

Matthew 26:1-16

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[0:00] Would you say it is? Is it a biography? Yes. Is it a record of miracles?

! Is it a constitution of sorts for the church?! Is it a record of Christ's sermons and teachings?

! Yes. It's all those things. But, a few weeks ago, as we entered into Matthew chapter 21, and today we're going to be in Matthew chapter 26 if you want to turn there.

As we entered into chapter 21, where we saw the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as Christ entered as a king, we recognized that we were beginning the end game, right?

Matthew was setting us up for a showdown. And, terms like the end game and showdown, that's not what we see in biographies.

[1:06] Or in spiritual memoirs or in legal documents. We use words like that in adventure stories, right? And, the book of Matthew is an adventure.

A prince come to slay a dragon. Villains conspiring against him to consolidate their power. Right?

A groom giving his life to rescue his bride. Right? You know what that is.

It's a quick series of cuts between several moments that show either like a development, or a tension, or a drama.

Right? The classic training montage from the 1980s, right? Where Rocky, you know, first he's chasing a chicken, and then he's beating up meat, and then he's running up the steps, and now he's ready to face whoever.

[2:00] Right? Or, the classic team building montage, right? You know, like the Ocean's Eleven movie. You know, now we got this guy, now we got this guy, now we're ready. Right? We've assembled the team, right?

Well, in this adventure story, we already know who the players are. The hero, the villain, the cast of characters. We already know what they want. We've already seen the obstacles that they face to get to this moment.

And today, in this montage, the camera cuts from one to the next to the next, as each character charts their plan.

They're going to set in motion their strategy for the end game. The hero, the villain, the double agent.

They're setting up their strategy for the final showdown. And they lock in their course. And as we follow the camera's quick cuts through this scene, as each character charts their plan, we might find that we aren't just watching them.

[3:11] That we might also be gazing into a mirror. Why is that? Why is that? People are people. We don't really change.

Yes, we wear different clothes. We have different costumes. Speak a different language in the first century Israelites. The things that people want, that doesn't change.

That doesn't change. So when people come face to face with Jesus, there are only a handful of responses that people have in any age.

And so let's pray to the Lord that as we see this cast of characters, this cast of humanity, really, how they approach Jesus, that we would learn how we ought to approach him as well.

So let's pray. Our Lord and God, will you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, show us ourselves and show us your Son to the glory of your name.

[4:31] We pray that in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen. Matthew 26 begins in verse 1.

When Jesus had finished all these sayings, 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.

Now verse 1 might look like a throwaway, but in these two short verses, We realize that we have already seen the final words of teaching in the book of Matthew.

Everything from here on out is action. Today is the day of plotting. The players chart their course. Next week, Jesus establishes the new covenant.

The enemies then strike. The trial commences. The disciples scatter. The crowds turn. And the darkest day of all, Good Friday, gives way to, well, let's watch the events unfold.

[5:42] But today, everything is set in motion. Beginning with the villain. Verse 3. The chief priests and 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 to kill him.

But they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people. Now this has been a long time coming, hasn't it? Right? I wonder if you've ever had an ambitious yet ambiguous plan in your life.

Right? A grand plan that you've never actually taken action on. That novel that you really want to write, but you've never penned a word. Right? Or that skill you want to learn, but you haven't even checked out a book from the library.

But you have these designs in your head. Someday. Someday I'll do that. But Christ's opponents are just like that. They had decided, I want to write a novel. Or we want to destroy Jesus.

As far back at least as chapter 12. Chapter 12, verse 14. The Pharisees went out and conspired against him how to destroy him. But while that was their goal, right, they hadn't really done anything to make it a reality.

[7:03] They hadn't taken action. On the one hand, Jesus was a threat to the religious establishment in Jerusalem. Right? He was one teaching with incredible authority.

And the crowds recognized that his authority was different than the priests and the scribes.

Something they had never had. And he gathered huge crowds wherever he went.

And the stories about his powerful works are incredible. And he had deliberately and repeatedly called out the priests and the scribes and the Pharisees and the elders for adding to God's law.

For placing burdens on the people. For unrighteousness. For hypocrisy. And so he was a threat to their reputation. To their position.

