

Hating or loving Jesus?

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Preacher: Chris Fry

[0:00] Welcome to this pre-recorded service of Calvary Evangelical Church in Brighton.

! It's Sunday the 26th of July and it's the evening meeting.! My name is Chris Fry. I'm one of three elders of Calvary Church in Brighton. And as you'll all very well know at the moment we're not able to meet together in our normal fashion. We're having to do so by Zoom or YouTube as in this case. And of course we're longing for the day when we can be properly together but only when that's safe to do so. I'd like to start with a reading from the Bible. It's actually a quotation from the book of 1 Corinthians. It's a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. He was largely responsible for the founding of this church and he's writing to them some years later and at a distance and remembering how it was for him when he first encountered them. When he first went into the city of Corinth. And he says this, when I came to you brothers I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaim to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Now please notice that when Paul writes to them he's linking the reality and the fact of this marvelous person Jesus Christ with his crucifixion. Now many people want to separate the two and in fact many people have done over history taken away the idea of crucifixion. But for Paul it's an absolutely essential understanding that Jesus Christ came not only to live but to die and to die in a particular way.

The death of crucifixion because the crucifixion has enormous significance and meaning. And the opening song we're going to have tonight is entitled Beneath the Cross of Jesus. It's a gentle song which reflects carefully upon the meaning of this crucifixion, of this death that Jesus endured for our sakes.

Beneath the Cross of Jesus. Beneath the Cross of Jesus. Beneath the Cross of Jesus.

[3:02] Beneath the Cross of Jesus.

my unworthy soul is one. Beneath the cross of Jesus, His family is my own.

Once strangers chasing selfless dreams, now one through grace alone. How could I now dishonor the ones that you have loved?

Beneath the cross of Jesus, see the children called my God. Beneath the cross of Jesus, depart before the crown.

We follow in His footsteps, where promised hope is found. How great the joy before us, to me is perfect bright.

[4:55] Beneath the cross of Jesus, we will gladly live our lives. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you so much. We thank you so much that we can talk and we can sing of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

On the one hand, it's a terrible thing that anyone should die a death like Jesus died. But on the other hand, it's a most marvellous thing when we recognise that He didn't die for any wrongdoing on His own part, but He died in our place as our substitute.

He paid the penalty for our sin. He was willing to go to the cross for our sakes.

He left heaven to come to earth so that He might live and die on our behalf. We thank you for this marvellous truth. And we thank you that throughout history, men and women have discovered this reality.

[6:17] And to be a Christian is to be a person who recognises that there is no other way for our sin and the judgment of our sin to be dealt with except by the cross of Jesus Christ.

So for this, we are deeply grateful. And we ask that we may give a response of gratitude and thankfulness tonight. We thank you too that we know that the cross was not the end. It was not just a magnificent gesture. But you, Heavenly Father, were so pleased with the finished work of your Son that you raised Him from the dead on that resurrection morning, that He became alive again.

Risen into heaven, now seated at your right hand, a living Saviour. One we can call upon, one who cares for us. We thank you for this so much.

And we pray that we would express our love and gratitude to you again this night in our praises, prayers, songs, the reading and listening to your word. Speak to us, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

[7:38] Amen. I'd like to draw attention to a verse in the Bible that came to my mind this morning.

It's in Deuteronomy, chapter 33, verses 26 and the first part of 27. And it says this. There is no one like the God of Jeshurun.

Let me just stop there and make a comment upon that. Name, Jeshurun. It actually could be translated Israel.

Now we're familiar with that. The God of Israel. The God who took a people for Himself. Named Israel. So let's start again.

There is no one like the God of Israel who rides on the heavens to help you and on the clouds in His majesty. The eternal God is your refuge.

[8:40] And underneath are the everlasting arms. I think that's a fantastic passage of the Bible.

He talks of this God who is so great. He rides on the heavens. The heavens belong to Him. The whole universe belongs to Him.

He's on the clouds in His majesty. He's awesome. He's an eternal God. Without beginning and without end. He's on the clouds. This mighty God.

