

The Gospel of Matthew

Lesson 33: The Plot, the Anointing, and the Last Supper -- Matthew 26:1-

35

Two days before the Passover, three scenes unfold so close together that Matthew lets them rub against each other on purpose. In one, the religious leaders gather in the palace of the high priest, heads bent low, plotting how to take Jesus by stealth and kill Him (vv. 3-4). In another, an unnamed woman breaks open a flask of costly perfume and pours it over the head of Jesus, holding nothing back (v. 7). And in a third, one of the Twelve slips out to the chief priests and asks the coldest question in all of Scripture: "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" (v. 15). Watch these scenes side by side, and you will see the whole human heart laid bare before the cross.

Notice how Matthew frames the season. Jesus has just finished teaching, and now He says quietly, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified" (v. 2). He is not surprised by the plot. He is not cornered by Judas. He walks toward the cross with His eyes open, naming His own death before anyone lifts a hand. The lamb is choosing the altar. Everything that follows happens because He allows it to happen.

And then comes the woman with her alabaster jar. The disciples scold her for waste, doing math on the perfume the way the world always does math on devotion. But Jesus receives her gift as a thing of beauty: "She has done a beautiful thing to me" (v. 10). She has poured out on Him what others were calculating how to profit from. In a chapter crowded with men weighing Jesus by what they can get, here is one heart that simply gives. Wherever the gospel is preached, Jesus says, what she has done will be told (v. 13). And it still is, in this very room, tonight.

At the center of it all stands a table. In an upstairs room, Jesus takes the ancient bread of the Passover, breaks it, and says, "Take, eat; this is my body" (v. 26). He lifts the cup and says, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (v. 28). A new covenant is being cut, not in the blood of lambs and bulls, but in His own blood. Then He warns that every one of them will fall away that night, and Peter, sure of himself, swears he never will. Plot, devotion, betrayal, and a meal that the Lord's church has never stopped sharing. This is where we begin.

Group Discussion: In this passage Jesus is surrounded by people who are all responding to Him: leaders plotting, a woman worshiping, a friend betraying, disciples boasting. As you read the chapter, which response surprises you most, and why do you think Matthew sets all of them so close together right before the cross?

Personal Reflection: The woman poured out something costly on Jesus while others stood by calculating its value. When have you held back from giving Jesus something extravagant, your

time, your money, your reputation, because part of you was quietly counting the cost? What would it look like to pour it out instead?

Read Matthew 26:1–35

Study Questions

1. Twice in this chapter Jesus announces His own death before anyone moves against Him (vv. 2, 12), and the leaders plot “by stealth” (v. 4). What does Matthew want us to understand about who is really in control of these events, and what does that tell us about the cross?
2. The woman with the alabaster jar gave Jesus something costly and was criticized for waste, yet Jesus called it “a beautiful thing” (v. 10). Where in your own walk have you let other people’s sense of what is “reasonable” shrink your devotion to Christ?
3. Judas asks, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” and settles on thirty pieces of silver (vv. 15–16). What does this scene reveal about how sin grows in a heart that is near to Jesus but not surrendered to Him?
4. Judas had walked with Jesus for years, heard every sermon, and watched every miracle, and still betrayed Him. What false security might you be resting in, assuming that closeness to the church or the Bible is the same as a heart surrendered to the Lord?
5. At the table Jesus takes the Passover bread and cup and gives them a new meaning, pointing them to His own body and blood (vv. 26–28). Why does it matter that the Lord’s Supper grows directly out of the Passover, and what is Jesus claiming about His death by doing this?

6. Jesus says the bread and cup are shared “for the forgiveness of sins” (v. 28). When you come to the Lord’s table, how does remembering that His blood was poured out for your forgiveness change the way you examine your own heart beforehand?
7. Jesus tells the Twelve, “You will all fall away because of me this night” (v. 31), quoting the prophecy that the sheep would be scattered when the shepherd is struck. What does it mean that even the failure of the disciples was foreseen and woven into God’s redemptive plan?
8. Peter insists, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away” (v. 33). Where are you most tempted to overestimate your own faithfulness, and what would it look like to depend on the Lord’s strength there instead of your own resolve?
9. Jesus said over the cup, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (v. 28). What is the new covenant Jesus inaugurates here, what does the Lord’s Supper actually mean and accomplish for the church, and how does the New Testament teach us to observe it?
10. Look back across the whole passage, from the plot to the table to Peter’s boast. Name one specific way the Jesus you have met here, the willing sacrifice who gives His body and blood for you, is reshaping how you worship, give, or watch over your own heart this week.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Exodus 12:1–14, the Passover lamb whose blood spared God’s people from death; Jeremiah 31:31–34, God’s promise of a new covenant written on the heart with sins remembered no more; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, Paul handing on the Lord’s Supper as a proclamation of the Lord’s death until He comes; Acts 20:7, the disciples gathering on the first

day of the week to break bread; Hebrews 9:11–14, the blood of Christ securing an eternal redemption.