They did not want to let this stand. But on the other hand. I mean, as long as he remained out in Galilee. In the Jordan River Valley. In the Decapolis.

[8:06] Either out in the sticks or at least outside of Jerusalem. Nothing really forced their hand. They didn't need to act. Until this week.

Now. These. Last few days. He's in Jerusalem. On their doorstep.

He's in their temple. So they think. Flipping tables. Crushing them in debate. Right? Denouncing them with really. Severe condemnations. Chapter 23.

Right? In just a few short days. Their. One day we'll get rid of Jesus' plan. Has become. Right now. We have to get rid of him. And so they gathered at the palace of Caiaphas. The high priest. Now in this time of. Roman occupation. Rome.

[9:00] Chose the high priest. And we find that Caiaphas. Was actually an incredibly powerful politician. Because that's really what the position was at this point. He held the position.

For 18 years. Which is longer than any other. High priest in the Roman era. And in fact. His father-in-law. Annas. Who we actually meet in the book of John.

Proceeded him in that office. So this is a very powerful. Political. Family. And they are very concerned. About their political future.

In John chapter 11. John sheds a little more light on this conversation. They say. If we let him go on like this. Everyone will believe in him. And the Romans will come.

And take away. Both our place. And our nation. Jesus ministry might make Caiaphas. The single most threatened person in the world.

[10:02] A lifetime of politics. Threatened. By some untrained. Backwater. Peasant. Rabble rouser. Right.

And so they meet at his palace. And plot. To plan. To kill Jesus. But he is actually too great. A threat. To take head on. That's what they're concerned about here. In their view. The source of his power. Is his popularity among the crowds. Right. He's too beloved. To capture in broad daylight. They'll have a riot on their hands. And Rome doesn't care about the temple. Or the religious issues. Or the teachings. Or who's actually in power. Rome wants to protect the Pax Romana. The Roman peace. If a riot breaks it out. They will crush it with force. But Caiaphas will lose his position. Along with his whole entourage. He's only useful to Rome.

[10:58] As long as he keeps. The peace. Among the people. Right. They see. The religion. Of the Jewish people. As. Right. The opiate. Of this mass. That's his function.

To them. And so governing. A worldwide empire. Requires stability. That's what Rome. Cares about. Stability. Above all else. And so. If they capture him. Among the crowds. And the crowds love him. That jeopardizes. Everything they have. So they feel. They have to get rid of Jesus. But it can't be loud. It can't be a spectacle. So doing it. Among the. Festival crowds. Verse five. Is out of the question. He must be made to. Simply. Disappear. So they plot to take him. Verse four. By stealth. Or by deceit. What are we seeing.

[11:56] In this short scene. They see Jesus. As a threat. An opponent. An obstacle.

And so they oppose him. Before the camera cuts. To the next part. Of this montage. Let's consider. If this first scene. Isn't just a look. At Caiaphas. But like we said. If it's a mirror. It could also be a look. At us. Do you.

See. Jesus. As an obstacle. Does his law. Spoil. Your funnel. Do his. Standards. Seem. Unfair. Unfriendly. Do his.

[12:55] Commands. Appear to you. To be. Too. Demanding. If that's. Your heart. Attitude. Towards Christ. You.

Will. Find. Yourself. Conspiring. Him. Just like. These priests. Certainly. You won't. You know. Try to have him.

Arrested. And killed. Right. Or will you. See. They plotted. To arrest. Jesus. Have him killed. I wonder. If. When we see. Jesus. As an obstacle. As well. If we actually. Do the same thing. In our hearts. Right. Arrest. They wanted.

To have him. Bound. By some. Authority. First. Their own. Guards. Then. The Roman army. What does that. Accomplish? What does arrest. Accomplish? It restrains. It shames.

[13:50] It forces. Forces. Submission. And though. We can't. Physically. Arrest. Jesus. We can still. Do all those things. Can't we? When.

Jesus. Is the opponent. Of our. Desires. Or of our. World views. Right. People can try to. Restrain. Or shame. Or force. Submission. Of his words. Right. They restrain.

Oh that's nice for you. But keep it to yourself. Practice your faith. In private. They shame. You believe. What? You bigot? They force.