This mighty God. Is the one who comes to help His people. Provides a refuge for them.

And enfolds them in His arms. He doesn't send angels to do this. Although He could. But He comes Himself.

[9:41] To help you. To be your refuge. And to enclose you in His arms. What a lovely family picture that is.

And we can say it is a family picture. Because the relationship that God has with His people. He's like a father to a child. Though He is.

The mighty God. The eternal God. He's also our father in Jesus Christ. Isn't that an astonishing thought? And what an encouragement that is for us in these days.

To know that. There is one sure. Reliable. Person. To whom we can come. Who is not only able. But willing. To help us.

To be our refuge. And to smother us. In His arms. Right now to read. One of the Psalms.

[10:46] It's Psalm 1. And it reads as follows. Blessed is the man. Who doesn't walk in the counts of the wicked.

Or stand in the way of sinners. Or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord. And on His law He meditates day and night.

He's like a tree planted by streams of water. Which yields its fruit in season. And whose leaf does not wither. Whatever He does prospers. Not so the wicked.

They're like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment. Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous.

But the way of the wicked. Will perish. A big contrast isn't there? And a question. I have for all of us.

[11:50] Myself included is this. Where do you find yourself in this psalm? Can you identify. With either of the characters described.

Can you truly say. I'm the man who is blessed. I'm the man who is blessed. I'm the man who is blessed. I'm the man who is blessed. Because I don't want to walk in the way of sinners. And I don't. But I do delight in the things of God.

And I love His word. If you're in that place. Then God says of you. You're just like a tree. Planted by streams of water.

You're continually. Nourished and invigorated. And you bear fruit. And your life is marked. By that fruitfulness. And a prosperity. And a prosperity.
Not necessarily. A prosperity. A worldly sense. A material sense. But a prospering in your spirit. You feel blessed in yourself.

[12:57] And you're a blessing to others. Well that's a mercy. And a kindness. Because we weren't like that naturally. And if we're blessed now.

It's because God has chosen. To be kind to us. Gracious to us. And to bless us in that way. And what a sad contrast. Not so the wicked.

To like chaff that the wind blows away. Insubstantial. Nothing to them. They won't stand on the day of judgment.

Because God who searches our hearts. Will reveal all that's gone on in their lives. Now the Lord watches over the way of the righteous. He cares lovingly for them.

But the way of the wicked only has one direction. And that's destruction. So the question is an important question. It's not just a poetic device.

[14:00] It's being used here. It's a real challenge to each of us. Are we the blessed man? Or are we the one who's going to be blown away?

Are we the person who can stand on the day of judgment? Or are we the person. Or find judgment falling upon us. In a terrible manner. Well.

How important it is to resolve these things. And not to push them out of sight. By God's grace. There is nothing inevitable.

About you. Remaining a wicked person. A person who ignores him. Despises God. Flees from him. No you don't have to be in that place at all. You can call out to him. For mercy. And that is his nature and character. To be merciful and gracious. And to give you what you need.

[15:00] Which is new life in him. A home in heaven. A relationship with him forever. Shall we pray?

Our Father we thank you for your word. That reveals yourself. And reveals us. In our true colours. We pray our Father.

That you would be. Merciful and kind to us. Show us. Where we are. What we need. If we do not know you. We pray that we will be able to respond to you.

You will give us grace to do that. We thank you. If we are hearing. This message tonight. We are online tonight. We are hearing something. Of yourself. And we pray that you use it mightily in our lives.

We thank you. That knowing you. We thank you. And here we can come to you. With our prayers. And we'd like to pray tonight. For all those who are. Suffering in great measure. From the ongoing.

