

What is Jesus worth to me?

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Preacher: Chris Lamont

[0 : 0 0] So I'd like to work through these headings and then the whole time I'd really like us to be thinking at the back of our own minds, what is Jesus worth to me? So if to some he's worth nothing, to others he's worth everything and to some he's worth something, what does he mean?

What is he worth? What is Jesus worth to me? So you guys have been working through Mark's gospel for a little while and up until now we've seen Jesus primarily as a teacher, as a prophet and now we reach chapter 14 and there's a change of tone, a change of pace because what's happening now is Mark is introducing the final days of Jesus' life as he goes towards the cross, the passion narrative it's called, not passion as in worked up but passion as in suffering.

I'm not going to major on what happens when Jesus goes to the cross because in your series you're going to think about that in the coming weeks but I am going to think about the people here and what they think of Jesus.

This passage begins in verse 1 by telling us the exact time. So it's two days before Passover and the feast of unleavened bread and that's really significant for a couple of different reasons.

So first of all, there are these men, the high priests, the rulers of the Jewish religion in Jerusalem and they want Jesus out of the way because he's getting in the way of people doing what they tell them, taking away their control.

[1 : 4 7] They're bloodthirsty but they can't act because it's the Passover and that means that from all the villages round about people have come to Jerusalem to celebrate. So they're frightened there's going to be a riot and of course the Romans were ruling at the time.

If there's a Jewish riot, the Romans are going to come down hard and that's going to be bad for everybody. But the Passover is also significant for another reason and that's because as we think about Jesus moving towards the cross, this Passover meal was a meal, an event but then it was followed by like a week of feasting, it's called the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the people would come together and they would eat it in their families and it was to remind people of when Jesus freed the people of Israel, all the Jewish people, their ancestors, from slavery in Egypt and the Passover specifically speaks about the destroyer coming to Egypt and to destroy the firstborn children of the Egyptians who wouldn't let the Israelites leave and the blood of a lamb was put on the doorposts of the Jewish people's houses so that when the destroyer came he would pass over their homes.

They would not suffer the same fate as those who didn't trust God and those who were oppressing God's people. We can read about how the festival was to be kept in Exodus chapter 12 and in Numbers chapter 9 and that gives you a really good insight into what was going on and what would have been going on similar here in Jerusalem I don't have time to do that now but it's no coincidence then for us that Jesus is preparing to go to his death at the feast of Passover because Jesus is the Lamb of God and it's his blood that saves people from their just punishment for sin.

So Jesus has been teaching performing miracles a large number of people like him are following him but the Jewish leaders don't like this one bit.

They don't like his teaching and they don't like that he's persuading the people. They don't want to lose the power that they have over the people and they want to snatch Jesus away sneakily.

[4 : 15] They want to arrest him and have him killed quietly but they can't act because of all the people who are in the city. So for now they're resigned to wait but they're looking for an opportunity.

I guess at this point we should maybe stop and say how does that relate to us because we're not living in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago and we're not ruled by Jewish priests who tell us how to live our lives and control us in that way.

we're a long way geographically from the ancient Near East as well but I think we don't have to look too far to see oppression and suppression of Jesus everywhere we look.

Every time we switch on the television we see people wanting to harm Christians to control Christians to water down what Christians are allowed to believe.

just as Christianity then started with a small band of Jewish people and spread out to the whole world so this persecution of Christians starts these people that follow Jesus starts with this band of Jewish people and now we see it all over the world where people are hurt and even killed for their belief in Jesus for their choice to follow after him.

[5 : 38] We see here in the West we maybe see it through subtle laws there's been laws recently about not being allowed to pray in public that's the suppression of Jesus but then we see it all over the world maybe if you look on the internet where people are literally being massacred for following after Christ.

These things seem far away when we think about them I think sometimes these people plotting to kill Jesus seems almost like an abstract concept but today these things are happening all around us this is not far from us not far from our own day and as followers of Jesus we're blessed I think to live in Scotland where we live the safety that we enjoy the comfort that we enjoy we're here free in a community centre that we're allowed to worship in but when we do face difficulties when people look down on us or when we don't get the promotion because we go to church or people don't like what we think we have to remember that that is how Christians have always been treated and that oppression is not good it's not something we look for but it's something we should expect.

