

More About Jesus, Week 22: Jesus accepted worship and service (Mark 14:1-8) by Paul Hammons

When we talk about Jesus in modern religious culture, the emphasis is often placed on “Jesus the Servant.” Rightly so. It is one of the central points of Jesus’ character, and the gospels constantly draw our attention to it.

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” - Mark 10:45 (ESV).

Jesus is shown throughout the gospels as humble, meek - willing to wash his apostles’ feet to show them what humility and service look like in action. His approach inspired a popular term in religious circles: “servant-leader,” which is intended to describe the proper way that men should lead in the church today.

In many cases, that idea is distorted to the point that “leadership” looks like “doing what others direct you to do.” Leadership is increasingly seen as separate from any type of authority.

In Mark 14, we read the story of Jesus, a few days before his death, staying in the house of Simon the leper. And as he sat at table, a woman (John’s account tells us it was Mary, the sister of Martha) anointed him with expensive ointment - expensive enough to pay almost a year’s wages.

The disciples’ response was outrage and indignation, and Mark tells us that they scolded her for this action. But Jesus, the humble servant, responded differently:

But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 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. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. 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.” - Mark 14:3–9.

Mary’s focus was on serving Jesus above other considerations, and Jesus commended her for that choice. Because while Jesus was meek and lowly in heart (Mat. 11:29), he was also worthy of praise and worship. Jesus never shrank from his identity as Master and Teacher. As he told his apostles, “*You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am*” (John 13:13).

And in Jesus’ interaction with Mary, we learn an important truth about our relationship to Christ: serving the Lord is more important than any other concern in life... even the most noble ones!

“She had done a beautiful thing” - which could also be translated “a good work.” What she did was a service to the Lord, an act of worship performed in a way that seems to reflect her belief that Jesus was about to die – something even his disciples hadn’t fully accepted yet!

And even though the apostles didn’t always understand Jesus, they knew who he was. They worshiped him after he calmed the storm, saying “*Truly you are the son of God*” (Mat. 14:33). The last thing the apostles did before Jesus ascended to Heaven was to worship him (Luke 24:52).

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem to the praises and shouts of his disciples, he did it with all the glory and honor that a king would expect.

“... the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” – Luke 19:37-38

And when the Pharisees demanded that he rebuke his disciples, Jesus said, “*I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out*” (Luke 19:40).

Compare that to the reaction of Peter in Acts 10, when Cornelius saw him and fell down at his feet to worship him. (The same Greek word is used for both Acts 10 and Luke 24.) Peter immediately lifted him up, saying “*Stand up; I too am a man.*”

Jesus accepted worship because he was worthy of worship. He was the son of God, and as such it was right to worship him. There was no arrogance or pride involved; God calls us to worship him, and he calls us also to worship our Lord Jesus (Rev. 5:8). When we do that, we are fulfilling our purpose in life, which is to give glory to our Creator (Col. 1:15-16).

Jesus is the anointed of God. He is King. To see Jesus as nothing more than a teacher and a servant who never expected praise or obedience or worship from his disciples is to miss a fundamental aspect of his nature and mission.