

The Gospel According to Mark - The Hideousness of Hate The extravagance of Love

September 8, 2019

The Hideousness of HateThe Extravagance of Love

Mark 14:1-11

"In desperation, I turned to heaven and spoke Your name into the night Then through the darkness Your loving-kindness tore through the shadows of my soul
The work is finished, the end is written, Jesus Christ, my living hope"
Beautiful lyrics that speak to one side of our message today - The Extravagance of Love! God loved you so much He was willing to send His One and Only Begotten Son to pay the penalty for your sins and mine. However, the question remains, how will you respond to that amazing love? Will you accept that love and the grace and forgiveness which are offered through the sacrifice of Jesus, the precious Lamb of God? Today we're going to look at the stark difference between the hideousness of hate exhibited by those who had only scorn for Jesus and the extravagance of love shown to Jesus by someone not long before His death. Let's pray and ask God to show us the difference today. Pray!

Mark 14:1 Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him.

Mark 14:2 "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot."

Mark 14:3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as 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.

Mark 14:4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume?

Mark 14:5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

Mark 14:6 "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.

Mark 14:7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me.

Mark 14:8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.

Mark 14:9 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."

Mark 14:10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them.

Mark 14:11 They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Okay, let me give you a little background info on this passage. We know from the passage that the timing was very close to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These two names were used interchangeably and formed somewhat of a double festival. The Passover was the most important festival or celebration for the Jewish people because it represented the deliverance of the Hebrew people from Egypt and God establishing the nation of Israel. It had to do with the fact that the death angel passed over the homes of the Hebrews who had sacrificed a lamb and placed the blood on their door post. We could preach a whole sermon series on how Jesus was the Lamb of God and the timing of His crucifixion was during this season. The Feast of Unleavened Bread followed on the heels of the Passover and represented the urgency and haste with which the Hebrews left Egypt. The religious leaders who wanted Jesus dead, didn't want it to occur during the Holy Passover Festival. However, as we'll see, the hideousness of hate supersedes any other consideration.

What makes hate so hideous?

The Anatomy of Hate is Selfish to the Core

Mark 14:1 Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him.

Mark tells us the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill Him. Why were they looking for a sly way? Because the people had grown to appreciate Jesus' method of teaching and the fact Jesus was very genuine and authentic captivated the people's hearts. He didn't have a hidden agenda.

As a result the leaders who were trying to get rid of Jesus were scared of the people. We'll see why in just a minute, but we must understand the anatomy of hate is selfish to the core. These people weren't concerned about any one but themselves. We see this very clearly in Luke's gospel in this story...

Luke 6:6 On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled.

Luke 6:7 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.

Luke 6:8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there.

Luke 6:9 Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"

Luke 6:10 He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored.

Luke 6:11 But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Back in Jesus' day, a man with a shriveled hand would not have had the same opportunities that a person with a handicap might have today and that's to take nothing away from the hardships and difficulties a handicap person faces today, but back then, there really was not much in the way of societal help for people who couldn't work and many of these people were reduced to begging on the street. The fact that Jesus heals the man and in so doing gives him back the ability to work and to care for his family was a wonderful thing and should have brought rejoicing especially among the religious folk, but the selfish nature of the religious leaders could only see Jesus' gaining popularity and they were furious. And this will lead us to the next aspect of the anatomy of hate, but before I go there, I must ask you to think about how this applies to our lives today.

Practical Application for today - When we allow hate to penetrate our hearts and minds, we become self-centered and selfish, and that is a very dangerous place to be.

James 3:14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

James 3:15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

James 3:16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

And what kind of disorder and evil practice might James be talking about? Let's examine the next aspect of the hideousness of hate...

The Anatomy of Hate is Insanely Jealous

Mark 14:2 "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot."

This verse gives us insight into why the religious leaders were so insanely jealous! Like I said, the people were listening to Jesus and many were following Him. They had embraced Jesus and His teachings because of His genuine, non-hypocritical, purely motivated actions. In other words Jesus was very different from the Pharisees. You might remember this from the very beginning of our study on Mark's Gospel...

Mark 1:21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach.

Mark 1:22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

I preached a sermon in this series that spoke about why Jesus had such authority. It was because His life backed His words. In other words, Jesus actually practiced what He preached. Jesus' authority not only came from who He was, it came from what He was in the way He lived! There's a fascinating verse in Proverbs that says this...