There's another opponent of Jesus in this passage today so we kind of started at the beginning and then if we jump to the last couple of verses that I read verses 10 and 11 if you've got your Bible Judas has been among Jesus' most intimate followers so he's one of the 12 disciples Jesus' very closest allies and he's travelled with Jesus he's listened to Jesus' preaching sermons he's even seen Jesus perform miracles and now at the end of our passage here he goes to the chief priests these guys that want Jesus dead and he's gone I'll get them for you I will put him in a path that you can get rid of him I think that the chief priests are looking for an opportunity but it's not like they're like tapping on the disciples' shoulders seeing if any of them are disgruntled seeing if anyone wants a way out Judas has taken it upon himself this is his entire free will he has decided by himself

I'm going to betray my Lord my Saviour who he doesn't see any value in it's a fully premeditated decision to walk away from Jesus and not just to walk away because you remember when Jesus goes to the cross or we'll get there all the disciples run away because they're scared but that's in an instant it's a reaction whereas this is a premeditated act by Judas tragic because everything he's seen and everything he's done with Jesus everywhere he's went with Jesus he's looked at Jesus and thought he's not worth more than a few hundred quid what it relates to in today's money but he was paid by the high priests and the scribes to betray him and when he does go to them when he goes to the high priests heartbreakingly painful words to read they rejoice they're delighted because they're like yes now we can find a way to get rid of this

Jesus Judas's actions I think are really stark warning it's uncomfortable to talk about I think it's not a nice thing to think about for too long but it reminds us that not everybody who says they're a Christian really follows after Christ not everyone who goes to church believes the truth of the gospel in their heart maybe we know people who've been part of a church maybe we know people who have spoken about faith and religion in the past and then we see them walk away and it's incredibly sad there's a guy who lived on my street a few doors down from me and he found out that we went to church and he said that he used to go to church but he had a fallout with a minister or I don't know the elders about the direction the church was going to and so I said to him where do you worship now and I think I'll always remember these words because it sent a shiver down my spine and he said

[9 : 57] I don't worship this man had been an elder in his denomination and because he'd come across difficulty or things had become rough for him in a small way he had decided to walk away from Jesus completely so we have to be careful then when we look what we're influenced by in the world if it's online or if it's in magazines or wherever it is that we're not relying on the opinions of people who go to church we're not looking for truth from people who have read books we look for truth we live our lives guided by what scripture tells us because that is the true word of God and because we know that there's some people in some churches or some people who call themselves religious that don't place a high value on Jesus at all so we have to take care so those are the people who think nothing of

Jesus or think very little of Jesus at least in the second place I like to think about those or particularly this person who thinks Jesus is worth absolutely everything so you'll maybe have noticed that when we are reading Mark uses this kind of sandwich technique so he's got plotting and plotting and in the middle there's this passage about anointing when they've gone to the table the guys who are at the table with Jesus are eating and this woman comes in and first of all this woman is not welcome in that space so Jewish custom would not be in favour of her eating with these men in fact the only time a woman was allowed to interrupt would be if she was serving the meal so there's a whole piece about her unwelcomeness at this table to start with but we know Jesus doesn't think like that not here he doesn't condemn her here and he doesn't condemn women in other places too there's a man called

Simon who's a leper Simon the leper and the leper is not his surname this is a man Simon who suffered from leprosy and I think we can confidently say he has suffered and he's better now because if he did still have the condition he wouldn't be allowed in the village he wouldn't be allowed to have people in his home because there was really strict laws about all of that he'd be outside the city away from everyone so he couldn't contaminate people we know that Jesus healed lepers we don't know for sure if he healed Simon I don't know but whether he was healed by Jesus or not Simon wants Jesus in his life and not in some sort of general sense where he thinks Jesus is a good guy he wants Jesus inside his home he wants Jesus right beside him at his dinner table he wants Jesus to meet his friends and to sit with his family he wants him in the most intimate part the closest part of his life

Simon wants Jesus to be there but Simon is not the main focus of this interlude that we're going to look at the main character that we've got here aside from Jesus is this unnamed woman Mark writes in verse 3 as he that's Jesus was reclining at table a woman with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard very costly came in and she broke the flask and she poured it over his head she poured it over Jesus head this woman is not named in Mark in John's gospel there's a very similar anointing that takes place the woman is called Mary and she's the sister of Martha and Lazarus some people think this is the same incident just captured written about in a slightly different way other people think this is a separate anointing for our purposes it doesn't really matter which it is but whatever it is it's a remarkable episode because we have to remember that this woman's not welcome there and then she's carrying this flask which itself is made of really precious stone and the contents are incredibly attention grabbing they're made of they contain pure nard a perfume pure nard

