

# Gospel of Matthew 26:1~16

## *Betrayal or Devotion?!*



I don't know about you, but I know that behavior that I consider betrayal, especially by someone I think of as a friend is very hard on me! I have told you before that I am not one to shed tears easily. I often wish it was *easier* for me. I feel sad things deeply, of course, but my tear ducts are only moved to produce spontaneous tears by the most dramatic events that have somehow brought me great loss! The deaths of family members, close friends, will do it, but when I am betrayed by a friend – unjustly accused, blamed, harangued, disrespected, humiliated – these actions can move me to tears. If they are doing to me what I would never do to them, it is a type of death to me! I know that in that moment that relationship is changed forever, and I grieve that deeply. I valued the deep friendship, and now it is lost! It has happened! It does not mean I won't forgive them, because, under the teachings of Jesus I must - and of course, I want to anyway. But it still will never be the same! The trust level has been destroyed! Now, if I *deserve* a confrontation, that is a different story! Then I value a friend's loving rebuke and counsel. They are doing the right thing and I will love them the more for it! That is TRUE friendship, and I can receive it if done lovingly and with humility! But betrayal is different. It is all wrong! It ends up sickening the soul like poison and sucking the life out of me! It brings great confusion and sadness! It begs the question - "*Did they not love me as I loved them?*"

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I empathize with Jesus as the plot against Him thickens in chapter 26. He must now encounter betrayal by His disciples. It will be hard on Him! It is the beginning of His sufferings and it must have hurt like the worst of His blows!

By the way – we are skipping over chapter 25 – the parables of the 10 virgin/bridesmaids, the parable of the talents, and the separation of the sheep from the goats at "*the end of the age*". My brother touched upon it when he was here a month ago, but I think I want a go at it also as it is the perfect way to finish up the book of Matthew! It speaks to the various responses of people to the gospel of Jesus and to His purposes – which is essential information as we determine our own response to the gospel and all its implications!

**Vs. 1-5** – The chapter begins with Jesus warning His disciples that He will be arrested in days. In the meantime, the enemies of Jesus gathered and conspired. They are determined now and committed to murder Him. They are not sure how yet, but their course is set. This atrocious behavior is to be expected from one's hateful and bitter enemies – especially when power and politics are in play!

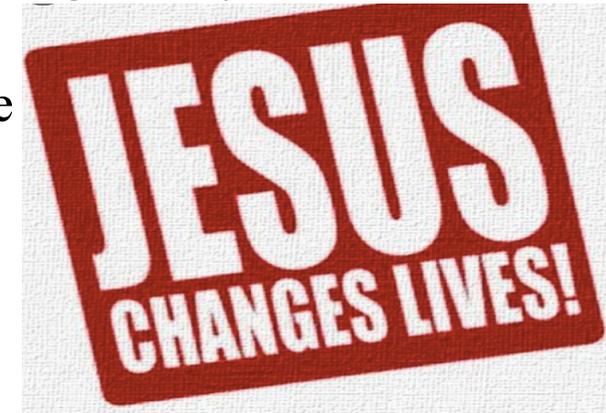


Then the chapter moves to the anointing of Jesus. Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, is the one who anointed Jesus. Evidently this was a outrageously expensive cologne, and it is all gone in one extravagant act of devotion, as she pours it out upon the feet of Jesus! And the disciples recoil a bit. What was she doing? Wasn't this maybe a bit inappropriate – or taking it a step beyond decency?! But one of them is particularly put out by the exorbitant waste of money this act represents! It says “the disciples” here in Matthew, but John's gospel names names! I'll bet you can't guess which of the 12 disciples was doing the lion's share of the protesting?! Yes, John's gospel says it was Judas, and also identifies the woman who is mysteriously *unidentified* in Matthew's gospel.

**[Jn. 12:1-8]** – The missing details – about a pint of pure nard (spikenard)– about \$45 in a day when workmen earned about 15-17 cents a day! It was a root extract imported all the way from India where it still grows today on the sides of the Himalayan Mountains.

Judas led the objections. Judas was very much trusted! He was entrusted with the group's money! That says something about how much he was trusted! But it was later discovered that he had been skimming money from the money bag!

So then the story abruptly turns. They are at the home of “Simon the Leper”, who, it is thought, may have been the father of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. Why he would have retained the nickname of “the Leper” is unknown. Surely Jesus had healed the man. He healed lepers all the time! He was probably staying at this house with this family because this family owed Jesus for the healing of the family patriarch! They counted Jesus as the closest of friends! Mary, obviously an emotional person, is also grateful to Jesus beyond words, for her brother Lazarus’s life, because Jesus had recently resurrected Lazarus from the dead! Jesus had had a major impact upon this family!



