WEDNESDAY

Jesus had been described as a glutton and a drunkard. (Matt: 11:19, Luke 7:34) He enjoyed a good meal with friends and this would be His final evening as a free man.

He was often criticised for consorting with people on the edge of society. On this occasion He accepted an invitation to the home of “Simon the Leper” in Bethany. To share a meal with someone was to show them acceptance. Leprosy was a skin disease and because it was believed to be highly contagious it meant that those suffering from it were excluded from society.

To touch someone with leprosy rendered them unclean too, which meant of course that they could not go near the Temple until they had gone through a purification process. Jesus was clearly uninhibited by this and accepted the invitation. He wasn’t going to the temple again in any case!

To make matters even worse a woman arrived and poured expensive perfume over Jesus’ head. *(Mark Chapter 14 records this story on the Wednesday evening. The other Gospels have similar accounts, but not necessarily on this occasion).*

The woman’s actions appeared scandalous – mainly because she was a woman and should have known her place! Also, her actions appeared from some accounts, to be sexually provocative. However, the witnesses on this occasion focussed their complaint on what they regarded as a waste of money which “could have been given to the poor”.

Jesus, accepted it as an act of devotion before His death, even though she would not have understood that herself. The sincerity of someone’s worship is far removed from the dullness of ritual and social convention and reflects their gratitude for God’s love and forgiveness. At this extreme time in His earthly life Jesus welcomed extravagant ministry from a sinner.

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During this day the “Holy People” were in deep discussion as to how they could solve their problems, by secretly capturing Jesus and putting Him to death. Although they had some authority, they were deeply insecure. This compelling preacher carried an authority they could not contain and their very position was under threat. In their eyes He had to be got rid of. They needed an opportunity.

However, they did not want to upset the Romans whose power over them was greater. They had much to lose. They did not want to upset the crowds either because they were on Jesus’ side. The coming Passover weekend, with thousands of pilgrims in the city, was not the time for them to move. They planned to do it after it was all over and most of the pilgrims had gone home.

Little did they know that their opportunity was going to come much sooner.

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Some time that day (perhaps it was while Jesus was eating with “sinners” in Bethany) one of His disciples approached the religious leaders and offered to sell his master to the devil.

Tonight would be the last when Jesus would lie down to sleep.

A question for your reflection: Does your worship reflect gratitude to God or is it simply a “ritual”. What kind of religious devotion offends you?