

Sermons on Matthew

A Woman to Remember

Matthew 26:1-13
A Sermon for Children

With Study Questions

Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@integrity.com
www.branchofhope.org
5/11/2008

A Woman to Remember

Matthew 26:1-13

A Sermon for Children

Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, *that* He said to His disciples, ⁻²⁻ “_You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” ⁻³⁻ _Then the chief priests, _the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, ⁻⁴⁻ and _plotted to take Jesus by __trickery and kill *Him*. ⁻⁵⁻ But they said, “_Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the _people.” ⁻⁶⁻ And when Jesus was in __Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, ⁻⁷⁻ a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured *it* on His head as He sat *at the table*. ⁻⁸⁻ __But when His disciples saw *it*, they were indignant, saying, “_Why this waste? ⁻⁹⁻ For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to *the poor*.” ⁻¹⁰⁻ But when Jesus was aware of *it*, He said to them, “_Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. ⁻¹¹⁻ __For you have the poor with you always, but __Me you do not have always. ⁻¹²⁻ For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did *it* for My _burial. ⁻¹³⁻ Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her (Matthew 26:1-13).

Introduction

I’ve done a lot of funerals. A major portion of the funeral is the memorial is the eulogy (*eu* in Greek is “well” and *logia* means speaking—to speak well). In the eulogy you say nice and appropriate things about the person who died. But of all the wonderful people we read of in the Bible (Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, all the apostles, etc.) I am unaware of Jesus placing right on the pages of sacred Scripture, a memorial to anyone except this one unnamed woman.

He could have given her a plaque, named a building after her or even a city. He could have started a holiday in her honor. These things have all been done for famous and notable people. But this woman had bestowed upon her the rare privilege of, not only being named in Scripture, but her, and her actions are to be remembered wherever the gospel is preached. And here we are this morning, thousands of years later, speaking of her once again.

Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, *that* He said to His disciples, ⁻²⁻ **“ _You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified_ ”** (Matthew 26:1, 2).

From Prophet to Priest

The three offices of Christ are Prophet, Priest and King. So far in Matthew He has mainly been executing His office as Prophet. When we read that He “finished all these sayings” it doesn’t mean that Jesus is no longer a prophet, but it does seem to indicate that He is shifting His emphasis from Prophet to Priest.

The basic difference between a prophet and a priest is that prophets came to men on behalf of God and priests went to God on behalf of men. And the primary thing a priest did when he approached God on behalf of men is offer animal sacrifices in the tabernacle or temple (Hebrews 8:3). But Jesus did not bring an animal sacrifice into a man-made temple.

Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ⁻¹²⁻ Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:11, 12).

God knew how hard it would be for us to understand what Jesus was going to do so He made earthly models to help us. The temple (especially one room called the holy of holies [Exodus 26:33]) helped us to understand heaven. The priest would bring sacrificed blood (the Bible teaches that life is in the blood [Deuteronomy 12:23] and since the wages of sin is death, blood is the just requirement) into the holy of holies so we could learn of the payment for sin. But when Jesus went into the true heavenly tabernacle, He didn’t bring the blood of an animal, He brought His own blood. He is our true High Priest and He is our sacrifice as well.

Passover

In two days they would celebrate the Passover. This was a celebration of when God delivered them Israel from over 400 years of slavery in Egypt. God delivered them through great and terrible plagues,

the last of which was the death of the firstborn of households by a “destroyer” (Exodus 12:23). And the only way for the “destroyer” to “pass over” your house was for your house to have the blood of a sacrificed lamb on the lintel (the top of the doorway) and two doorposts.

Since all of this was designed to teach us of Jesus (remember John the Baptist, upon seeing Jesus said, “_Behold! __The Lamb of God __who takes away the sin of the world” [John 1:29]!) it was suitable for Jesus to be sacrificed during the Passover. The Apostle Paul said of Jesus, “For indeed _Christ, our _Passover, was sacrificed __for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Whose Plan is This?

But here is something truly amazing: while verses one and two tell us of Jesus’ plans to be crucified, verses three through five tell us of the plans of the evil men who are plotting to crucify Him. It makes you wonder whose plan this all was.