Not only that, they had come to truly believed in Him! So Mary comes to Jesus, breaks the slender neck or a seal on an alabaster jar that contains some kind of strong smelling perfume-like substance “nard”, and pours it on His feet, and wipes it dry with her long hair. Jesus puts context into this strange scene. There is nothing sensuous about this act. Mary is both grieving (for Jesus) as He has been saying with increasing frequency that He is going to die soon by crucifixion, and she is expressing her devotion! This is not the only family Jesus had a major impact upon. \*2000 years later, for example, He has had a major impact upon MY family! My mother’s was the second of 13 children in her family to give her heart to Jesus – I believe she was 12! Her mother, (my grandmother), an abused child herself, used some very bad parenting practices on her children - definitely severe and abusively so! But when Grandma gave her heart to Jesus, my mother said all that changed! What I experienced myself is that the person *I knew* was a gentle woman and kind and patient with her grandchildren (not an easy thing)! Jesus took the potential resentment from my mother and gave her a good and open spirit. She had the ability to bring her children up in a different way, without physical and verbal abuse! The love of Jesus was definitely a part of our home!

The Living Christ also had a major impact on my father! In his early 20s he was already an alcoholic, and (I was told) a brawler. He had a foul mouth and a terrible temper. But one night, about 2 or 3 in the morning actually, under pressure from God’s Spirit (as he tells it) – at the end of his rope, and in a half-drunken state and exhausted from not having slept – he gave his life to Jesus! His prayer to God was simply – “*Okay God, I give up!*” And so he too became a child of God, and God began working diligently on his character. It took awhile to iron out the wrinkles there, but by the time I came along, He was a good and godly man, solid, faithful to Christ, dependable, and a just and good father to me! Jesus worked miracles in my parents that have greatly affected their descendants – my life, my children’s lives, and my children’s children! They are following Jesus too and He makes a *huge difference* in the lives of those that are devoted to Him!

I could not be more grateful to Jesus for the wonderful impact He has had on my family! It is one of the reasons I really, and I mean really, believe! Because the love He bestowed upon my family has changed the course of our lives and has shaped our futures in the most positive way! Of course we were *willing* followers of Christ. He does miracles in the lives of all who will stop at nothing to cooperate with the work of His Spirit on our hearts, our minds, our value system, our priorities, our attitude, our purpose in life, etc., etc.! But He is the ultimate game-changer!



Well, He had certainly changed the lives of Mary and her family 2000 years ago! I think she was one of the first to really get Him – who He actually was! She was convinced that He could not be just a man! She would have NEVER done this to a regular man, in front of a group of men! But it was different with Jesus. And Jesus defends her and tell Judas to leave her alone and why! This act had prophetic meaning. He was being anointed for his burial! Bodies spoiled quickly in that hot semi-arid climate so bodies were often perfumed to keep it from smelling bad before burial. It is probably for the same reason that every funeral today is accompanied by large, aromatic bouquets of flowers! They fill up the entire room with that sweet flower smell! The practice may be left over from before the days of embalming with preservatives, when the smell of a quickly decaying body could be noticeable.

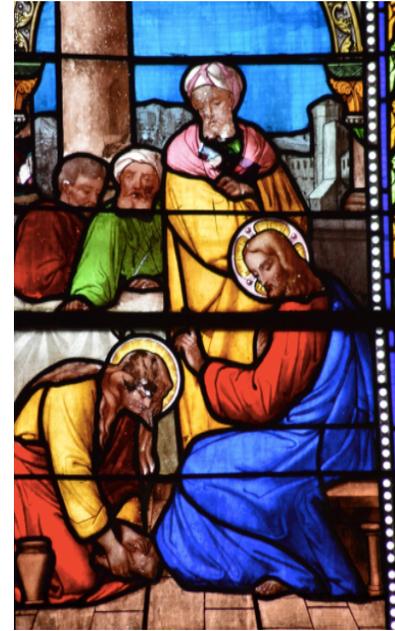
Anyway, after Jesus defends Mary's actions,.. I mean, the man, Judas, is really incensed/disgusted - so much so, that the first thing he did was go to the chief priest and the pharisees, and offered to betray Jesus! All four gospels testify to it! For their part, the enemies of Jesus are thrilled! They finally have a strategy! They finally have a way in! Now, to be honest, I'm not exactly sure why they needed a traitor. It seems to me that they could have just arrested Jesus if they had wanted to - without Judas turning on Him. But there is undoubtedly information missing in the story. Perhaps Judas was providing information on the movements of Jesus, so that the arrest could be made under the cover of darkness – which, of course, it ultimately was!

So, chapter 26 can be broken down into the two reactions to Jesus. One reaction was that of Mary. Jesus commended the extravagant action she took in no uncertain terms. *“She has done a beautiful thing to me”*

It is a phrase that should ring in our heads! It is something I would like Him to say about me one day! I owe Him *so* much! I am *so* grateful to Him! He is the One who gave His life for me! Could anything be more beautiful than to give one’s life for one’s friends, much less for one’s enemies!

