

The Impact of One Person

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By Lenny Cacchio

LEE'S SUMMIT, Mo.—At first glance, an event recorded in John 12 and an event recorded in Mark 14 appear to be the same event. A deeper reading, however, reveals some striking differences.

In John 12:1-8, the event takes place six days before Passover. In Mark 14:1-9, it happens two days before the Passover.

John 12 takes place in Lazarus's house. Mark 14 occurs in the house of Simon the Leper.

In John 12, the woman anoints Jesus' feet. In Mark 14, Mary pours the ointment over His head.

In John 12, only Judas complains about the wasting of a valuable commodity. In Mark 14, many of the disciples complain.

These differences could indicate one of two things. Either John contradicts the accounts given by Mark and Matthew (Matthew 26), or these are two different events that occur only a few days apart.

A historic week

If these are two separate events, they illustrate the impact one person can have on the attitude of the whole. These two events take place during the week before Jesus' death and resurrection.

Among the disciples, tension is high as messianic expectations are filling Jerusalem, and Jesus seems to be right in the middle of them.

In both Mark and John, Jesus bursts the messianic bubble by talking about His own burial rather than a triumphant entry into Jerusalem and driving out the occupying Romans.

By this time, Judas (wrapped in the roots of bitterness and in the grasp of greed) blusters out the accusatory question: "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages!" (John 12:5).

Now, fast-forward four days to Mark's account. The woman anoints Jesus, and notice in verse 4 who it is who complains about the "waste."

Mark 14:4-5—“Some of those present were saying, ‘Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.’ And they rebuked her harshly.”

So in John, six days before the Passover, only Judas complained.

In Mark, four days later, many of them complained.

Powerful impact

Do we see how the attitude and actions of one can influence the attitude of many?

We might not always recognize that our attitudes can negatively impact the thinking of others. If we spend our time griping and complaining, or we invent scandals in an attempt to get our own way, we very well could create disenchantment among our peers.

This might score us the political points we wish to score, but in the process of sowing discord we can hamper or destroy group cohesion, and that bitterness can spread throughout the body.

Your words and actions will have an impact, for good or for ill. For Judas the root of bitterness was strong. It had the potential to destroy the loyalty of the other disciples.

Contrasting history

Mark tells us that, immediately after Jesus’ rebuke of the disciples, Judas went to the authorities, promising them that he would find an opportunity to betray Jesus. His bitterness became his own destruction, and his reputation has been tarnished forever.

For the others, they all came to see Judas for what he was. They changed their attitudes and went on to turn the world upside down.