

Sunday School Lesson for April 19, 2026
Matthew 26

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this third Sunday in April, we're concluding our chapter-by-chapter study of the gospel according to Matthew, as Pastor Trey preaches from Matthew, chapter 25 where we hear the final two parables that answer the disciples' questions about the destruction of the Temple and the Lord's return. In our study of chapter 26 today, we find no less than ten events leading up to the Lord's crucifixion, including the anointing of Jesus in Bethany, the events and conversations at the Lord's Supper, the events that followed in the Garden of Gethsemane, His trial before the Jewish leaders, and Peter's denial.

Attempting to stay within the customary time limits that we've followed since Sunday School on the Go began more than four years ago would be impossible if we were to cover all these events, so I've chosen to focus on three passages from this lengthy chapter.

Chapter 26 opens with Matthew's brief, concluding note about the end of Jesus' teaching ministry saying, "When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, 'You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.'" Quite a somber message to mark the close of the phenomenally amazing ministry that we've been reading about, from the Lord's powerful and challenging Sermon on the Mount, feeding thousands with just a handful of food, healing the lame and forgiving sin, restoring sight to the blind, bringing those who had died back to life, and putting to shame the prideful Jewish leaders. And then, this gloomy, depressing prediction is followed in verse three with Matthew's report that "the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him."

In the midst of this cloud of despair, a woman appears to confirm the Lord's words yet honor Him in the process--verse six: "Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table."

We don't know exactly who Simon was. He may have been a friend or relative of Lazarus, maybe even his brother or possibly Mary's--Lazarus' sister's--husband. John tells us more about this meal in his gospel. Martha served, Lazarus sat at the table, and the woman who anointed Jesus was Mary, almost certainly Lazarus' sister.

Around the table sat just some of those who had been profoundly touched by Jesus. There was Martha, diligent in her service; Lazarus, not long since brought back from the dead; Simon, a former leper who had most likely been healed by Jesus; and Mary, focused on worshipping Him. Can you imagine Jesus in a more peaceful setting at home among those who truly loved Him as the end of His earthly life and ministry was soon coming to an end?

For the others in attendance, it might have been pretty exciting to be in the presence of Jesus at the height of His life and ministry. He's recently entered Jerusalem, welcomed with the words, "Hosannah in the highest; blessed is He Who comes in the Name of The Lord," and welcomed as the Messiah, the long-awaited Savior of the Jewish people and the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. For some of them, it could have been a celebration meal, with everyone in attendance looking back over the last three years, recalling the miracles, the healings, the conversations, the teachings, the frustration of the religious leaders who tried to trap Jesus, the raising of Lazarus, and so much more.

Then, all of a sudden, the scene abruptly changes. Mary stands, and all eyes turn to her. Apparently without saying a word, she broke open an alabaster bottle that held a very precious perfume and poured it over His head.

This vial held an ointment of pure nard that was very costly, perhaps even as one commentator wrote, “the costliest anointing oil of antiquity, and was sold throughout the Roman Empire, where it fetched a price that put it beyond any but the wealthy.” Some say the oil was made from the petals of flowers imported from India. John tells us that there were about twelve ounces of this oil in the bottle.

She broke the narrow neck of the small flask and poured the perfume first on the head, and then on the feet of Jesus, drying them with the hair of her head. It seems clear that she didn’t wish to keep or hold anything back. She offered up everything, gave it all away all, and her “all” was a tribute worthy of a king.

But there were some in attendance at the banquet table who were outraged by what she had done. “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” John tells us that the murmuring began with Judas Iscariot, and his complaining spirit seems to have infected some of the others, particularly the Galileans who were not at all accustomed to such luxury.

To Judas it was absolutely intolerable there should be such an utter waste of this extremely expensive oil. But Judas had a different attitude and a different motive. John tells us with a double entendre in the original language that, as treasurer, Judas both carried the funds and carried off some for his own use. Some translations say that the complainers “scolded her.” One commentator writes, “The disciples chimed in with the objection, not because they were superior to Mary in wisdom, but because they were inferior in consecration.”

But who among them was more concerned about the poor than Jesus? He fed the multitudes they wanted to send away. He gave sight to Bartimaeus when they told the blind man to leave Jesus alone. It’s still true that whenever a generous impulse expresses itself with a charitable hand, some heartless

faultfinder adds up the value of what is spent and compares its worth to “the poor.” It’s interesting to recall that orphanages and hospitals and food pantries aren’t usually built and run by those who criticize the church. So, we shouldn’t be surprised when John tells us that Judas, the dishonest purse bearer, was frustrated at the loss of a chance to steal a little more from the disciples’ treasury. And Judas had other plans.

