

June 12, 2005 by Steve Brandon



# Anticipating the Death of Jesus

## Matthew 26:1-16

- 1. The perspective of Jesus (verses 1-2)**
- 2. The perspective of enemies (verses 3-5)**
- 3. The perspective of love (verses 6-13)**
- 4. The perspective of hate (verses 14-16)**

One of the grandest of all foot races is the marathon. For 26 miles, 385 yards, those who run the race push their bodies to the extreme. Every mile or so, they are refreshed with a drink of water or Gatorade, as they press on to the finish line. I love how the finish line works in the Olympic games. When they are nearing the end of the race, they enter into the Olympic stadium through a side door and run the last ¼ mile on the track. As the audience in the stadium watches the runners enter the stadium, they begin to anticipate the end of the race and the resulting celebration by the winner. They can rise to their feet and begin to cheer on those who are racing for the gold!

This describes our journey in the book of Matthew. For three and a half years, we have been running through the book of Matthew. This morning, we arrive on the home stretch of our study. We have entered the stadium for our final quarter mile around the track. The finish line is in sight. Everything is anticipating the finish of the story. I trust that you will be a bit like the crowd at the Olympic games. We are going to see some tremendously exciting activity taking place in these chapters. For, what takes place in these chapters is our salvation! The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is everything to us! It is our hope! It is what God has done to save us!

We aren't saved from our sins by following a clever teacher. We aren't saved from our sins by some formula of truth. We aren't saved from our sins by discovering something within us. No! We are saved from our sins because of the work of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. God eternal came to earth in the flesh to live among us. By dying on the cross, Jesus took our sins upon Himself. We can look back some 2,000 years ago and confidently say that Jesus dealt with our sins with finality upon the cross. These last three chapters of Matthew will bring this out clearly for us.

The story unfolds for us here in Matthew 26 with a bit complexity. It's not that it's complex due to difficult in understanding. It's complex in that Matthew is trying to give us a full picture of what took place before the death of Jesus. In real life, things take place all at once. But when looking back and telling a story of what happened, you need to tell it from different perspectives.

Think about a typical novel. One chapter is devoted to the development of one character: his actions and his thoughts and his experiences and his perspective. The next chapter takes you to a different place with different people and different events. And then, in a future chapter, some of the characters collide. But at that point, you understand what is going on because the author has developed these characters for you beforehand.

This is what is taking place at the beginning of Matthew 26. But, rather than taking an entire chapter to develop each character and event, Matthew spends only a few verses on each one. We read of one scene for a few verses, and then Matthew's pen flashes to another scene, where we see a different event taking place. Eventually, all of these events will converge upon the arrest of Jesus, which will lead to His eventual death.

The title of my message this morning is "Anticipating the Death of Jesus." We will look at four scenes that will help set the stage for the death of Jesus. Each of these scenes will span the spectrum. We will see the death of Jesus from the of Jesus, Himself. We will see it from the perspective of His enemies. Matthew will give us a perspective of a loving follower and a betrayer. With each of these scenes, we see that the days of Jesus are numbered. That's the point of this passage. All of these scenes point to the nearness of His death. Let's begin by looking at ...

### 1. The perspective of Jesus (verses 1-2)

Jesus knew that His death was at hand. We read, ...

Matthew 26:1-2

And it came about that when Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion."

These words bring us back to a familiar scene: Jesus telling His disciples that He was going to die. In fact, this is the fourth time that Matthew records Jesus predicting His death. These predictions all came after it was revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Christ. Once His disciples understood that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, Jesus sought to continually remind them of what this means. Sure it means glory in the kingdom someday as the disciples had sought (Matt. 20:20-28). But, it also meant suffering and death. For this reason, Jesus kept telling his disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up

on the third day. It would do well for us to review these verses:

Matthew 16:21, "From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."

Matthew 17:22-23, "And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.' And they were deeply grieved."

Matthew 20:18-19, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up."

And here in our text this morning, Matthew 26:2, Jesus will again repeat it for all of them to hear! "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion."

