

Sermon – Port Macquarie – 6th April (Palm Sunday) 2009

Mark Chapter 14:1-25

What price you attitude.

Last week John W used the analogy of trading in your old car/life for a new or newer one. However before we get to the car yard or the store to look for a new Fridge we usually work out what we are prepared to pay, or what price bracket we will use as our guide. In other words we work out the price we will pay.

As we know today is Palm Sunday when we celebrate Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem and how the people shouted with joy at the coming of their king. Next week we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus at the hands of the same people who were in the welcome committee the week before.

But what of the days in between these events, well that is where our reading from Marks gospel comes in for it records for us some of the events of Jesus last days with his followers and disciples.

In the first part of the gospel we see that Jesus had a dinner date in the town of Bethany, which is about 20ks outside of Jerusalem. This dinner was held at the house of Simon the Leper – thought to be a former leper that Jesus had healed. As was the custom at that time, they are not sitting down to eat but reclining, lying with their feet away from the table, resting on their left arms, using their right hands to eat. The table is short, perhaps a foot high.

During the meal a woman enters the room carrying an incredibly expensive jar of perfume. She not only opens the jar, but breaks it, filling the room with its aroma. Then instead of putting a small amount on Jesus, she pours the entire jar on him.

In John's gospel, John indicates for us that the identity of this woman is Mary, the sister of Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead and whose house was also in Bethany and not far from the dinner venue. John also tells us that she does not stop at his head, but pours the perfume on his feet, and wipes those feet with her hair.

The plant that produces nard at this time is said to have only grown in the Himalayas, and so the perfume is very expensive. If the stated value of three hundred denarii is accurate, this would be about \$20,000 in Australia today: 300 times one day's wage for unskilled labor. Nard was literally a gift for a king.

So we see again the acknowledgment of Jesus kingship, first the people who welcomed him as king and not the women who anoints him with a gift for a king. The price the crowd paid was cheap and fickle where as the price the

women/Mary paid was not, it is said to have been worth a year's wages for the average worker which really makes it worth approximately \$40000, a lot of money in any language.

John also tells us that Judas has a go at the women for what he considered was a waste of money, followed by the disciples putting in their bit. Jesus however accepts this offering and silences her critics.

In Mark 14:3-9 (NASB) we read – starting at verse 6, But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me.

Marks record for what is Jesus last week on earth then takes us to the upper room where Jesus as part of the meal presents his disciples with a way in which they can remember him through what we call the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

Here, while they are eating, Jesus breaks the news that one of the twelve disciples will betray Him. Twice before -- in Mark 9:31 and 10:33 -- Jesus has said that He will be betrayed (note that the NASB translates the word "delivered up" in those verses, but it is the same Greek word translated "betray" in 14:18). But the disciples had not understood much of what Jesus said in those verses, and clearly did not think that one of the twelve would be the betraying agent. They cannot believe this -- clearly the eleven have no suspicions of Judas -- and each one asks Jesus if he is the betrayer.

In this culture, to be betrayed by one "who is eating with me," who "dips with me in the bowl" was considered particularly treacherous. To eat with someone implied friendship, trust, and an obligation to help and protect them. So by speaking of their eating together, and saying that the betrayer is "one of the twelve," Jesus is emphasizing the enormity of the evil of what is happening and the price he was being called on to pay.

Yet Jesus knows this has all been prophesied 1000 years previously, when David wrote Psalm 41:

(Psalm 41:9 NASB) Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me

At the end of this meal Judas ducks out and makes a deal with the Chief Priests to hand Jesus over to them. He sells his loyalty to Jesus out for 30 pieces of silver. As each piece of silver was worth approximately 4 denarii, which makes the bribe equivalent to 120 denarii or in today's terms about \$14000. For the Chief Priests this was at bargain price and was about one-third of the value of the nard Mary poured out on Jesus.

According to the Old Testament, this is the value that the owner of an ox would have to pay the owner of a slave gored by the ox. So Judas sells Jesus for the price of a slave.

Jesus in offering the cup at the supper says "this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many." In Mark, this is the clearest statement yet of Jesus' role in atoning for our sins, paying the price for our sins. In 10:45 Jesus says he came to "give his life a ransom for many;" here He elaborates on that theme. Jesus here identifies himself with the Passover lamb, whose blood we are told in the Old Testament, would have been poured out on the altar "to make atonement for your souls."

