

What is Jesus Worth to You?

New Castle Bible Church
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Text: Mathew 26:1-16

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 26 takes us into the climax of Matthew's Gospel, it's final movement: the Passion of Jesus Christ. Earlier in the week was Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into the City of David on the back of a lowly donkey.

I can only imagine the disciples feeling embarrassed. Israel's long-awaited messiah riding into Jerusalem on a glorious... donkey. *Jesus, that's not how you make an entrance!*

On Monday or Tuesday, the Lord cleared the temple... and the next morning He boldly went back to the temple to confront His accusers and to teach the people. Matthew 21-23 records all of this for for us.

Chapters 24 and 25 seem to take place later that day—Wednesday evening. Jesus departed the temple. He walked with the disciples through Jerusalem, down the Kidron Valley, and up the Mount of Olives.

The disciples anticipated that Jesus just might set up His kingdom—a physical kingdom, an empire ruled by Him. Israel no more under the thumb of Rome, but Rome answering to Israel. Glory, power, splendor, blessing. *When will you restore Israel, Jesus?*

At the Mount of Olives, Jesus spoke to His disciples saying...
*Guys, things are going to get a whole lot worse before they get better for Israel.
Be ready for My return. Watch eagerly. Wait patiently. Work diligently.*

“When Jesus had finished all these words...” That's where Matthew 26 begins.

When Jesus had finished teaching about things to come...
When He had finished saying that things would get so much worse...

Jesus then said the worst thing of all: “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man [will] be handed over for crucifixion.”

*You know this... You know this, Peter... You know this, James...
You know it, because I've said it over and over.*

Matthew 16:21, 17:22, and 20:17 record three of the times that Jesus said He had come to die. As we enter into Matthew 26, Jesus' death shouldn't have been new information to anyone.

Matthew wants us to see how two people responded to this news. It wasn't anything new. Many of Jesus' followers knew He said He was going to die.

- 1) There's Judas who had reached his breaking point. He had suffered alongside Jesus for three years, always believing there would be a kingdom with glory and riches and splendor for him. Yet, here he realized that wouldn't be the case. He had had enough of Jesus, embittered to the point of murder.
- 2) In contrast to Judas stands someone who wasn't even a disciple: a woman not even named by Matthew. Just a woman. She was the first person who believed that Jesus would die. I'll tell you who she is in a moment, but when Jesus spoke this woman believed Him. In fact, anytime He spoke, she believed Him and kept believing Him.

Judas came to believe that Jesus is worthless. In contrast is this woman: Jesus was worth everything to her. Both of she and Judas were confused in ways. Both hurting. Judas hurt because he thought he had wasted three years following Jesus. She hurt because she knew Jesus would soon die and be taken from her. Nothing made sense to either of them... and they responded very differently.

Confused or not, hurting or fine: Jesus is still worthy. The point of our passage is simply that Jesus is worthy of my worship even when life hurts.

And life does hurt. It is filled with hurt for all of us, which leaves us with a choice:

Will I believe God's Word? Will I draw near to Jesus though the pain doesn't make sense?
Or... will I go my own way?

Whatever circumstance each of you are in today, this text encourages us to believe God's Word and draw near to Jesus.

Believe God's Word, unlike Judas, knowing that Jesus isn't worthless.
Draw near in faith, just this woman did, seeing that Jesus is worth everything.

If you would stand as we read this remarkable text...

Matthew 26:1-16 — 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.” Then 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. But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”

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. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.” But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

You may be seated. Let us pray...

As Matthew looked back on that Wednesday evening, two days before Calvary, he recalled Jesus’ sovereign control over His own death. Very striking to hear a man tell you multiple times that He’s going to die, His death will be in two days. He will be handed over and will die as a criminal nailed to a cross.

Striking! I’ve never heard a man predict His death with such certainty, saying how and when it will happen. Very striking! It reminds us that Jesus was always in complete control.

Remember that in the weeks ahead. When you read that Jesus was beaten and whipped, received the nails through His hands, was scorned and spit upon, and left on a cross to die, remember Matthew 26:2—total control.

Jesus wasn’t “handed over” by the disciples or even by Judas. He was “handed over” by God the Father to die for your sins and for mine.

Acts 2:23 — “delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God”

Many had conspired to kill Jesus throughout His ministry. Here, in Matthew 26, the highest court in the land, the Sanhedrin, is actively conspiring to kill Him. They wanted to “arrest Jesus by stealth” which means they wanted to quietly abduct and then kill Him. They wouldn’t do it personally... they would hire a hit man to do it.

Keep it quiet, no one must know... “lest there be a riot among the people”

But the “definite plan” of God was much different. The Father would hand over His Son to be tried and condemned as criminal, not privately but quite publicly. He would be nailed to a cross for thousands to see, because this was God’s “definite” plan.

But Judas never believed this. In the darkness of his heart, he disbelieved and kept disbelieving Jesus. Trial after trial, Judas disbelieved until He concluded that Jesus isn’t worth 30 pieces of silver. He’s worthless to me.

This text encourages us. When life doesn’t make sense to believe God’s Word, knowing that Jesus isn’t worthless.

