

# Anointed, Betrayed and Denied

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, as we consider that portion of God's word, let's start with a question. What is your response to the death of Jesus?

What is your response to the death of Jesus? And what impact has the crucifixion had in your life? When the church takes bread and wine together, remembering these extraordinary words, this is my body.

This is my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. What goes through your mind? What goes through your heart? What is Christ worth to you?

How did you react the last time you heard of someone giving up a good job and a comfortable life to go and serve in a challenging mission situation where life would be hard and money tight and the work challenging?

What did you think? Did you think how privileged they are to be going away and giving up everything to serve Jesus and to share his gospel?

[ 1 : 16 ] I wish that could be me. Or perhaps you thought this. Well, I admire them, but I could never do that. I don't have the confidence.

I don't have the ability. I'd fail. I'd be scared. I'd mess it up. Or maybe for some, what you honestly thought in your heart.

Why on earth did they do that? Why have they given up their comfortable life, their friends, their possessions, all the things that are so good? You wouldn't catch me doing that.

I like the stuff I have. I like the life I have. I wonder, can you identify with the woman in this passage who pours out her expensive perfume for Jesus?

Maybe we identify with the weakness of the disciples who will flee as Jesus is arrested. Or perhaps for someone here, your attitude actually is a little bit more like that of Judas towards Jesus.

[ 2 : 29 ] Well, I guess people wouldn't know. So we have these three reactions in our passage today, and we're going to look at each of those one after the other.

We have the devotion, the anointing. We have the betrayal. We have the desertion of the disciples. But before we do that, just a little bit of context. So here in Matthew chapter 26, where we are looking, of course, at the final days and hours before Jesus will be crucified, before he gives his life as a ransom for many.

And it's no surprise then, rather, that Jesus's sacrificial death is the central theme of the chapter. It's there at the heart where Jesus gathers his disciples around to celebrate the Passover and inaugurates the Lord's Supper.

Take, eat. This is my body. This is my blood. So the cross is at the centre. Of course it is. But also notice that this passage points us towards God's sovereignty.

It's important for us to see that Jesus isn't simply being carried along by events here. Matthew shows us clearly that he knows beforehand exactly what's going to occur.

[ 3 : 42 ] And why is that? Well, because in every detail, God is sovereignly working out his divine plan.

Even when it might look like chaos on the ground as the events work away and head away to the cross. It isn't. God is in control.

Now, there's a striking example of this in the first verses of this chapter. In verses three to five, the religious leaders are plotting to arrest Jesus and kill him. But notice as they do so, they explicitly say, not during the feast.

Not during the feast. This is not going to be a good time. There's too many people. Too much. Too much happening. Let's not arrest him during the feast. But God has determined that Jesus will die at the feast.

Feast of Passover. And Jesus tells his disciples that in verse two. And of course, that's exactly what happens. Jesus, you see, is not being carried along by events.

[ 4 : 46 ] He's not being carried along by the will of evil men. Rather, the religious leaders are being carried along in the purposes of God so that all might be fulfilled exactly as God has planned and promised.

God is entirely in control. So the cross, then, in this passage is central. And God is sovereignly working out his purposes. Let's keep these in mind as we look at the verses in front of us.

So we're going to look then at three responses to Jesus and his death. And as we do so, look at your own heart. Where do you find yourself?

Three headings for the three responses then. And the first one is this. And we're looking at verses six to 13. A costly anointing. A costly anointing.

So here Jesus is attending a meal in Bethany. Bethany, a village just outside of Jerusalem where Jesus often stays.

[ 5 : 47 ] We see that he's at the house of Simon. Simon the leper. Presumably a former leper that Jesus had healed. And whilst they're at the table, something quite remarkable happens.

It's certainly something that's never happened at a dinner party I've been to. And I suspect that was true for all of the people there that day. A woman comes up to Jesus and she has a flask of very expensive perfume.