So while the fragrance of the ointment filled the house, their complaints unsettled the peace that soothed Jesus’ heart as He contemplated the significance of the moment, only two days before His arrest and crucifixion.

In responding to the condemnation of Mary's spontaneous expression of love, Jesus reminds them that they would always have the opportunity to minister to the poor, but this moment with Him in their midst would soon end, never to present itself again. Soon His body would be in the hands of those who would beat Him and scorn Him and ultimately kill Him. Of all those present, Mary had understood; she had taken to heart His warnings about what was about to happen to Him. She had anointed His body beforehand with a clear intention “to prepare Him for burial.” She had done what she could. She recognized the importance of that single moment, and what she did, Jesus said, would be remembered forever.

By way of application, one commentator writes, “Brethren, the question of Judas is far more fitting when asked of other people than of Christians. ‘To what purpose is this waste?’ may well be said to those ... who are taking mind, and heart, and will, capacity, and energy, and all life, and using it for ... purposes [other] than the service of God, and [in] loving obedience to Jesus Christ. ‘Why do ye spend money for that which is not bread?’ Is it not waste to buy [things that cannot fulfill your heart’s true desire] at the price of a soul and of a life? Why do ye spend that money thus? ‘Whose image and superscription hath it?’ ... Better for us to ask ourselves the question to-day about all the godless parts of our lives, ‘To what purpose is this waste?’ than to have to [answer] it [after this life ends]! Everything but giving our whole selves

to Jesus Christ is waste. . . . ‘He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake, the same shall find it.’”

The story of the stark contrast between Mary and Judas continues after Matthew records how the arrangements were made for the Passover meal that was shared the next evening. During the meal, Jesus shocks them with the announcement that one of the twelve was going to betray Him--verse 21: “When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said, ‘Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.’ And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, ‘Is it I, Lord? He answered, ‘He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.’ Judas, who would betray him, then asked, ‘Is it I, Rabbi?’ He said to him, ‘You have said so.’”

How Judas came to the decision to betray the Lord is an interesting study, although much of what has been written is built on speculation. From the hints provided in the four gospels, it’s generally assumed that Judas was, at first, sincere in joining the Lord and His Eleven. Perhaps because he had some business experience and skill in managing finances, Judas was appointed as the treasurer of the few funds that had been given to the Lord. We soon see, however, that he slowly began to embezzle the funds entrusted to him as John tells us in chapter twelve, verse six.

It’s quite possible that his expectations of what the Messiah would do were fed by the Lord’s early teaching and the crowds that began to follow Him; but, when he saw his hopes disappointed when Jesus--perhaps in Judas’ mind--failed to take advantage of the glorious reception He received when He entered Jerusalem and then told them of how He would soon be killed by the very religious leaders he perhaps expected would be part of their deliverance from Rome, he saw no worldly advantage in being on what he surely saw as the losing side, so he decided to make whatever profit he could, given the

circumstances, especially now, in light of the waste of some very precious perfume.

Now, sitting next to Jesus for the Passover meal, Judas hears the Lord say, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” As each of the disciples asked, “Is it I?” Judas also asks the question, perhaps to see if the Lord was aware of his treachery. You’ll note that the other disciples asked, “Is it I, Lord?” but Judas doesn’t use the word “Lord,” instead, he asks, “Is it I, Rabbi?” From him, “Rabbi” was a cold, ceremonial title. It would also be how Judas would identify Jesus in the garden.

In Jesus’ instructions to the disciples in verse eighteen, He tells them “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.”’” The Passover meal is rich in symbols and based on the instructions God gave to the Israelites as they prepared to leave Egypt. If you’ve not had the opportunity to participate in a Seder meal, let me encourage you to do so. It’s a fascinating picture of Jesus, our Savior and our Messiah.

Matthew provides his partial record of this event beginning in verse 26: “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and, after blessing it, broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.’”

At a particular point in the meal, Jesus took some of the bread that was part of the meal. After He blessed it and passed it out to the disciples, He told them, “Take, eat; this is my body.” In drawing their attention to the bread, He was symbolically representing Himself as the Passover lamb that was killed in accordance with the Lord’s instructions we find in Exodus, chapter twelve, verse eleven: “In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your

sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover.”

As the lamb was represented as the Passover--the means by which the death angel would pass over the homes of those who had carried out the preparations dictated by the Lord--so also the Lord Jesus presented His body as the Passover by Whom all those who followed God's instructions regarding Him as the ideal Passover Lamb would not fall victim to eternal death.