When Jesus says He is going to be “**delivered up** (*paradidotai*— from *paradidomi*—present, passive, indicative) **to be crucified**” it is what they call the “passive” voice. In other words, it’s something that is going to happen to Him. If I were to tell you that the light bulb fell on my head, that would be in the passive. I didn’t throw it at my own head. It fell on me.

But when the Apostle Paul explains how husbands ought to love their wives the way “**Christ loved the church**”, he explains that Jesus “**delivered Himself** (*paredoken*—from *paradidomi*—aorist, active, indicative) **for her**” (Ephesians 5:25). He uses the same word “delivered” but in a different voice. It is in what they call the “active” voice. In other words Jesus delivered Himself up¹.

It becomes pretty clear that all of this was primarily God’s plan to save sinners.

_For _truly against __Your holy Servant Jesus, __whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together ⁻²⁸⁻ __to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done (Acts 4:27, 28).

¹ By the way, this word is also translated ‘betray’ which has very interesting implications for husbands who have a “hey honey, I am what I am” attitude. There are some things men may want to “deliver up” about themselves.

Not only do evil people fail to get away with things, God uses their sinful actions to accomplish His own good works for His own glory and for the good of His own people.

_Then the chief priests, __the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, ⁻⁴⁻ and _plotted to take Jesus by __trickery and kill *Him*. ⁻⁵⁻ But they said, “_Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the _people_” (Matthew 26:3-5)

Evil Religion

You often hear of all the evil done in the name of religion. One needn't look beyond the pages of Scripture to find examples. But, of course, it is an empty accusation against Jesus and the redeeming work of His cross.

But let the lesson be learned here. These religious leaders were supposed to be the shepherds of God's people but instead they were sons of the devil (John 8:44) leading their followers into a spiritual ditch (Matthew 15:14). Just because someone wears a robe or stands behind a pulpit doesn't mean they're to be trusted. Clergy is only valuable to the extent that they present the true Christ of the Scriptures. As Jerome said, **“To be ignorant of the Scriptures is not to know Christ.”**

An Evil Plot

They gather together in the palace of the high priest, not to worship or give honor and thanksgiving to God for sending His Son to save sinners. They gather to **“plot”**, to use **“trickery”** (*dolo*—to set bait) in order to kill Jesus. In the list of things that God especially hates we see **“a heart that devises wicked plans” (Proverbs 6:18)**. All sin is harmful. All sin is destructive. But when you reach the point where you're planning out your sin instead of planning to avoid it, it is especially dark.

Young people, hear the wisdom of God **“My son, if sinners entice you, _Do not consent.** ¹¹ **If they say, “_Come with us...(Proverbs 1:10, 11).** I did a funeral of a young girl who was raised in the church whose poor decisions and willingness to be influenced by certain people cost her her life. Her father's grieving words to me were, **“Why were these people so important to her?”**

God's Plans Happen

The Proverbs teach “**_A man's heart plans his way, _But the Lord directs his steps**” (Proverbs 16:9). Here is an example. These cowards didn't want to kill Jesus during the Passover Feast because Jesus had grown popular (John 11:46-48) and they feared a riot (some say that over two million people might attend). But Jesus had already indicated that He would be “**delivered up**” in “**two days**”.

We should always trust in Christ and seek with all our heart to love and obey Him and others (Matthew 22:37-40). We should also work and plan (Proverbs 6:6; 30:25). But the hand of God will never be shortened by the plans of men. It may be great and mysterious, but

_The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. ¹¹ _The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations (Psalm 33:10, 11).

We can take great comfort in knowing that God is in control of every event—and ordains every event (even the evil ones [Proverbs 16:4] for His own glory. It is not without cause that Christians are called to “**count it all joy when you fall into various trials**” (James 1:2). God is in control.

And when Jesus was in __Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, ⁻⁷⁻ a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured *it* on His head as He sat *at the table*. ⁻⁸⁻ __But when His disciples saw *it*, they were indignant, saying, “_Why this waste? ⁻⁹⁻ For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to *the poor*__” (Matthew 26:6-9).

From Palace to Leper

We now move from the palace of the priest to the house of a leper (cured, no doubt). We move to characters who, in their evil, have become infamous or have faded into obscurity, to that woman who Jesus extols beyond those who would be considered so much higher in their stations in life. In a way, this event would typify the New Covenant and the advancement of the gospel in redeeming the world.