And she pours it over his head so that he's covered head to foot in this beautiful, fragrant oil. This oil of nard. You can only imagine the looks of shock on the faces of the other guests there, can't you?

John's account of this event tells us that the woman is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. The one who sat learning at Jesus' feet. And so Mary takes what you'd imagine must be her most valuable possession and pours it over her saviour's head.

This perfume is worth a great deal. According to Mark, it'd be worth about 300 denarii or 300 days wages for a labourer.

[ 7 : 03 ] That's a staggering amount of money, isn't it? And people are stunned by this event, by the sheer extravagance of it. To the disciples, it looks horribly wasteful.

This could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor. I wonder whether we would have joined in. This was a well-intentioned action.

Sure, it was born of love and devotion. Sure. But isn't this a poor use of resources? Couldn't something better have been done with that? All that money that could have been raised? But Jesus hears the grumbling and he dismisses it.

What this woman has done is a beautiful act. Why do you trouble the woman, he says in verse 10? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. A beautiful thing.

But why is it beautiful? Well, firstly, because it's an act of worship, of devotion to Jesus. He's done a beautiful thing to me, he says.

[ 8 : 09 ] And Jesus, as God the Son, rightly claims that worship. He says he is entirely worthy of all her worship and service and sacrifice.

And because of who he is, it is entirely fitting that such an extravagant action should be done. For him. Verse 11 says, you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.

It's an unique moment in time that deserves unique action. And Jesus certainly says that forgiving to the poor matters. Jesus cares greatly for the poor after all.

But it doesn't matter to the exclusion of worshipping him. Indeed, all true Christian love and care for the poor and disadvantaged must flow from a heart that is first of all devoted to Christ.

But this action is also beautiful because of what it signifies, what it means. Look at verse 12. In pouring out this ointment on my body, says Jesus, she's done it to prepare me for burial.

[ 9 : 23 ] He's repeatedly foretold his death. His timing is certain. And therefore, it's appropriate to anoint him as one anoints a dead body for burial.

Now. This anointing is beautiful because it shows that Jesus's death is valuable beyond anything else.

She anoints his body in perfume in anticipation of the death he is about to die, because that death is of great and infinite worth.

For Mary, the extravagant pouring of oil is entirely right. For her and every true follower of Jesus, his death in our place is worth everything.

To have sins forgiven, rough, turned away, right relationship with God restored, the hope of eternal glory.

[ 10 : 22 ] Isn't that worth infinitely more than the greatest fortune we could ever imagine having on earth? How about you?

Have you grasped that? Have you grasped the infinite worth of Jesus's death and do worship and wonder and thanksgiving flow out of you when you contemplate the sacrifice he has made for you? And when you come and you take the bread and the wine. Notice what Jesus says in verse 13. Truly, 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.

Extraordinary, isn't it? Why? Well, at the heart of the gospel, of course, lie the death and the resurrection of Christ. And as Mary pours the perfume, these events are just about to happen. And these events, says Jesus, will be proclaimed throughout the whole world. And now, of course, as we look back 2000 years later, we see that Jesus's words are indeed true.

[ 11 : 35 ] The gospel truly does span the globe. And wherever the scriptures are read, this story of this woman of Mary is heard. Why? Because this woman valued Jesus's death more than anything else and demonstrated that by responding in love and devotion, anointing him for his burial.

Now, of course, this is a unique act. We can't anoint Jesus's body today. And I don't think that this passage is a core to expensive and elaborate rituals in worship or anything of that sort.

But what does it mean for us? What is the costly response that we are called to? For we are called firstly to leave all and to follow Jesus.

Friends, if you've never come to him in faith before, trusting in him for the forgiveness of sins, then that is the call for you today. Leave your sin, leave your old life and come to him and find life and forgiveness, mercy and eternal, eternal life in him.

Christians, as those saved by grace through faith, we are to give ourselves as living sacrifices.

