



Since the end of October, we've been working our way through the gospel of Mark in a series called "Unreasonable God." God has been so gracious to us; He has gone beyond the norm, beyond what is fair, and He has given us Jesus. That's unreasonable! We don't deserve it! As our faith grows, Jesus calls us to unreasonable steps of obedience – things that don't make sense. These include steps that don't make sense to those closest to us. Those who know us best may look in confusion and ask, "*Why would you do that?*" That's a great setup for today's study, "Unreasonable Anointing."

Key Passage: Mark 14:3-9

Discussion Questions:

1. Why was Mary's anointing Jesus considered "unreasonable" by those around her?

It was deemed unreasonable because the ointment was extremely costly, and some believed it could have been better spent helping the poor. However, Mary's act of devotion was focused on honoring Jesus above all.

2. What do Mary's actions teach us about true humility and devotion?

Mary's actions teach us that true humility and devotion come from recognizing Jesus's worth and responding with wholehearted love and surrender. She didn't hold back in expressing her reverence and gratitude, even when others judged her actions as excessive. Her willingness to anoint Jesus with costly perfume and wipe His feet with her hair shows her deep awareness of who He is—her Savior and Lord—and her response is marked by selflessness, vulnerability, and a desire to honor Him above all else.

3. What does this passage suggest about the relationship between meeting physical needs and addressing spiritual needs?

Today's passage shows that while meeting physical needs is important, spiritual needs, particularly the priority of devotion to Jesus, must come first. Acts of faith should flow out of a heart transformed by the gospel.

4. Based on the sermon, how would you differentiate the social, incomplete, and true gospel as they were explained? How does the "social gospel" concept relate to the story of Mary and Judas?

Social gospel – "The most important thing we can do is care for a person's physical needs."

Incomplete gospel – "The only thing we care about is their eternal salvation."

True gospel – “The most important thing is a person’s eternal salvation, and because of what Jesus has done for us, we also meet the physical needs of people.”

The story contrasts Judas’s criticism, which focuses on outward, temporary needs (a social gospel), with Mary’s act, which prioritizes worship and devotion to Jesus as central to her faith.

5. What can we learn from the contrast between Mary’s heart and Judas’s heart?

Mary’s actions reflect genuine faith, love, and humility, while Judas demonstrates surface-level spirituality, hypocrisy, and self-interest. This reminds us to examine our hearts and prioritize authentic devotion to Jesus.

6. In what areas of our lives are we most at risk of letting our hearts reflect Judas’s attitude rather than Mary’s devotion? How can we cultivate a heart of worship in our daily lives?

Spend Time in Quiet Reflection: Regularly reflect on your experience of God’s grace, love, and sacrifice through times of prayer, scripture reading, and worship. A heart filled with gratitude is naturally drawn to humility.

Worship Sacrificially: Like Mary, we can prioritize giving our best to Jesus, whether our time, resources, or talents, rather than offering Him what’s convenient or leftover.

Walk in Obedience: Genuine devotion is expressed through actions that align with God’s will, even when it challenges us or invites criticism from others.

Embrace Vulnerability: Worshiping like Mary means letting go of pride and focusing solely on glorifying God without concern for how others perceive us.

Love Extravagantly: Serve and love others in a way that reflects Christ’s love, viewing it as an act of worship to Him.

7. How might your devotion to Jesus lead others to perceive your actions or beliefs as unreasonable?

Your devotion to Jesus might lead others to perceive your actions or beliefs as unreasonable when your choices prioritize your faith over what the world around you expects. These actions can include upholding biblical principles, such as forgiveness or generosity, when unexpected. People may also observe how you spend your time, money, or resources in service to the church and consider these priorities unreasonable. Trusting in God during trials or taking bold steps of faith based on conviction, even when outcomes are uncertain, may be hard for others to understand. Ultimately, devotion to Jesus involves living in a way that reflects His love and truth, which can challenge others' perspectives.