[16:09] Crisis of COVID. Think particularly tonight. Of elderly people. People by themselves. People in hospital. People facing operations.

which may be postponed people in care and nursing homes who will not be able to get out and who will not be able to have visitors pray for those who feel worn down disorientated upset oh Lord encourage them now Father please help us as a church to be a light a light on a hill a light that spreads the good news of the gospel of Jesus and the health and well-being that he brings we pray Father that you would help us as a church in Calvary you'd help the churches of Brighton and Hove and the churches of this land that in spite of the restrictions on our activities that we will find ways inspired by your Holy Spirit to encourage and bless one another and the world around us for we may have big hearts for our neighbours our friends our families our work colleagues those we encounter some we know well some we know little but we pray that these will be days in which the kingdom of Jesus Christ expands extends as people in their need call out to you and we pray that hearts will not grow hard but rather be softened and Father we thank you thank you tonight for those who are working in lands throughout the world who are seeking to spread the gospel of Jesus to others some of these we know by name and we pray Father for the countries which are represented by those names we think of Joel in Cambodia and good folk in Sri Lanka think of George in Sri Lanka bless him Father and help those who are struggling with the day-to-day necessities of life in that land as we think also of the work of mission in India which is often facing great persecution but we pray that you keep your people steadfast clinging to you and seeing your help we pray too for Jamie and Laurie in Albania and ask that you would uphold them through the

ups and downs of life please look after their family their young family thank you for Michael and Mary Steedman thank you for so many years of faithful service that they have rendered in Italy and we pray that you'd keep them going strong feed them by your word and help them to bless others and for Victor and you who have spent so many good years in Turkey we pray for them that they would be blessed and helped as at the moment they can't return there but help them in the land of Mexico that there would be a blessing there and we thank you that your gospel is the same the same message for every country for every culture wherever we are so we bless you for them and we do pray Father for the persecuted church we know that in these decades terrible persecution has occurred from the lands of North Korea and China and India and in the Middle East and we pray for those who have endured so much and we praise you for the marvellous miracles that you have wrought so that people under extreme pressure have stayed close to you and they've willingly sacrificed their lives if necessary for the good of the gospel and for the honour of the name of Jesus Christ please look after them this night and we pray for ourselves you know the particular challenges that each one of us is facing particular needs

that we have before us and we pray that we would rely upon you in these days casting all our burdens upon you as the Bible says cast all your cares upon him for he cares for you our Father please hear our prayers in Jesus name Amen we're now going to sing a song which is really a prayer which says speak O Lord speak O Lord as we read the Bible speak O Lord as we hear the Bible explained now we pray this prayer because we cannot naturally speaking properly understand God's word unless he speaks to us and we pray for that reality to happen again as we look at the Bible and as I seek to expound it speak O Lord speak O Lord as we come to you to receive the fruit of your holy word take your truth

Lord take deep in us shape and fashion us in your likeness that the light of Christ might be seen today in our lives of life and your deeds of faith speak O Lord and fulfill in us all your purposes for your glory teach us Lord teach us Lord for obedience holy reverence test our thoughts and our attitudes in the radiance of your glory of your generosity of your generosity cause our faith to rise cause our eyes to seek your majestic love and authority

Words of power that can never affect Let the truth prevail over unbelief Speak, O Lord, and renew our lives Help us grasp the lives of your plans for us Truth's unchanged from the dawn of time That will echo down through eternity And my grace will stand on your promises

[24:32] And my grace will walk as you walk with us Speak, O Lord, till the church is built And the earth is filled with your glory Our reading tonight is from the Gospel of Matthew and Chapter 26 Sunday by Sunday we've been going through this Gospel And we're now approaching the climax The crucifixion of Jesus Christ But there are several preliminaries to be considered And we find these in Chapter 26 and verses 1 to 13 Chapter 26 verses 1 to 13

When Jesus had finished saying all these things He said to his disciples As you know the Passover is two days away And the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified Then the chief priests and the elders of the people Assembled in the palace of the high priest Whose name was Caiaphas And they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way Or crafty way and to kill him But not during the feast they said Or there may be a riot among the people Verse 6 While Jesus was in Bethany In the home of a man known as Simon the leper A woman came to him with an alabaster jar A very expensive perfume Which he poured on his head As he was reclining at the table When the disciples saw this They were indignant Why this waste?

They asked This perfume could have been sold at a high price Than the money given to the poor Aware of this Jesus said to them Why are you bothering this woman?