[ 13 : 04 ] Paul tells us that, doesn't he? Our whole lives are lives of sacrificial worship to Christ as we live for him. Not because we can contribute in any way toward our salvation, but in response, in thankfulness to what he has done for us.

And we're called to continue the great work of proclaiming, of sharing the gospel throughout all of the world. And that is costly.

To share Jesus will take sweat and sacrifice. There will be sacrifice of money, giving to God's work. For some, there will be making different career choices or life choices in order to enable to serve God more effectively. Some may give up all and go to the other side of the world or go into some kind of Christian service, perhaps.

For most, at the very least, we'll be giving up some of our leisure time to reach out to our friends, to our community, to serve the cause of the gospel where we are. And there's a further cost.

[ 14 : 20 ] The cost of facing rejection when we speak of Jesus. Of facing mocking from those we care about and speak to. Perhaps the cost of finding career options close to us.

Maybe even the cost of facing legal sanctions for standing firm for the gospel and for the truth.

Maybe worse. But friends, when the cross of Christ is everything to us, no sacrifice is too great.

When his broken body and shed blood cause us to overflow with praise and thanksgiving in awe at what he has done for us. To give up everything else is not a problem.

But even so, it's a humbling challenge, isn't it? It's our question. It's my question. What can I give for the sake of Jesus and his cross?

God is sovereignly at work saving people through the preaching of the gospel throughout the whole world. Let's give ourselves to that great task.

[ 15 : 41 ] So firstly, then, we have a costly anointing. Secondly, we have a shocking betrayal, a shocking betrayal. The contrast between verses 6 to 13 and verses 14 to 16 is really striking.

It's really stark. On the one hand, we have Mary pouring out hugely valuable perfume to anoint Jesus. On the other, we have Judas portraying Jesus for a pitifully small sum.

30 pieces of silver. It wasn't much. Notice that there's no coercion here with Judas. He goes freely and willingly to the priests and offers to betray Jesus.

He's happy with the modest offer of money. And he goes back to Jesus and waits for an opportunity. Now, of course, this is all behind the scenes as far as the other disciples are concerned.

And when the disciples come together to celebrate Passover, Jesus makes a shocking announcement. Look at verse 21. Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.

[16:55] And this is devastating to the disciples. They're all distressed. They mourn. They mourn. They can't figure it out.

You can imagine what they were thinking. We've been with Jesus these three years, the 12 of us. We've lived our lives with him. We've seen his miracles. We've heard his teaching. He loved us as friends.

He trusted us. We've preached in his name. We've done miracles in his name. We've left everything for him. We've done miracles in his name. How could one of us betray him now?

And they each wonder if it was them, don't they? Is it I? They say to Jesus. Is it I? Could I do such a thing? And as Jesus, as Judas rather, dips his bread into the dish and asks, is it I?

Why? The Lord says to him, presumably quietly, you have said so. The thing is, Judas, all appearances is just like the others, a disciple of Jesus from the beginning.

[18:04] And yet in his heart, he has come to reject the Lord deliberately and clearly. That rejection will soon become public as he commits the ultimate act of betrayal.

But as yet it's hidden. Could it be? Could it be that someone listening today is in some way like Jesus?

It's possible to appear as a follower of Jesus while all the while rejecting him deliberately in our hearts. It's possible to be in church every week.

It's possible to be involved in music or children's work. And yet to have failed to have come and put our faith in Jesus. To have never come to the cross. Young people, you may have grown up in the church.

You may be able to answer pretty much any difficult question about the Bible anyone could ever ask you. You may have been blessed by having Christian parents. You may have been baptised. But for someone here.

[19:15] Perhaps you're just here really because that's the way you were brought up. In your heart. In your heart. Actually, you reject Jesus. You reject his death.

It means nothing to you. You've never come to know its value for yourself. Well, friends, Judas is a Stern and a serious warning.

His judgment would be terrible. Look at what Jesus says. Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for him if he had not been born.

