

“The Path to the Cross: Betrayed”
Matthew 26:1-29
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The Main Characters (verses 1-5)

1. Jesus – He has just finished an extensive teaching. Now, for the fourth time, He tells His disciples that He will be handed over to Roman authorities, beaten, crucified and on the third day rise from the dead. Even before the plot to kill Jesus is unveiled, Matthew wants us to understand that Jesus is not being swept away by uncontrollable forces. He is completely in control as He willingly chooses the path to the cross to redeem sinful mankind.
2. The chief priests and elders of Israel - These leaders see Jesus as a threat to their political power. They are jealous of His popularity. They hate him for unmasking their hypocrisy. They view His claims of equality with God as blasphemy. Consequently, they are plotting His murder. This is where all leadership ends up when leaders are more concerned with position and power than serving God.

Two Different Responses to Jesus (verses 6-25)

1. Anointed for Burial (verses 6-13) – Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, pours an extremely valuable (worth about a year’s wages) alabaster flask of ointment on Jesus’ head in preparation for His burial.
 - a. This oil was Mary’s savings, her security for the future. Yet filled with a heart of love and gratefulness, she came to Jesus and poured it out on His head. Her act was a breathtaking act of worship that would be remembered wherever and whenever the gospel is proclaimed.
 - b. Mary is held up as a model of true discipleship. We are called to sacrificial love for Jesus. We are called to bring our gifts and our resources and to use them for His praise—to pour them out for His glory.
2. Betrayed by Judas (verses 14-25) - The contrast between Mary’s self-giving devotion and the treachery of Judas couldn’t be greater.
 - a. Though many have tried to diagnose Judas’ motives, the Bible’s presentation of Judas is very simple and straightforward. He was a greedy thief. He was the keeper of the purse for Jesus and used to take money for himself. We see this naked greed in verse 15. He isn’t pursued, manipulated or duped by the chief priests. He seeks them out and wants to know, “How much will you give me to betray Jesus?” And so he sells Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Even the price of His betrayal reveals how little regard he has for Jesus. This was equivalent to only four months wages.
 - b. Consider the warning we’re given through Judas’ unfaithful example:

- i. First, proximity to Jesus can never take the place of faith and submission to Jesus. It is not enough that you've grown up in the church. It is not enough that you have religious knowledge or are surrounded by Christians. If you would belong to Jesus Christ, you must believe and surrender to Him and be saved by faith. You must forsake all and make Jesus your Lord.
 1. The ESV (English Standard Version) Study Bible points out that nowhere does the New Testament record Judas addressing Jesus as Lord. What a sobering reminder of the insufficiency of religion to save us.
- b. We also see in this story a sobering example of God's sovereignty alongside human responsibility. Jesus knows Judas will betray him. In verse 24 Jesus says, "*The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!*" Judas betrayal was known, even prophesied by Scripture. And yet Judas was not forced to betray Jesus—he made this choice and is responsible for his choice. We must never misuse the truth of God's sovereignty as an excuse for our sin.

The Lord's Supper (verse 27-29)

1. The Passover meal commemorated how God had performed the greatest rescue of His people from bondage and slavery in Egypt. On the night before their great redemption from Egypt, God sent an angel of death to kill the first-born son of every household in the land. But God instructed Moses to have the Israelites sacrifice a lamb and smear its blood on the doorposts of their houses. The angel of death would "pass over" every home marked with the blood of the lamb.
2. Jesus, on the night of His betrayal and death, gathers His disciples and says, "I'm going to give you something greater to remember than the Exodus." Jesus tells them the purpose of His impending death. He will be that Passover Lamb. His body will be broken and His blood will be poured out for the complete forgiveness of sin. This is a greater victory!

Fellowship Starters:

1. Are you a disciple like Mary asking, "What can I give to my Lord?" Or are you like Judas asking, "What can I get instead of Jesus?"
2. Like Mary's heart of love and gratefulness, to what act of sacrificial worship is the Lord calling you? What gifts and resources can be poured out for His praise and glory?
3. What obstacles prevent Jesus from being your dearest friend and your most valued treasure?
4. Josh taught us that proximity to Jesus, to the church, or to other Christians can never save us. Are you relying on religious knowledge and practice for salvation, or have you believed and surrendered your life to Jesus as both Savior and Lord?

5. How can a reflection on the Lord's Supper move you to bow your heart in gratefulness and worship for such a costly sacrifice and such infinite love?