

His Preparation for Burial

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[0:00] kind of riffing off of something that Rick mentioned about New Year's resolutions. I know not everybody makes New Year's resolutions in our house.

We call them turning over new leaves. And I am regularly mocked in my house for the amount of new leaves that I tend to turn over during the year.

And they usually have to do with eating, exercising, other things of that nature. This morning, this first Sunday of 2018, I don't know if you've made New Year's resolutions.

I don't know if you've turned over new leaves. But I want to call you to make a resolution. It's not to get physically fit.

It's not to get financially healthy. It's not to get vocationally positioned to grow in your time management or get right with other people.

[1:06] Those are all good things. But what I want to call you to do this morning is the thing of most importance. It's what God in His Word says this is of first importance.

And I want to call you to make a resolution in light of that. And to line your life up with it. This past December, we took a break from the Gospel of Matthew.

And we spent the bulk of our Sunday mornings preaching on the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God became a man and dwelt among us. And this morning, we get back into the study of the Gospel of Matthew.

And we get back in in Matthew chapter 26. And what you need to know about Matthew 26 is, it's the beginning of the passion of the Christ.

And when we talk about the passion of the King, the passion of Jesus, we're talking about His suffering and His death that eventually leads to His resurrection.

[2:12] What you need to know about the passion of Jesus Christ is that it's at the heart of the Gospel. The heart of the Gospel is Jesus Christ making a sacrificial death on behalf of sinners.

Another way to talk about it is, if Christ had not been crucified, there would be no good news of salvation for anybody. Everything rides on it.

And so this morning, I want to call you to make a life resolution. Not just a year resolution, but for the rest of your lives. We never outgrow the need to be reminded of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We never outgrow the need to be reminded of what He did for us. So it's good and right to start this new year focusing our Sunday mornings on the passion of the King.

His suffering and His death, and eventually His resurrection. And this morning, what I want you to see is that the sacrifice Jesus makes is the greatest sacrifice, resulting in the greatest deliverance for the greatest number of people.

[3:28] And we're going to be looking specifically at a moment where He's prepared for burial. We're going to see an unnamed woman lining up her life with the redemptive purposes of her King.

And though unnamed, she is memorialized forever. So this morning, I want to walk us through Matthew chapter 26.

We're going to walk through 19 verses. Verse 1 through 19, there are five sections in this passage. I'm going to walk you through each passage, and I'm going to show you how they relate to one another.

And after we do that, I'm going to say, here's what it's all saying, and then we're going to apply it to our lives. So let's walk through this account. It starts in Matthew 26, verses 1 through 1 and 2, in

Jesus' final passion prediction.

Listen to what Matthew writes. When Jesus had finished all these things, He said to His disciples, You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.

[4:40] When Matthew writes, when Jesus had finished all these things, He's referring to immediately what He's just got done talking about, the Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24 and 25, when Jesus is talking about the end times, final judgment.

But He's talking about also all of Jesus' public ministry. It has come to an end. From here on out, when Jesus speaks, it's going to be more in a private context.

But this is the fourth and final passion prediction that Jesus makes. Predictions of His suffering and of His death.

And I just, in order to get you ready, I want you to bring you back to the first passion prediction. It's in Matthew chapter 16. Peter has just confessed Jesus as the Christ, and then Matthew goes on and tells us what Jesus does in light of that.

In verse 21, from that time, Jesus 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 on the third day, be raised.

[5:49] So back in Matthew 16, Jesus starts telling His disciples, I'm going to Jerusalem. I'm going to suffer, die, and be raised. If you flip over to Matthew chapter 17, we have the second passion prediction.

It's in verses 22 and 23. And they were gathering in Galilee. They're still up north. Jesus said to them, The Son of Man. That's Jesus' favorite title of Himself.