Why are you troubling her? She's done a beautiful thing to me The poor you will always have with you But you will not always have me When she poured this perfume on my body She did it to prepare me for burial I tell you the truth Wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world What she has done will also be told In memory of her Our Father Please come and help us As we look into this word For we may receive the word And it will be light in our lives We will understand what you need to understand And we will obey We ask this in Jesus name Last Sunday we were looking at Matthew chapter 25 verses 31 to 46 Which is briskly titled in my Bible as

The sheep and the goats Now if that title suggests Pastoral gentleness and harmony and bliss And Jesus words in that passage Quickly dispel the idea And there is a gulf of Fundamental separation

Between those whom Jesus calls sheep Essentially those who belong to and follow him Those who do not follow him And do not want to follow him And this difference is expressed In life behaviour The sheep behave like sheep The goats behave like goats And there is no middle ground You can't have a half sheep and a half goat And this reminds us again Of what we saw in Psalm 1 There is the righteous and the wicked And there is a big gulf There is a big difference between the two Now many people would like to See themselves as in Some sort of middle ground Which they could sort of step into

[28:52] Either world At a moment's notice But that is not the case In God's eyes There is an absolutely clear distinction And that's why Matthew 25 Verses 31 to 46 Is so challenging The sheep that Jesus the good shepherd leads Take after the shepherd And you can see it in their behaviour They deal tenderly and thoughtfully And kindly With fellow sheep In a sense they don't even recognise They are doing it It just comes out of Of hearts that have been changed The goats on the other hand Are wild and unruly Not led by anything but their own desires And they deal roughly and thoughtlessly Carelessly with the sheep Because they have no respect for the shepherd Now we thought earlier in prayer about the persecuted church And what an example of this sheep and goat behaviour We see throughout the world

In the way that Christians are So often been the subject of being maligned Being dismissed And more seriously Being actively fought against And even tortured and killed Because they are Christians Because they are sheep belonging to the shepherd Now these behaviours Will be fully exposed on the day of judgement!

When Jesus returns and deals personally With each one of us The awful finality of this judgement The awful finality of this judgement is Expressed in Matthew Chapter 25 Verse 46 And they the goats Will go away To eternal punishment But the righteous The sheep to eternal life How do you believe that?

Do you understand that distinction? I suppose it would be fair to say That many people would like to think that Or even death is just a portal to life A better life, a changed life But Jesus is saying here That death is for some The doorway into eternal punishment And for others The door to eternal life Now what a contrary The doorway into eternal punishment And for others And for others The door to eternal life Now what a contrast Polar opposites And forever But who are you going to trust? Who are you going to believe? Your own instincts and desires? Or the words of the Son of God? So here's the question Who are you following?

[31:39] Who is your leader? And what is your eternal destiny? The strength of Jesus' words in Matthew 25 Is now expressed in two stories That occupy Matthew 26 verses 1-13 In verses 1-5 we're told of The plot against Jesus And in verses 6-13 Jesus anointed at Bethany So if you'd like to have a title for this message You may put those two stories together And give this heading Are you hating or loving Jesus?

That's a question The plot against Jesus The anointing at Bethany Love In which scene do we find ourselves?

Are we with the haters? Or the lovers of Jesus? Because the contrast between these two stories On the one hand we read of the chief priests Assembling to plot how to arrest Jesus And kill him Using Matthew 25 language We could say that's the behaviour of goats On the other hand We read of an outstanding Even controversial example Of one person's love for the Lord Jesus And that's the behaviour In the language of Matthew 25 And the sheep These two stories are also found in the Gospels of Mark Luke chapter 22 And John chapter 12 Although several of the Gospels only include one of the stories But they are recorded with some variation Which we'll note as we go along It's Matthew who sets the context

For these two stories In verses 1 and 2 Jesus has finished his teaching He's been sitting on the Mount of Olives With his disciples They left the temple area And Jesus gave extended teaching And it says in verse 1 When Jesus has finished saying all these things Well he's finished the main part of what he has to say But he now has some extremely important information for his disciples In verse 2 The Passover is two days away It's now the Tuesday Before the sunset of Thursday When Jewish families will gather to eat the Passover meal It's the start of seven days of the solemn feast