Paul, in First Corinthians, chapter eleven, verse 25, and Luke, in chapter 22, verse nineteen, record Jesus as saying about the bread, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” The whole purpose of the Seder--the Passover meal--was to call to remembrance in a vivid, symbolic manner, the Jews' experience of their dramatic deliverance through the Exodus. In an even more significant manner, The Lord Jesus called His disciples then and calls us today to remember His body broken and given to us in order to remind us how He sacrificed Himself so that our sins could be atoned for, as if He were saying, “As I give this broken bread to you to eat, so will I deliver my body to be afflicted and slain for your sins.”

For the disciples, deeply conscious of the profound significance of the Passover lamb as they had celebrated this feast every year of their lives, and having been trained to lead the Seder celebration in their own homes, flawlessly recounting each and every step of the meal, the significance of each food item, every piece of bread and every sip of wine, all the various movements--the readings, the singing, the eating, the hiding of the matza and the children sent to find it--in this highly symbolic remembrance of God's deliverance from their bondage in Egypt, these words would have brought a fusion of history and eternity, bondage and deliverance, a Passover lamb without blemish and the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. Remember Egypt. Now, remember Calvary.

I fear we often take the Lord's Supper far too lightly. Paul accused the Corinthians of that, which is why he provided some very clear instructions for them, including--chapter eleven, verse 28, "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself."

Jesus told them, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." It's not His literal body, just as the lamb was not the Passover. It's intended to draw us back to the realization of what He did for us in fulfillment of every thing pictured in the original Passover. The Lord's Supper is to be a continual calling to mind of the One Who redeemed us from the bondage of sin, as the Passover was an annual calling to mind the Israelites' redemption from their bondage in Egypt.

Then--verse 27: "He took a cup, and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" By the cup He meant the wine in the cup and not the cup itself. The wine that He passed to the disciples represented, as we know, the blood He was about to shed for the forgiveness of our sin. The covenant--what Luke refers to as the "new covenant"--referred to the solemn agreement--that God was about to make through Jesus as the Redeemer.

The "old" covenant was the one that God made with the Jews by the sprinkling of the blood of sacrifices after Moses repeated all the words of the Law given to him by God as we find in Exodus, chapter 24, verse eight: "Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." This sprinkling with blood was the means by which the covenant was ratified or sealed, just as, in ancient times, covenants or contracts

were ratified by slaying an animal and shedding its blood as a symbol of what would happen to those who violated the terms of the agreement.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews explains it this way in chapter nine, beginning in verse eighteen: “Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.’ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law, almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” So Jesus says that this new covenant that God is about to establish with believers is sealed or ratified with His blood. And, unlike the Passover lamb that made provision for just one family and possibly a few more, His blood was poured out for “many.” This is the way God has provided for the forgiveness of sin, once for all, and it’s the only way. “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” This is what we are to always remember.

One commentator urges us to try to imagine what this moment might have been like: “... [L]et us try humbly and reverently to enter into the mind of Christ as He breaks the bread and pours the wine and institutes the feast of love.” “Consider first how extraordinary it was that / at such a time / He should take pains to concentrate the thoughts of His disciples in all time to come upon His death. Even the bravest of those who had been with Him in all His temptations could not look at it now; To the disciples, to the world, it must have seemed defeat; yet He calmly provides for its perpetual celebration as a victory!”

“Think of the form the celebration takes,” he writes. “It is no mournful solemnity, with dirges and elegies for one about to die; but a Feast--a strange way of celebrating a death. It may be said that the Passover feast itself was a

precedent; but in this respect there is no parallel. The Passover feast was no memorial of a death. If Moses had died that night, would it ever have occurred to the children of Israel to institute a feast for the purpose of keeping in memory so unutterable a calamity? But [One] greater than Moses is here, and is soon to die a cruel and shameful death. Is not that / a calamity / as much more dreadful than the other as Christ was greater than Moses?"

"Why, then, celebrate [a death] by a feast? Because this death is no calamity. It is the means of life to a great multitude that no man can number, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. Therefore, it is most fitly celebrated by a feast. It is a memorial; but it is far more.... Think what must have been in the Saviour's mind when He said, 'Take, eat;' how His soul must have been enlarged as He uttered the words 'shed for many.' Simple words, easily spoken; but before they came from these sacred lips there must have risen before His mind the vision of multitudes all through the ages, fed on the strangest food, refreshed by the strangest wine, that mortal man had ever heard of."