Prov 27:19 As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man.

You may recall me saying this before, but in the Hebrew language the subject-verb agreement rules are different than in English, so this verse can also be correctly translated:

Prov 27:19 As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart.

So Jesus' life reflected His heart and the Pharisees were insanely jealous of the pure heart and genuine life of Jesus. In fact, so much so there was another incident in which the Pharisees began to make up bizarre things about Jesus. Check this out...

Mat 9:32 While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus.

Mat 9:33 And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."

Mat 9:34 But the Pharisees said, "It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons."

So like Satan's going to cast himself out of someone he's gotten control over! In case you didn't know, that's not the way Satan rolls. Once Satan gets a foot hold in someone's life, it takes the power of Almighty God to get him evicted!!

Practical Application for Today - Hate can lead to Insane jealousy and insane jealousy can lead to hate and Satan will use both to control you!

Prov 27:4 Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?

When we become jealous and envious of others we loose satisfaction in life and begin walking a destructive path that will cripple our lives. In fact the writer of Proverbs also states:

Prov 14:30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

This takes us to another characteristic of hate...

The Anatomy of Hate is Greedy

Mark 14:3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as 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.

Mark 14:4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume?"

Mark 14:5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor..."

Here's the deal: There's some debate over who all was actually gathered at Simon the Leper's home. Many scholars believe Simon may have been one of the lepers Jesus had previously healed. John shares the story and gives us additional details about the characters involved.

John 12:1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

John 12:2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.

John 12:3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

There are some skeptics who would like to point out that Mark says the woman anointed His head while John says she anointed His feet. Some think this is a contradiction. I think not! It's a simple matter of one being most struck with her anointing Jesus' head and the other being moved by her anointing His feet. Each one recounted the details as they remembered it. And Jesus said... "She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial." Some also like to point out that Mark mentions two days before the Passover and John six days. However, neither one gives the exact day of the dinner. John says "six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived...Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor." In neither case is Mark or John trying to give the exact timing of the dinner, but the closeness of the event to the Passover! On another detail, Matthew's Gospel clearly indicates it was some of the disciples who got upset, and John's Gospel goes further and points directly to Judas, where we get a clear glimpse into the greedy anatomy of hate...

John 12:4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,

John 12:5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."

John 12:6 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.

And we see what Judas did right after the dinner...

Mark 14:10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them.
Mark 14:11 They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Practical Application for Today - Have we examined our hearts, and lifestyles, to see if we are motivated by greed and would possibly betray Jesus if the price were right?

Once again the writer of Proverbs has wisdom for us...

Prov 23:4 Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint.

Prov 23:5 Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.

Prov 23:6 Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies;

Prov 23:7 for he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you.

John also tells us about some additional folks gathered around Jesus on this day in Bethany...

John 12:9 Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

John 12:10 So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well,

John 12:11 for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.

So these bad guys were not only willing to kill Jesus, but anyone who might lend credibility to Jesus and His cause. This leads us to our final look at the anatomy of hate, and it includes several things from one small, but very telling part of our story...

The Anatomy of Hate is Vengeful, Unforgiving, Bitter, Unscrupulous and Uncaring

Mark 14:4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume?

Mark 14:5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

"And they rebuked her harshly!" Hate is indeed hideous! Mary is so thankful for all that Jesus had done in her life, not the least, having raised her brother back to life from the grave, so she finds the most extravagant gift she can find to show her appreciation, and yet there were those couldn't see the beauty in her act of love, so they rebuked her harshly!

Practical Application for Today - Mean spiritedness hurts the people it is directed towards, but it destroys the soul of the one who spews that kind of hate!

That is why God's Word in Proverbs gives us this advice about the hideousness of hate...

Prov 4:14 Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.

Prov 4:15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.

Prov 4:16 For they cannot sleep till they do evil; they are robbed of slumber till they make someone fall.

Prov 4:17 They eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

But we come now to the amazing contrast in our text between the hideous nature of hate and the extravagant nature of love. So now that we've seen what makes hate so hideous, let's look at...

What Makes Love So Extravagant?

First I must give you the definition of extravagant. According to the Oxford Dictionary it means...

"lacking restraint in spending money or using resources."

When true love is involved, many times people lack restraint in spending money or using resources, thus we would say that love is sometimes extravagant. What makes love so extravagant? When we look at the anatomy of love we discover this...

