

# **APPRENTICES OF JESUS – Worship**

## **Mark 14:1-9**

**Sermon for Peace Church  
April 5, 2009 – Palm Sunday**

**PURPOSE** – To call the congregation to the ministry of worship – giving their heart to the Lord’s heart known in the love of Christ crucified.

**MAIN IDEA** – Worship is connecting to the heart of God, giving Him our best, and is the corresponding response to Christ’s sacrificial love.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Let’s open our Bibles to Mark 14:1 (p. 1578)

1. This morning’s sermon subject was actually introduced to us earlier the service.

When the Palm Sunday crowd praised God in loud voices: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord”, some of the Pharisees asked Jesus to REBUKE those who so lauded Him.

- Perhaps they were jealous
- Perhaps they thought such praise inappropriate for any human being to receive.
- “Jesus – rebuke your disciples. Tell them to be quiet!”

JESUS’ RESPONSE?

*If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out. (2X)*

(i) The occasion of Jesus’ ride into Jerusalem calls for PRAISE. The CENTRAL fulfillment of all Scripture is about to happen in the Holy Week ahead! ... Salvation accomplished! The centerpiece of history is about to be enacted. !

The occasion CALLS FOR PRAISE to Him who is our Savior – and if we don’t, these stones (bricks) will cry out in our stead.

2. Through Lent this year, we’ve been considering what it means to be an APPRENTICE OF JESUS. = to practice the skills of living in God’s Kingdom, as Jesus revealed & taught.

= EXERCISES that shape our spiritual life – and give us Holy Spirit STRENGTH to live effectively for God.

Just as physical exercises do that for our physical life, the “spiritual disciplines” strengthen our Holy Spirit life.)

“*Train yourself to be godly*”, Paul writes in the letter of 1 Timothy (4:7).

(i) So last month we thought of disciplines of fasting (withdrawal) & feasting (engagement).  
= various WORK-OUTS for spiritual conditioning

The spirit is like the body – it must be nourished & exercised & trained to be strong for God – to overcome temptations, live in obedience, advance God’s reign.

3. Today’s spiritual discipline, in line with Palm Sunday, is WORSHIP.

On the back of your bulletin I’ve had printed a couple of quotes about worship. Look at the top one. William Temple, a former Archbishop in the Church of England, writes:

*Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by God’s holiness; the nourishment of mind with his truth; the purifying of the imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of the will to His purpose – and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy of that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.*

What POWER comes from a good worship work-out!

What HEALING!

What TRANSFORMATION from self to God-centeredness!

4. Jesus calls His apprentices to be people who worship God in Him. That call and its importance is taught in this Mark 14 passage, as Jesus continues to train His apprentices, even days before His death.

### **READ MARK 14:1-9**

From this Word, let me draw thoughts on

WHAT WORSHIP IS

HOW TO WORSHIP

WHY TO WORSHIP

## II. WHAT WORSHIP IS

### 1. WORSHIP IS MINISTERING TO GOD.

In the context of a world with many demands, many needs, many places of “poverty”, worship focuses on ministering to God Himself – who has made himself present & known in Jesus Christ.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind & strength” is the first commandment of our Maker. Worship is the FIRST EXPRESSION of obedience to this first commandment.

(i) Worship adores / attends / responds to God in Jesus.

A. ... in the context of a lot of things to attend to:

Job / kids / family / community / friends / spouse / church... worship ministers to God Himself!

(ii) And, not unlike our story, some people will think this is kind of CRAZY!

Some people in the house of Simon the Leper thought this woman was FOOLISH for such extravagant worship of Jesus.

> “What a waste ... that perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor.”

A. So too do increasing numbers think, “What a waste of a Sunday morning!”

> “You go to church to worship God?! There’s a lot more USEFUL ways to spend your time. Go help out your neighbor – rake their lawn. Go enjoy a round of golf. Go have a relaxing coffee & read the paper. Go play on your sports-team. Go volunteer in a hospital ...  
... that’s a better use of time than to just worship.”

2. BUT JESUS DEFENDS THIS WOMAN – because worship is the first expression of the obedience to the first commandment:

(i) He says, *The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want.*

Jesus is saying that there are always going to be things to do in this broken age.

