

The Gospel of Matthew
Week 29
Matthew 26:6-35

Day One

6 While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, 7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. 8 When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. 9 "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."

v. 6 – It is interesting that this man was known as Simon the Leper, for he could not have been a leper at this point in time. Jesus must have healed him, otherwise this Simon would have been “exiled” or excluded from public life. It is not a good thing to identify someone by who they were in the past. Everyone should have a chance to be known by who they are today and not by their past history. What’s more, you should not allow people to identify *you* according to who you were, although that can be a difficult thing to achieve. They even identified Jesus by His past in Nazareth, which prevented many from seeing Him for who He truly was. **Who are you identifying by their past instead of their present? Is that happening to you in any way? What can you do to reverse that?**

v. 7 – Some argue that this alabaster jar represented the woman’s dowry, which she would give to the man who became her eventual husband. It was obviously very expensive. This whole picture makes me uncomfortable when I put myself in Jesus’ place. I would not enjoy a woman pouring expensive, fragrant perfume on my head while I am in someone else’s home at the dinner table. Yet I am not Jesus, and He was allowing this woman to do what she did as an indication of what was to come in the next few days.

vs. 8&9 – The disciples considered this woman’s act a waste. They knew how much the perfume was worth and they argued that it could have been sold for a lot of money and that money given to the poor. This is the first time we see that the disciples expressed any concern for the poor. Perhaps they did express it and Matthew did not record it. In all probability, however, the poor were not a high priority for them. They were simply criticizing this woman’s act as wasteful and using the poor as a reason.

What are you doing for the poor? What more can you do? Who are the poor for you? Are they only people in a foreign land? Do you blame the poor for their predicament? Have you hardened your heart toward them? Do you use your spiritual gifts to help the poor at least some of the time? There are many verses in Proverbs that pertain to helping the poor. My favorite is

He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done (Proverbs 19:17).

Day Two

10 Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 11 The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. 12 When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13 I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

v. 10 – Jesus was aware that the disciples were indignant. In fact, Jesus was always aware of what was going on around Him, especially what was going on in the hearts of the people closest to Him. **Are you aware? Do you know how to read people and the signs of their discomfort or displeasure?**

Not only was Jesus aware, but He also confronted the disciples' bad attitude. It is one thing to notice, but quite another to have the courage to say something about it. Jesus did both. **Is there any situation of which you are aware that you need to confront?**

v. 11 – Jesus indicated that the woman had done a beautiful thing for Him. He was not uncomfortable with what she did. In fact, Jesus was comfortable not only with this woman but also with children, sinners, other women, lepers, men, and Gentiles. He only had problems with the religious leadership of Israel. Jesus made an oft-quoted statement that the poor would always be with us. I don't think this is necessarily a social statement about the conditions that produce the poor. He was simply saying, "Hey. If you're so concerned about the poor, you will have ongoing and plentiful opportunities to do something for them. Yet I won't be with you much longer, as I have repeatedly told you. This woman has done something for me, whom you won't have around much longer – as I have predicted on more than one occasion."

I wonder if the disciples didn't also resent this act because the woman was a woman! **How do you feel about women in ministry? Women in general?** You can answer that question even if you are a woman, for sometimes women ministering to or for the Lord encounter bias from their fellow sisters.

v. 12 – The woman was prophetically ministering to Jesus in advance of His imminent death and burial. The disciples had absolutely no excuse when the events of the next few days unfolded. Jesus had warned them and even used this story to reinforce the fact that He was about to die and be raised again. **How could the disciples have "missed" this?** They had plenty of warning, but for many reasons – fear, unbelief, an ability to comprehend the unthinkable – they never wrapped their minds and hearts around what Jesus was saying. Yet later, after Jesus resurrection and ascension, they gave their lives as witnesses of the truth they had seen unfold according to Jesus' words.

I met with a woman the other day who said she had a call on her life and knew it for ten years, yet had not done anything about it. **Is there anything you are not grasping and**

accepting even though the Lord has revealed it to you on many occasions? What about you? What aren't you acting on that you know to be true?

v. 13 – This woman made an impact on Jesus and He promised that her story would be told along with the gospel for all time! **How would you like to do something for the Lord that caught His attention in such a dramatic way?** The woman pressed through culture, economics and self-consciousness to do something significant to and for the Lord. **What can you do by pressing through the same things?**

Day Three

14 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests 15 and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. 16 From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. 17 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

vs. 14&15 – The leadership soon found a willing accomplice from among Jesus' own followers. Judas approached them to see what he could get by betraying Jesus to them. **Why did they need Judas' help?** Remember that the leaders did not want the public to know that they were seizing Jesus, so they needed help to find a way to do it secretly. Judas would know Jesus' whereabouts and tendencies, so he could help them do their dirty deed quietly. The leaders hoped that they would be well on their way to trying and executing Jesus before the public would do anything to prevent it.