And Jesus says And the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified Now this isn't the first time that Jesus has told his disciples Of the fact of his crucifixion He's been preparing them for it But it is the first time When he has told them exactly when it's going to happen In two days the process will begin with Jesus' arrest On the Thursday night The first day of the Passover The day of the Passover Climaxing in the crucifixion of Friday afternoon Oh, shockingly close We're not told of the reaction of the disciples But they must have been stunned In two days something absolutely dreadful is going to occur The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the pivotal moment of human history It's also the defining act which separates the sheep and the goats Those who have no time for Jesus are the ones who shout When given the chance to spare or condemn him As they would be They want to be rid of him He's an embarrassment

[35:43] A challenge to their lives On the other hand Those who love the Lord Jesus Can't spend enough time at the foot of his cross The death of Jesus on the cross is for them A wonderful demonstration of God's love Not just generally But as something intensely personal As the Apostle Paul expressed it later The Son of God Who loved me And gave himself for me Like Paul They never tire of coming to the place Where God's mercy and justice meet Where sin is cleansed Where acceptance with God has been purchased And where lives in ultimate destiny Are changed forever And this picture This contrast is going to be played out in these two stories So let's start with the first one Which is the plot against Jesus It's given in verses 3 to 5 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people

Assembled in the palace of the high priest Whose name was Caiaphas And they plotted to arrest Jesus In some sly or crafty way Or crafty way And to kill him But not during the feast they said Or there may be a riot among the people This is the meeting of the Sanhedrin Comprised of chief priests Elders and no doubt scribes as well Gathered in the palace of the high priest Now it's interesting that Matthew gives us the name of that priest And he gives us that name That we might just understand something of the nature Of the leadership of the spiritual leaders We know something of this man He was a sign-law of a previous high priest Who had presided as high priest between 86 and 15 Caiaphas had been appointed by the Roman governor in AD 18 Well we can learn something already For the fact that he was appointed by the Roman governor And he'd stay in post until AD 36 These two men are in post throughout most of the life of Jesus These were political appointments And these men were political operators When we read of Caiaphas in other places It's clear that godly spirituality has little place in his life He's essentially a wheeler-dealer Trying to please everybody And to get rid of anything that stands in the way of that It's not said in any of the Gospel accounts But I think we can take it as read That Caiaphas was present at this very important meeting There were many other things they could have been doing In the run-up to Passover But this became a priority one on their agenda So, Luke records rather tellingly That this group of men were afraid of the people

They were meant to be shepherds of a spiritual flock To give leadership, direction, help And they turn out to be men-pleasers How do we know what was said at the meeting?

Well, perhaps Nicodemus You remember Nicodemus? A secret disciple of Jesus Perhaps he was present at that meeting And was able to relay what happened to the Gospel writers It was a dark and unpleasant meeting How sad that instead of spiritual leaders Of preparing themselves and the people To properly celebrate the Passover They're spending time to plot a murder To plot a murder There's no justice going to take place over the next few days It's a lynching We don't need to linger long here But it's clear that there were few, if any, dissenting voices How uncomfortable it must have been for Nicodemus If he was struggling on a journey to faith And hearing all these things all around him They closed ranks to get rid of the threat But they wanted to do it in a private, a secret sort of way

[40:09] To avoid, as they thought, the possibility of a riot Judas' offer to betray Jesus in verses 14 to 16 Was exactly what they needed An insider Someone who would be able to do things In a quiet, sort of underhand kind of way Rather than in a public space Well, what a sad, sad picture Of so-called spiritual leadership in Israel Well, nothing new there, of course The prophets had regularly denounced The venal,

self-serving nature Of spiritual leadership in Israel Jesus himself had crowned all such condemnation By his own stinging rebukes Blind leaders of the blind, he described them And he'd spoken a couple of chapters earlier Of all the woes that would descend upon such leadership Isn't this a fresh reminder to all of us To pray for spiritual leadership in our day In our land, in our churches How critical and crucial this is How much we need servant-hearted people In love with Jesus Christ and his people

Messengers for God Able to discern truth from error Right from wrong Unafraid to denounce and stand against unrighteousness And to encourage righteousness Not being blown along by the tide of the politics of the time But being able to stand for the truth of God Unafraid to stand for the truth of God Unafraid to stand for the truth of God Uncompromised by double standards Not being blown along by the tide of the politics of the time And there's plenty of that around at this moment, isn't there?