It's messianic. It's Christological. It refers back to Daniel chapter 7, when God gives this Son of Man the kingdom forever. As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, The Son of Man is about 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 greatly distressed. If you flip over to Matthew chapter 20, verses 17 and 19, we have the third passion prediction. And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the 12 disciples aside, and on the way, He said to them, See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes.

He's going to be betrayed. And they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him over to the Gentiles, to be mocked, and flogged, and crucified. This is the first time Jesus tells what kind of death He's going to die, by Roman crucifixion.

[7:12] And He will be raised on the third day. And then that leads us to Matthew 26, verse 2, where here Jesus is saying, for the fourth and final time, You know that after two days, the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up, to be crucified.

There's something unique about this passion prediction. Did you notice the word Passover? You know after two days, the Passover is coming.

Here's what Jesus is doing. He is making a connection between His death, and the Passover. He wants you to know that. God wants you to think about Christ's death, a certain way.

It's going to be a Roman crucifixion, on the Jewish Passover. That will be how He dies. The Son of Man, the Christ, will die by crucifixion.

Now, I don't want to assume you know what Passover is. So let me just give you a little crash course in it. Now, Passover was one of three annual feasts Jews would make a journey to go to Jerusalem to observe.

[8:30] And Passover was a feast that spanned over eight days. It started with Passover and included the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And one scholar estimates that Jerusalem's normal population would have been about 30,000 people at kind of normal city life.

But when Passover came, the city would swell to 180,000 people. So six times the normal amount of people there. Jews had to observe Passover in Jerusalem because the temple was there.

And the temple was there. And what would happen there was they would sacrifice these male, unblemished lambs at the altar. Blood was shed.

Now, I don't know how your mind works, but when I think about 180,000 people in a city that's normally 30,000 celebrating or observing a ritual like Passover, I start asking, well, how many lambs are involved?

How many? And so like, if we just kind of include like 10 people to a family unit and we divide that by 180, I mean, we're talking 18,000 lambs per family.

[9:43] Not per family, but all together. Even if you just slice that in half, 9,000 lambs, that's a lot of lambs in the city. And that's a lot of blood. Passover was a feast memorializing God's deliverance of his people from captivity to Egypt.

And we see that in Exodus chapter 12. Remember Moses saying to Pharaoh, let my people go. Israel had been enslaved by Egypt.

And God heard their prayers. He raised up Moses and says, Moses, you go tell Pharaoh to let my people go. And so Moses goes. And Pharaoh wouldn't listen.

So God starts bringing plagues after plagues after plagues. And every time, Moses is saying, let my people go. And Pharaoh would resist. The plagues would get worse.

And eventually, the plagues climax in the tenth and final plague in which God vows to send the angel of death, the destroyer, to take the life of every firstborn male in Egypt.

[10:57] And at that time, God makes this incredible provision for his people. He instructs his people to kill a male lamb because the firstborn males would be struck by the destroyer.

He instructs his people to take a male, unblemished lamb and kill it at twilight on the night the destroyer comes. And what they did with the blood of that lamb was they took the blood of that lamb and they spread it over the doorposts of their homes.

And so when the angel of the Lord approached that house and he saw the blood of the lamb, he passed over the people under the blood. The blood of the sacrificed lamb signaled the angel of death that those in that house were covered and protected by the blood of the lamb.

The lamb was slain to deliver the people under the blood. And so the blood of the Passover lamb rescued God's people from sheer death that led to their deliverance from captivity to Egypt and bring them out.

And this is the deliverance that defined Israel as God's people. So God commanded this Passover feast to be observed every year for his people to participate in forever.

[12:24] Passover has to do with death. It's got to do with blood. It's got to do with passing over protection. And Jesus drops it here in Matthew chapter 26 verse 2.

It's two days from Passover. He's connecting the Passover with his death. Do you understand the claim that Jesus is starting to make? Jesus is starting to make this claim that his death is the ultimate Passover sacrifice.