The leadership agreed to pay Judas a fee of thirty pieces of silver, and we know that Judas was greedy for money since he often pilfered from Jesus' treasury. Jesus showed tremendous restraint by not exposing Judas for who and what he was during their three-year relationship. Judas was on the team to fulfill a purpose and Jesus cooperated with that purpose, which was to ultimately betray Jesus to the officials. As far as we can tell, Jesus never treated Judas any differently from the others, even though He knew what Judas would ultimately do.

All this was to fulfill the Scriptures concerning Jesus betrayal, suffering and death. Jesus was fully committed to do the will of His Father, even by humbling Himself to tolerate and not expose His betrayer. Jesus was loyal while Judas was disloyal. **Is loyalty one of your character traits? Do you operate in the best interests of others or your own interests?** I recently had a business deal where an African friend betrayed me to improve their position and obtain a larger portion of the business. That is painful, but it is nothing compared to what Jesus must have felt in this situation.

v. 16 – All the events of the Jesus death were unfolding according to plan. Judas looked for an opportune moment to lead the officials to Jesus. The officials didn't really need Judas; they could have seized Jesus anytime they wished, for Jesus was a public figure. They simply needed a way they could do it by stealth and that is where Judas helped

them. It was one thing for Jesus to be arrested; it was quite another for one of His trusted Twelve to have had a hand in the plan. How sad it is when brothers and sisters are disloyal to one another. **Are you a loyal person? Can you prove it?**

v. 17 – Since Jesus was the Passover Lamb, it was necessary for Him to be slain on the Passover, which was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The disciples asked for directions as to where they would celebrate the Passover together. Notice that these men had no intention of going home to eat the Passover meal with their families. They had every intention of eating it with their Master. This indicates something to me of their new identity that was emerging as part of God’s family centered on the Lordship of Jesus. **Who is your family? Do you relate to the body of Christ as such?**

Day Four

18 He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. 20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. 21 And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." 22 They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"

v. 18 – I have often said that God is a great administrator, the best I have ever beheld. He knows when to start to be ready at a certain time. He knows how to prepare His team and covers all the details. What’s more, God is not just “creative” or “administrative.” He is both and when He functions in one role, He is not excluding the other. **What do I mean by that?** For example, we know the exact time the sun comes up and sets. We know the first day of winter and spring. We know the exact minute when it will be high tide and low tide. That is supreme organization in my mind. **Yet does all that “organization” and “administration” take away from God’s creativity?** Absolutely not!

I point this out because many people believe they are in either one or the other category – creative or administrative. I formerly thought this way too, but now I see that I am both and God helps me function in both because of who He is. **Do you think like I used to think? Do you see yourself as more creative or administrative? Are you ready to grow in the “other” sphere as God helps you?**

v. 19 – The disciples went and found the man that Jesus had directed them to and, sure enough, the man gave them the place in which they were to prepare and celebrate the Passover. God made their job easy by going ahead and preparing the way. I have felt and known that kind of help in my career, and it is special thing. When God directs and I obey, the job always goes smoothly. Yet I don’t believe God always gives this kind of specific direction. At times, we are to walk in what we know and carry out our duties in a work-like fashion, which doesn’t mean that work style isn’t spiritual. I point that out because there are some who are looking for God’s direction in everything, even the simplest things. I think that sounds spiritual, but isn’t realistic. **Do you agree with me or not?**

vs. 20&21 – This is the 28th time that Jesus said “I tell you the truth” according to Matthew’s gospel. **Do you tell the truth? Do you exaggerate, leave out important details, hide the truth, tell half-truths, or just plain lie?** I hope not, but it’s hard to be truthful in every situation. What if someone you love asks you, “How do I look?” and he or she look terrible. **How do you answer the question?** Jesus told the truth that people were not even asking for, as in this example. He told the disciples that one of His closest Twelve was going to betray Him. They could not believe it, so He had to assure them that He was speaking truth. I want to be as committed to telling the truth as Jesus was and is:

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, *speaking the truth in love*, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:14-16, emphasis added).

v. 22 – The disciples were shocked by this truth and began to proclaim their innocence by denying any personal responsibility. While Judas would betray Jesus specifically, all of them would betray Him in a more general sense by abandoning Him in His hour of need. Loyalty is a rare trait, as we discussed a few days ago. Most people will serve their own interests, which is why this passage in Philippians has always been so special to me and one I have tried to use as a guiding principle in my life:

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel (Philippians 2:19-22).