"How marvellously the horizon widens round Him as the feast proceeds! At first He is wholly engaged with the little circle round the table. When He says, 'One of you shall betray Me,' when He takes the sop and hands it, when He pours out His last lament over the false disciple, He is the Man of Sorrows in the little upper chamber; but when He takes the bread and again the cup, the horizon widens, beyond the cross He sees the glory that shall follow, sees men [and women] of all nations ... coming to the feast He is preparing for them, and, before He closes, He has reached the consummation in the heavenly kingdom: 'I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.'"

The Lord closes this reminder to them with these words: "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." The reference is to a feast that's a symbol of the glorified life as the Lord speaks of in Luke, chapter 22, verse 30 when He tells

the disciples about how they would “eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.” The new wine is either a part of this feast or a symbol of the new, higher level of life that they would share with the saints in glory. Although this declaration could also have been intended to draw a contrast between the original Passover remembrance and the final Passover celebration in heaven, the most important point Jesus wanted to impress upon His hearers with these words was that His death would come very soon, and He would leave them, but they would be gloriously reunited once again in heaven.

In looking back to the cross, we look forward to the Lord’s return and the marriage supper of the Lamb, just as the Passover lamb pointed its celebrants to the true Passover Lamb of God Who would take away the sins of the world. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.”

//As they departed to the Mount of Olives, knowing what lay before Him only hours away, His thoughts were filled with the ancient prophecy from the hand of Zechariah: “‘Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,’ declares the LORD of hosts. ‘Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’” It’s the last part of this prophecy that most troubles Him. For the smiting of the Shepherd, He is well prepared; it’s the scattering of the sheep that makes His heart so sore and forces Him to break the silence with the sorrowful words, “You will all fall away because of me this night.”

One commentator writes, “What pathos in these words--‘because of Me;’--how it pained Him to think that what must come to Him should be so terrible to them! ... Then the thought of the shepherd and the sheep which fills His mind and suggests the passage He quotes is full of tenderness without even a hint of reproach. Who will blame the sheep for scattering when the Shepherd is smitten? And how trustfully and ... how wistfully does He look forward to the reassembling of the flock in [Galilee], the sacred region where they gathered first round the Shepherd: ‘After I am risen again, I will go before

you *as the shepherd goes before the flock* into Galilee.’ Thus, after all, would be fulfilled His prayer of intercession [recorded for us by the disciple whom Jesus loved], so recently offered on their behalf: ‘Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one.’”

It was then that Peter announced his brash defense: “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” But “Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.’ Peter said to him, ‘Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!’ And all the disciples said the same,” yet we know all too well what actually happened.

After a brief walk, they arrive at the garden of Gethsemane. The olive trees would provide some solitude, but the full, Passover moon brightly illuminated the hillside. It’s there that Jesus would leave eight and take with Him the remaining three into the deeper recesses of the olive grove, to prepare Himself for what was about to come. The word Gethsemane means “Oil-Press.” John tells us that it was a garden or an olive orchard on the slope of the Mount of Olives, and it most likely included a press to crush the olives that grew all around. John also tells us that Jesus went there frequently, and that Judas “knew the place.” In silence, the Lord Jesus turns to the deep gloom of the olive grove, aware now of the approach of the darkest and deadliest assault ever known in history.

Matthew tells us in verse 27 that “Taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled.” Most English translations fail to communicate the depth of sorrow He was experiencing in these moments. Most render the first of the two words as “grieved,” but the New Living Bible translates it as “anguished.” The second word appears in our Bibles only three times: once here and in Mark’s parallel passage, and in Philippians, chapter two, where Paul describes Epaphroditus’ concern for the church in Philippi. One biblical word study tells us, “The word signals more than ordinary sadness. It portrays a crushing weight that presses the spirit

toward despair, yet without extinguishing hope. In the Gospel accounts, the intensity of Jesus' sorrow is framed by parallels to Psalms of lament, drawing readers into the prophetic anticipation of the Suffering Servant." "His turmoil anticipates the cup of wrath He will soon drink. This moment underscores the true humanity of Christ; He does not float above pain but enters it fully. Yet His submission [in His prayer that follows]--affirms the perfect harmony between His will and the Father's plan. The distress amplifies, rather than diminishes, His obedience."

Matthew shares with us the deeply troubling, weighty, and solemn prayer of Jesus--at least a very small portion of it: "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." Here again we have another word packed with meaning and emotion--"very sorrowful" or "exceedingly sorrowful" translate a single word as Matthew recorded it. The word points to an incredibly deep anguish and grief, leading some Bible students to imagine that Satan had now returned after having left Him "for a season." It seems that that season is now over. If any of you remember the movie about the crucifixion, "The Passion of Christ," you may recall that Satan actually appeared in the Garden of Gethsemane as Jesus prayed.

Matthew tells us that Jesus went a little farther and "fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.'"

