

## **Mark 14:1–15:47**

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at a table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.

There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you

want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says,

Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.’” And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at a table and eating, Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, “Is it I?” He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”

And as they were eating, he took bread, and after

blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter said to him, “Even though they all fall away, I will not.” And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same.

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time and said to them, "Are

you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.” And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not

seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.” And they all left him and fled.

And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in

three days I will build another, not made with hands.’ ”

Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”<sup>7</sup> But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!” And the guards received him with blows.

And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the



servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.<sup>10</sup>

And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole

council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.” But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him

release for them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Here ends today’s Gospel.

Think about some of the kind things that others have done for you. Perhaps someone brought you a meal when you were sick or grieving. Perhaps someone allowed you to cut in front of them in line at the grocery store because you only had a few items. Perhaps someone sent you a bouquet of flowers “Just because”. Whatever it is, I am sure you remember it. Being kind is

easy when it involves being kind to someone you love. Being kind is only a tad more challenging when it is to a stranger that seems “worthy of your kindness”. For example, giving someone at Aldi’s your cart so they don’t have to pay a quarter.

But what about being kind to someone that you would rather just ignore? What about being kind to the homeless person on the street? Or the dirty, tattooed, scary looking colored man in the elevator? It might be a lot easier to look down and pretend you are alone than to smile and say “Good morning.”. Would you give your free Aldi cart to an obviously openly gay or transgender person? Or would you put it away, gather your quarter and walk away? What about giving money to the Salvation Army when your money is running low? It’s always easy to think that you need it more than some random person would.

The fact of the matter is, we have been denying Christ over and over for most of our lives. In a lot of ways, we are no better than Peter, who swore that he would never deny Jesus. He said, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” and yet, he did exactly as Jesus predicted. Peter denied knowing Jesus three times.

How are WE denying Jesus? We believe in Him, we pray to Him, we come to church.

But, we deny Jesus every time we deny the existence of someone else. When we deny people from other cultures or races, people from other orientations, people from other classes and economic status, people who look scary, people who think differently than us, people who are easier to ignore than to accept and be kind to. Yet, for those we love, we will often act like Mary Magdalene and give far more than we need to in order

to show our love.

In today's gospel, Mary Magdalene is using very expensive ointment on Jesus while others complained, saying "Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

We could use more people like this. Compassion is the universal solution to a lot of the world's problems. Let's

remember to be compassionate. We don't always know where someone is at or the battle they are facing.

Mary is the quintessential example of showering someone that you love with lavish gifts of love. And, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. But, now that Jesus is no longer on Earth, He wants us to treat others the way we would treat Him if He were here. And when we don't, we are denying Him and are no better than Peter, who promised that He would stick by Jesus, no matter what.

Jesus has accepted His purpose. He will die soon, but He left us with explicit instructions to Love God wholeheartedly and love your neighbor as yourself. And if you don't particularly like or love yourself, then remember that He said, "Love your enemies." And those enemies come in all different forms. 1 John 4:7-8 States,

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

Perhaps some of you saw the commercial during the Super Bowl by the organization called, He Gets Us. It was about people washing other people’s feet. There was a lot of controversy over the commercial, with people saying things like, “They could have used all the money needed to make that commercial to help people instead of making a stupid commercial.”

From the website of He Gets Us, they explain the commercial choice: “When we were exploring creative ideas, we recalled the story of Jesus washing his disciples’ feet and realized this was the perfect example of how we should treat one another, even those people with whom we don’t see eye to eye. Jesus had washed



Peter's feet, a loyal friend who would publicly deny that he knew Jesus later that very night. And even more astoundingly, Jesus washed Judas Iscariot's feet, the one who would betray him for 30 pieces of silver. Jesus was using foot washing to emphasize a larger point — a symbol for all of his followers to see how they should treat one another. It was these words and actions of Jesus that inspired us. We began to imagine a world where ideological others were willing to set their differences aside and wash one another's feet. How would that look? How would our contentious world change if we washed one another's feet, not literally, but figuratively? Figurative foot washing can be as simple as giving a compliment to a co-worker or paying for a stranger's lunch. It can also be as difficult as not responding to someone who's criticizing you or reaching out to an estranged family member. Acts of kindness done out of humility and respect for another person could be

considered the equivalent of foot washing.

Honestly, images of people washing each other's feet look a little strange and disconcerting because it's not part of our modern-day customs. But there's also something beautiful and profound in each image. Our hope is that our latest commercials will stimulate both societal discussion and individual self-reflection about "who is my neighbor?" and how each of us can love our neighbor even as we have differences and serve one another with more kindness and respect."

**STOP! I will play the commercial**

Let us pray: Jesus, we acknowledge that we deny you when we are not willing to "wash the feet" of others that we don't agree with. It is easy for us to be like Mary Magdeline when in essence, we are more like Peter. Please

help us to open our hearts to all the people around us  
whose existence we deny. In your name we pray, Amen.