It's a huge claim. Jesus at this moment is fully aware that God has purposed that he, the Christ, the Son of Man is to be the ultimate once for all Passover sacrifice for all sinners everywhere willing to acknowledge him.

So what you have going on here 33 AD in Jerusalem is a seismic shift in God's plan of salvation. Jesus is making a claim on the Passover.

So that's the first section of this passage. Let's go to the second. Verses 3 through 5. Caiaphas house. Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest whose name was Caiaphas and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.

[14:02] But they said not during the feast lest there be an uproar among the people. We move from Jesus' final passion prediction in which he's making a claim on being the Passover sacrifice to Caiaphas house where the chief priests and elders are plotting the death of Jesus.

These men are not only aware of Jesus but they're seeing him as a threat. It's not good for their political position and power. So they start plotting to arrest and kill him.

And what Matthew lays out for us is very interesting. We've got one plan laid out the plan of the Christ that his death is going to take place on the Passover and now we have another set of plans by the leaders of the people and their plan seems to be saying let's not kill him during the feast.

Here's what I want you to notice. Notice where they're meeting. They're meeting in Caiaphas house. a palace.

In verse 3. Here's what I also want you to notice. That Caiaphas is named. It's not just some guy. [15:36] It's Caiaphas. He was a unique high priest in Israel at this time. He was able to hold on to power for about 16 years which was quite the political accomplishment of that time.

He was politically savvy. So they're meeting in a palace in Jerusalem. Caiaphas house. Prestigious. It would have been a nice place. And notice the plans.

Verse 5. They're secretly trying to arrest, seeking how to arrest and kill Jesus. But again, not during the feast. I mean 180,000 people. Surely some of them are Galileans.

Jesus has a following. If we try to arrest him, it's a political tinderbox. We could have a riot on our hands. So they're going to wait him out. But they're looking for an opportunity.

In this section, what I want you to see is that we have important people in high positions plotting the death of Jesus in a really nice place. A palace. And their plans seem to be at odds with the plans of the Christ.

[16:47] Christ. Now we move on to the third section. Verses 6 through 13. The pouring of oil on Jesus by an unnamed woman.

Let me read that for you. Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask, a very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table.

And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant saying, why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor. But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, why do you trouble the woman?

For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. So here's the shift that takes place.

[17:49] We've just been in Caiaphas' palace. He's named. A plot's unfolding. And then Matthew brings us from the palace of Caiaphas to the house of Simon the leper.

From palace to a leper's house? In Bethany? We go from the capital to some potent place on the outskirts.

It's quite a contrast. We're not given the back story on Simon the leper. I'd love to know it, but in order for Jesus and other Jews to be meeting there, it must have been cleansed.

And so one of the theories is Simon the leper was healed by Jesus. That's how they could meet there. Otherwise, it would have been unclean and unallowed for any Jew to meet in.

So the where is in contrast to Caiaphas' palace. It's a questionable place. A leper's house? In Bethany?

[19:06] And now, the who. verse 7, a woman came up to him with an alabaster. She's unnamed. If you look at the rest of the section, she goes nameless.

Verse 10, why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing. Verse 12, on my body, she has done it. Verse 13, what she has done will also be told in memory.

She's never named. Caiaphas gets named. This woman doesn't. It's an interesting contrast.

Matthew is wanting to draw our attention to something.

Now, we actually know who this is. John 12 spills the beans. This is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

Matthew intentionally keeps her anonymous. We'll come back to it in a second. But this Mary would have been the Mary in John 11 who witnessed Jesus raise her brother, dead brother, up from the grave.

[20:15] That's who this is. This is the same Mary in Luke 10 who is commended by Jesus himself for sitting at his feet and listening to every word that came off his lips as her sister Martha is crazily, busily trying to facilitate stuff.

this is that Mary. But Matthew intentionally keeps her anonymous in order to contrast her with the big wig Caiaphas who's been named.

