



## Sermon Transcript

### March 25, 2018

## Gospel of Mark: The Good News of Jesus

### Under the Shadow of the Cross

### Mark 14:1-25

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on March 25, 2018 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio version of this sermon can be found on the church website at [www.wethefc.com](http://www.wethefc.com).

## Sermon Text

### Mark 14:1-25

<sup>1</sup> 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, <sup>2</sup> for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

<sup>3</sup> And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at 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. <sup>4</sup> There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? <sup>5</sup> For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. <sup>6</sup> But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. <sup>9</sup> 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.”

<sup>10</sup> Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. <sup>11</sup> And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

<sup>12</sup> 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?” <sup>13</sup> 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, <sup>14</sup> 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?’ <sup>15</sup> And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.” <sup>16</sup> And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

<sup>17</sup> And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. <sup>18</sup> And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” <sup>19</sup> They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, “Is it I?” <sup>20</sup> He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. <sup>21</sup> 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.”

<sup>22</sup> 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.” <sup>23</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. <sup>24</sup> And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. <sup>25</sup> 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.”

## Introduction

It is possible to come to a passage like this and move quickly from scene to scene and from one event to the other. It can seem at times that Mark is just chronicling for us the events that unfold that lead us to the cross. In fact, when we come back here on Good Friday, we are going to pick up with where we leave off this morning and we are going to walk through those events that land us at the cross. We will start with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, witness his betrayal, listen in on his mock trial before the religious council, hear Peter deny Jesus, see Jesus stand before Pilate, hear the people cry “*Crucify him!*” . . . And then we will watch the scene unfold where Jesus will be crucified between two thieves, and we will hear him cry out, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” We will end on Friday night with him being placed into a tomb. It all moves rather quickly, from one event to the other, especially in the Gospel of Mark.

Our passage this morning sets those events into motion. From the activity of our passage this morning it seems like things start happening fast and it accelerates us to the moment of the cross. Mark 14 begins by telling us that the religious leaders were doubling down their efforts to arrest Jesus and their intention was clear. They wanted to kill him. Clearly, they are losing control of this situation. The crowds were quite enamored with Jesus, as was witnessed when he rode into the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. What the crowds were saying about Jesus that day indicated their belief that he was Israel’s hope, the promised Messiah. Then Jesus went into the Temple and he disrupted everything, turning over the tables of the money changers. On the next day, when Jesus was confronted about this by the religious leaders, through the parable of the tenants and the vineyard, he pronounced judgment upon them. They got what he was saying. It says in Mark 12:12, “*for they perceived that he had told the parable against them.*” They wanted to get rid of him and kill him, but they didn’t know how to do it. It says in Mark 14:1 that they “*were seeking how to arrest him in stealth and kill him.*” They needed to figure out a way to get to Jesus without causing a scene.

And along came Judas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. I’m not sure what prompted

him, but Judas went to the religious leaders and for a sum of money he agreed to quietly hand Jesus over to them. It couldn't have worked out any better for the religious leaders. And so, Judas betrayed Jesus. I wonder what Judas thought when Jesus revealed to the disciples in the Upper Room that one of them was going to betray him. How did Jesus know? He even knew that it was Judas who was plotting against him. But once this happens, things move quickly and the next thing you know, we are standing at the cross.

It is possible to come to this section of the Gospel of Mark and to be swept up in the current of the events that are happening as we are carried along from one event to the other. But I don't want to do that this morning. Nor do I think it is Mark's intention to just chronicle the events that lead us to the cross. Instead, what I notice about this passage is that the cross casts its shadow over the events of this passage. In other words, these events don't just lead us to the cross. It is not as if the cross is one of many events strewn together. Rather, the cross is the event that hovers over all of these events. The shadow of the cross shows up in Mark 14. The events of our passage this morning are told with the cross as the focal point that explains these events.