If Paul only had the pleasure of knowing one like Timothy in his lifetime, how many people like Timothy will you and I ever know? And a more important question is: Can you be one like Timothy according to this definition in Philippians?

Day Five

23 Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." 25 Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you." 26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

v. 23 – Eating together in a Middle Eastern culture was a sign of covenant and loyalty, which is why Jesus portrayed His betrayer as one at the table with them who had broken

bread with them as a brother and fellow worker. This was a heinous breach of trust and friendship! Which again leads me to the question: **are you a loyal person? Do you take seriously your relationships and the responsibilities you have to those people? What's more, how often do you eat with others, especially those in the church? Do you take those mealtimes seriously to make the most of them in presence of God?**

v. 24 – There has always been the debate as to whether or not Judas acted of his own free will. **Was He a pawn used in God's plan or a willing participant? If he was a pawn, how then could he be held accountable for his actions?** This verse answers those questions by showing that Judas was held accountable by Jesus for what he was about to do, so he had a choice in the matter. He did what he did willingly. Yet he did what he did to fulfill the purpose and plan of God.

How I wish I could comprehend that fully, but I know it to be true. God does not interfere with man's ability to choose, yet man cooperates with God's plan when he does choose. Or perhaps it is true what another man said: "God plays chess with man. He matches his every move." There was woe for Judas when he betrayed for Jesus, just as there is for anyone who betrays or ignores God's goodness and grace. We have discussed loyalty this week and it is good to be loyal to your friends, family, brothers and sisters. It is even better, however, to be loyal to the Lord and His purposes. **Are you?** Don't answer too quickly or before you ask the Lord to help you see the answer from His perspective.

v. 25 – **What was Judas saying here? Was he denying that he was the betrayer? Was he covering his tracks, so to speak? Did he not see what he was doing as a betrayal?** Some have portrayed Judas as confused, used by the Jewish leaders for their own purposes. My own sense is that Judas joined the others in denying that he was the one because that is what everyone else was doing. He joined in, but he didn't count on one thing: Jesus knew his heart! You cannot fool God like you can other people, but Judas tried. **Do you try? Do you tell God one thing while something else is in your heart?** Remember, we talked about truthfulness earlier and you must be truthful above all else with God. **Do you tell God you love people that you don't? Do you confess that you feel a certain way when you don't because you don't want to tell God the truth?** Remember what David wrote:

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place (Psalm 51:6).

v. 26 – Jesus focused on bread in His teaching throughout the gospels, because bread was such an important type and symbol in the Bible. It all began with God sending manna or bread from heaven to feed the Jews in the wilderness. Jesus referred to Himself as the bread of life (see John 6). At the supper, Jesus took the unleavened bread (leaven often represents sin, so this bread was a type or shadow of Jesus, the sinless Bread from heaven), blessed it and broke it, distributing the pieces to His disciples. This does not mean that the bread turned to the actual body of Jesus as Catholics teach. That doesn't make any sense. But if you study bread and all that the Scriptures have to say about it,

you can easily see that Jesus was teaching the disciples that His body, about to be broken, would be the “bread” that would sustain weary sinners and saints from that point on.

Day Six

27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." 30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

vs. 27&28 – Jesus took the cup from which they drank the Passover wine and ordered them all to drink from it as a symbol of the redemption that was to become available through His death and blood. Jesus was not declaring that His blood would somehow be in it every time the cup would be taken. That is what Catholic doctrine has done with this verse but I think that has made it too other-worldly, almost magical. Keep in mind that the disciples were at the Passover supper. The Passover was when the lamb was sacrificed, eaten and blood spread over the door so that the angel of death would pass by the house so marked. Jesus was identifying Himself as that Passover Lamb and indicating that His impending death was the means to forgiveness of sins:

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22).