But being able to stand for the truth of God Unafraid, unashamed Even though that costs them something Please pray for spiritual leadership in our land and in the churches Please notice how out of touch with God's plans and purposes These blind leaders of the blind were How unaware they were of the very things That God had told them over centuries And that Jesus was telling them now They say, quite specifically That this murder was not take place during the feast But Jesus has tellingly prophesied That it's going to happen in two days' time At the very start of the feast Now here's a question Whose plan is going to prevail?

Theirs or Jesus? They say that it must be done after the feast In case there's a rise of the people How little they appreciated The fickleness of the human heart The very people that they were meant to be leading Oh, they were all over the place, weren't they?

As Jesus says in another place They were like sheep without a shepherd No fixed point On Sunday they shout, Hosanna Four days later The word is crucified Well, it's not going to be right And Jesus knows this They say that it must be done In a private sort of way They say that it must be done What happens is actually something very public And rather remarkable The ordinary population of Jerusalem at that time Was about 50,000 people But at Passover time It was swelled to 200,000 people The place was packed People from every part of the known world Were gathered in that city For that particular Seven days of the feast Hmm As the disciple Cleopas

[44:03] Innocently says to Jesus on the road to Emmaus Some days later Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem? Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem? And do not know the things that have happened there in these days? In other words You must be unique This has been the centre of talk How does that make the leaders look?

Who's in charge of the narrative of this story? It's the sovereign God It's the sovereign God His plans and the detail of his plans As Peter says to the crowd on the day of Pentecost This man Was handed over to you by God's set purpose And full knowledge And you with the help of wicked men By nailing him to the cross Acts chapter 2 verse 23 So here's the question Who's in charge? The sovereign God Who's responsible? The crowd with the help of wicked men This story is such a fulfilment of the words of Psalm 2 Psalm 2 Why do the nations conspire And the peoples plot in vain?

Kings of the earth take their stand The rulers gather together against the Lord And against his anointed one Let us break their chains, they say And throw off their fetters The one enthroned in heaven laughs The Lord scoffs at them And he rebukes them in his anger And terrifies them in his wrath saying I have installed my king on Zion My holy hill King Jesus Everything Everything That God intends For King Jesus Has come to pass And will come to pass Exactly according to God's plan Well after that grim but Important story It's a joy to turn to the second Verses 6-13 Jesus anointed at Bethany This story is also told in Mark chapter 14 and John chapter 12

However there is an apparent difference in the Matthew and John accounts Matthew is this story set after the account of Jesus speaking to his disciples Two days before Passover Verses 1 and 2 But John says That an anointing Happened 6 days before the Passover So some have thought that there must have been two separate anointings Not out of the question One 6 days before the Passover And another 2 days before the Passover But the descriptions in Matthew and John Also Mark Are very similar Well how to square that circle I suggest that what's happening here Is that a

single anointing took place Six days before the Passover As definitely stated by John In Matthew and Mark It's not said that the anointing took place Two days before the Passover It just happens that the account of the Passover Is that the account of the anointing

[47:31] Is set in Matthew and Mark After events that took place two days before the Passover If so this would be one of a number of examples Of the way in which the Gospel writers tell stories and parables Teaching of miracles In a deliberate manner to make a point Rather than to give you a chronological diary As we saw earlier The two stories in Matthew Are a strong example of the sheep and goats teaching Of Matthew 25 A point is being made Which would disappear if the only story told Was about the plot to kill Jesus So what could we learn from this striking story?