There will always be NEEDS around us

There will always be NEEDS within us (perhaps fabricated)

- As you know you can find plenty of ways to spend your time & resources.
- We can keep busy, busy, busy

(ii) But, Jesus goes on ... *YOU WILL NOT ALWAYS HAVE ME with you.*

That was true then and is still relevant. Just as Jesus' life ENDED in death on a Cross, THIS AGE – in which God is yet with us (despite how broken this age is) – this age WILL END.

Jesus' death is the ASSURANCE that things will not perpetuate forever as they now are. One day HEAVEN & HELL will come. Because Jesus died & rose again, we know this. So one day, there will be a place of NO WORSHIP or FULL WORSHIP for each person.

A. And in that age to come, only those who've made it a PRIORITY to worship God will join in the eternal worship of saints & angels.

Jesus defends this woman – because His apprentices learn in this “poor” age to minister to God Himself, preparing for the age to come!

- Christians don't live MERELY horizontal lives. His apprentices worship (VERTICAL MINISTRY) in the context of ONGOING, PRESSING NEEDS all around us.

3. This woman further shows us WHAT WORSHIP IS through another statement of Jesus.

Verse 6. - *“Leave her alone”, Jesus says, “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing TO ME.”*

(i) This woman's worship has touches THE HEART OF JESUS. Worship responds to the heart of God known in Jesus by His Word & Spirit.

Undoubtedly, she has sensed the HEAVINESS of Jesus' heart as His suffering & death draws near. Her worship MINISTERS to that knowledge of God. So it is HEART TO HEART. Her heart responds to His.

(ii) That's worship. It's not about songs & liturgy. It's about spirit to Spirit; deep to deep; heart to heart; God to us; you to God.

QUOTE (bulletin) – Richard Foster – *“Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father. Its central reality is found in “spirit & truth”. It is kindled within us only when the Spirit of God touches our human spirit.*

*Forms & rituals do not produce worship, nor does the disuse of forms and rituals. We can use all the right techniques and methods, we can have the best possible liturgy, but we have not worshiped the Lord until Spirit touches spirit (i.e. woman).*

*The words of the chorus, “Set my spirit free that I may worship Thee”, reveal the basis of worship. Until God touches and frees our spirit we cannot enter this realm. Singing, praying, praising all may lead to worship, but worship is more than any of them. OUR SPIRIT MUST BE IGNITED BY THE DIVINE FIRE.”*

A. That's what happens in this woman's worship. Her spirit was ignited by the divine fire in Jesus – Using Temple's categories, Jesus' holiness; truth, beauty, love, purposes touches her within. And she responds in ADORATION & SURRENDER.

This is what it means to worship God in Spirit & truth.

It means conviction / stirring / relationship / word within / being spoken to & responding!

B. In the Bible, God's fierce judgment is held against those who only "worship" in form & ritual. Worship, whether it's here or in your home, is Spirit to spirit, heart to heart.

### III. HOW TO WORSHIP

Responding to God in Jesus, HOW DOES THIS WOMAN WORSHIP?

1. Clearly, SHE GIVES CHRIST HER BEST to represent HER ALL.

She takes off the shelf the alabaster jar of perfume. It's her life's savings. Might have been the family inheritance (her 401k's). This perfume is worth a year's wages - \$30, \$50,000. It's her all.

(i) When it comes to worshiping God, we should always think in terms of giving Him our BEST!

- This is a theme of worship in the Old Testament:

I.e. – People were to bring their BEST LAMB, BEST CROPS to worship God.

- Some brought mangled sheep. They were judged!

I.e. – In the Old Testament, people were to give their FIRST TITHE to the Lord in worship.

= The first cut of the field. God does not want leftovers of our time & income & energy

Worship is about giving our best – as a way of saying, like this woman, I give my all.

(ii) So it's important that you worship God at the BEGINNING of each week & day. That's why Christians gather to worship on Sundays, the Lord's Day. It's a way to say to God – "This week is yours. I live to honor You in it. Give me a Word, shape me for it."

- Even if you're away from home – camping, travels business - don't NOT worship on the Lord's Day. Find the fellowship of God's people.

- Be aware - become repentant - if you ever find yourself somewhat comfortable with beginning a week without worship. That's a danger sign.

A. Likewise, begin EACH DAY in worship. It's another way to give God your best!

Read the Word / sense the heart of God / Listen to the Spirit / Respond in prayer adoration, trust, obedience.

= 10-15 minutes – connect with the heart of God.

(iii) Give God your tithe in worship. This is giving our best.