Caiaphas is plotting Christ's death. This unnamed woman is not plotting his death. She's preparing him to give his life as a ransom for many.

she's lining up with the Christ's purposes. And what we read is she comes to Jesus with an alabaster flask, a very expensive ointment and we learn from Mark that this is not just your everyday oil that during the day you put on somebody as just kind of a token welcome.

In our time this would have been about 35, 40 grand of perfume. That's the value. It was worth a year's wage of a laborer.

[21:32] 35 to 40 grand of perfume this unnamed woman pours out on the head of Jesus in this leper's house outside of the political capital.

Quite a contrast. when you see a pouring out of this sort in the Bible it's called an anointing.

And as you read your Old Testament you see a pouring out of oil on somebody's head. Typically it's the anointing of a king. It's associated with kingship.

In 1 Samuel 16 Samuel anoints David by pouring oil over his head. But the thing is we're not told why.

Matthew doesn't tell us why this unnamed woman pours this oil out on Jesus' head. We don't learn it from the other gospel writers either. But you know what it's safe to say?

[22:38] It's safe to say that this pouring out of this 35, 40 grand of perfume oil, it was a lavish demonstration of this unnamed woman's devotion to her king Jesus.

And it stands in sharp contrast to the plotting Caiaphas. It also stands in contrast to the disciples. In verses 8 and 9, they throw a hissy fit. They're angry. They go pragmatic. They see her pouring out a year's wage on this, on his head, and they're like, why the waste?

What are you doing? We could have used it for the poor. I really think I would have done that. But Jesus does something phenomenal.

This is like my favorite part. Jesus, Jesus goes to her defense. He goes to bat for her. He says, this is no waste.

[23:49] Verse 10, for she has done a beautiful thing to me. Opposed to Caiaphas and what we'll read in a second about Judas. It's a beautiful thing, not wasteful. And then verse 11, he says, for you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.

Jesus is recognizing this unique moment in salvation history. Jesus is not dismissing the help of the poor. He advocated it. What he is acknowledging is a very appropriate display of devotion at a unique moment in salvation history.

He's the son of man. He's the Christ, God incarnate, and he's coming up on his Passover sacrifice, and this woman does a really beautiful thing to him.

In verse 12, Jesus declares that what she's done is a beautiful thing. it's preparing him for burial. Here's what you need to know about this.

Jesus knows he's going to die on a Roman cross, and what you need to know about crucifixion is when you get crucified, you forego all burial rites, okay?

[24:58] Here's what would typically happen. You get crucified, and either the body rots and disintegrates on the cross, or it gets cut down, falls down, and scavenged by animals.

There's no burial proceedings. It was a display of power by Rome. Jesus knows this. And so, this act of devotion, and we're not clear if this woman knew that she was anointing his body for burial, we're not told.

But what Jesus says is, oh, this is what you have done. You've anointed my body for burial. You've shown me a kindness that all other crucified bodies typically don't receive.

A perfumed body. What we see here is that Jesus is thinking about his crucifixion.

And in verse 13, he says, truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. She is commended for her service in his great redemptive act for the world.

[26:20] Did you notice the words, this gospel? Look at verse 13. I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, Jesus already

knows that his coming death is going to be good news for the world.

And what this woman has done has lined up with his redemptive purposes, his sacrificial death. She has anointed his body for burial after crucifixion on the Passover.

Passover. Quite a contrast to Caiaphas, and it's quite a contrast to Judas. And this is the fourth section of this passage.

In verses 14 through 16, then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priest and said, what will you give me if I deliver him over to you? And they paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

We've got another contrast. This unnamed woman is now contrasted with another named man, Judas Iscariot. Now this is the one who would have walked with Jesus for a long time.

[27:52] He would have seen first hand what Jesus has done. He would have heard with his own ears the teaching that Jesus taught to the astonishment of the crowds. He would have handled the baskets of the leftover bread of the feeding of the five thousand and four thousand.

