

**SCRIPTURE** (Mark 14:1-2) "The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, 'Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.'

### **REFLECTIONS FROM A CHIEF PRIEST**

I am sick at heart about this. I simply cannot understand why these prophets don't go off into the desert to pray or, at least, have the decency to stay in their own villages. I can't understand why they keep putting us in this horrible situation. Our concern has to be for the majority, for the good of the whole. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation. Our concern has to be finding a way to keep these uneducated folk safe, not only from Rome, but from themselves. They don't know what is best – how can they? They don't have the wisdom that comes from years of study.

But I am sick about this. And angry – I am furious! Why should I, a person of honor and integrity, need to resort to underhanded means to stop this insanity? We must appease Rome or everyone will suffer. Why is he forcing us to do this? Why can't he leave well enough alone? He will break this fragile peace just as he has broken my heart. But, there is no choice, this uprising must be broken before we lose everything.

**SCRIPTURE** (Mark 14:3) "While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, . . . "

### **REFLECTIONS FROM SIMON THE LEPER**

I can't believe this is happening, my heart is racing; I feel sick with excitement, and (God hear me!) with hope. I know I am unclean. People turn their heads away from me; they don't even look me in the face any more, they are so afraid.

I live in shame, day after day, nothing but shame...I thought I would live in shame all my life. Now this.

This man sits down beside me and touches me. He accepts my food. He doesn't act as if I am unclean, as if I am worthless, as if I am riddled with unrighteousness. He sits here beside me – beside *me* -- sharing his presence, including me in his circle of friends. He sits here as if I belong with him, as if I have a place, as if I can break out of my loneliness and (Oh, God, hear me!) as if I will be welcome again at other tables in other houses.

**SCRIPTURE** (Mark 14:3) [A]s he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head.

### **REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIRST BELIEVER**

Don't these men ever listen? Haven't they heard him?

I heard. I didn't want to; what he keeps saying makes me sick with fear. And sick with grief. I feel like my heart broke with the jar...and the smell of the nard is making me sick with all the memories of loss. The ones in the past and the one he keeps telling us is coming.

Don't these men ever listen? What do they think? That he is going to defeat Rome and rule in its place. They are little boys with their sticks and stones. What is one man against the whole empire? Who are we against the whole empire?

We have listened, we women – that's what women do best, after all. I wonder if he ever thought he could defeat the Romans. I wonder if he ever intended to. I don't know any more... and I don't care. I can only do what we women always do at times like this: I can only love him as hard as I can and say good-bye and, then, go on, one foot in front of the other, carrying the memories and the love to the end of my days.

**SCRIPTURE** (Mark 14:4-5) But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.' And they scolded her.

### **REFLECTIONS FROM A DISCIPLE**

What is this woman playing at? Hasn't she been listening to the Teacher? He tells us to sell everything and give to the poor. And so we did that. And, now, we have been wandering the roads for months, always sharing the scraps we have, always hungry, every day feeling the shame of asking for hand-outs. Half the time we are asked to share bread with gentiles and the lowest of the low. One more day of gnawing in my belly because I can't eat here; I just can't! This house is unclean, our host is unclean. I am sick with hunger and this woman spends her money on spices and ointment?

No one can eat spices and ointment. And how did she hide this money from us all? Why wasn't she offering it to the poor? Why did we have to go begging and hungry when she could have provided for us? It makes me sick that I did everything he told me to and she didn't...and he hasn't told her how wrong she is. If he won't do it, I will have to tell her how wrong she is....

**SCRIPTURE** (Mark 14:6-9) But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.'

### **REFLECTIONS FROM A DISCIPLE**

I don't care what he says: it makes me sick to watch these women touching him. It is very, very troubling that he allows them such liberties. He is not only a rabbi, he is the Messiah – have these women no shame?

Well, he will not be able to do that when he comes to power. The people simply won't take him seriously—they won't follow him—if he continues to act that way.

And I don't understand why he keeps talking about dying...as if it is going to happen soon. I don't think he realizes how much he is upsetting us. We are following him because he will destroy the Romans, those scum who have oppressed us and our children, but he seems to be offending the very people we may need to support us when we take over. Instead, he keeps consorting with outcasts (like our host) and women like this one.

And what does he mean that people will remember *her*? When he takes over people will forget everything but him and how powerful he is.