Calculate that tithe on your gross income, before taxes. That too is saying to God: "You have the first cut. You have my best. You have my all."

WORSHIP IS ABOUT GIVING GOD YOUR BEST – of your flock & field, of your time & attention!

2. The other thing to note in this woman's worship is its PHYSICALITY.

It was bodily worship. She MOVED to Him who was reclined at table. She ANOINTED his head with the perfume.

Of course, that was unique because God was bodily present there. However, worship in the Bible is described in very physical terms.

(i) The Hebrew word we translate, 'worship', literally means "to prostrate" (bow).

The word "BLESS" literally means, "to kneel" – so to bless God means to kneel before Him.

A. In the Psalms, worship is described as: Bowing the head, lifting the head, dancing, standing, kneeling, clapping the hands, raising the hands = many physical expressions.

(ii) A couple of applications:

A. Physically prepare for worship – here & at home – again, give God your best. A good Sunday worship begins with a good Saturday rest.

B. Physically express your worship – This may stretch some of us, but we do that when we fold hands, bow heads, close eyes, open mouths.

But experiment even further:

- Cup your hands to receive the blessing
- Raise your hands in times of praise – even a bit – it aids the spirit.
- Our African-American friends in Kingdom Ministries, had some of us clapping, swaying, moving our feet ... a couple of weeks ago.
- Conversely, some of us may need to work on STILLING OURSELVES physically to receive the Word of God.

In worship, we PRESENT OUR BODIES TO GOD AS LIVING SACRIFICES – in postures consistent with the inner spirit of worship.

The PHYSICALITY of this woman’s worship demonstrates this!

#### IV. WHY TO WORSHIP

Third - the SIGNIFICANCE of worship.

1. When Jesus defends this woman’s act of worship, He adds – v. 8 – *“She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial (= a custom of those days). I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”*

(i) Jesus makes this statement because this woman’s worship APPROPRIATELY CORRESPONDS to God’s Word there present. It fits with the meaning of his impending death.

They go together (hands) – his sacrifice of love unto death / her sacrifice of worship

A. Jesus is about to show the world the full extent of the love of God.

= a love so PROFOUND, it suffers for us

= a love so HOLY, it covers for our sins

= a love so DEEP, it dies for us.

B. The first APPROPRIATE response to such love is WORSHIP. That’s why her example will always be told with the story of that love.

There’s no other way to reveal that you truly get it than worship.

If you don’t flat-out worship, you don’t understand this love.

If you don’t give your best, your all, you haven’t got it.

“When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died ... were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small. Love so amazing, so divine DEMANDS my soul, my life, my all.”

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORSHIP is that it is the first response that the gospel DEMANDS!

*“Because He first loved us ... WE LOVE”* – extravagantly, sacrificially, adoringly!

The 2 go hand-in-hand!

## V. CONCLUSION

But even more personally, to conclude, think of what this anointing worship meant to Jesus.

1. For the fragrance of that woman's WORSHIP would stay with Him in the rest of the days to come that week.

These rich perfumes didn't dissipate at day's end.

The fragrance remained for Him to smell – through the trial of his suffering & death.

(i) That fragrance was WITH HIM in the pain of Upper Room – when one of His own slipped away to betray Him.

(ii) The fragrance of worship was with Him as he prayed the sorrow of Gethsemane:

- Struggling, not wanting to drink the cup of suffering
- Yet you wonder if, he may have just smelled that fragrance of worship, just before he said, "NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE BE DONE".

(iii) The fragrance of worship would have ministered to Him

- When he was spat upon, mocked, mis-tried
- When he was flogged, this woman's anointing worship remained on Him – close to Him – to smell, to bless

(iv) When He was crucified, this fragrance was still there with Him

- What meaning that would give Him – for He knew that His suffering would not be in vain – She loved Him for His love.

2. This is the SIGNIFICANCE OF WORSHIP – each week, each day – it is a fragrance that anoints our Savior God!

3. So as we enter this Holy Week – remembering again the suffering & death of our Savior – let's resolve to be apprentices who WORSHIP HIM – anointing His love with ours in return.

THE GOSPEL DEMANDS IT. JESUS IS BLESSED BY IT.

And God has made Himself thus known, available, vulnerable in order to be loved by worship.

Come, LET US WORSHIP HIM!

(Songs – I Love You, Lord / My Jesus, I Love You)