go to people who were not even welcome at the temple...

Did you notice where Jesus turned up next? He turned up at the house of Simon the leper...

Who does that? Who goes to a Leper's house? Certainly not the chief priests; certainly not the Pharisees – that would make them 'unclean, and then **they** wouldn't be allowed to go to the Temple either...

But Jesus left the Temple, and went to the home of Simon the Leper.

Now, we don't know who this bloke is:

- Was Simon a leper who got better again, and so he could come back home? ; Or
- did the house belong to a Leper, and now his family live there without him? (quarantined) ; Or
- is he one of the lepers that **Jesus** healed, and so he's welcomed Jesus into his home???

We don't know. But wow, what a contrast: From the lavish temple, to the home of a Leper...

You know, some people don't feel that they're good enough for Jesus... but Jesus went to the lowest of the low – a leper – an untouchable – someone who was diseased; contagious; and for the safety of the community, isolated (probably outside of the town)... And Jesus went to his home.

And at both these settings (at the temple & the home of the Leper), we have people making offerings to God... In the

Temple, there had been the wealthy, giving from their abundance (but still keeping plenty for themselves).

But also at the Temple, there was a poor widow, who gave everything she had, to God – just 2 small copper coins. Nobody even noticed what she gave, but Jesus did...

And now here at **Bethany**, in the house of **Simon the leper**, another woman, once again unnamed, poured her lavish gift, all over Jesus...

Different people give in different ways. And different people worship in different ways. And I know at times, I've been guilty of judging other Christians and judging other churches, at the amount of money that they might've poured into a flash building, or to run a particular event...

And when I read this passage for today, I felt somewhat chastened...

- I have no business questioning how another person, uses what they have, to worship God...
- I have no business, judging them, and
- I have no business telling them that instead of spending what they did (on facilities or on an event), that they should've given it to the poor.

It is to the **Lord**, to whom they must give an account – not to me, and not to you... And yet, even by me saying “They have to give an account”, well doesn't that betray the fact that I've

already judged them, and *“Owww, they’re gunna have to explain their wasteful actions...”*

God really challenged me, this week...

As I studied the Bible reading and began preparing for the message for today, I very quickly realised, that I find myself on the wrong side of Jesus on this one.

It’s like: the jar of ointment **pure nard, very costly**, worth virtually a whole year’s wages: And she broke it open, and she poured the whole lot of it over Jesus' head... I can’t picture that I would **ever** do something like that...

And if **I** was there, **I** would’ve been one of those saying: “It should’ve been sold and given to the poor.”....

I know I would’ve been saying it... Or if I **wasn’t** saying it, I certainly would’ve been thinking it...

*But Jesus' words today, reveal “my hypocrisy” ... I don’t have any problem at all, spending a whole years wages to buy a motor vehicle if I need it ... And I have every opportunity, all the time, to give what **I** have to the poor... Why would I judge another person’s gift to Jesus as being wasteful????*

V⁴ There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that?”

⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.”
And they scolded her.

Alright, they said it to themselves (They might've been muttering it; they might've been thinking it)... Whatever it was, in their hearts, they were judging her, and they were scolding her...

You know, you don't have to **say** it, to be judging someone...

- Silence says a lot;
- The look that you give can says lot;
- A gasp says an enormous amount;

But Jesus doesn't even need those kinds of 'tells' – Jesus can see right into my heart (and right into your heart). He knows our minds. He knows what we're thinking...

And Jesus said:

"Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me.

⁸ She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹ And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

This was her personal act of worship – her personal act of devotion to Jesus... and they were pointing the finger – *oh, that should've been given to the poor...* But Jesus turned it back on those who were judging her: **⁷ For you always**

have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them.

You see, when it comes to giving, whether we give to God, or whether we give to the poor, it shouldn't be one or the other – **it supposed to be both**. This is something I learned a long time ago – the biblical principal to be generous in all ways...

Be generous by:

- tithing regularly to the church so that ministry can be funded, and the Gospel can be preached in the world...
If I cease to tithe, the advance of the Gospel slows down.

Be generous by:

- giving sacrificially to other Christian ministries. If I cease to give sacrificially to other ministries, the Gospel slows down; and
- always be generous, by giving to the poor –
 - to feed the hungry;
 - to help the sick
 - blind; lame...

And that's what Christian people do...

A few months ago, when Israel Folau was sacked by Rugby Australia, he set up a crowd funding page for people who wished to support his legal expenses. It was a means for people to donate, so he could take his case to court, and make the case, that his dismissal was a case of religious discrimination,,,

And all these people started bagging Christians for making donations to fund this legal case, instead of giving money to 'poor sick kids' who also had 'Go Fund Me' pages...

You see, they didn't only make an assumption – they were making a statement, of which they had no knowledge – they were acting as if Christians would only give to one cause (to one or the other)... and as I heard one Christian put it,

“These people who are against Israel Folau and against Christians in general, are making the assumption that Christians will only give to one cause... And if they've donated to this cause, then they won't also give to the poor and the sick... That's just not true...”ⁱ

There are always opportunities for us to give to the poor, and we shouldn't ignore those opportunities... As disciples of Jesus, we **should** be giving to those who are **genuinely** in need...