A. B. Simpson was the founder of the Christian Missionary Alliance denomination. It is a sister denomination to the Free Church. Their college is Nyack College. He lived from 1844-1919 and he was rather prolific author, writing over 100 books. He wrote a sermon titled "Under the Shadow of the Cross." I was struck by this illustration he gave in the sermon. He said that in medieval times at the center of the market square of every town the people would erect a cross. Now mind you, this is at the center of the market place, the place where business was conducted. We are not talking about a cross on the top of a steeple of a church. That we get. Rather, it was a cross that occupied the hub of everyday life and action. This became known as "the Market Cross." Some of your older European towns still have what is called "the Market Cross." The only difference is that there no longer is the symbol of the cross. Rather it is a monument of some kind, marking the town center. But back then, it was a symbol of the cross. I love what Simpson said about that. He said, "The simple beautiful idea was that the cross should dominate all the business of earthly life, all the transactions, interests and concerns should ever be under the shadow of the cross."<sup>1</sup> The cross shaped their business.

That is what I want for us as we come to Mark 14 this morning. I want to look at the events of this passage under "the shadow of the cross." But more importantly, I want us to take some time this morning to consider what it looks like for us to live life "under the shadow of the cross." In other words, the cross is not just a symbol relegated to the church. Rather, it should cast its shadow over all of life. Nor is the cross something that

only applies to our salvation. When Paul gives us the kernel of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3 he says, “*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scripture.*” So yes, the cross is the place where atonement is made for our sin. We talk about the need to come to the cross by repenting of your sin and turning in faith to Jesus. But once you do that, you don’t get up from the cross and leave it. Rather, it is like your shadow on a nice sunny day. It follows you wherever you go. We live our faith under the shadow of the cross and it makes us into cross-shaped people. The cross shapes our lives.

From Mark 14:1-25, I want to point out three ways the cross shapes our lives. I will give them to you up front and then we will look at them. First of all, the cross forms within us a humble devotion to God. It fuels our worship. Secondly, the cross brings healing to our pain. And finally, the cross fills us with hope for this life and the next. Whatever you do, stay under the shadow of the cross.

## **Humble Devotion**

The first thing I want you to see about living life under the shadow of the cross unfolds for us in the home of a man by the name of “Simon the leper.” We don’t know his story, but can only assume that he was healed of leprosy by Jesus. His home is located in Bethany, about 1.5 miles east of Jerusalem. While Jesus was reclining at the table of Simon’s home, we are told in verse 3 that “*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.*” We know from John 12:1-8 who this woman happens to be. This is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. They too are from Bethany and of course John tells us of that rather dramatic miracle when Jesus called Lazarus forth from the grave. In fact, Kent Hughes wonders if Lazarus wasn’t the topic of conversation as they reclined around the table. “Lazarus, what was it like on the other side? What is it like to come back to life?”<sup>2</sup>

While we don’t know what they were talking about as they reclined around the table, what we do know is what Mary did as an act of love and devotion for Jesus. She anointed Jesus with “*an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard.*” It was a strong perfume that had a very pleasant smell to it. It was very expensive and it most likely was a family heirloom that was passed down from generation to generation, from mother to daughter.<sup>3</sup> In other words, it was a most valuable and treasured possession. She took this most treasured possession and snapped it open and poured it out on Jesus.

What was going through her mind when she did this? We are not exactly sure. Some

actually think that she is the only follower of Jesus who comprehended the cross. Whether that is true or not, do you notice how Jesus casts that shadow of the cross on what she did. He said of her action, *"she has anointed my body beforehand for burial."* In other words, Jesus explains her action in the context of the cross. The shadow of the cross looms over this event and defines it for us. Jesus goes on to say in verse 9 that *"wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."* And here we are talking about her. And Kent Hughes says that the point of this story under the shadow of the cross is that "she was a demonstration of what happens in a life touched by the Savior of love."<sup>4</sup> This is what happens when your life is lived under the shadow of the cross. What happens?

When you live life under the shadow of the cross, it produces a humble devotion to Jesus. Life under the cross leads to a life of worship. I love what Jesus says about Mary in verse 6, *"She has done a beautiful thing to me."* What was that beautiful thing she did? Out of love for Jesus, she took what she had and gave it to Jesus. It was extravagant and she really didn't care what others thought of her. Some in the room scolded her for "wasting" this perfume and not selling it for the poor. But Jesus welcomed her act of devotion. He says it this way in verse 8, *"She has done what she could."* I love that. She did what she could with what she had and she gave it to Jesus. That is what living under the shadow of the cross does to us. It leads us to a life of humble devotion. The cross leads us to worship Jesus and to serve him with what we have been given.