Paul also emphasizes this parallel between Jesus and the Passover lamb, stating "Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Thus Jesus, the perfect, unblemished lamb, offers His life to pay the penalty for all our sins, enabling us to enter God's presence spotless and pure. This is what we act out and celebrate when we partake of the Lord's Supper. This is how precious Jesus is today and as he has always been.

What does this mean for us today?

As the author of the book of Hebrews writes, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." God is a just God; He is the moral authority in the universe. He makes sure that every wrong is paid for, exactly as it deserves and given that Jesus pays the penalty for all our sins, we should respond by living out lives that honor and glorify him. But how can we do that, since we are so prone to selfishness, self-centeredness, and other forms of evil?

To get an idea we need to look again at Mary, the Disciple and Judas. Mary obviously did not understand totally what is going on yet she gives up what is most valuable to her -- this jar of nard, perhaps a family heirloom, perhaps she had saved a year's wages to buy it -- to prepare His body for burial. She demeans herself even to the point of rubbing His feet with her hair, knowing that the most important thing of all is devotion to Jesus. Also for a single woman to approach and touch a man in public was risking ridicule and social exclusion. Mary was prepared to give up everything and for which she gained eternal life.

Judas on the other hand, one of these disciples, one of the intimate circle that has been loved by Jesus, taught by Him and who had traveled with Jesus for three years, and has heard those prophecies about His death. Judas has even been empowered by Jesus to perform miracles when He sent the disciples out two by two. But now, Judas sells the most precious person in the world for the price of a slave. For \$12000, Judas gave up the source of all true life. He too gives up everything, and loses his soul to Satan.

Mary has had much less contact with Jesus, but values Him above all else and she gives up three times what Judas received for betraying Him, in order to honor Him and acknowledge Him as precious.

Both Mary's & Judas's actions are shown to be part of God's plan and show that God is sovereign, for both actions had been foretold. So why are they here and together? Well Mary lives out the picture of the Lord's Supper for she is feeding on Jesus by showing that she values him above all else - and this is what Jesus pictures for us in the Lord's Supper.

Judas on the other hand rejects Jesus teaching and in a way throws it all back in his face.

So what about you and me, are we sold out to God?

Or have we sold God out by rejecting Jesus and refusing to make the needed changes in our lives. Mary was sold out on God whereas she had accepted Jesus for who he was and is, Judas was sold out period.

Just as in the Old Testament we see that Esau sold his inheritance for lentil stew, Judas sold his soul for \$12000.

So what is your price? Do you have one – a price?

So ask yourself this question: Is your price a steady job and a nice income and a nice house and a nice car and college for the kids, plenty of silver in the bank account or investment? Good things, all: But are you devoting yourself to these goals more than you are devoting yourself to following Jesus? Is your mind set on the pursuit of these things, is your plan to achieve all these things, standing in the way of your making a radical, life-changing commitment to God standing in the way of your expressing you wholehearted devotion to Jesus, like Mary?

Then what of the un-forgiveness, anger, lust that you are holding onto?

Have they become for you your 30 pieces of silver?

Or are you more like Simon's dinner guests: calculating, "Oh, that's too much to give to Jesus! We'll give him our worship on Sunday, and a tenth of our income (maybe); that should be enough. But, Hey! What I do with the rest of my money and the rest of my time, that's up to me."

Are you sold out to Jesus and the gospel? Or are you only playing at church and keeping a pew warm?

Brothers & Sisters, seekers of a relationship with Jesus, You & I don't owe Jesus only a tenth of your income. WE don't owe him only our worship on Sunday or Wednesday. We owe him *everything!* We owe Him our entire lives!

This is not some onerous debt you have to repay like a bank mortgage or credit card debt, which hurts each time you make a payment!

For when you yield to him, when you give up these pseudo-successes and pseudo-pleasures the world offers, when instead you feed on Him, and drink Him up – you find the real love, joy, and peace the world so much longs for. You get to know the most precious, the most beautiful, the most loving person in the world. And as you get to know Him, and as you see Him and learn more and more of Him, as you drink Him up, you become like Him.

So do that! Drink him up! Feed on him, so that you can taste and see the goodness of the Lord – and enter in to the joy of His presence.

So, would you and I rather be a poor and know Jesus - than the richest man in the world, and not know Him. Jesus said that it would be harder for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven for the riches can get in the way.

What about you? Is Jesus more precious to you than anything in this world? If not please make him so today and accept the price he has paid by his own blood for you and me on the cross.

In the name of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

Micheal Perrott