Submission. Right. To participate. In the public discourse. You must. Affirm. That which your faith. Condemns. They sought to.

Arrest him. They sought to. Kill him. The priests. Didn't just want him. Contained. They wanted him. Gone. They wanted him. Dead. And though. We can't. Physically.

[14:47] Kill Jesus. We can. Act like we have. Can't we? If Jesus. Is an obstacle. To my fun. Or. My plans.

Or my fulfillment. As I see it. Well. I can ignore him. I won't. Kill him. But I'll pretend. He's dead. Right. I'll just forget.

That command of scripture. Right now. God's living word. I'll just forget. That it's there. Living and active. I'll just pretend. That I'm not living. This moment. Of indulgence. Before the face.

Of God. I like. Like he's not here. Like he's dead. Or. Growing in holiness. Is really. Inconvenient. I'll pretend.

Like the Holy Spirit. Isn't. Really. Alive in me. I'll just coast the law. Is God. The opponent.

[15:41] Of your desires. If so. You will. Oppose him. You will try. To contain him.

Or restrain him. Try to pretend. That the living God. Is dead. Just like this story's villain. The camera doesn't stay there.

Matthew cuts away now. To the hero. To Christ. Verse six. 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.

[16:38] Said to them. Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you will 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 this gospel is proclaimed. In the whole world. What she has done.

Will also be told. In memory of her. Bethany. Where this scene takes place. Is just over the crest. Of the Mount of Olives. Perhaps a mile or two.

From the temple. That both the gospels of Mark and John. Contain this same episode. And from them we learn. That the woman here.

Is Mary. The sister of Lazarus. Whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Which means there is this tantalizing possibility.

[17:35] And it is just a possibility. That this ointment. Was the burial ointment. Intended for Lazarus. Which wasn't needed anymore. Because.

Well. Jesus had drawn. Lazarus's death. To an early end. Now the text doesn't say that. So I'm not really free to proclaim that. But it is. Quite fitting. Isn't it?

What's so interesting about this. Scene. Is the. The contrast. Between. What has just come before. And the. Palace of the high priest. And what's happening here.

In Bethany. One is a palace. The other is. A very simple home. In a very simple village. But in the palace.

Things are not going. Quite well. Right? It's rushed. It's panicked. The priests. Seem to be convening. Like an emergency meeting together. Frantically. Trying to preserve their. Power. But here. It's a very relaxed scene.

[18:32] Jesus is. Reclining. At table. He's not flustered. Or worried. They are seeking. To destroy him. Mary.

Seeks to anoint him. The priests. Are trying to avoid. An uproar. In the city. At his arrest. But the disciples.

Are. In an uproar. Not about his arrest. Not about something negative. But about his anointing. Something positive. Now.

None of the gospel writers. Explain to us. Mary's. Reason. Why. She anoints him. With the ointment. Perhaps she herself. Didn't know.

Only. That she loved him. And wanted to do something loving to him. Right? Some here. See a rebuke. Of the disciples. And of men. In general. Right? The men.

[19:26] Who have been with him. For three years. Don't understand. Or believe. What he has been saying. All along. And today. In verses one and two. About his. Upcoming death.

But a woman. Who didn't travel with him. Did believe him. She did. Understand. And she did. Take him seriously.

And so she acted accordingly. Anointing his body. For burial. Ahead of time. Which adds another. Layer of irony. Right? A woman. Was the one. To understand. Now. I personally feel.

You know. Kind of. Attacked. And threatened. By this interpretation. So. No. Perhaps also. It could be. Right? That. If these really were. The burial ointments. For her brother. If they were the scents.

Meant to cover. The stench of death. This was. A wonderful. Symbolic. Gester. Right? Jesus. Jesus. Had not. Only. Overcome.

[20:21] The odor. Of death. But death itself. In the resurrection. Of Lazarus. Just days before. How appropriate. Then. Would it be.

That he carried. That same aroma. The aroma. That counters. Death. Again. The text. Doesn't explain. Her. Her motives. Her reasoning. All we know.

For sure. Is this. She gave. A splendid. And valuable. Gift. To Jesus. That's a sign. Of love. And. As lovers. Know. It is a delight. To give. To the one. Who is the object. Of your affection. Right? This is what she had.