For a start we can think about this gathering As a good example of Middle Eastern hospitality This is the home of Simon the leper Rather unfortunate name you might think But perhaps he was glad to have that title According to him Because he clearly had been a leper But the fact that he was entertaining all these guests Indicates that he was no longer a leper Quite possibly one of those healed by Jesus Quite possibly one of those who came back to say thank you to Jesus And certainly one who was saying thank you to Jesus now As he opens up his home to Jesus and the twelve disciples And who else was there?

Well John 12 tells us that Lazarus and his sister Martha was there They were residents of Bethany So it would have been quite natural for them to be in the same circle Well that's fifteen people And there were possibly more Quite a crowd Lazarus was a remarkable presence Remember he had been resurrected by Jesus just a few days before Now eating with the rest Now eating with the rest Ah but there's one more person present Who is not actually identified by name By Matthew or Mark But is declared to be a Mary by John Now there are quite a few Marys in the Bible And in the New Testament And in the days of the crucifixion and resurrection So we then have to ask the further question Well which Mary might this be?

Well the location, Bethany And the setting with Lazarus and Martha present Rather clinches the point That this is most likely Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha They are so often named together in the Gospel accounts She's the one who would sit at Jesus' feet Carefully listening to him The woman with spiritual sensitivity And one who would personally witness the raising of her brother to life Their home had been a home for Jesus A place where he felt comfortable and at ease in a way that nowhere else in the Gospel record could compare And she was clearly devoted to Jesus And this is her day and this is her moment They are in the midst of supper And in the fashion of the time Sitting on the floor facing the table With their lower body and legs angled away So to make a practical point that will help us later Almost the whole of their bodies are visible Unlike the western habit of sitting on chairs

With your legs certainly tucked under the table Mary brings an alabaster jar filled with precious ointment or perfume So that's a form of China in a way John points out that it's a pint of pure nard It's a pint of pure nard So I'm thinking in my preparation of a pint of milk Thinking how much liquid there is in a pint of milk But this isn't milk This is pure nard Not only is it nard but it's pure It's not diluted or mixed as it might have been It's very costly It's worth a year's wages for a labouring man Or a Roman soldier And in the Gospel accounts it's clear that people in that room Once this jar had been brought out Knew exactly what it was

[51:59] And knew how pricey it was Just think of it A pint sized bottle filled with ointment worth Let's say £20,000 It's the sort of jar that you would keep in a safe place And use very sparingly But this jar has not been opened But it's awaited this day and this moment So purposefully and carefully Mary approaches Jesus Matthew and John then say that she Pours out the ointment on Jesus' head and feet Mark adds the important detail That she didn't just carefully uncork the bottle Or a similar action But deliberately broke the jar She must have struck the neck of the jar Against some furniture And the perfume flowed Not as a careful dribble But a torrent onto Jesus' head and feet And indeed anywhere else on Jesus' body So that as John tells us The room, not just the immediate vicinity Was filled with the fragrance of the perfume

Unmistakable Mary had no intention of saving any of the perfume in the bottle Perfume and bottle were to be entirely exhausted but on Jesus This was her expression of love for the Lord Jesus Surely no one had any idea that Mary had planned to do this It was just a very personal gesture It was just a very personal gesture Reflected for her very personal love for the Lord Jesus And what a hundred percent kind of action it was Holding nothing back Without reservation The three Gospel writers pointed to the droid and pointed to the passage The three Gospel writers pointed to the droid The fact that there were near universal indignations The three Gospel writers pointed to the droid And the truth of the Lord Jesus And what a hundred percent kind of action it was Holding nothing back Without reservation Jesus and Mary knew exactly what this was about And what this meant But nearly everyone else Doesn't seem to be on the same page The three Gospel writers pointed to their attention The fact that there were near universal indignation

Mark says that some were indignant Matthew says that the disciples were indignant And according to John Judas Iscariot acting like a spokesman for the rest objected Can't help but Just think that just a few verses later We read about the 30 pieces of silver That was his reward for betraying Jesus 30 pieces of silver 120 denarii For betraying Jesus Mary's jar Worth 300 denarii It's just poured out as a love offering to Jesus Well Well However many were involved in this indignation It's clear that they hardly dare to speak it So they expressed this to one another Sort of murmurings and mutterings Some harassment and bothering of Mary

Verses 8 to 10 When the disciples saw this They were indignant They asked one another This perfume could have been sold at a high price And the money given to the poor They thought they had the high moral ground But Jesus takes a completely different view And silences their murmurings Verses 10 and 11 Aware of this Jesus said to them Why are you bothering this woman?

