

The Poor Are Always with You **Mark 14:7**

“Poor” can mean several different things- one can be “poor” in *finances, social standing, or even spirit.*

Text: Mark 14:1-11

I. The Basics of the Story

v.1, Plans were already laid by the chief priests and scribes to kill Jesus.

v.2, But, care was being taken to do it *secretly* as to avoid the notice of the crowds, which could start a riot.

v.3a, Jesus was staying, or had at least stopped by temporarily, at the home of Simon *the* (surely *former*) leper. It is obvious that Lazarus, whom He had raised, and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were also there, cf. John 12:1 and John 11:1-5ff, 19. It had become His custom to stay with disciples and avoid public appearances among the Jews, John 11:53.

v.3b, While there with His friends, Mary (John 12:3) took a *pound* (Greek *litra* is equivalent of about 12 of our ounces) of *pure nard* (ointment derived from an east Indian plant- thus imported) and anointed Jesus with it. Note only was the ointment expensive, but presumably so also was the container in which it was kept- a sealed *alabaster* vial, which was likely sealed in such a way as required breaking to open it. Mary *anointed* Jesus’ head with it (John 12:3 adds His *feet*). *Anointing* was often done to mark a special occasion or purpose- as in the *anointing* of a king. But in this case, Jesus specified the reason, v.8b.

vv.4-5, Objections were made to this *gesture* saying that the vial and its contents could have been sold and the money given “*to the poor.*” Though “*they*” (Jesus’ disciples) all seemingly joined in with the rebuke, **Judas** appears to have led the charge, John 12:4ff. His motives were

obviously less than *pure* in regards to the *poor*, cf. John 12:6!

v.6, Jesus defended Mary, and at the same time *rebuked* His disciples generally, and Judas *specifically*, John 12:4-7; which evidently prompted him to carry out his betrayal plan, Matt.26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11.

v.7, In further explanation, Jesus proclaimed that the *poor* would always be present, and so also would additional opportunities to benefit them. But, and this **is** the real point, “*you do not always have Me.*” His time was drawing near, just “*six days before Passover,*” John 12:1.

v.8, Jesus affirms her action to be: *good*, v.6; *timely*, v.7; *commensurate*, v.8a; and *preparatory*, v.8b. All of these required both *understanding* and *compassion*- traits His disciples- and especially Judas, clearly still lacked.

v.9, “*Verily, verily*” or “*Truly*” is derived the Aramaic expression which sounds like, and is the equivalent of “*Amen, Amen*”- or *so let it be*. As a result of her *compassion* and *foresight*, Jesus said that her deed would thus be spoken of her as a memorial throughout the world...and it has been so ever since!

II. What Jesus is not teaching in Mark 14:7:

- A. That *the poor* are to be helped only when it is convenient-** the parable of the Good Samaritan clearly dispels this notion, Luke 10:25-37.
- B. That assisting *the poor* is at best a secondary consideration to spiritual service/worship-** such cannot be assessed from Acts 4:32-35; 24:17; Rom.15:25-27; Gal.2:10; Jas.2:5,15-17 → 1:26.
- C. Conversely, that *good works* such as *generously helping the poor* are the only real test of faith.** There are surely many *godlessly generous* people in the world. But Jesus’ words do not elevate the

alleviation of poverty above appropriate worship, cf. Mark 12:41-44.

III. What Jesus is teaching in Mark 14:7:

- A. That there is a time and place for all facets of our service to God, v.7 → v.1; that *first things* should come *first*, Matt.6:25-34.
- B. That there are multiple ways in which to serve, v.8; Mary did what **she** could do. See also Luke 10:38-42; and Rom.12:6-8.
- C. That the *lasting value* of service is that it remains as an important lesson to others, v.9; cf. John 13:12-17; Heb.11:4.

IV. Conclusions

The stark contrast of this story is between Mary and Judas:

- The *former* was *selfless, good, timely, commensurate, and looked ahead*.
- The *latter* was *selfish, evil, untimely* (sought only an occasion to perpetrate his evil), *disproportionate, and looked only presently*.

Which example will you follow?