So this is what she gave. But the disciples. Don't. Really see the love. They see waste. For a sake. [21:17] When the disciples saw it. They were indignant. Saying. Why this waste? For this could have been sold. For a large sum. Given to the poor. For. So where all.

The disciples can see. Is waste. Jesus knows. That her offering. Is part of something bigger. But. Before he talks about his burial. Before. He talks about. That larger picture. He takes a moment. To talk about her. To talk for her.

Before he explains. The larger narrative. The history. That's unfolding here. He slows down. And says something. Very personal. Verse 10. Why do you trouble.

The woman. She has done something. Beautiful. For me. Do you ever feel. Like your service. To the Lord. Is unnoticed.

[22:14] Do you ever feel. That your worship. Your offering. Is insignificant. Or forgotten. Do you ever feel. Like you. Are insignificant.

Unimportant. In his sight. Look here. To your savior. And see. That he sees.

This peasant woman. He sees her offering. He sees her loving. He values it. He values her. She doesn't even speak.

In this passage. She offers no defense. Of herself. Against the accusations. Of the disciples. He defends her.

And not only that. He's going to make sure. That she's remembered. Right? Repenting and believing. In Christ. Means that we decrease.

[23:16] And that he increases. But it doesn't mean. That we're forgotten. Instead. Being found. In him. Having our story.

Tied to. His story. Is the way. The lasting. Significance. Verse 13. Truly I say to you. Wherever this gospel. Is proclaimed. This gospel.

Is proclaimed. In the whole world. What she has done. Will be told. In memory of her. You see how. Her story. Is tied. To his story. I guarantee you.

That's a better. Outcome. A better lineage. Better notoriety. Than anything. She could have possibly imagined. To have earned for herself. And so if you.

Find. Your heart. Being knit. To his. In love. The Holy Spirit. Has. Or is. Stirring. A loving. Faith. In you. You. You need not.

[24:16] Make a name. For yourself. He is. Joining you. To his. Story. Forever. If the Holy Spirit.

Has. Or is. Stirring. A loving. Faith. In you. You need not. Defend. Yourself. He comes to her defense. He. Will vindicate.

Her love. Right. And so not. Critics. Not markets. Downturns. Not confusion. Or doubt.

Or fear. Most of all. What he defends. His people. Against. Is from the wrath. That they have earned. That's the whole point. Of this burial.

Right. The cross. Right. The destination. That he plotted. For himself. In verse two. Is where. He protected. His people. Most of all.

[25:16] From the storm. Of divine wrath. Wrath. Over our sin. Fell not on us. But on him. Our great defender.

Jesus. So. Do not fear. To love. To love. To love. The Lord Jesus. He is your strength.

And your shield. And I hope that. Kindles. More love. For you. For him. In your heart. The ointment. Was probably the most expensive thing. She owned. I hope you see. As Mary did. That he is worth. More. Than any other treasure. She has chosen.

The better portion. Today. In Matthew's montage. We have seen. Christ. Set the scene. The villains.

[26:15] Turn their desires. Into a plan. Jesus. Shows himself. The protector. Of those. Who treasure him. And then. Someone. Who has been. By his side.

The whole narrative. Who should know. To treasure him. Better than anybody else knows. It bridges the gap.

Between the villain. And the hero. Connects them. The foundation. Of the betrayal. Actually begins right here.

In John's gospel. As he records this passage. In John 12. Well. He makes the connection. A little clearer for us. He shows us. Who led. The disciples.

In their complaint. John 12. 4. Judas Iscariot. One of his disciples. He. Who was about. To betray him. Said. Why was this ointment.

[27:14] Not sold. For 300 denarii. And given to the poor. He said this. Not because he cared. About the poor. But because he was a thief. And having charged. The money bag. He used to help himself.

That was put into it. Normally it's Peter. Leading the disciples. And whatever they're saying. Here it's Judas. He has been walking.

With Christ. For three years. But Jesus. Had not become his treasure. Money was. And when Jesus.

Entered Jerusalem. As a king. King. It wasn't the kind of king. That Judas. Wanted to be attached to. This was the servant king. Not the victorious king. The conquering king.

