

Jesus: love him or loathe him?

discussion guide

based on **Mark 14.1-11** (Linked to sermon of 5/3/17)

which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/current-sermon-series

This was the first in a series called "24: Jesus' final hours" – going slowly through Mark 14-16 during Lent.

Intro: What's the most treasured possession you've ever had?

Someone read Mark 14.1-11. Keep quiet for a couple of minutes whilst everyone replays the scene in their minds. Someone else read Mark 14.1-11. Get everyone to share a word or phrase that stands out for them.

Jesus is calmly going about his ministry (v3), even whilst the religious leaders were plotting against him (v1-2). Jesus knew his end was imminent (see Mk 8.31, 9.31, 10.33-34). How do you think he managed to carry on his ministry in such circumstances? What are the implications for us when we're under pressure?

Jesus often hangs out with the social outcasts (v3). What stops us doing that more? How do you think Jesus managed to do that?

The woman pours her perfume over Jesus (v3) – prompting most people there to decry the waste (v4-5). Only Jesus describes it as a 'beautiful thing' (v6). If you'd been there, would you have seen it as a waste or a beautiful thing? Why?

Jesus says the woman was right not to sell the perfume and give the money to the poor. (If people are worried that Jesus was ignoring the needs of the poor, read Mark 10.17-22.) Mark hints at why it was appropriate to anoint him – because of who he was (the king - hence anointing his head), and what he was about to be do (offer his life sacrificially - hence anointing for his burial, v8). With this hindsight, do think the anointing was appropriate or not? Why?

Jesus commends the woman because "she did what she could" (v8). Jesus doesn't ask us to do things we can't. He asks us to do what we can with what we have.

Can you recall any times when Jesus has multiplied a gift you made (or someone else made) way beyond its original value – in other words, when someone has given what they could, and Jesus has multiplied it for his glory?

In what ways do we hold back from giving to Jesus what we have? Why?

Up: Ask God to help you give to him what he deserves from what you have.

In: Is there a spiritual discipline (eg prayer, generosity, silence, Bible reading, confession) that you want to develop during Lent? How could you help each other achieve this growth?

Out: How could you use the season of Lent to engage unbelievers with this or other gospel stories?

Pray: Pray that our hearts would be moved to extravagant worship. Pray that our new pattern of Sunday services will help us engage more deeply with God and each other.