



Getting Something vs. Giving Everything

Small Group Guide — Mark 14:1-11 — 09/09/2026

Introduction

The message focuses on what scholars call a “Markan Sandwich,” where Mark brackets the beautiful story of a woman’s devotion to Jesus between two dark plots to arrest and kill Him. This structure highlights the striking contrast between the hostility of those seeking Jesus’ death—the religious leaders and Judas—and the loving sacrifice of one who recognized Him as the suffering Messiah. Set just two days before the Passover, the passage reveals that while men plot in the shadows, God’s timing is perfectly preparing Jesus to be the ultimate Passover Lamb whose blood provides eternal mercy and salvation.

The Plot and God’s Sovereignty (Verses 1-2)

The religious leaders were looking for a cunning way to arrest Jesus, but they were hindered by their fear of public opinion. Because the Jewish population doubled during Passover, they feared a riot that would draw Roman intervention. While they planned to wait until after the festival, God’s timetable was different; Jesus was to die as the perfect Passover lamb during the very feast that celebrated deliverance through the blood of a lamb.

- Discussion Question: The religious leaders were more concerned with "public opinion" and avoiding a "riot" than with the truth of who Jesus was. In what ways does the fear of what others think hinder our own obedience to God today?
- Reflective Question: How does it comfort you—or challenge you—to know that even when people are plotting "cunning" evil, God’s timing and purposes remain supreme?
- Biblical Question: Read 1 Corinthians 5:7. How does the historical context of the Passover in Egypt (Exodus 12) help us understand the significance of Jesus’ death occurring at this specific time?

The Radical Nature of Worship (Verses 3-9)

While Jesus was at the home of Simon the Leper, a woman (identified as Mary) brought an alabaster jar of perfume worth 300 denarii—a full year’s wages. She broke the jar, pouring every drop on Jesus’ head, signaling she had no plans to save any for herself. Though the disciples scolded her for "wasting" what could have been given to the poor, Jesus called her act a “noble

thing". He explained that while service to the poor is vital, worship must come first; we serve others from the "overflow of our worship".

- Discussion Question: The disciples viewed Mary's gift as a "waste". Have you ever felt that your time, resources, or devotion to Christ were viewed as "wasteful" by the world or even by other believers? How did you handle that?
- Reflective Question: Mary is consistently found at the feet of Jesus—as a learner, a mourner, and a worshiper. Which of these three postures do you find most difficult to adopt in your current season of life, and why?
- Biblical Question: Jesus states that the "first commandment" (worship) always trumps the "second" (serving others). Based on Mark 12:30-31, why is it impossible to truly fulfill the second commandment without first prioritizing the first?

The Danger of Self-Interest (Verses 10-11)

The passage ends by returning to the plot, as Judas Iscariot approaches the chief priests to betray Jesus for money. The contrast is sharp: Mary gave what she could to Jesus, while Judas wanted to get what he could from Jesus. Judas' betrayal suggests that when our relationship with Christ is based on our own expectations of what He should do for us, we are easily tempted to "sell out" when those expectations aren't met.

- Discussion Question: Judas was "one of the Twelve," yet he sought a "good opportunity" to betray Jesus for money. How can being "close" to religious activities sometimes mask a heart that is actually drifting away from Christ?
- Reflective Question: The message warns against a relationship with Jesus based on "what He will give you" or "your own expectations". Are there any "pennies" in your life—comfort, reputation, or money—for which you are tempted to trade your loyalty to Jesus?
- Reflective Question: Mary gave her absolute best with no expectations, while Judas took from Jesus and expected Him to fulfill his own agenda. Looking at your prayer life this week, does it look more like Mary's devotion or Judas' list of expectations?