

# Adored and betrayed

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you again. I should have said that I am here with my wife Joy and my mum Jo. We would normally be at Christchurch on Sunday or near this time but we are all delighted to be with you.

! Let me thank you at your ease for the next 20 minutes or so this will be a Gary Lineker free zone. I promise not to make mention of what you mentioned in the moment.

I have this memory that sticks out to my mind. We were at a buffet lunch party on a Sunday some years ago. It was at the home of a woman who had been baptised that morning along with her two sons.

I am not sure what I could have said in that moment. It is really annoying isn't it? Those times. It doesn't come there and end. It is always afterwards.

You think what you would have liked to have said. You see in front of us on the buffet table was this lovely chocolate cake.

[ 1 : 39 ] And I wish I had said, Denise, we can believe that that cake tastes really good and leave it there.

I would have been ashamed, wouldn't it? How much better than to cut a piece, put it on your plate, bring it up to your lips and bite into it.

I would have said, Denise, we can't believe that it tastes good. Tasting and not now just believing that it tastes good, but knowing beyond all doubt that it is good.

I wonder if you noticed in the song that we had read that line, taste and see that the Lord is good. It's inviting us to taste and know that Jesus is good because that is the Lord being spoken of here. But every one of us in this room is on the spectrum when it comes to Jesus. So there will be people down this end who don't believe.

[ 2 : 49 ] You are here this morning, perhaps you have been invited or you are looking into who he is. There will be people here that believe. And there will be people down this end who can say, I don't just know, I don't just believe, but I know Jesus.

Like that chocolate cake, that you have tasted his goodness, the goodness of God through his son, Jesus. Well, wherever we are on that line, I'm delighted we're here this morning.

And the aim of the next 20 minutes, the aim of the whole morning is wherever we are, is to move us a little bit to your left on that line, to come to the place of certainty in knowing the goodness of God in his son.

You see, Jesus isn't to be known in the abstract. Faith is so much more than head knowledge. It's about daily lived experience, personal relationship.

We ought to taste and know that Jesus isn't just good, but wonderful and worth our all to love and to follow.

[ 4 : 08 ] But it's inappropriate to start with that Sunday lunch buffet story and chocolate cake, because the context of our passage this morning is food.

There are two, three, maybe even four different meals that spoken on or hinted at in these verses. And I've got two simple points to help us to understand them better.

At first, we've got a love to learn from. And second, a faith to feast on. A love to learn from, a faith to feast on.

Firstly then, a love to learn from. Or if you want the other word, a lavish love for the Lord to learn from.

Jesus knows that his days on earth are coming to an end. His region is final hours before his arrest and execution.

[ 5 : 09 ] But there's no panic. He is in complete control, enjoying a meal with friends. Verse 3, while he was in Bethany reclining at the table in the home of Simon the leper.

That's how they used to eat in those days. They didn't eat like us sitting up at a table on chairs.

They would lie down, lean on elbows at a low table. But then strange turn of events.

A woman came with an alabaster jar of a very expensive perfume made of pure lard. She broke the jar and put the perfume on his head.

And to many there, this caused outrage. Verse 4, some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than his wages than the money he came to the poor.

And they rebuked her harshly. But Jesus has her back. Verse 6, leave her alone, said Jesus.

[ 6 : 11 ] Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you. And you can help them anytime you want.

But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare me for burial. I don't think it's stretching it too far to say that a growing, maturing love for Jesus will be, can be, can be visceral.

In other words, something that our senses can experience. I'm speaking for myself. After 40 odd years of following Jesus, it feels at times that my unseeing faith is actually becoming sight.

As I'm beginning to see Jesus at work in his world and in my life. And I guess what Jesus is saying in these verses is, smell the love.

I mean, imagine the strength of smell in that room. The sweet smell of perfume lingering for days after inside his house. Smell the love.

[ 7 : 33 ] And that is entirely biblical because the Apostle Paul encourages Jesus, follows one of his letters in the New Testament, to be the aroma of Christ as we spread knowledge of Jesus through the lives of sacrificial love that we are called to.

And I guess the woman here was literally living that out. But why? Why does she do this by her life savings in one act of extravagant love?

Lavish love. Does she know what Jesus knows? That anointing him with oil, according to the custom of the day, she knows he's going to die in the coming days, so he's preparing his body for burial.

No, I don't think so. Is she trying to earn Jesus' love and twist his arm? Look how much I'm giving up for you, Jesus. Aren't you impressed? What are you going to do for me now?

No, no, no. Faith. Remember, not just believing in, but knowing personally, is always a gift and something to ask for and to receive.

[ 8 : 48 ] And having received that gift, this woman has kept close to Jesus, I guess by listening to his teacher, talking with him, serving and caring for his people, to grow to that point of understanding that he's worth her everything.

Everything she has and everything she is. He's a man who has had it all. He was a man who could be said to have it all.

He was heir to a family fortune, a brilliant cricketer who paid for England. But he gave it all up, literally giving his fortune away to become a missionary in China in the late 1800s.