I. I Will Believe God’s Word, Knowing that Jesus isn’t Worthless (3-5, 14-16)

Verses 3-5 and 14-16 flow seamlessly, so we will treat them as one unit. Matthew says the chief priests and elders gathered at the court of Caiaphas. The Sanhedrin was Israel’s supreme court, and Caiaphas had called a meeting.

Many people had condemned Jesus for blasphemy or for breaking the Sabbath, but Caiaphas didn’t care about those things.

About two weeks prior to this, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. News traveled fast to the ears of Caiaphas. What happened?

John 11:47-50, 53 — “So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, ‘What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.’ ... So, from that day on they made plans to put [Jesus] to death.”

Very delicate balance to keep peace between the Jews and the Romans... and Jesus was just stirring the pot. *Either we kill Him or all of us will be killed by the Romans.*

Just to give you an idea of the seriousness: In 70 AD, when the Jews did revolt, it was said by Josephus that the Romans couldn’t find enough wood for all the crosses that went up around Jerusalem.

We must eliminate Jesus... It’s for the greater good.

Sadly, by averting the wrath of Rome, Caiaphas invited the wrath of God. Fear of man.

After two weeks of conspiring against Jesus, suddenly “one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot” arrived. One of Jesus’ own men showed up, and all he wanted was some money. *I’ll do it, but I’d like something in return.*

Three years of suffering, poverty, and persecution... what a waste! I’m going to get something out of it!

All of the disciples were slow to believe at times, they said the wrong things, they misunderstood Jesus. But with the exception of Judas, they loved Him. They loved Jesus. So what’s with Judas?

He was willing to suffer as long as there was a pot of gold in the end... but Judas realized there would be no pot, no earthly riches. That growing realization filled his heart with bitterness to the point he was willing to murder.

Judas had stepped so far from believing the Word that Jesus was to him just another so-called messiah, some guy who gets everyone excited and gets everyone killed.

Well, that’s not happening to me!

Judas was the group’s treasurer, which is part of what kept him going. John 12:6 says that Judas “...had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.” Not a moment of weakness. Pilfering had become a regular activity.

When the disciples suffered, and the men had many rough days, most of them drew near to Jesus. Judas, however, drew near to the money box.

No idea what Judas bought with his stolen money... whatever it was, having money helped Judas deal with life.

Jesus can’t satisfy my pain. Jesus doesn’t understand my disappointment. Jesus won’t help me, because Jesus is the problem!

When we disbelieve God, we let ourselves believe lies: Jesus isn’t there, Jesus can’t help me, Jesus doesn’t really care... and so, if I’m going to be happy in life or at peace, I’ve got to get it myself.

When we turn to sin to fill the aches in our heart, we might keep going to church, but in all honesty, Jesus has become worthless.

Judas went to the Sanhedrin and gladly accepted the 30 pieces of silver. The next evening, Thursday evening, Judas would attend the Last Supper like a good disciple. Jesus would wash the traitor’s feet, even offer him a piece of bread. Sadly, that was the final act of love Judas would ever receive from the Son of God. What a tragedy!

Job 5:7 says “man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.” But must remember, friends, that Jesus is worthy of our worship no matter how much life hurts.

The end result of sin isn't joy but deeper and more abiding pain. Believe God's Word. Fill your mind with thoughts of His character.

Hasn't God said He will never leave you, nor forsake You? Hasn't
Isn't our Lord a gentle shepherd? Will He not carry your burdens?
Can He not understand your temptations?
Isn't He sovereign, holding your life in the palm of His hands?

Judas rejected God's Word, but if you keep believing what God has said... you will find that Jesus isn't worthless but worth everything in the midst of every trial you could ever face.

Now, in verses 6:13, we are told to draw near to in faith, seeing that Jesus is worth everything.

II. I Will Draw Near in Faith, Seeing that Jesus is Worth Everything (6-13)

Matthew 26:3-5 and 14-16 flow seamlessly, but pressed between them is this flashback to something that happened earlier in the week.

Verses 6-13 break up the narrative and step out of chronological order. Seems odd, but many of our movies do this. They begin telling a story, flash to something in the past, and then jump back to the present. I've read biographies that do this and many others books as well. That's what Matthew is doing.

We have this glorious flashback that contrasts Judas with someone else. And it wasn't Peter or any of the disciples, just an unnamed woman. John tells us this woman's name was Mary.

Mary was no stranger to the disciples. She and her sister Martha lived with their brother Lazarus in the little town of Bethany. It's just two miles outside Jerusalem. According to John 12, the three wanted to hold a banquet for Jesus and his disciples. Let me explain that...

Twelve men invited plus Jesus and the three of them plus anyone else they might have invited. That's a lot of people! Matthew says that Simon the leper hosted. Maybe Simon's house was larger than Lazarus' house? I don't know, but Simon was a *former* leper. He's someone who had been healed by Jesus and wanted to honor Him.

Disciples plus Simon, Lazarus, and Jesus would have been reclining around a low U-shaped table. No chairs or silverware. Each would have been lying on his left elbow, eating with his right hand. Relaxing on soft mats, feet extended away from the table.