I can say to you this morning, "You need to worship God." It is the key to life. I can say to you that Jesus needs to occupy the throne of your heart and he needs to come first before anything else. After all, it is the first commandment. We are to have no other gods before us. We are to *seek first the kingdom of God*. I can remind you to worship God with the use of your time and your money and your service. I can hold this picture of Mary up to you and challenge you to do what you can do with what you have to serve God. But if I don't encourage you to do these things under the shadow of the cross they are just acts of religion, often done out of guilt. The beautiful thing to Jesus was that these things were done out of a love Mary had for Jesus. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13 said that you can sacrifice everything you have but if you don't have love it doesn't mean anything. That is what living under the shadow of the cross does. It produces the love that leads to our worship of Jesus and our acts of devotion.

Living under the shadow of the cross reminds us of two things. First of all, it reminds us of God's incredible love for us. He died for us! He took upon himself our sin when he died on the cross. When someone extends an act of kindness to you, it causes you to

want to be kind to them in return. How much more so with Jesus? And secondly, there is this sense that we are not worthy of such love. That is why we call it grace. John Piper heard someone say one time, “Jesus didn’t die for frogs.” This man’s point was that he died for us because we are of more value. And so Piper said, “This turns grace on its head. We are worse off than frogs. They didn’t sin. They didn’t rebel and treat God with the contempt of being inconsequential in their lives. God didn’t have to die for frogs. They aren’t bad enough. We are. Our debt is so great, only a divine sacrifice could pay it.”<sup>5</sup> And yet, for the likes of you and me, Jesus died.

It is under the shadow of the cross where I find the shade of God’s love. I know I don’t deserve it. I know I didn’t earn it. I know if I got what I deserved it would be of the stuff we talked about last week when we saw the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. And yet, on the cross he tells me of his love for me. When I keep my eyes on the cross and live in its shadow, it makes me want to take all that I have been given and use it for him. The cross is the fuel for our worship. When out of love we do what we can with what we are given, Jesus says that it is “*a beautiful thing*” to him. Don’t take your eyes off of the cross. It is one reason I encourage you to come on Good Friday. It is good to come under shadow of the cross. It will give fuel to your worship on Sunday.

## **Healing our Pain**

The scene shifts rather quickly from the devout faith of Mary to the betrayer Judas. In verses 10-11 we learn that Judas met privately with the religious leaders to work out an agreement as to how Judas would hand Jesus over to them. Then we see Jesus making preparations for he and the disciples to celebrate the Passover somewhere in the city of Jerusalem. It is while they are celebrating Passover that Jesus announces to his disciples in verse 18 that one of them was about to betray him. He said, “*Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.*” Obviously, everyone is taken back by this revelation and they want to know who it is. Jesus discreetly singles Judas out, by saying, “*It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me.*” Though they were at the part of the Passover meal when they would all dip the bread and the bitter herbs in the bowl of stewed fruit. The bitter herbs are a reminder of the bitter suffering the people of Israel endured in Egypt. It is a good time to announce a betrayal.

What is fascinating about this statement that the betrayer is eating bread with Jesus is that it is taken out of Psalm 41. It is a psalm of David that laments having been betrayed by a close friend. The close friend who had betrayed David was Ahithophel, who sided with David’s son, Absalom, when he tried to take the kingdom away from David. In

fact, David's former friend and advisor was advising Absalom to pursue David and overtake him. But Absalom did not listen to this advice and it led to his own demise. But David couched this painful betrayal this way in Psalm 41:9, "*Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.*" So Jesus is saying, "There is an Ahithophel among us, one who is actually eating bread here, who acts as if he is a friend, but really is a traitor."<sup>6</sup> Sometimes I think we can read about the betrayal of Jesus and not capture the pain and the hurt of it. But by linking it to the cry of David in Psalm 41, you taste some of the pain that came with this betrayal.

This kind of pain and evil and suffering is all too familiar to us. It is a window into the world in which we live. There is a lot of pain in this room this room right now. A large majority of that pain we endure in this world can't be adequately explained. You may be wondering, "Why am I suffering what I am suffering?" No adequate answer can be given. That is the way the Bible handles these issues as well. Our understanding of the origin of evil will only take us so far. Instead, Piper says, "the heart of the Bible is . . . a demonstration of how God enters into the evil of this world and turns it for the very opposite—everlasting righteousness and joy."<sup>7</sup> It is only under the shadow of the cross that we are able to take our pain and find real and true healing.