She's done a beautiful thing to me High praise from Jesus Who sees not only the deed but the heart For him this action was beautiful The poor you'll always have with you But you'll not always have me How true In just a few days Jesus would be dead And after resurrection day Anointing with Jesus would no longer be appropriate or necessary Verse 12 When she poured this perfume on my body She did it to prepare me for burial On resurrection day Two other Marys had hurried to the tomb With spices to anoint the body of Jesus But they were thwarted Because Jesus had already risen from the dead There was no body to be anointed then But Mary had got him first An anointing for burial was now taking place Did Mary realise this?

[56:31] Well we can't tell But that was how Jesus understood this And spoke openly of it Mary did it For deeply personal reasons Of her love for the Lord Jesus But as so often happens in the lives of Jesus' disciples The significance of a single action Can far exceed the thoughts and intents of the disciple Of the disciple They may be very unaware of the significance Just as those perplexed disciples In Matthew 25 Had little appreciation of the significance of their behaviour Care for the poor in Jesus' name Is the bread and butter of Christian discipleship But there are times For outrageous acts of love To be expressed to Jesus One might draw an analogy to a marriage Where daily practical love is expressed In a multitude of ways But every so often A husband or wife might offer a lavish Unasked for

To one another This is a love gift It's for you because I love you Jesus didn't need this gift But he was deeply touched by it So Jesus says in verse 13 Verse 13 I tell you the truth Wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world What she's done will also be told Not just that we might remember Mary In fact it's interesting that She's just known as the woman So It's not A person focused issue But a recognition That we should realise That for every Christian person The nature of our life is Not only to receive God's great mercies But to respond In heart gratitude These two truths are Inextricably joined together Gracious love to us

Our response Of glad Love to him And there are times In very costly ways We don't know how Mary came to possess This very expensive jar of perfume!

We don't know what she had thought But one day God told her what to do When to do it Perhaps God has given You something that is actually costly Or costly in your thinking You don't really know what to do with it Or perhaps you think you do But could this be an opportunity For you to show outrageous love for Jesus Doing something that the world and even fellow Christians might see as

a waste Risky!

Too enthusiastic! Well, church history actually belongs to those Who are in many ways Seen as foolhardy Over the top Over enthusiastic And we read what happened As God saw that love And blessed it The story reminds us that In the everyday of life Opportunity to show A special love for Jesus will arise And if we are spiritually sensitive Or more of God's voice Ask him Amen Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus of God's voice.

[60:05] Ask him. Amen. Let's sing this lovely song, Oh the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus.

Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus But I'm measured down the tree Rolling as a mighty ocean In its fullness over me Underneath me, all around me Is the current of your love Leading onward, leading homeward To your glory, friends of all Oh the deep, deep love For I lead and trust Is the deep, deep love of Jesus Spreads his praise from shore to shore

How he came to pray around them Through the saving cross he calls How he watches, oh his loved ones Once he dies to make his own How bold and he's interceding Pleading, pleading, pleading now Pleading now before the throne Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus All I need and trust Is the deep, deep love of Jesus Lord, the deep, deep love of Jesus Lord, the loving, pleading now It's a notion to obsessing In the midst of every chest Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus Christ is saviour, precious friend You will bring us home to glory Where your love of Jesus Where your love will never end Where your love will never end For the deep, deep love of Jesus All I need and trust Is the deep, deep love of Jesus I'd like us to close with reading final verses from the letter to the Corinthians or the second letter to the Corinthians chapter 13 verses 11 to 14

Finally brothers, goodbye Aim for perfection Listen to my appeal Be of one mind Live in peace And the God of love and peace will be with you Greet one another with a holy kiss We can't do that at this moment, can we?

[64:24] We can wave All the saints send their greetings May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all Amen Amen.