Perhaps Jesus felt the need to again remind His disciples of His plan, especially after what He had just finished telling them about the future kingdom. Verse 1 tells us that Jesus reminded them once again of His death after He "had finished all these words." "These words" refer to the Olivet Discourse, in which Jesus sets Himself up as the coming and reigning ruling King of the Universe! Jesus said that the temple would be destroyed (Matt. 24:2) and things will get pretty bad: wars, earthquakes, famines, etc. Jesus said that the sun and the moon and the stars would all grow dark (Matt. 24:29). He would also come on the clouds in splendor and glory (Matt. 24:30) to be judge of the whole world (Matt. 25:31-32). How easy it would have been His disciples to forget the words that Jesus had previously spoken on several occasions regarding His upcoming death. So filled may their minds have been with the glory of Jesus, that they forgot the suffering. So focused were they upon the crown, that they forgot the cross. So focused were they upon the victory, that they forgot the road to obtain that victory.

In verse 2, Jesus is very plain and clear with them about when His death would take place. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus focused His attention upon the future, even hinting at times that there might be a delay. For instance, when the 10 virgins were waiting the appearing of the bridegroom, which took longer than expected (Matt. 25:5). Also, when the master was gone "a long time." It was a sufficient delay to allow the slaves to double the talents entrusted to them (Matt. 25:19-20). But in verse 2 (of Matthew 26), Jesus puts a definite time frame upon His death. He said that it would take place very soon. In fact, it will be within a matter of days. "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion." Though His coming may delay, His death wouldn't. It would come in two days. It's not far away. It's not next year or next month or next week. It's this week ... only a few hours away.

In linking His death with the Passover, surely the disciples missed the full implication of these words, but it ought not to be the case with us. The Passover was the time in which families all around Jerusalem would remember their redemption from the land of Egypt, by taking an unblemished lamb into their home for a few days (Ex. 12:3-5). Then, on the eve of the Passover, they would kill it (Ex. 12:6) and take of its blood and put it upon the lintels of their houses (Ex. 12:7). It would be a reminder to all of God's great redemption of the people of Israel.

In linking His death with the Passover, Jesus was seeking to link His upcoming death with everything that the Passover represents. As Jesus was sacrificed during the time of the Passover, Jesus would become "our Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7), as Paul said. No longer would the Israelites need to look to an unblemished lamb. Rather, the Israelites would be able to look to an unblemished Messiah, who is the only one who can take away the wrath of God. Jesus made this eminently clear when He celebrated the Passover with His disciples (as we shall see next week). He said, "This celebration that you experience every year is going to take a drastic change. No longer will you celebrate it in remembrance of Moses. You will begin to celebrate it in remembrance of Me! I'm the true Passover lamb to which all of the other lambs have pointed."

Noticeably absent from Jesus' words is the mention of His resurrection. I suspect that the only significance of this is that they were eliminated for the sake of clarity. When you put forth many details, often the crucial details are easily lost. It's not that Jesus has stopped talking about the resurrection. (It will come again in verse 32). It's simply that at this point, Jesus is focussing the heart of His disciples upon His upcoming death (which is the theme of our text this morning). He doesn't want for them to think about anything else. It is His death that they need to deal with at this moment in time!

The death of Jesus was no accident. Jesus wasn't some casualty of a political ploy that went astray. Jesus wasn't caught in the crossfire, killed accidentally, when the bullet, intended for another, accidentally killed Him. Jesus wasn't surprised to find Himself nailed to a Roman cross. Jesus died a death upon the cross because it was His plan to die during the Passover. It was what Jesus was anticipating.

In fact, this is the entire reason why He came to earth! "The Son of Man didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). That's (1) the perspective of Jesus (verses 1-2). He knew that He was going to die. Let's focus next upon ...

## **2. The perspective of enemies (verses 3-5)**

The enemies of Jesus were the leaders of the religious establishment: Chief priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. They all hated Him and wanted Him dead. Beginning in verse 3, we read of a special meeting that these leaders convened.

Matthew 26:3-5

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill Him. But they were saying, "Not during the festival, lest a riot occur among the people."