If you think about it, there was no greater suffering nor any greater innocence than the suffering and innocence of Christ. Yet, clearly, God was in it. Isaiah 53:10 says, "*It was the Lord's will to crush him.*" But in the very same chapter of Isaiah, the prophet says, "*with his stripes we are healed.*" The irony is that through the evil of the betrayal and all the evils associated with the cross, Jesus was defeating evil. That is why David can say with confidence even in Psalm 41:10, "*But you, O LORD, be gracious to me and raise me up.*" God overcomes evil. And so when Jesus says to Judas, "*woe to the man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for that man if he had not been born*" he is not just pronouncing judgment. Rather, he is telling Judas that this act of betrayal will not defeat him. Rather, Jesus will be vindicated and through his death he will conquer evil and sin. Jesus is placing the betrayal under the shadow of the cross. The best remedy for pain is to sit under the shadow of the cross and to know that it is temporary.

I came across a new song by Andrew Peterson called, "Is He Worthy?" It is taken out of Revelation 5. Listen to these moving words.

Do you feel the world is broken? We do!

Do you feel the shadows deepen? We do!

Do you know that all the dark won't stop the light from getting through? We do!

Do you wish we could see it all made new? We do!



Is all creation groaning? It is!  
Is a new creation coming? It is!  
Is the glory of the Lord to be the light within our midst? It is!  
Is it good that we remind ourselves of this? It is!

Is anyone worthy? Is anyone holy? Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll? The Lion of Judah, he conquered the grave! He is David's root and the Lamb who died to ransom the slave. Is he worthy? Is he worthy of all blessing and glory and honor? Is he worthy of this? He is!<sup>8</sup>

This is the power of living under the shadow of the cross. It allows us to find a category for our pain. It gives us strength to endure. At the same time, we know that there is ultimate healing in Jesus. He secured it at the cross. Sit under the shadow of the cross.

## Hope in Life and Death

Our final scene leaves us sitting in the Upper Room as Jesus and his disciples celebrate the Passover meal. This is the meal that commemorates when God delivered Israel from bondage slavery in Egypt. They recalled how the angel of death “passed over” the homes that had applied the blood of the lamb on the doorposts, sparing the first born son of each house. So through this meal, they remember what God had done. But during this meal, Jesus drapes the shadow of the cross over this event and he points us to himself—to his body and his blood. Here he institutes for us what we know to be communion.

In verse 22, we hear those familiar words, “*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.”*” This probably took place at the beginning of the Passover meal. The head of the family would stand up and take a cake of unleavened bread and he would pray this blessings, “Praise be Thou, O Lord, Sovereign of the world, who causes bread to come forth from the earth.” And then everyone would say, “Amen.” Then the head of the home would break the bread and pass a piece to all the guests and it would normally be done in silence. But at this point, Jesus most likely broke the silence and said, “*Take, this is my body.*”

That is a profound statement that puts this meal under the shadow of the cross. In other words, what just happened to this bread will happen to Jesus. David Garland says, “What is significant is that Jesus uses an article of food so simple and so universal that the disciples can never again recline at a meal, take bread, bless it, and break it without thinking of the last night they were together with their Lord.”<sup>9</sup> The bread reminds us

what Jesus did for us in his body. He came in body. He died in body. He rose in body. He is coming back in body. He did this for our benefit.

Then came the cup. During the Passover celebration, four cups of wine were used to rehearse what God had done for the people of Israel. Each cup has a meaning and the meaning is taken from Exodus 6:6-7. Here God promises four things to Israel: "I will bring you out . . . I rid you of your bondage . . . I will redeem you . . . I will take you for my people and I will be your God."<sup>10</sup> It was when they took the third cup, the cup of redemption that Jesus cast the shadow of the cross upon the cup. He said, "*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.*" In other words, through the blood of Jesus the promise of God to redeem you from your sin is secured.