This woman might be included in the “**least of these**” category Jesus just spoke of in His foretelling of Judgment Day. The Apostle Paul spoke of it this way:

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ⁻²⁷⁻ **But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;** ⁻²⁸⁻ **and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,** ⁻²⁹⁻ **that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).**

This nameless woman took a very expensive flask of fragrant oil and poured it over the head of Jesus. At what level she actually understood what she was doing is not known. Perhaps she understood, at some level, that this was how someone was anointed to a special position. Perhaps she understood, at some level, that Jesus was to be crucified—a message seemingly lost on His disciples.

What a Waste!

Whatever she was doing, and at what level she understood, it is obvious that the apostles weren't into it. They viewed it as a waste.² There were much more functional, practical, things that could be done. The woman elevated the person of Jesus above whatever good deeds could have been done at the same expense.

I can't tell you how much comfort I found in this. Sometimes I have the feeling of wasting hours in study. Every sermon about Jesus—about a person! Do we not need lessons on marriage and ethics and raising households? Certainly we do. And there is a striking temptation to dispose of the ethereal discussions of who Jesus is and what He did and replace it with more “practical” things.

But when we lose Jesus, everything else is lost as well. Displacing Jesus in order to preach on more practical things is like putting a hole in your boat so the water can drain out—soon the entire boat is under water.

² This was primarily Judas (John 12:4) who would have stolen the money. But at very least, the others were guilty of silence.

Jesus is the “**bread of life**” (John 6:35) and above all things it is that bread that we are to cast “**upon the waters, for you will find it after many days**” (Ecclesiastes 11:1). But it does seem as if the days truly are many with little observable return. But the return must be left to God. Paul wrote that He “**planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase**” (1 Corinthians 3:6).

These men had walked with Jesus for three years. Yet they were still critical of true childlike faith that simply ran to Jesus seeking to do a “**good work**” for Him. The apostles, who would become the very foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20) could still be a stumbling block for true worship.

But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, “_Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. ⁻¹¹⁻ __For you have the poor with you always, but __Me you do not have always. ⁻¹²⁻ For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My _burial. ⁻¹³⁻ Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her (Matthew 26:10-13).

A Memorial to Faithfulness

So what did this woman do that was so worthy of praise?

The glorifying (lifting up and worshiping) of Jesus is the primary purpose of the church. The apostles give an example of how easily the church can lose its job description. Jesus is not belittling the importance of feeding the poor. The poor have always gained where the true gospel has prevailed. Nor is Jesus giving instruction on some perpetual expensive operation of worship. That they would not have him “always” spoke of His earthly ministry which was coming to a conclusion.³

There is a great deal of discussion, and rightfully so, about the proper way to approach Christ in worship. Who knows better how to love and worship God in purity than God Himself? And who knows, if this woman,

³ Matthew Henry’s interesting side-point: Christ’s constant *bodily* presence was not to be expected here in this world; it was expedient that he should go away; his *real* presence in the eucharist is a fond and groundless conceit, and contradicts what he here said, *Me ye have not always*.

later in life might have approached Jesus differently, yet with the same faithfulness and sacrificial worship?

But here is something we better not forget—that our structure of worship—at best—is a stench in the nostrils of God if we fail to approach clothed in Christ. Heaven help us if we begin to think we've actually structured a liturgy that God is impressed with. God's detailed instructions to Israel on how He was to be approached became a disgusting odor because it was not done in faith.

Jesus desired to have this woman's memory kept alive because she exhibited a zealous, sacrificial, worshipful, faithfulness in Him. I can only assume He wants us to follow her example.

Questions for Study

1. What is the difference between a prophet and priest (page 3)?
2. How is Jesus different than other priests (page 3)?
3. What is significant about Jesus being crucified during Passover (page 4)?
4. Whose plan was the crucifixion of Jesus? Explain (pages 4, 5)?
5. Is all religion good (page 5)?
6. Contrast man's plots with God's plans (pages 5-7).
7. How does the house of the leper, over the palace of the high priest, typify the New Covenant (page 7)?
8. How did the apostles respond to what this woman did? How can that kind of thing happen today (page 8)?
9. What made this woman memorable (pages 8, 9)?