This was a meeting of strategy. For a long time, they had set their hearts against Jesus. In Matthew 12:14 we read that "the Pharisees went out, and counseled together against Him, as to how they might destroy Him." For months, their strategy had been to trap Him in something that He might do or in something that He might say. They wanted for Jesus to mess up in some way. They asked Him for signs from heaven with the intention of trapping Him (Matt. 16:1). If Jesus would perform some type of sign, they could easily claim that Jesus was satanic (Matt. 12:24). They asked Him difficult questions with the intention of trapping Him. They asked about difficult subjects such as their traditions (Matt. 15:2) or the sticky situations of divorce (Matt. 19:3). Hoping to involve the Romans, they asked Jesus about taxes (Matt. 22:17). They even tried to point out how ridiculous the resurrection was (Matt. 22:28).

But it reached a point where Jesus had behaved in such a manner as to be completely above reproach. When Jesus had answered every question without being trapped, they didn't dare ask Him any more questions (Matt. 22:46). At this point, Jesus turned up the heat by denouncing the great hypocrisy of all these leaders (as recorded in Matthew 23). The battle lines were drawn. Jesus was on the side of righteousness and truth. The religious leaders were on the side of wickedness and error.

Assassination was their only option. Verse 4 tells us that these religious leaders "plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill Him" (Matt. 26:4). Their plan was to think long and hard about a way in which to deceive Jesus into walking into a trap, that they might take Him away and kill Him. In future years, these same leaders had attempted to do the same with Paul. They had planned to call him to a meeting, setting an ambush for him as he walked along the way and kill him (Acts 23:15). With Jesus, such an action certainly wasn't going to be an easy thing. On several other occasions, the gospel writers recorded for us how they had already tried to kill Jesus. When Jesus claimed to be the sovereign God, they "picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple" (John 8:59). On another occasion, they were seeking to seize Him, "and He eluded their grasp" (John 10:39). Try as you might to kill Jesus, somehow, He has always been able to elude His attackers. He was a little bit like the cat who came back.

The Cat Came Back  
by Harry S. Miller (with later folk additions)

Well, just like everybody you have troubles of your own  
But let me tell you mister of the sorrow I have known!  
I had an old grey cat, that I couldn't bear to keep  
He spent the nights a-howl'n and he wouldn't let me sleep.

So I put him in a box and I tied it up quite well.  
I had some fellows help me and I paid them not to tell.  
We put it in a boxcar, the west-bound 7:10  
The train pulled away and was never seen again.

But the Cat came back, the very next day  
Yes the Cat came back and he wouldn't stay away!  
Meow, kitty! Meow, so pretty!  
Meow, such a pity, but the Cat came back!

So I took him to the harbor and I put in on a ship.  
I bid him bon voyage! for that oceanic trip!  
The captain was obligin' and glad to help us out  
We tied him to the anchor so that there could be no doubt!

Well, we heard that sad report of that might storm at sea  
And though it may sound heartless, I was happy as could be!  
The paper said the ship went down beneath a heavy gale  
And not a single soul was left to tell the awful tale!

But the Cat came back, the very next day  
Yes the Cat came back and he wouldn't stay away!  
Meow, kitty! Meow, so pretty!  
Meow, such a pity, but the Cat came back!

So I gave him to a scientist, destined for the moon.  
The Cat was used for ballast in an outer space balloon!  
I guess you know what happened, that balloon's up there still,  
And early that next morning, guess what came across the hill??

(Meow! That's right.)

Now, everyone in town was sworn to shoot that Cat on sight.  
With that crazy cat around you couldn't sleep at night!  
We even formed a posse just to hunt that critter down!  
You could hear the guns a-blazin' as they ran him out of town!

But the Cat came back, the very next day  
Yes the Cat came back and he wouldn't stay away!

Meow, kitty! Meow, so pretty!  
Meow, such a pity, but the Cat came back!

The reason why Jesus was able to allude His attackers is because His hour had not yet come. The irony here is that when His hour did come, those who were seeking to kill Jesus had decided that they didn't want to kill Him. As they thought about the timing, they knew that the upcoming days would be a terrible time in which to kill Him. It was the Passover. At the time of the Passover, crowds ascended upon Jerusalem. The town of 30,000 would have a up to a million visitors coming to town. The murder of Jesus would certainly set off a riot among the people against the religious leaders. As the peace would be disturbed, Rome would get involved and the power of the religious leaders would be decreased. So they decided, "Not during the festival" (verse 5). It was a wise choice for them. Waiting until the crowds were gone would make it much easier and cause much fewer problems later on down the line.