But some people (usually those who hate Jesus), will see what **you** and **I** give to God, and they'll judge you, and they'll be going “What a waste of money. You shouldn't be giving to the church – you should be giving to the poor instead”... **No**, we should be giving to **both**...

And it would be very interesting, next time someone tells you “You shouldn't be giving to the church – you should be giving to the poor.”, it would be very interesting to turn it back on them, and see how much **they** give to the poor... Because that's what Jesus is doing here, you see...

They were criticising her devotion to Jesus, and dressed it up as a concern for the poor,,, And Jesus turns the table on them

– **You** give to the poor... What she's done for me is a beautiful thing (She's done what she could)...

It's an interesting phrase that He says:

8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.

And, she probably had no idea what she was doing... She just knew that she loved Jesus a lot, and she expressed that, in a way that she could...

In the Temple, the widow gave everything she had – 2 small copper coins, and she probably had no idea, that God noticed that she'd given everything she had...

And now Jesus has turned His back on the Temple, here's another woman, who also gives a lavish gift to God... And Jesus knows, **She has done what she could** ... She obviously had this jar of very expensive perfumed ointment – don't know why – don't know where it came from... But she had it; it was worth a fortune; and in her devotion, she gave it to Jesus...

And Jesus said:

9 ... truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.

You know, sometimes, a person gives a gift, and they want their name to be attached to it, so that everyone knows that

they're generous, or so that everyone can know that they're such a wonderful person (and we want their name to live on)...

Now, we here at Bush Disciples, obviously don't have a church – we just meet in various halls and what-not... But **if** it is ever the Lord's plan for us to have a more permanent place for us to meet, and **if** we ever have our own building, I do hope that we never have any plaques on any furniture, or any plaques on the building itself – Nothing, that says “In memory of so-and-so...”

Anything that gets given to God, is **not** given so that **we** can be remembered... We give, and we give lavishly, because we adore Jesus...

Now, Jesus said, “Wherever the Gospel is preached, in the whole world, what **this** woman **has done, will be told in memory of her**”... Now what's her name??? We don't know, do we... Jesus didn't say – Mark didn't tell us...

You see, what Jesus wants us to remember about her, **isn't** her name. He wants us to remember her act of lavish devotion... **No**, we **don't** know her name,, But wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, (in the whole world), we're also going to be reminded that lavish devotion to God, is not a waste... The Gospel is being proclaimed here in this place today, and you and I, have been reminded that lavish devotion to God, is not a waste...

- She **didn't** do it to seek glory for herself;

- She didn't build a monument, so that she could have her name written on a foundation stone;
- She just seized the moment, and she did what she could...
- And she gave what she had, in devotion to God...

We've got a lot to learn from that. I've got a lot to learn from it...

Lavish devotion to Jesus, is not a waste,, but some people will be very disturbed by it...

Let me share something, about the way that Mark writes, and it's the way he sometimes brackets things...

He introduced this story, by telling us that the religious leaders are looking for a way to kill Jesus (but they didn't have it)...

He then told us the story of how this generous, lavish act, is despised by some people who were with Jesus.... But Jesus pulls them up on it, and says "You give to the poor. She's done a good thing"...

And then immediately following this incident, Judas Iscariot (one of the twelve), decides he's going to betray Jesus...

Do you see how it's bracketed? (e.g. Fig tree & temple. He's doing it again.) They're looking for a way to kill Jesus without

causing a fuss, and immediately after this incident, Judas goes and offers to sell Jesus out...

It's almost like this woman's act of devotion to Jesus, is what tipped Judas over the edge... And on one hand, we have this woman who sacrifices this lavish gift for Jesus (she gives up everything for Him), and on the other hand, we've got Judas. He was supposed to be an insider – one of Jesus' closest followers, offering (for money) to sell Jesus out...

Something tipped Judas over the edge... And in the Gospel of John, Judas is identified as the one who was griping about the waste.

Anyway, as I said before, **I'm** deeply challenged by this reading today...

Different people give in different ways. And different people worship in different ways.

And sometimes **I** see a lavish gift, given in devotion to God, and I go, "What a waste..." And **I** have used that line – "Look at the money this church is spending, while the poor are starving..."

I've been judgmental, and I need to repent of that... I have no business, questioning another person's devotion to Jesus... If I care for the poor (and I **should** care for the poor), then let **me** give to the poor...

Our devotion to Jesus, doesn't **exclude** our caring for the poor...

You know, at various times, various people have suggested that Bush Disciples should get their own little building. And I've always reacted against that suggestion... You know why??? Because I've seen it as a waste...

For me, it's a natural aversion to spending money on something we can live without...

And that's one of the things that I've been challenged with... *What if one day, it is God's plan, for us to have a building?* Would I stand in the way of it??? Well, before today, I probably would've... But not now... If the Lord ever reveals that it's His will to do that, none of us should never stand in the way of lavish devotion to Jesus... We all give to Jesus in different ways...

The truth is, we can be lavishly devoted to Jesus, **and** give to the poor...

We might leave it at that... Questions.

ⁱ Not an exact quote. I remember hearing something very much like it on Christian radio.