**[Rom. 5:6-8,10]**

He is God! He lives in His heavenly splendor, surrounded by the adoring creatures of heaven. He didn’t need to do this! He could have chosen a less personally-expensive way! But the apostles tell us that He is a God of such love – the depths of which we cannot begin to comprehend! He was compelled by love, drawn to the cross by love of me and you. \*If one of my grandchildren fell into a raging torrent, I would be absolutely be compelled to jump in after them to try to save them knowing I would probably die! But love compels you to acts of heroism! You know if you do not risk your life and go through the ordeal and the risk, that your life will be over anyway as you would have to live with the pain of the shame of having done nothing! Well, Jesus did not stand aside and let us die! A beautiful love would not let Him! I love Him for that in return! I cannot love Him with the completeness that He loves me – not even close! I am not capable of it. But I am touched deeply by the extreme love of Jesus! **AND...** I would like to do something beautiful for Him! I mean - don’t you want that too? I can’t be the only one, and I am certain I am not! I think every true follower would love to hear those words spoken by Christ about something they have done for Him – *“Kurt, you have done a beautiful thing for me”*! Listen, as far as we know, none of the other disciples of Christ were commend them in such a way. But this woman disciple moved Him!



Mary found something special to do for Jesus! It was oozing with the metaphorical imagery of Christ’s death and burial. And that image of her wiping the feet of Jesus with her hair, in public, and Jesus just letting her do it and being pleased with her devotion rather than being uncomfortable with it,.. Well, it just captures the imaginations of Christians everywhere for all time! We don’t get to do something like that and I can’t imagine we ever will! Maybe if we are lucky, we will see that opportunity to rise out of the crowd and do something special for Jesus. Who knows!



What Christ really wants from us is nothing sensational. The truth is that it is our *FAITHFULNESS* that is the best course of action! It takes self-discipline, endurance, and abject determination to keep our heads down and just keep going forward when following Jesus. Sometimes following Jesus and loving people seems like slogging through thick mud. It's like it sticks to our boots and seems to weigh a ton! It tires us out; we slow down and we get discouraged! We become *worn down!*

At times, following Jesus can *seem* joyless! We are tired of shouldering the burden of our own problems, but then we are called upon to love other people and to help them with their problems and concerns! It gets heavy! Honestly, it does! Anyone in leadership in the church has felt that weight at times, and has wondered if they really want to do this! But then you break through that wall, and the purposes of God become a joy once again, for in our faithfulness in loving people and serving Christ, our involvement on the front lines becomes the means by which we see these brilliance faith-boosting glimpses of the hand of God at work in a powerful way! We see Him change the lives of the people we have been loving on His behalf! That is a beautiful thing! Stay faithful my friends! Jump in and keep your boots muddy!

## [Philippians 2:20,21]

This is the other reaction to Jesus and this is betrayal! It smells of Judas! When the followers of Jesus turn from the path of loving people on behalf of Jesus and go back to focusing on their own interests, then Satan has won! People were doing it in the early church, and the problem has only worsened! When this is going on en-mass, the forward progress of the Kingdom of God grinds to a halt! Listen - the whole of the gospel of Jesus is to go and win the world to Himself through the self-sacrificing love of His own people! If we regress back to following our own interests, all is lost! This is devastating to the momentum of the gospel! We cannot,.. we must not abandon the purposes of God in favor of our own! I'm telling you that these unprecedented times with unprecedented opportunities for the Gospel. If you are trapped at home, your electronic devices are instrument of God's grace and love! Do not turn inward during these times, but may the Spirit of God break through to turn your hearts back to the cause of Christ to reach and redeem a world that is lost to Him, back to Him. Now is the time to redouble our efforts, not draw back into our shells in fear! Every Christ-follower should come away from this enforced isolation with carpal tunnel in their hands and wrists for all the handling of our phones and tablets on behalf of Christ! I'm telling you that we can yet win the day! 3 weeks ago that seemed impossible! Today it does not – if God's people will deny themselves, stay faithful and focused, and seek to do a beautiful thing for Jesus! May the love of Jesus compel you to take risks you would not have taken before! May His heart beat in you and give you a love for people that you have not felt in a long time! Love Jesus with your persistent faithfulness to Him and to His purposes! Show the world the true and undeniable love of God! Remember, you were bought at an exorbitant price – the life of Christ! You belong to Him now! Your life is His forever, not your own! [1 Cor. 6:19b, 20]



Remember – we meet again in this way, next Friday - God willing! The time is 6:30 and we will be live streaming our Good Friday service into your homes! We hope you can worship with us then. Don't forget to tune in pre-prepared with some juice and crackers or bread, as we will be worshipping together with communion! Then, of course, Resurrection Sunday next Sunday – our victory celebration! We'll see you then!