What is so intriguing about their decision is that it was completely contrary to God's plans. The Lord had planned that Jesus would die during the feast. The chief priests and the elders had agreed that Jesus needed to die, but they didn't want to have Him killed during the feast. And when God makes a plan, and a man makes a different plan, who wins? God does. Everytime! Proverbs 16:9 says, "The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps." Try as you might to escape the sovereign hand of God, and you will never do it. This is greatly illustrated in the story that Peter Marshal, one-time chaplain to the United States Senate, once told.

Marshal told of a man who worked as the servant of a wealthy merchant.

"This servant had gone into town to shop for the day when suddenly he felt someone brush heavily against his shoulder. Somewhat offended, he turned toward the person who had jostled him, and found himself staring into a pair of eyes that spoke death to him. Panicking, he dropped everything and ran home. His master saw him running breathlessly toward the house, and met him on the front steps.

"What on earth is the matter?" asked the master.

"Oh, sir! Someone in the marketplace rudely brushed me, and when I turned to face him, he looked like the Angel of Death to me. He too had a look of shock on his face. It was almost as if he wanted to grab me but then backed away. I am afraid, sir. I don't want to go back to the market."

"Saddle one of our horses and ride all day till you reach the distant village of Samara," the master said. "Stay there till you get word from me that it is safe for you to return."

The servant rode off, and the master made his way to the market to find the person who had so frightened his servant. As he wound his way through the crowded streets, he suddenly came face to face with this strange looking individual.

"Who are you?" the merchant said. "Are you the one who just scared my servant?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Why did you frighten him?"

"Well, I was truly surprised to see him here. I am the Angel of Death, and I chose to spend the day here before heading to my stop for tonight. You see, it was not so much that I surprised him, as that he surprised me. I did not expect to see him here because I have an appointment with him tonight in Samara." [1]

Just as the Angel of Death had an appointment with this servant in Samara, so also did Jesus of Nazareth have an appointment upon the cross in a mere two days. The schemes of the religious leaders to the contrary weren't going to prevent the plans of God from carrying forward. "The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps" (Prov. 16:9).

Anticipating the death of Jesus, we have seen, (1) the perspective of Jesus (verses 1-2) and (2) the perspective of enemies (verses 3-5). We come now to ...

### **3. The perspective of love (verses 6-13)**

This comes in verses 6-13. It's the account of a woman anointing Jesus before His death with some costly perfume.

Matthew 26:6-13

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it upon His head as He reclined at the table. But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, "Why this waste? For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. For the poor you have with you always; but you do not always have Me. For when she poured this perfume upon My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of in memory of her."

When you compare this account to the gospel of John, you discover more details. For instance, in John, you find that this event probably happened before the triumphal entry. John is very clear that this event took place "six days before the Passover" (John 12:1). This isn't a

contradiction in the Bible. It teaches us that Matthew isn't trying to be strictly chronological in his relating to us of the passion narrative. Rather, He is being thematic. Like I said at the beginning of my message this morning, he is a writer, who is anticipating the death of Jesus from varying perspectives. All of these perspectives are focussing on the soon-coming death of Jesus. In these verses, we see Jesus being "prepared ... for burial" (verse 12).

This scene begins with Jesus in Bethany, in the home of Simon the leper (according to verse 6). We can safely assume that Jesus had cleansed Simon of his leprosy at some point before this, for otherwise, Jesus would have been violating the Law of Moses, to keep your distance from a leper (Lev. 13-14). Simon had certainly wanted to demonstrate his great love to Jesus, by hosting. The gospel of John tells us that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were also there with Jesus, along with all of the disciples. As it was a fairly large gathering, Martha was serving those who were at the table. Martha's sister Mary was the woman who anointed Jesus with the perfume.