He realized. He had not. Hitched his wagon. To the gravy train. Like he thought he had. And now. He realized. As Jesus was cool.

[28:11] With this woman. Pouring out. Valuable things. Seemingly. And waste. He wouldn't be able to gift. Even off of the smaller gifts. And so.

Verse 14. One of the twelve. Whose name was Judas Iscariot. Went to the chief priests. 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. The priests.

Saw Jesus as an opponent. As an obstacle. Mary. Saw Jesus. As her treasure. Judas. Saw Jesus. As an opportunity.

An opportunity. For personal advancement. And everyone. Acted. Accordingly. One of the great preachers.

[29:13] Of the early church. Was John Chrysostom. When he looked at. What Judas. Plotted. And planned. Here. He saw only stupidity.

And foolishness. He put it like this. Oh. Madness. How did greed. Altogether blind him.

For he. That is Judas. That had often seen him. That is Jesus. When he went through the mess. Was not seized. And when he afforded. Many demonstrations. Of his God headed. Power.

Look to lay hold of him. He's saying. Isn't it just stupid. He's seen him. Calm the storm. You think. You can capture him. You think. And then he turns.

To his hearers. And says. Hearken. All ye greedy. Like Judas. Ye that have the disease. Of Judas. Hearken. And beware. Of the calamity.

[30:13] For if he. That was with Christ. That is Jesus. As Christ. Wrought signs. And as. Judas. Had the benefit. Of so much instruction.

He was not. Freed of the disease. Of greed. And selfishness. Was sunk. Into such a gulf. How. Much. More. Shall ye. Become. An easy.

Bray. To this calamity. And so the first question. Is not. How do you treat. Jesus. Because. The first. How you treat. Jesus. Comes from the real. First question. Is how do you view. Jesus. What do you think. Of him. What is he. To you. Right.

The way. You treat him. Oppose him. Embrace him. Use him. As Judas. Is doing. Will follow from that. Now.

[31:09] As the camera. Has panned. In this montage. From one. Setting. And character. To the next. The villain. The hero. The double agent.

Is. How different. Are their intentions. How different. Are their plans. But here's. The crazy. Thing. God.

Gave. Them. All. Exactly. What they wanted. Judas. Gets.

His money. Will. But it will turn. To ash. In his hands. The priests. Get. The crucifixion. They get him arrested.

In secrecy. Just like they want. They get him denounced. And destroyed. Just like they want. They get. The ultimate end.

[32:06] And humiliation. Of their foe. But it will not be. Christ's defeat. It will be theirs. And the Mary.

Gets her treasure. Forever. Everyone. Got. What they were seeking. Be careful.

What you. Seek after. God. God might just say yes. He gave them.

Each. Exactly. What he wanted. But for his enemies. Even. What they thought. Was success. Didn't accomplish. Their desires. It accomplished.

His. One writer. Put it this way. Those sinful men. Do their best. To thwart. The mission of Jesus. They accomplish. The very purpose.

[33:07] For which he came. And thus. Fulfill. God's. Will. This. Is the wisdom. And sovereignty. Of God. Friends. Right.

His enemies. Advance. His plans. So friends. Be careful. About the desires.

Of your heart. They might just. Come to fruition. Be careful. Be careful. That you don't ask.

And seek. Ask. And seek. And seek. After. Freedom. Freedom. From God. He is the source. Of life. Freedom. From him. Means death.

Be careful. That you don't ask. For license. To sin. And seek. After that. Even this week. I've.

[34:03] Sat. With people. Who. Are experiencing. The very. Brutal fact. That sin. Is. Destruction. Breaks.

Things. Be careful. That you. Don't ask. Chiefly. And first. For riches. Like Judas. Judas.

Got. His price. And what good. Did it do him. Be careful. Not. To ask. God. To prosper. Your plans.

For self. Exaltation. And aggrandizement. Right. The priest's. Plan. Will. Succeed. To their peril. Friends.

We see. In this montage. Ourselves. And we see now. That the plans. Are locked. In. The pieces.

[35:02] Are set. The players. All take. Their place. That die. Is cast. The great. Event. Of all.

History. Approaches. Let's pray.