Jesus was not making a symbolic comment here. He was declaring that His death and blood were the keys to man’s reconciliation with God. No longer would there have to be daily and seasonal sacrifices to cover man’s sin. Jesus’ sacrifice would be enough once for all and the cup would be a reminder of that crucial and magnificent truth. There can be no other sacrifice for sins once Jesus made His sacrifice.

v. 29 – The next time Jesus would see the disciples, it would be a new day, so to speak. The old would have passed away, representing all the sacrificial system that the Jews had always known, and the new would have come, the new covenant of grace sealed in the blood of Jesus. All of this was an expression of the kingdom of God and the Jewish reader, which was Matthew’s target audience, would understand the implications immediately.

Let’s go back to the issue of the bread and wine. If Jesus had wanted to introduce a significant teaching on something that would transpire in the nature of the bread and wine, He could have done so. Jesus was always “telling the truth” as we have noted repeatedly, so He had the capability to be clear and concise. **Why would He suddenly get secretive and mystical in this case?**

That is why this is a straightforward expression of something like this, “The old system you have known is done and is being replaced by a new system that focuses on Me, My death and sacrifice. The old sacrificial system will no longer be necessary once I do what

I am about to do. When you eat the bread and drink this cup in the future, I want you to remember what I have done for you and I want you to forget that old system, which has been dissolved in favor of a better 'system,' which is God's grace available to all who recognize that I am the Bread of heaven and that my blood made possible man's access to God."

v. 30 – The men sang a hymn and proceeded from that Passover meal into history that night. Events would be set in motion that would change the course of God's redemptive history with His creation. The disciples had no idea then what was about to happen, nor did they comprehend what was ahead for them. Yet as miserably as they would all fail in the coming days, they would take the bread and cup of that Passover meal and they would eat and drink unto their own deaths in order to bear witness to the truth that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

Is there any truth or even in your own life that, reflecting back, you did not fully understand then but do now? If so, you know then what the apostle were about to encounter.

Day Seven

31 Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: " 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' 32 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." 33 Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." 34 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." 35 But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

v. 31 – One thing I have learned to do recently is to look back at the entire context of an Old Testament reference that Jesus made. And while this verse appears to be about Jesus being left alone, it is really about judgment coming on God's people! I will include this one example so that you can see what I mean. This puts what was about to happen to Jesus in a whole new light, for the focus wasn't only the abandonment and betrayal, but on God refining and purging His people:

"On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity. "On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more," declares the Lord Almighty. "I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land. And if anyone still prophesies, his father and mother, to whom he was born, will say to him, 'You must die, because you have told lies in the Lord's name.' When he prophesies, his own parents will stab him. "On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his prophetic vision. He will not put on a prophet's garment of hair in order to deceive. He will say, 'I am not a prophet. I am a farmer; the land has been my livelihood since my youth. 'If someone asks him, 'What are these wounds on your body?' he will answer, 'The wounds I was given at the house of my friends.' "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against

the man who is close to me!" declares the Lord Almighty. ***"Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered,*** and I will turn my hand against the little ones. In the whole land," declares the Lord, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.'" (Zechariah 13:1-9).

This practice of going back to the full context of the verse quoted has added an important dimension to my study of the New Testament. I would recommend that practice to you for your consideration as you study.

v. 32 – Jesus was so confident of His resurrection that He made plans of what He would do once He returned. Once again we see that the disciples had no excuse for not understanding Jesus' death and resurrection. He certainly instructed them about it on many occasions. **Is there anything you haven't grasped that God has showed you again and again?** Don't answer too quickly. Ask God to show you.

vs. 33-35 – Peter spoke up to express the sentiments of the group. Having been told at supper that one of them would betray Jesus, they all declared their willingness to die for Him. They had an exaggerated concept of their loyalty and commitment! I have had the same assessment from time to time, believing I was more spiritual than I truly was. **Has this ever happened to you?**

Jesus had to speak another "I tell you the truth," and this time the prediction was about Peter's impending denial of Jesus, not once but three times. Peter's response was, "Lord, You're wrong! I will never do that!" Now you see why Jesus had to preface His remarks with "I am telling you the truth" because even His disciples thought He was off-base with some of His comments! Peter was in denial of the truth and it would be a painful process for him to see and accept the truth.

Are you in denial at any point in your spiritual walk? Don't answer too quickly. Ask the Lord to show you if you are.