I think that comes from India wherever it comes from it's incredibly expensive so the commentators say that in those days a woman would not have had the opportunity to work to earn this so it's likely commentators think a family heirloom something that she's been saving up this is her whole safety deposit or maybe it's a gift that she's going to give to her daughter on her wedding day it's not a bottle of CK1 that she's picked up from Asda this is a precious perfume it's worth 300 denarii the bible tells us which is equivalent of about a year's wages for a labourer so maybe 20 grand's worth of liquid and the flask was a considerable size too so it's not like a bottle of perfume we would see today it's maybe three four times as big as that and in Mark's account here the woman doesn't hesitate at all she breaks the flask she breaks it so there's no going back and she pours the perfume over Jesus' head this woman is showing real boldness even bravery to enter the room and then she's taken the thing that she has

[15 : 39] I think it's safe to assume of most value in the entire world and she's literally poured it out on Jesus to her Jesus is of such value such worth such preciousness that it's all that she can do to pour out the most expensive the most valuable material thing she has at her disposal in an act of pure honour and devotion to him to this woman Jesus is worth so much more than anything else and she holds nothing back in her worship of him I wonder how we measure our love and devotion to Jesus and I think that's a challenging thought too to think about all the ways in your life that you've been blessed but what are the things that we would struggle to pour out for Christ or the flip side of that what would our lives look like what would our service look like if we held back from Jesus nothing at all if we lavished everything we have on him imagine the churches all over

Scotland if everyone gave their everything to Christ imagine our communities and our relationships if everyone gave everything they had and I'm not just talking about money I'm talking about gifts and talents and networks and resources if we gave all those things we held nothing back from building Jesus kingdom here on earth this woman reminds us of Jesus parable it's recorded in Matthew about a woman who goes to the temple and there's lots of people putting in lots of money and this woman is a widow and she's got very little and she throws in two tiny little copper coins and Jesus says that she's thrown in more than anyone else it's not about the size of the gift it's about the heart attitude towards Jesus this woman has poured out on Jesus everything she has just like the woman who had two mites two tiny little coins put in everything she had into the temple that's what

Jesus is like for this woman he's incomparable in preciousness nothing comes close and that's what he's like for Christians because there is no other way given to us to escape God's judgment than to come to Jesus this woman's anointing of Jesus is also doing something else so whether she's aware of it or not I suspect not but as we move into the next chapter of Mark it's not a spoiler to say that Jesus is on his way to the cross and he's going to be killed and he's going to die and he's going to be buried and in Jewish custom when somebody died before they were buried they were anointed with spices their body was anointed with spices before they were put in the tomb or buried but because

Jesus' cross was taken down in a hurry the Sabbath day was coming where Jews couldn't work and they wanted Jesus' body off the cross and also probably because of the nervousness around the situation with the Jewish leaders and the Romans Jesus was buried in a hurry so this woman's anointing of Jesus' body is the only anointing that Jesus receives before his death in verse 8 Jesus knows this and he says to the people who witnessed what the woman does he says she's anointed my body beforehand for burial this woman was probably completely oblivious but this alabaster box of precious perfume was the pre-burial anointing of King Jesus so this woman Jesus was everything and then the final group of people we're going to look at today are those who think Jesus is worth something not nothing not everything something as soon as we see this woman being extravagantly generous with her most valuable possession the reaction from those who are at the table with Jesus is extreme

Mark Mark records these are not the ones who are plotting to kill Jesus these are the people who are invited to eat with him who've been learning from him who are spending time with him Mark doesn't tell us they were a bit confused as to what was going on and he doesn't tell us they were a bit annoyed that she spilled all her perfume the language here is so strong says that they were indignant the word is related to nostril flaring anger like a bull maybe stamping its feet fury they're absolutely raging and they scold her what is she doing that was worth a fortune do you know how many hungry people we could have fed with that that's a year's wages but Jesus defends this woman in verses six and seven he jumps to her defence and Jesus says something that

[21 : 29] I think could easily be looked at as an opportunity for us to overlook our requirement to help people round about us because Jesus says you will always have the poor but Jesus is not saying the poor will always be there that's okay what you're going to do he's not saying that at all we know how important people who are poverty stricken people who are ill people who are outsiders are to Jesus that's what he built his ministry around helping those people but Jesus is saying in a very deliberate!

way! you can and you should help the poor all the time but I'm not going to always be here with you at this table and this woman has performed a deliberate act of honour and respect towards me!

that we should care for the poor we're commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves that means looking after those round about us especially those less fortunate but that's the second commandment the first commandment is love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength Jesus said that in Mark chapter 12 probably just a couple of weeks ago for us see these guys are so concerned with the things of the world they're so blinded by monetary value that they don't see that this woman anointing Jesus with all that she has is a worthwhile act of praise and worship and adoration for who he is in preparation of what he is going to do they miss it all together they miss his worth he's precious and he's worth all that we have

I think this idea of being quite close to Jesus but holding back thinking there's some value in him is super common today so of course we've got those people who don't see any value in Jesus and they say when they see people living their lives in a Christian manner giving to the poor and looking after others as a charity begins at home look after yourself that's fine for you as long as you keep it to yourself but what I'm talking about are the people who know Jesus who've maybe grown up in church maybe understand what Jesus stands for and they're happy for us to devote our lives to time with our family or friends to get a promotion maybe they think it's a good thing to go to a different country to seek your fortune that's fine but they don't respond the same way when we sacrifice the material things we have in order to serve the

Lord that's more difficult for some people to understand but I think that when we're as Christians we understand the ugliness of sin and the filthiness of what we carry without Jesus forgiveness the pure mercy of Jesus becomes clear the value of Jesus becomes clear and there's nothing we would hold back there's an old writer called J.C.

[25 : 37] Ryle and he said I'm paraphrasing it's not exactly his words because he lived a long time ago we'd happily waste our financial resources our talents our gifts our education our contracts or our opportunities on Jesus in fact we would hate to waste them on anything but on him we'll all go through times in our lives when we feel closer to Jesus and further from him so I think it's important and healthy for us to ask at regular intervals what are the things that I'm holding back I'm not just talking about giving money is there a gift that you have that you are not ready to give over to the Lord or maybe is there a sin in my life that I've grown comfortable with something that I'm not willing to fight every day to give up for him there are those who think

Jesus is everything there are those who think Jesus is nothing and there's people in the middle who are still seeking to see that true value of Jesus Christ so then just to conclude we've seen the religious leaders who wanted to see Jesus dead they think he's worthless we've seen the people who were eating with Jesus who didn't fully understand his true value we've seen Judas who betrays Jesus who was so close in his inner circle and then gave him up to be killed and we've seen this woman who had no right to be there who was scolded by others pour out her life everything she had in honour of her saviour so I'd like to finish with two other thoughts from the passage this is properly cheating I had three points then I've these are really short and I want to talk about them because I think they're both reassurances because I think we've spoken about lots of hard stuff today people who are not as close to

Jesus as maybe they think they might be or show that they are or asking us what are the things that are hidden in our hearts so as encouragement for us as we feel like maybe we feel like we're stumbling through life sometimes and the first word of encouragement to take home is that despite the worst plans of wicked men all things work together for God's glory God is in sovereign control when the chief priests and the scribes were looking to kill Jesus at the beginning they were like we can't do it now because there's too many people but when Judas comes to them and gives them the opportunity what happens is Jesus goes to the cross and the day when Jerusalem is most filled with Jews the entire nation the last thing the priest wanted to happen is what happens everybody's there to see what's happening God was in sovereign control of all of those things he made all those things work together to his glory so that's the first reassurance God's in control he's in control then and he's in control in our lives when we put on the news and it's

Ukraine or Gaza or any other of the wars all over the world it feels helpless we feel helpless and it's hard for us to understand Jesus' disciples couldn't understand why Jesus was going to the cross but God is in sovereign control and all these things are working together for our heavenly father's glory and the second reassurance I want to mention is in the words that Jesus says to the woman in verse eight the people on the table are furious and Jesus says leave her alone and then he says she's done what she could she's done what she could so this woman was led to this place in this time she had this family heirloom or this precious bottle for this task that she was given to do but Jesus words here are a reminder to us that he's not looking for a particular spectacular expensive gesture like this woman gave from all of us that was right for that woman but it's not right for everybody when that woman in the temple threw in her two mites she threw in everything that she had but Jesus said that she put in more than everything else because she anyone else because she gave what she had she had done what she was able and similarly when we see the real value in

Jesus the real preciousness of Jesus of his perfect life of his sacrificial death of his triumphant rising again we're not called to find more to give to him we're called to simply hold nothing back amen let's pray lord god don't let us hold back anything in our worship of you when we meet together around your word and also as we live our lives lord we pray that you would remind us daily that Jesus is the one thing that we need over and above anything else the most precious gift ever offered to us lord help us to receive it and in response live lives that show our love and our devotion to him help us by the power of the holy spirit to live lives that reflect our hearts desire that our hearts desire is in Jesus we pray this in Jesus name amen