There's nothing more tragic than to know God's word. To enjoy the friendship of God's people. To see firsthand the joy of others who know Jesus and value him above all else.

And yet to find yourself condemned to the judgment of hell because you refuse to come to Jesus and put your faith in him yourself. There's nothing more tragic because the judgment of hell is where that path leads.

[20:25] There's no hope there. And whether you stay in church your whole life. No change. Or one day you leave never to come back.

Causing that same sadness, that same grief that the disciples had. If you continue to reject the offer of salvation, then the effect is the same.

How shall we escape, says the writer of the Hebrews, if we reject? It's a greater salvation. Friends, do not let that be you. Don't value the things of this world, the sin, the pleasure, whatever it might be.

Don't value that so highly. It's like 30 pieces of silver. It's nothing. Come. Come to Jesus. Know his death is for you.

Now, we must not miss the fact here that Jesus is not surprised by this betrayal. He knows all about it.

[21:28] Again, because it's part of the eternal divine plan. Indeed, even the point of the dipping of bread alongside Judas, I think, is to fulfill the prophecy of Psalm 41, which says this.

Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who has shared my bread, has turned against me. We take some comfort that in the betrayal of Judas, God is sovereignly working out his plan of salvation to bring Jesus to the cross.

So we've seen a costly anointing. We've seen a shocking betrayal. And lastly, we see disciples' desertion.

The disciples' desertion, and that's verses 30 to 35. So the third response to Jesus in his death here is that of the disciples. Jesus makes another shocking statement after they've taken the Lord's Supper together and they've gone out.

He says to them, you will all fall away because of me this night. You will all fall away because of me this night. And that's another shock, isn't it?

[ 22 : 41 ] And again, we notice here that the prophecy is being fulfilled. I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. Jesus is quoting Zechariah there. And we see once again that God is carrying out his purposes, his plans.

The Lord will be abandoned to suffer without his friends, without his disciples, to suffer alone. That is God's plan, his purpose. Well, the disciples then, they felt grief earlier.

But the response now is actually rather different. They respond now with disbelief. Peter leads the way, doesn't he? Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away, he says.

And the others all say something similar. And Jesus turns to Peter and says, Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.

What's striking, isn't it, that the disciples have such a misplaced confidence in themselves. And it's misplaced because, of course, if we read on, we see very quickly that when Jesus is arrested, the disciples all abandon him.

[ 23 : 50 ] They run away, down in verse 56. And Peter does indeed deny Jesus three times. It's a misplaced confidence.

But we do need to pause at this point. And we do need to notice the important difference between Judas and the rest of the disciples. Judas purposely and deliberately rejects Jesus and betrays him.

The disciples, they fall. They fail. But they fail through panic and fear. And they let down the Lord that they love badly. And I think all of us who know the Lord know what it is to fail, don't we?

To let the Lord down. You see, here are genuine disciples who love the Lord, who fall badly because they are afraid. But we mustn't forget that this same group ultimately go on to lead the church.

This same group will go on to start taking out the gospel to the world, the task that Jesus has alluded to. But nevertheless, here they are, weak, going to abandon him.

[ 25 : 02 ] Are we confident that we would have done any better? I'm not sure that I am. And we can sympathise, can't we, in our own lives.

Which of us hasn't found ourselves failing to stand up for the truth when Jesus is under attack, being insulted, whatever it is, when we're perhaps in a work environment or school or with friends? I think we've probably all found ourselves there and failing to say the thing we know we should say and must say. And which of us at times, if we're honest, haven't lived lives that are totally inconsistent with our faith just to fit in with those around us?

There may be that someone here this morning feels that they are an utter failure. You've let the Lord down badly and you're despairing.

Is there forgiveness for me after that? Is there hope for me? Is there a future for me as a Christian? I'll notice what Jesus says in verse 32.

[ 26 : 12 ] Let's just reread verse 31 first. Jesus said to them, you will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

But after I'm raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. I will go before you to Galilee after I'm raised up, he says. You see, Jesus is going to rise from the dead according to God's sovereign plan and he will go to Galilee ahead of them.