Verse 7 gives the details of what she did. We read, "A woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it upon His head as He reclined at the table." Matthew identifies this perfume as being "very costly." John said that it was worth three hundred denarii, which puts the cost of the perfume to me somewhere in the neighborhood of \$20,000 - \$30,000 dollars. Some commentators say that it was probably imported from India, which made it so expensive. [\[2\]](#)

When the disciples saw what Mary had done and began to calculate the cost of the perfume that she had poured out upon Jesus, they weren't too pleased in the least. Their response is recorded for us in verse 8. They were indignant, which means that they were angered at such an action. They said, "Why this waste? For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor" (verses 8b-9). John tells us in his account that Judas was the ringleader of this complaint, "not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it" (John 12:6). (What a great picture of sin this is. One person stirs dissatisfaction among others, who eventually become his own voice in protest, to push another agenda).

These disciples were directing their responses at poor Mary, who was acting in love for her Savior. Jesus comes to her rescue, by asking His disciples why they were belittling the woman. He said, "why do you bother the woman?" (verse 10). I'm sure that they easily could have justified their responses. "Lord, think about it. That ointment that she just placed on your head is worth 300 denarii! She wasted it all! It was a terrible thing that she did. Think of the benefits that such a sum of money might do to help the poor. Don't you care about the poor people? It was a waste of money! Doesn't God call us to be good stewards? 'Waste not, want not! Lord!' But, she has wasted it all!"

From a logical standpoint, certainly, it was a waste. I wouldn't argue with the disciples. They have a point. But, what they don't understand is that love is extravagant. What appears to be waste in the mind of others is a gift willingly offered by love.

O'Henry tells the short story of a man and a woman, Jim and Della Young. Though they were poor in material wealth, they were rich in their love for one another. The story begins on Christmas Eve, with Della wondering what she will get her beloved husband for Christmas. For months, she had been saving all of her pennies to be able to purchase something for him, but all she could muster up was a mere one dollar and eighty-seven cents. Della was desperately trying to figure out what she might purchase for Jim. She knew that there were only two possessions in their home which they valued at all. One was Jim's gold watch, which his grandfather and his father owned, but now was in Jim's hands. The other was Della's beautiful, long hair. Reaching below her knees, her hair rippled and shined like a cascade of brown waters. After a bit of thought, Della decided to sell her hair, so that she would be able to purchase a Christmas present for Jim. She went to a store that sells hair goods of all kinds and asked if they might want to purchase her hair. For such nice hair, she was given \$20. With her hair cut off, she bounded out of the store, looking for a gift for Jim. Searching from store to store, she finally found the perfect gift for her husband: a nice chain for his watch. It was \$21, which she could afford, now that she had sold her hair. So, she came home with a chain for Jim's watch and 87 cents to spare.

Della was fixing dinner when Jim arrived at home. He was a bit later than usual, but that didn't matter much to Della. She was excited to give Jim his present. When Jim arrived at home and saw that Della had cut her hair, he simply stood and stared. Della cried to him, "Jim, darling, ... don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice-- what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

Before Della could give her gift to Jim, Jim showed her why he was so stunned. He had purchased a set of combs for her to use in her beautiful hair. "Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone."

She took these combs, she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!" And then, Della held out her hand to Jim to show him the wonderful chain that she had purchased for him. She said, "Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it." Jim sadly told Della, "I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs." [\[3\]](#)

We might easily say that what took place with Jim and Della was a tragedy. But such is love. Love is willing to sacrifice greatly for the good of others, even when it seems unreasonable. Even when it costs your most precious possession, love will willingly sacrifice.

Think about flowers. When men give flowers to their wives, from a logical standpoint of view, it can be seen easily as waste. To be sure, flowers are very pretty and smell very nice. But in a few days, flowers will wilt. And in a week or two, they find their way to the garbage. Last Summer, it just so happened that my wife and I were apart from each other on the day of our 12th anniversary. (She was in California and I was in Illinois). As an expression of my love to her, I called up a florist and sent her a dozen red roses. The florist in California carefully placed these dozen red roses into a nice looking arrangement and delivered them to Yvonne in California. Yvonne and I were recently talking about the cost of this little venture. It cost us \$70. Now, from all logical standpoints, you might call it a waste. But, from the perspective of love, it was a

natural way to express my love to my wife.