He was there. He was in the boat when Jesus calmed the raging seas. He was there. He saw first hand people raised from the dead. He was there. He saw demons exercised.

He saw the blind see. He saw the lame walk, the sick healed. Of all people, why Judas? Judas.

We're not really told. But what we know is like Caiaphas, he opposed Jesus.

You know what's safe to say? Jesus is not Judas' Lord. If you want to flip back with me to the Sermon on the Mount, here's some sobering words.

could you imagine if Judas was there, what he was thinking and what Jesus would have been thinking? Matthew chapter 7 verse 21, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven.

[29:10] On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name? And then will I declare to them, I never knew you. depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

You want to see what Jesus is going to say to Judas? We're going to talk about this next week, but if you look at chapter 26 verse 24, this is what Jesus has to say to Judas. The son of man goes and is written of him, but woe to the man by whom the son of man is betrayed.

It would have been better for that man Judas if he had not been born. what this man does here is the complete opposite of this beautiful devotion by an unnamed woman.

It is a diabolical act of betrayal by a named man. And if you notice where he goes, he goes to the chief priests in verse 14, he goes to them, and he goes to them asking, what will you give me if I deliver him over to you?

If Matthew gives us anything as far as motive, it's money. The team Caiaphas now has an inside man, and that inside man is going to get paid to show them an opportunity when Jesus is away from the crowds, Gethsemane.

[30:52] And Judas does it for 30 pieces of silver. That might sound like, whoa, 30 pieces of silver, wow, that's impressive. It's not. 30 pieces of silver in our day was about \$7,500.

\$7,500. It was a paltry sum of money to hand over God incarnate to die. But it was all according to plan.

It's quite a contrast. The name Judas, the unnamed woman, the delivering over to death, but for a paltry sum, and then the preparing for burial at great cost.

Judas, the name remembered as a perpetual evil. Have you ever been called a Judas? And this unnamed woman remembered always for good. The final section is in verses 17 through 19.

We read, now on the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus saying, where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover? He said, go into the city to a certain man and say to him, the teacher says, my time is at hand.

[32:06] I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. What Matthew does here is he bookends this passage with Passover talk.

He wants you to be thinking about Christ's death in terms of Passover. And I'm not sure if you noticed this, but in verse 18, when Jesus says, my time is at hand, he's speaking of his death.

The Passover has arrived. It's two days later now. The Passover has come. They need to start preparing the meal. I'll elaborate that next week. But what Jesus is saying, with the coming of the Passover is the coming of his time to die.

my time is at hand. This passage begins and ends with the bookends of Passover.

And the way that Jesus talks about it, it sounds like he's in total control. It's going to happen in two days. My time is at hand.

[33:20] And it's true. This is God-ordained, all of it from beginning to end. Let me try to summarize these five sections in a slightly different way.

This passage, these five sections, the first section and the fifth section are Passover fulfillment spoken by Jesus. It's about him. He's the ultimate Passover sacrifice.

And then section two and four, these are sections about treachery. And then the middle section, the third section, is this unnamed woman who does this beautiful thing preparing Jesus for his burial.

It's all surrounded by God's sovereignty. Here's the point of it all.

God wants us to think about Christ's death in terms of Passover. He wants us to be thinking about what Christ did as sacrifice.

[34:31] And he orchestrated it all by his sovereignty, both the good, the indifferent, and the really ugly. It was all under God's sovereignty to bring about the greatest sacrifice ever made for all people.

So we must see Christ's death as the ultimate Passover sacrifice. He's the greatest sacrifice.

It's who he is. He's God in the flesh. His blood shed and God's wrath passes over. And he accomplished the greatest deliverance.

Deliverance from the captivity to sin. Deliverance from the fear of death. Deliverance from the domain of the devil. And he establishes through this death a whole new people, the church.

We need to be thinking about Christ's death as the ultimate Passover sacrifice that has launched a whole new season of salvation on earth.