Jesus addresses His Father with the intensely personal term, "Abba." It is used only twice more in the New Testament, and both times by Paul, in Romans, chapter eight, verse fifteen, where he says, "we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father" and Galatians, chapter four, verse six, where Paul writes, "God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." As you probably know, the word *Abba* is an Aramaic word that means "Father" and expressed affection, confidence, and trust. *Abba* signifies the close, intimate relationship of a father and his child, as well as the childlike trust that a young child puts in his "daddy."

Beginning with this word that establishes the close, personal relationship between God the Son and God the Father, Jesus acknowledges that, with the Father, everything is possible. Speaking absolutely, with God nothing is impossible, but God is bound by His own laws. Certainly, if there had been any other way to obtain the forgiveness of our sin, the payment of the penalty for our rejection of God's plan and purpose for our lives, God would have chosen it. But there was no other option, there is no Plan B. "Without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin," as we've already been reminded. Jesus himself knew this, and that's why He fully embraces the will of his Father. But it was the natural desire of his humanity that He be delivered from what it was going to take to bear the full punishment for our sin and purchase our pardon.

Jesus' request was to "Remove this cup from me." The "cup," both in Scripture and secular literature, meant one's lot or portion in life, whether good or bad, that God appoints for us. But immediately, Jesus followed that request with a commitment to fulfilling God's plan: "Not as I will, but as you will."

In this moment of grief, the Lord Jesus found the disciples sleeping. After chastising them for not being able to stay awake in this most important moment, warning them to "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation," He went back to His place of prayer. Matthew only records a single desire of the Lord: "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." A second time He found the disciples sleeping before He returned, then found them asleep a third time, but the opportunity for watching and praying had now passed, for Judas came, and "with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people."

One commentator writes, "We shall not understand Gethsemane at all, nor will it touch our hearts and wills as it is meant to do, unless, as we look, we recall in adoring wonder the words of Isaiah 53:6: 'The Lord has laid on

Him the iniquity of us all.' It was the weight of the world's sin which He willingly took upon Himself by choosing to identify Himself with us that pressed Him to the ground in fervent prayer." Nothing else than the atoning nature of Jesus' sufferings explains the agony that we read of here. But, really, we can't even begin to imagine the pain or the choice He made. His voluntary surrender was for us, so that "by His stripes we might be healed," as Isaiah had written so long ago.

Jesus was arrested, taken to Caiaphas the high priest, and questioned at length. Although Matthew tells us that "many false witnesses came forward," it doesn't seem that their testimony was strong enough to convict Him of anything. Exasperated, the high priest demanded a response from Jesus--verse 62: "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?' But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.'" Verse 64: "Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his robes and said, 'He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?' They answered, 'He deserves death.'"

And so it was. Not being able to carry out a death sentence themselves, the Jewish leaders delivered Him to Pilate, the governor, who also interrogated Him, but, Luke tells us, he found no guilt in Him. The crowd, stirred up by the religious leaders, called for His death, so Pilate sent Him to Herod who also found no fault in Him and sent Him back to Pilate.

Luke tells us in chapter 23, verse twenty that "Pilate addressed [the crowd] once more, desiring to release Jesus, but they kept shouting, 'Crucify, crucify him!' A third time he said to them, 'Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.' But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices," Luke says, "prevailed." So Pilate decided that

their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder and for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.” And He was crucified.

That was Friday, but Sunday was coming, and you know the rest of the story. He is risen! He is risen indeed!

In the few passages we’ve considered from chapter 26, we’ve seen a contrast between two treasures, two hearts, two lives headed in two totally different directions. Mary loved her Lord publicly, openly. Judas betrayed Him privately, secretly. Mary loved her Lord expensively--more than a year’s wages. Judas sold his Lord cheaply--for the price of a slave. Mary was criticized for her devotion. Judas was praised for his deceit. Mary understood what she needed to do when the time came, and she did what she could. The disciples ... not so much. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus chose to go to the cross for us, and His act of obedience in submission to the Father has made all the difference in the world, and, I hope, in your life as well.

Thank you for being a part of our extremely brief glimpse into the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus as seen through Matthew’s eyes as he leads us to understand Who Jesus is through His works and His words so that we might be the people of God He’s calling us to be for such a time as this. This concludes our study of the first gospel. Next week, we begin a new series of lessons focusing on the gospel of John--the disciple whom Jesus loved. Following Pastor Trey’s message on Sunday from the first five verses of the first chapter, and, with his message on verses six through eighteen to follow on Wednesday, we’ll hear the testimony of John the Baptist and the calling of Jesus’ first disciples in the remainder of the first chapter.

As always, as it’s still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

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