It is a natural thing to sacrifice to demonstrate your love for others. That's what this woman did. She was acting out of love to Jesus. To her, \$20,000-\$30,000 wasn't too much to spend on her Lord. The disciples objected on logical grounds. To them, they considered it a waste. But notice in verse 10, what the disciples call a "waste," Jesus calls "a good deed." "Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me." (verse 10). Sure, it may have been wasteful, but as an expression of love, it was perfectly adequate.

Jesus then goes after the logic of the disciples, who tried to explain that this money could have been given to the poor. Jesus said, "The poor you have with you always; but you do not always have Me. For when she poured this perfume upon My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial." (verses 11-12). By these words, Jesus says, "I'm leaving soon. My days are numbered. I will be with you for only a few more days. Your opportunities to demonstrate your love directly to Me are almost over. Regarding the poor, you will have abundant opportunities. Regarding Me, you will have few opportunities."

When a loved one leaves our presence, we know how to focus our attention upon the one leaving, knowing that life will continue on later. Those of you who read Adoniram Judson's biography with the church will remember when Adoniram and Nancy were set to sail for Burma. When they were to commission Adoniram and his four friends to be the first American missionaries, the church was packed! At least 1500 people were there to witness the event. So packed was the auditorium that "the aisles could be traced only by the ridges or seams made by the people standing. ... The platform around the high white pulpit was completely filled by members of the ecclesiastical council and various dignitaries. ... Everything said and done [in the service] ... conveyed the spirit of farewell. The audience realized it was seeing the five men being bid a farewell that in some respects approached that bade at the edge of a grave in the prospect of an eventual resurrection." <sup>4</sup>

This is what was taking place with Jesus. He was leaving soon. His disciples seemed clueless. But not Mary. She expressed her love to Him by covering his body with sweet-smelling perfume, whose aroma covered the entire house. I'm sure that for weeks that the smell continued to permeate Simon's house, as this ointment certainly spilled on the table and onto the floor. Long after Jesus died and rose again, the sweet smell still lingered. Perhaps every now and then, Simon would have been at home and caught a whiff of the perfume that had been poured out upon Jesus. At that moment, all of the wonderful memories of what this woman had done would flood into his mind. He would think of her great love for her savior.

This sweet smell continues today, even for us. Oh, we may not smell the fragrance of the perfume. But, as we hear the story repeated again, we can experience many of the same emotions that Simon experienced as he reflected upon Mary's great act of devotion. Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of in memory of her" (verse 13). Such Scripture is being fulfilled at Rock Valley Bible Church this morning. Her act of love continues to have its effect down until today.

Her example is a great model for us to follow. We ought to love the Lord in this manner. No sacrifice ought to be too great to demonstrate our love for Him. Paul said, "I urge you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Rom. 12:1). Why did Mary sacrifice this perfume for Jesus? It's because of His great kindness and mercy to her, which gave her reason to respond to Him. This is what Paul says. Because of God's great kindness and mercy towards you, you ought to respond in whole-hearted sacrificial love to Jesus. Do you know anything of this? Do you know anything of complete sacrificial dedication to the Lord, where no sacrifice is too great?

When David was offered the threshing floor of Araunah as a place to offer sacrifices, it was offered to him for free. But, he refused it! He said, "I will surely buy it from you for a price, for I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God which cost me nothing" (2 Sam. 24:24). How many there are who live nice Christian lives without knowing anything of sacrifice at all!

Malachi, the prophet, rebuked the people of Israel, who offered sacrifices that were blind, lame, sick and even stolen (Malachi 1:8, 13). The Israelites had no need for these types of animals. These animals would be discarded anyway. Since there was no genuine sacrifice involved, God rejected their worship! God wants our all! Her all was exactly what Mary gave.

In verse 13 of our text, Jesus says that this woman will be remembered when the gospel is preached. This is because her actions are a great illustration of the gospel of grace. Her actions of love to the Lord didn't come from any compulsion or pressure or requirements. She poured out this ointment upon Jesus because of her great love for Him. Sure it was lavish. Sure it was over and above what was necessary and customary. But, such abundance is the point! It demonstrated the abundance of her love to Jesus.