[35:37] I want to help apply this in three ways. First, I want you to realize that this sacrifice that Jesus speaks of, he's your sacrifice.

In Matthew, Matthew begins in Matthew 1 with this Emmanuel who is going to be named Jesus. The Lord saves.

He will deliver his people from their sins. And then for the rest of Matthew, you have these passion predictions of how God will save his people. And it's finally realized here, Matthew 26 and 27.

He is the sacrifice. He is the one who would sacrifice himself for his people as a ransom. So it fulfills Matthew's purpose.

This one who would save, saves by being a Passover sacrifice. But it's just not Matthew. There's this whole Old Testament story of Passover beginning in Exodus chapter 12.

[37:00] God delivers his people and it was a real deliverance. But God also had that aimed at being ultimately fulfilled in the ultimate Passover sacrifice, Jesus.

A greater sacrifice to accomplish a greater deliverance for a greater number of people. Do you remember John the Baptist when he lays eyes on Jesus in John 1?

Behold, the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sins of the world. sacrifice. Ultimate Passover. In 1 Corinthians 5, 7, the Apostle Paul, he's writing to a primarily Gentile church.

He says to them, for Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. He's paid it. It's done.

This morning, I want you to realize if you're a believer in this room, the sacrifice has been made. It's over. He's delivered you.

[38:07] God's wrath has passed over you. He's called you out and delivered you from captivity to sin. And he's brought you into the sweetness of being in relationship with him amongst the new people of the church.

church. If you're in this room and you have not received Christ as your Savior and King, you need to realize God is offering you today this sacrifice.

It's available and effectual. It will change you. This sacrifice is your sacrifice.

His Passover sacrifice is for you. And it's God's eternal plan that he sovereignly accomplished. The second thing I want you to see is by way of resolution.

Caiaphas, Judas, they betrayed Jesus. They were opposed to him. The disciples, they were at best indifferent. And what we're going to see in the rest of this story is that these disciples are going to fall away in cowardice.

[39:22] And it's not until after the resurrection with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, these cowardly disciples are made courageous proclaimers. But it's this woman that we must resolve to be like, to line up with Christ's purposes.

Her heart was one of a humble worship of her Christ. She was giving him the best she could at the time.

And man, she got criticized for it. But Jesus defended her. I don't know where you are in the room. I don't know what you're thinking about in terms of giving to Jesus your best.

But let me urge you, give him everything. Give him your entire life. Live for him. And if you get criticized for being too loud or too lavish, do you know what?

Jesus will take care of you. Leave it to your Lord. Here's a New Year's resolution. Here's a life resolution.

[40:42] just like this unnamed woman who did a beautiful thing to Jesus. Would you line up your life with him? Line it up with his purposes.

And he will take what you give him and he will use it for his glory. The last piece of application is encouragement.

all throughout this particular section, you see Team Caiaphas and you see the betrayer and you see the indifferent disciples and you even see this incredible outpouring of devotion from this unnamed woman.

All of it is being sovereignly worked out by God. All of it. All of it. God is working all things out in his sovereign, wise care.

God's sovereignty is not just limited to a week in 33 A.D. God is sovereign, just as sovereign now, working out circumstances for those who are humble to save.

[41:58] So be encouraged. God is as sovereign as ever. And if you resolve to line your life up with him, he will make much of it.

He will use it for his glory and point others to him. Our great Passover sacrifice.

Let's pray. God in heaven, God, we ask that you would make much of yourself in and through us as your church.

Lord, it would be our greatest joy to think of you saying to us, you have done a beautiful thing. God, would you help us individually and as a church to line up our lives with your kingdom purposes, to resolve today and tomorrow and however long you give us to be about your fame, your glory, your redemptive purposes around the world.

God, we don't need notoriety. We would rather go unnamed so that your name is glorified among all people.

[43:20] for cómo. It's in the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.