Mary and Martha wanted to serve, bringing food to and from the table. But at some point in the banquet, Mary stopped serving. She walked up to Jesus and poured “an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment” on Him (v. 7).

Odd that Mary stopped serving, but she drew up Jesus from behind. That’s taboo for a woman to have done something like this... and it gets much, much worse than that. She began pouring ointment on Jesus’ body right in the middle of dinner. Oh, and John tells us that Mary began wiping Jesus’ feet with her hair!

When guests entered a home, the host provided a basin so each could wash his feet... but guests washed their own feet. Slaves didn’t even wash feet in this culture. Yet, here’s Mary washing Jesus’ feet... not with a towel but with her own hair. *Jesus, next to You, I’m not even a slave.*

Women didn’t interrupt men or make a scene in that culture.
They didn’t touch men in public or show emotion.

Worse than all of this was the fact that Mary “wasted” nearly a year’s worth of ointment. John 12 says it was 300 days wages... and within a few minutes, gone.

And what did the men do? They were angry. They became “indignant” or condemnatory towards Mary. I can’t imagine how uncomfortable this must’ve been for her... a woman acting in this way in front of a group of angry men. But no fear of man or anything would stop her from worshipping Jesus.

Woman, “this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor!”

Please realize that the disciples didn’t go around alleviating poverty everywhere they went. Anyone who followed Jesus around Galilee and Judea didn’t have a full-time job.

These men had left everything behind to follow Jesus. They survived by relying on the donations of others as they ministered. They were poor. They could’ve used the money, and certainly anyone else who followed Jesus needed some money as well.

The disciples weren’t overflowing with a desire to solve world poverty. No, each of the men were personally offended... most of all was Judas.

This woman is dumping on the ground something that really could helped us!

I have no idea what was said, but they were “troubling” Mary with their words. Here was a group of men scorning a woman when Jesus defended her saying, “She has done a beautiful thing to Me.”

What was so beautiful about this? It was definitely extravagant, but you know what stands out to me? Mary’s faith. She was the first person who believed Jesus would actually die. Look at verse 12. Jesus tells us why Mary did this: “she has done it to prepare Me for burial” (v. 12).

Jesus kept saying He would die. Mary took Him at His word and acted on it. Now, you didn’t anoint people for death while they’re still alive. You did it afterwards, but Jesus had said He would be crucified, which means He’s going to die as a traitor, a criminal.

Mary reasoned: *If Jesus dies as a criminal, like He said He would, I may never be allowed near His body.*

This is why Mary prepared Jesus’ body before He died... and she did it even while knowing He would die as a criminal!

Mary prepared Him with ointments meant only for the body of a king. Incredible faith!

Mary had a pattern of believing Jesus. When He visited her home, Martha was busy serving... but what was Mary doing? Luke 10 says that Mary was sitting at Jesus’ feet clinging to His every word.

Then there was the time that her brother, Lazarus died (John 11). Lazarus was ill, and Jesus wasn’t far away. He could have come to heal Lazarus, but He didn’t. He arrived four days after Lazarus was dead. No one understood why Jesus delayed... that didn’t make any sense to Mary or to Martha. But when He arrived, do you remember what He said to Martha? He said amid her tears, “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” *Yes, your brother is dead, but death answers to Me. Do you believe this?*

Martha gave a remarkable answer, and then Jesus spoke with Mary as well.

Matthew 26 is two weeks after raising Lazarus from the dead. Mary and Martha are serving a dinner in honor of Jesus. Nothing made sense about Lazarus’ death... but then Jesus raised Him from the dead. Nothing made sense about Jesus saying He would die.

So, what did Mary do? Worship. She chose to believe in the one Person who’s always been in control, who always means what He says and never breaks His Word.

She drew near when things didn’t make sense and her heart was breaking.

As opposed to Judas who refused to believe, and saw Jesus as worthless... was Mary who drew near, seeing that Jesus is worth everything.

CONCLUSION

When life gets hard, when things don't make sense... when you say, "Why God? Why is this happening?" That's when you find what Jesus is truly worth to you.

I'm sure no one here today will say, "I believe that Jesus is worthless." No, but how much do you trust Him in your trials? What do you turn to when your heart is heavy? What helps keep you going?

Do you worship Jesus in the midst of adversity? Do you experience His peace in the storm and feel your burden lighten... or do you go it alone?

I want to encourage you to believe God's Word. When life doesn't make sense, draw near to Jesus... and there you will find Him to be your closest friend, more valuable than all you have and all you are.

POST-SERMON

Psalm 27:4 — "One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple."

David was the king of Israel, a man who had all this world could give him... and yet, the "one thing" David wanted was to with God every moment of every day. Like Mary, he saw the exceeding worth of knowing God and just wanted to draw near.

Jesus, our King, our Lord and Savior, our friend. May you draw near to Him today.

Before we go to our benediction, please join us tonight for a special time of boasting in all that the Lord has done here. Our congregational meeting starts at 6pm. And if you can't join us in person, please watch online. Very exciting to look back at God's work, celebrate what He's done, and look ahead. I hope you can join us!