

Study Guide: The Alabaster Jar

Carter Sanger, Mar-10

Introduction

- Have you ever had a relationship sour? Do you remember what caused it?

Read Mark 14:1-11

Verses 1-2 give the context to Jesus' time in Jerusalem. He's under intense scrutiny, enough to see what kinds of friends he really has. One kind is illustrated by the unnamed woman as she gives to Jesus. The other is illustrated by Judas who sells Jesus. These relationships can be characterized by beauty or betrayal.

I. Beauty

Read verses 3-9 again.

- What does the woman risk by entering such a place in a culture of men?
- Consider how long it would take for you to save the equivalent of a year's worth of your salary. If you had that much money in savings, what kinds of things can you imagine doing with it? Can you imagine giving that up for someone in need?
- Verse 8 explains why the woman was pouring her ointment on Jesus' head. How did this woman pick up on this need when all others did not?
- Do you have any relationships in your life that look like this?

II. Betrayal

Read verses 10-11 again.

- Can you imagine yourself betraying a friend like this?
- Considering Jesus' triumphal entry (Mark 11:7-11), what was the expectation of the people with Jesus? Considering that the disciples did not embrace Jesus' statement about dying in Jerusalem, do you think this was the expectation of the disciples as well? How might Jesus' acceptance of this woman's expensive gift as appropriate for his burial impact Judas' expectations of Jesus?
- How do you handle it when friends don't meet your expectations? Have you ever had a friend that didn't take your side in an issue you faced? How did that impact your friendship? Has your spouse ever let you down? How did that impact your sharing with him or her? How often have you changed your "best friend"? Could any of your old relationships be a result of betrayal? Is there anyone in your life right now that you are pushing away because of unmet expectations?

III. Burial

We move from friend to friend when friends don't give us what we want from them. We often pick friends that we think have something to offer us. The things we look for are symptomatic of what happened with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. They once experienced walking and talking with God and when they ate of the forbidden fruit, that was lost. Ever since, all of man's relationships have been warped. We seek to recover what was lost through our relationships and so we put expectations on them that cannot be met.

- What is the one thing that can set you free from using relationships to meet that need?
- How does Jesus exhibit risk, sacrifice, and his knowledge of our deepest need through his burial?
- If it takes someone being more vulnerable than you to free you to open up to him, how does Jesus burial put on display his vulnerability?

Wrap-up

- Can you see how a relationship with Jesus is the start of authentic relationships with others?