In other words, when he is raised, which he will be, he will be reunited with him. They will be reunited with him. They will not be cut off because of their sin.

As terrible as it is. There's hope. There's restoration. How can this be so? How can they be restored when they abandon him at that very moment when he needs them most?

How, when they see his infinitely valuable death, when they see him going to the cross, they're too scared to risk suffering with him and they run.

[ 27 : 24 ] How can it be? Because of that very same cross. Because of Jesus is saving work. Because of his body broken and his blood shed, which has just been enacted for them in the institution of the Lord's Supper.

The blood of the covenant has been depicted. The blood of the covenant is shed on the cross. That blood of the covenant which seals God's eternal and unbreakable commitment to his people.

The blood of the covenant which provides the forgiveness of sins once for all. The blood of the covenant that God truly will never break. For he will and must keep his promise. God will never demand payment for sins that have been washed away by the blood of Jesus once for all. Friends, if you have come to the cross of Jesus Christ, looking to him in repentance and faith.

Even after your very worst falling. You can know that you will see the risen Lord Jesus Christ face to face one day.

[ 28 : 43 ] Though you fail and fall. And sadly we do. We all do. He will keep you. He says back in verse 29 to his disciples.

I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom. We will one day drink wine with Jesus in the new heavens and the new earth.

We will see him face to face. Because of the broken body and the shed blood. But what do the disciples get wrong?

Is failure and falling inevitable? Well, the error is at least this, as we've alluded already. They're confident in their own strength.

I will never fall away, says Peter. I will never fall away. They all say that. We're strong. We're capable. We won't be scared. We'll go with you even to death if we need to.

[ 29 : 56 ] They don't get very close, do they? They run at the first sign of trouble. So what will we do when we come under attack for sharing the gospel?

For standing up for gospel truth? If perhaps things get harder for us as churches, what will we do? Well, the answer is not self-confidence.

Because the reality is, like the disciples, we left ourselves a weak. We easily become afraid. We easily fall into sin. We don't have confidence in ourself then.

We must have confidence in Christ, recognizing our own weakness. When people insult us or they threaten us or they attack Jesus' name, where do we look for the strength, the sand, our ground?

To Christ. To Christ. We run to him in prayer for help. We trust in the promises that he makes to us in his word. When we are weak, he is strong.

[ 30 : 59 ] Where do we go when we are tempted to compromise with sin? To Christ Jesus, who promises us that way of escape in temptation.

He is strong. He indwells us by his Holy Spirit. He is the one who will keep us. He will.

Recognize your own weakness and look to him for the strength that he gives when things get hard. So we've seen then a costly anointing.

We've seen a shocking betrayal. We've seen disciples' desertion. So as we close, how will you respond to the cross of Jesus?

I trust no one here will go on rejecting him and his sacrifice. That path is a terrible one. We must come to him in faith and find his mercy.

[ 32 : 11 ] Christian brothers and sisters, let's fix our minds and our hearts on him. Let's meditate on the body and the blood of Christ broken and shed for us.

Let's come to grasp evermore the infinite value of what Jesus has done for us. And then let's look and see that he is working out his sovereign purposes in this world.

That in our day, to save a people for himself that no one can count. And friends, as we respond in worship and praise to what he has done, let's go out and tell others about it.

No matter what it costs us. For he is worth it. No cost is too great. When we value and love the Lord Jesus Christ and his death for us above everything else.

Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father. We thank you. For Jesus.

[ 33 : 21 ] We thank you for his cross. For his resurrection. For his ongoing presence with us by the spirit. We pray simply now that you would take your word.

Apply it to our hearts. Fix our minds and hearts on him that we might trust him. That we might value him above all else. That we might make the cause of the gospel.

Of serving him. Of offering our lives as worship to him. Our great aim and purpose in life. We ask these things in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen.