

3. Posture

Mark 14:6-8 NLT - 6 But Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me? 7 You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. 8 She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time.

God knows our thoughts and looks at our hearts. He defended the woman's actions who anointed him and challenged those who criticized her. What does Jesus' response imply about their concern for the poor?

Matthew 15:7-8 NLT - 7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 8 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

We don't want to be guilty of hypocrisy, that is when our outward action doesn't align with our heart. It is tempting to do things that make us appear "good" but unless our hearts are motivated by love and worship of God, it is not acceptable to Him. Jesus called the woman's actions a good thing. If we first draw near to God and are motivated by awe of His holiness, then our response will be extravagant worship from the heart.

WRAP-UP

What are we willing to offer to God? The woman in Mark 14 didn't withhold her precious offering but lavished it in recognition of Jesus who is worthy of our worship. Because of God's prominence in her life and her proximity to His holiness her action reflected the posture of her heart.

MEMORY VERSE.

...While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head.

- Mark 14:3b NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life _____

Challenge.- Make time in your schedule this week to put God ahead of everything else. Spend time in His presence, and experience the awe of His holiness.

"Prominence Proximity Posture"

Mark-Grace•Sacrifice•Hope- #1

INTRODUCTION

During this season of Lent and the 40 days leading up to Easter, we will be studying the last three chapters of the Gospel of Mark. It is a journey of grace, sacrifice and hope that leads us to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. In the first ten verses of Mark chapter 14 we see the stage being set. We are introduced to those plotting to crucify Jesus (priests and teachers of the law), to His betrayer (Judas) and to a woman whose extravagant worship was the source of controversy amongst Jesus' disciples. Why did the emptying of a jar of perfume cause such an outcry? Are we willing to empty our "alabaster jars" onto Jesus?

Ice Breaker

Is there a fragrance that holds a special meaning for you either currently or from you past? (mom's perfume, dad's aftershave)

Key Passage

Mark 14:9 NLT - 9 I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman's deed will be remembered and discussed."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Prominence

Mark 14:3-4 NIV - 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 at the table were indignant. "Why waste such expensive perfume?" they asked.

The events of Mark chapter 14 begin just two days before Passover. Jesus knew his time on earth was nearing its end. The place of this meal reveals the people who Jesus chose to spend His final days with.

Whose home was Jesus in? How do you think that influenced those in attendance at this meal?

Clearly Jesus was not seeking the wealthy or influential crowd at this meal. They were likely a rather humble gathering.

How is the woman's "offering" described (v.3)? What was the reaction of some to what she had done (v.5)?

Mark 14:5-6 NLT - 5 "It could have been sold for a year's wages and the money given to the poor!" So they scolded her harshly. 6 But Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me?"

John 12:6 NIV - 6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

John's account of this event identifies Judas as the one who first raised this objection to the woman's offering as well as the reason for his objection (John 12:6).

Prominence is the importance we give to something.

What was prominent to Judas?

Who was prominent to Jesus based on how He spent his last days on earth?

What or who is prominent to the woman?

Judas used the importance of "caring for the poor" as a pretext to conceal what was important to him - money. In doing so he may have gained the support of others at the dinner who felt that caring for the poor was important. (Many were probably poor themselves) But to the woman, the most prominent or important thing was the worship of Jesus.

There are many things vying for prominence in our lives. If we allow anything to take first place in our lives, we risk pushing God out of His rightful place. What are some things that might become idols in our lives if we allow them to? What are indicators that would alert us when we give prominence to things that aren't worthy of our worshiping them?

2. Proximity

Our proximity to God reveals His holiness and exposes our sin and brokenness. We see this throughout scripture-

Isaiah 6:5 NLT - 5 Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven's Armies."

Luke 5:8 NIV - 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

Being in the proximity of God and Jesus made Isaiah and Peter intensely aware of their sin. For the woman with the alabaster jar it moved her to worship. Why do you think the others at the meal were not affected similarly?

It isn't until we behold God with our own eyes and recognize His holiness that we experience the awe we see expressed in the above passages. And it isn't until we accept and experience God's great grace and sacrifice that we feel moved to respond in extravagant worship as the woman did.

At times we may be in a place where others seem to be experiencing God's presence while we do not. Which of these are the most helpful for you to sense God's nearness and holiness? Silent reflection, worship music, reading scripture, praying, being surrounded by His creation???? In what ways can you offer extravagant worship (your alabaster jar) to God?

During the season of Lent we hope you will pause to reflect on the significance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Draw near and experience the grace and hope we have in Him, spend time in His presence and express your worship extravagantly, in whatever way you feel moved to do so. Lent is not about how to stop sinning, rather it is about beholding God, then responding in awe.