Anything that we do in our lives as believers in Christ are only response. They are response to God's mercy. They are response to God's grace. Our response ought to be lavish. Is this your life? Mary's life is a picture of those who are saved.

Let's look lastly (and quickly) at the fourth perspective that Matthew gives of the upcoming death of Jesus. We have seen (1) the perspective of Jesus (verses 1-2). He knew that He was going to die. We have seen (2) the perspective of enemies (verses 3-5). They wanted to kill Him. We have seen (3) the perspective of love (verses 6-13). Mary prepared His body for burial. Now, let's look at ...

#### **4. The perspective of hate (verses 14-16)**

We're talking about Judas. He is a huge contrast to this woman. As you read the following verses, notice the contrasts between Mary and Judas.

Matthew 26:14-16

Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, and said, "What are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you?" And they weighed out to him thirty pieces of silver. And from then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Him.

This woman loved Jesus. Judas hated Jesus. This woman was willing to lavish upon Jesus an abundance of very costly perfume, some tens of thousands of dollars. Judas was willing to betray Jesus for a mere thirty pieces of silver, which wasn't much, probably around \$20. This woman was giving of herself to Jesus. Judas was using Jesus to get money for himself. This woman had spent but little time with Jesus. Judas had lived with Jesus day in and day out for three years! This woman expressed her love to her Savior. Judas turned his back to his own salvation.

Look at how quickly the deal was done. Judas went to these chief priests and asked for a deal to hand Jesus over. They promised him these thirty pieces. He said, "OK." The silver was weighed out and the deal was done! Judas had the money in his pocket and went out searching for the opportune time for him to make good on his deal.

How quickly do the plans of man change. The religious leaders had planned on waiting in capturing Jesus. But here was their opportunity. They were going to take it. By the end of the chapter, Judas will betray Jesus into the hands of the priests and elders of the people (Matt. 26:47).

In the future at Rock Valley Bible Church, we will look more deeply into the betrayal of Judas and will see exactly how terrible it was to be betrayed by a friend. Sufficient for this morning is simply that the deal that Judas made with the religious leaders anticipates the death of Jesus. His days are numbered. Soon He will be placed upon a Roman cross to die. It will take place as soon as Judas has an opportunity to betray Him (verse 16).

The soon to be death of Jesus is what all of these scenes are pointing toward. Jesus knew that He was going to die within days. The leaders knew that He must die. The woman knew that His death was coming soon. Judas was finished with Jesus and wanted to see Him killed as well.

The marathon that we have been running in Matthew will soon be over. Jesus will cross the finish line. His death is His victory. His death is our victory. These next few months will be a great opportunity for you to fill your minds with the death of Jesus. When Christianity is boiled down to its most basic level, it's all about the death of Jesus. Paul boiled down his message with this easy statement: "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23). Some find this message to be a stumbling block, particularly the Jews. They say, "How could our Messiah suffer? How could our Messiah die? This can't be right!" Others find this message to be foolishness, particularly the Greeks. To think of God dying is a ridiculous thought to them. "Your religion is craziness! We want a powerful leader! Not a crucified one." But to those who are called, they find in this message of Christ crucified the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24).

Over the next few months as we continue through Matthew's narrative of the death of Jesus, it is a great opportunity for your soul to be stirred with the power of the message we proclaim: Christ crucified. I'm excited for us to look deeply into the wonderful message of the cross. Are you? The purpose of an appetizer is to whet your appetite for the meal to come. This message this morning was only an appetizer. I hope that you are ready to eat the full meal in months to come.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 12, 2005 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] Found in "Light in the Shadow of Jihad: The Struggle for Truth" by Ravi Zacharias (Multnomah Publishers, 2002).

[2] D. A. Carson, The Expositors Bible Commentary, volume 8, p. 526.

[3] O'Henry, "The Gift of Magi." This story is all over the internet. Simple search on "Jim Della O'Henry" using any search engine and you can read it in full.

[4] Courtney Anderson, To the Golden Shore, pp. 110-111.