The Anatomy of Love is Beautiful

Mark 14:3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume...

Alabaster jars can be very beautiful and are made from a type of Gypsum often used for statues and carvings. According to Britannica.com it sometimes has the appearance of marble when treated with heat. What does this have to do with the anatomy of love? Because genuine love is such a beautiful thing, people will sometimes be extravagant in their attempts to show their love to someone or to show their gratitude to someone for their love. Mark says she broke open the jar. Evidently it was a custom to break a jar if it was for the purpose of anointing a body for burial. So this woman does a beautiful thing for Jesus. In fact Jesus even says this...

Mark 14:6 "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me."

Practical Application for Today - Have you considered something beautiful you could do to show your love for God for the extravagant love He has shown to you?

Folks I'm not talking about trying to earn God's love or trying to be good enough to deserve it, rather I'm trying to get us to think about how we should be so grateful for the gift of God's love given to us through Jesus, we would want to live for Him out of gratitude for His Amazing Grace. Aren't you glad God was willing to be extravagant in His love for us? John points this out beautifully in 1 John 3:1...

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

And what did it cost The Father to lavish His love on us? Let's look at another aspect of the extravagance of love and we'll get an idea...

The Anatomy of Love is Sacrificial and Timely

Mark 14:3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as 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.

And let's go ahead and look at John's remembrance of this event...

John 12:3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

We know from Judas' objection to this beautiful act that the perfume was worth a years wages. All I can say to that is Wow! I can't imagine the sacrifice that was for Mary! She had worked so hard to save the money for this and now in a moment of utter abandon, she pours it out upon Jesus! Let's be clear, Jesus did not demand this of Mary, or even ask this of her, rather, Mary made a decision to show Jesus her gratitude in this way. There's no way Mary could have known the full significance of what she had done or the timing, or exactly what was going to transpire over the coming days in which Jesus would actually lay down His very life for her, but somehow she may have been more perceptive than the disciples! Ray C. Stedman said this...

"It is interesting to go through the Gospel accounts and note the many times Jesus told His disciples that He was going to die. Over and over again He informed them that He was heading for death. Not one of them believed Him --except Mary of Bethany!

John had recounted Jesus' response as well as Mark...

John 12:7 "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.

While the sacrifice Mary gave to show her gratitude for all Jesus had done for her was powerful, it would pale in comparison to the sacrifice Jesus was going to make for her very soon. The writer of Hebrews says this about the extravagant love of Jesus...

Heb 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

Heb 9:28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second

time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Practical Application for Today - We should be willing to live sacrificially in our love for God and for others!

Mark 14:7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me.

You see, Jesus was not saying to ignore the plight of the poor! In fact He had spent much of His ministry teaching and showing the disciples the importance of caring for the poor. What He was saying was they would have ample opportunity to help them after He was gone. And of course, as we've already mentioned, Jesus knew Judas' heart and real motivation. Once again Ray Stedman has a powerful insight...

"There are always people who try to place a monetary value on things. They seem to know the price of everything but the value of nothing. In this account Jesus is warning us of the foolishness of that attitude, for if you look at the world only in terms of dollars and cents, you are going to miss three-quarters of life."

Paul put it this way...

Eph 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Eph 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children

Eph 5:2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Mary had made an offering and sacrifice that was powerfully symbolic of the fragrant offering and sacrifice Jesus was going to make not too many days later!

The Anatomy of Love is Insightful and Memorable

Mark 14:8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.

Mark 14:9 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."

Some of you here today might wonder what you could ever do for Jesus that would even begin to show your thanks and gratitude for all He has done for you. Let me ask you to do what Mary did! You might say, "that's not possible!" I would say, "yes it is!" She did what she could! Ask God to give you divine insight, by way of His Holy Spirit, to know how you could show your love and gratitude to God for His amazing grace, mercy, forgiveness and love!

Practical Application for Today - We may think because we're not in the spotlight, or serving in some big leadership position, then we're not really doing anything.

But let me tell you this, when it comes to the anatomy of love, if your heart is in the right place and you're doing what you can, God will be honored and blessed by the love you've shown and it will be memorable. He won't forget it!

Mat 25:40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Mark 9:41 I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.

Paul sums up our message today in a pretty good way...

Rom 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Rom 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Rom 12:11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Rom 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

What do love and hate have in common?

They are both all consuming!

What's your choice? Consumed by hate? Consumed by love?

Let's pray!