Do you know what it means to live under the shadow of the cross? It means to accept what God says when he says to you, "I forgive you." When we get out from underneath the shadow of the cross, one of two things can happen. We can become so full of ourselves that we fail to see our own sin. When that happens we are good at picking out the sin of others and judging others. That is not good. Or, the opposite can happen. We are so plagued with guilt that we can never find rest. The remedy for these things is to come under the shadow of the cross. Andrew Peterson said that the beauty of observing communion on a weekly basis is that each week he gets to open his hands and receive the words, "Andrew, this is the body of Christ, broken for you." I love what he says, "Every week, my wayward hungry soul is confronted by the love of Jesus. Like clockwork."<sup>11</sup> How often our wayward souls need reminded of the promise of Jesus.

It is interesting, Jesus concludes by saying in verse 25, "*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.*" Jesus did not drink that fourth cup of the Passover meal, the cup that rehearses the promise, "I will take you for my people and I will be your God." That cup will be shared with Jesus when we are together for eternity. A life shaped by the cross is a life filled with hope. It is a hope that finds rest for the soul in this life and the next. It is secure because the blood of Jesus has sealed the promise of God for the repentant.

Andrew Peterson continues in his song:

Does the Father truly love us? He does!  
Does the Spirit move among us? He does!  
And does Jesus our Messiah hold forever those he loves? He does!  
Does our God intend to dwell again with us? He does!

Is anyone worthy? Is anyone holy? Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll? The Lion of Judah, he conquered the grave! He is David's root and the Lamb who died to ransom the slave. From every people and tribe—every nation and tongue—he has made us a kingdom of priests to God who reign with the Son. Is he worthy? Is he worthy of all blessing and glory and honor? Is he worthy of this? He is!

## Conclusion

May the “Market Square” of your heart cast the shadow of the cross over your life. What a great week to erect the shadow of the cross in your life. Stay under the shadow of the cross. If you stay under the shadow of the cross, it will shape your life. How so?

It will lead you to humble devotion and a life of worship as you respond to God's love for you.

It will heal your pain because at the cross evil is vanquished.

It will fill you with hope as your wayward soul is reminded time and time again that in Jesus there is forgiveness of sin. The shadow of the cross reminds us that God deeply loves us. Amen! And Amen!

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<sup>1</sup>A. B. Simpson “Under the Shadow of the Cross” [www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com)

<sup>2</sup>Kent Hughes *Mark Vol. 2* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1989) 146

<sup>3</sup>William Lane *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 492

<sup>4</sup>Hughes, 150

<sup>5</sup>John Piper *The Passion of Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004) 29

<sup>6</sup>Hughes, 156

<sup>7</sup>Piper, 118

<sup>8</sup>Andrew Peterson song “Is He Worthy?” Album: Resurrection Letters: Prologue

<sup>9</sup>David Garland *Mark: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 526

<sup>10</sup>Lane, 508

<sup>11</sup>Andrew Peterson “Andrew Peterson’s New Song for the People” [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org)  
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## COMMUNITY GROUPS



### Getting To Know Me Questions

1. What was Easter like in your home growing up? What traditions do you currently observe for Easter?
2. Why do you think sharing a meal together is a powerful thing? What impact does the dinner table have on families? Why is hospitality an important Christian virtue? Why did Jesus institute a meal for us to observe? Reflect on these things.
3. What do you think it means to “live under the shadow of the cross”?



### Diving Into The Word

4. Read Mark 14:1-9. What do you make of Mary’s act of devotion and worship in this passage? After sharing your observations, reflect on the two things Jesus said about “Mary.” “She has done a beautiful thing to me” and “She has done what she could.”
5. Read Mark 14:10-11 and 17-21. Contemplate the pain of betrayal (cf. Psalm 41:8-10) Where can we find God in our own pain and hurt? (Genesis 50:19-20; Acts 4:27-28) How does the cross bring healing to our pain? (Revelation 5:9-10)
6. Read Mark 14:22. Why do you think Jesus chose bread to cause us to remember his body? What do you see when you hold communion bread in your hand? (Philippians 2:6-11)
7. Read Mark 14:23-25. Why does Jesus call the cup, “the blood of the covenant”? What promise does Jesus make to us through the cross? Do you wrestle more with self-righteousness or with being able to forgive yourself? How does the cup help?



### Taking It Home

8. Close with prayers of worship and singing. If you would like to use the song referred to in the sermon you can play it by logging onto -  
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/andrew-peterson-resurrection-letters/>