

Break the Jar

South Jersey Small Group Guide

Warm-Up Questions

1. What is something you owned at some point in your life that felt too valuable or too special to actually use?
2. Think of a time you did something generous or sacrificial that someone else didn't quite understand. What was that like?

Key Passage: Mark 14:1-11

Recap

In Mark 13, Jesus sits down with his disciples on the Mount of Olives and does something unexpected — instead of giving them a timetable, he prepares them. The disciples have just heard Jesus say that the magnificent Temple they're looking at will be completely demolished, not one stone left on another. They want to know when and what to watch for. What follows is one of the most debated passages in the Bible, but at its heart it is a deeply pastoral word: don't be deceived, don't be surprised by the cost of following Jesus, and above all — stay awake.

Much of what Jesus describes was fulfilled in 70 AD when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple to the ground — a catastrophic event that Jesus warned his followers to flee from, and which many of them did. But the passage also points forward, to the end of all things, when the Son of Man returns with power and glory to gather his people. In the meantime, Jesus leaves his disciples — and us — with a single, urgent command: Watch. Not with anxiety or obsession, but with the quiet faithfulness of a doorkeeper who has decided that when the master returns, he will be found at his post. The question this passage presses on all of us is simple and uncomfortable: are we awake?

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. When you heard the description of what this woman did — breaking open a jar worth a year's wages and pouring it all out — what was your gut reaction? Did any part of you relate more to the disciples' objection than to her act?
2. The sermon described how we often edit ourselves before coming to Jesus — not hiding things on purpose, but quietly managing certain areas on our own. Are there areas of your life that tend to stay off the table in your relationship with God?
3. Simon is identified in other translations as Simon the Leper — a name that stuck long after his healing. Have you ever carried a name or an identity from your past that felt harder to shake than the thing itself? What was that like?

4. The disciples' objection to what the woman did was genuinely reasonable. Is there an area of your life where "being responsible" or "being wise" might actually be functioning as a reason to keep something sealed from Jesus?
5. The sermon made the point that sometimes the people closest to the scriptures are the most protected from what the scriptures ask of them. Do you think familiarity with church or the Bible can ever become its own kind of sealed jar? How have you seen that in your own life?
6. The woman broke the jar in a room full of people who immediately shamed her for it. Has there ever been a moment where you took a step of vulnerability or surrender — with God or with others — and were met with criticism instead of support? How did that affect you?
7. Judas had a jar too — a vision of who Jesus was supposed to be. When Jesus didn't fit that vision, he walked away. Have you ever been disappointed by Jesus in a way that caused you to pull back? Is that something you've ever fully brought to Him?
8. Jesus stepped in front of her and said "leave her alone" — directly pushing back against every voice that was shaming her. What would it mean for you personally to let that be the loudest voice in the room this week?

Pray