And no doubt family and friends tried to dissuade him. You're mad. What are you doing? But it was his knowledge of Jesus, his love for Jesus, that inspired him.

Like this woman with her perfume, a CT stud with his fame and fortune. Lavish, sacrificial acts of love serve as great examples and encouragements to us, don't they?

[ 10 : 01 ] But we must never think that they're beyond us. Like somehow they're not going to be part of our story. Because every text sent, every cake bait, every meal delivered to that friend or family that's going through it.

Every time you give up your eating to babysit or your money or room in your home to help meet the needs of others. It's in all of those small things that we grow the confidence and faith to do the big things.

And I'm sure that in this room there'll be examples that you can think of of lavish acts of love. Things that people have done and you think, oh that's beyond me, I can never do that.

I think of two friends having had two children naturally conceived of their own with the third and adopted him. Because they wanted to provide a home to a child, a home of love to a child that didn't have one.

And the lovely thing about God's Word is as Simon was reading, I saw something that I didn't see in my prep. So look at verse 8. This woman, Jesus said, she did what she could.

[11:23] And I guess that's what the Lord would say to each of us this morning. What can you do? You may not have vast savings in perfume to pour over Jesus' head.

But with the little thing you do have, or the lots you have. How much you learned from her example. She did what she could. I wonder how you want to be remembered.

Have you ever thought that each of us is writing our obituaries today? Every day in fact, in the way that we use our time, our money, our homes, the way we speak to colleagues, to our children.

We're writing our obituaries. Well, here we have two people who are remembered 2,000 years on. One for all the right reasons, and one for all the wrong.

And I think they put alongside each other to compare and contrast. Verse 9. Jesus said, truly I tell you, wherever the Christmas preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.

[12:40] Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this, and promised to give him money, so he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Our name is woman, and Judas, a name so synonymous with wickedness and betrayal, that you won't find many boys running around our school playgrounds with that name.

Anyone know the name of Judas? No surprise there. See, they're both remembered for their attitude to Jesus, and linked to that, their attitude to money.

And for all of us, money represents security, comfort, hope, good things. A roof over our heads, food on the table.

I've got money, I'm going to be okay, I can manage. And that's the bigger the savings, the greater that feeling of security. Well for our woman, security and comfort and hope are so clearly rooted in Jesus, that she can live open handed.

[14:03] She gives it all away. While for Judas, the opposite is true. She's a good person, grasping and tight-fisted.

Which of them is you? Which of them would you rather learn from? If we were to do a bit of homework in the other Gospels, I think it's clear that we can identify who this woman is.

But I think our author here deliberately doesn't name her, because there's something powerful in that. But your name and my name won't be remembered in this world in 200 years' time after we've gone, let alone 2,000.

But it will be remembered in Jesus' kingdom if we learn this lavish love for the Lord from our manless friend here.

So firstly then, a lavish love for the Lord to learn from. She did what she could. Secondly then, it's not our sense of smell that we're appealing to, but to our taste buds.

[15:20] We have a faith to feast on. I don't want to get too het up about our spectrum that we started with. Where do I sort of fit on that line?

Am I here or am I here? No, Jesus commends faith as small as a mustard seed. In other words, tiny.

You see, it's not the size of the faith that matters, but the quality. What that faith is in. What that trust is in. And that takes us to the next verses.

And of course the whole point of seeds, isn't it? There to be planted and water to grow. And so it is with faith. Faith is given in the form of a seed to grow in our hearts.

Well, I don't know what meal you would choose if you were on death row. For me, it would be probably what I had last night.

[16:22] Chicken and tikka masala, philia rice, naan bread, maybe steak and chips. Over here, Jesus is on death row. He's not locked up at this stage or has done anything wrong.

No, he's very much in control. This is part of God's plan. But Jesus' choice of meal is the Passover. Verse 12.

On the first day of the festival of unleavened bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?

So he said to him, So his disciples told him, Go into the city and the man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, says the owner of the house, the inventors. The teacher asked us, Where is

my guest room?

Where are they eating the Passover with my disciples? He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there. The disciples left, went into the city, and found things just as Jesus told them.

[17:22] So they prepared the Passover. We are not told whether Jesus met with these individuals in advance to plan, or whether their actions were divine inspired.

It doesn't really matter. But what matters here is that heartbeat of Passover, Passover, Passover, Passover. This was the once a year meal that God gave his people to remember that very first Passover meal in Egypt.

Let me encourage you to read it or reread what happened on that dreadful but wonderful night. The Old Testament of Exodus, chapter 12.

Because it helps us to understand what this thing faith is. You see, to be safe when death came knocking on every home in Egypt.

You didn't have to do anything particularly grand or special or religious. All you had to do was what God constructed through his servant Moses. And that was to gather the family around the table for a dinner of roast lamb.

[18:34] And get ready to run when the time come. And the important thing, when preparing the meal, you had to paint some of the blood of the lamb on the frame of the front door.

So that when the angel of death visited, late at night, they would see the blood, know the occupants trusted this promise-keeping saviour, and literally pass over that home.

The blood was the guarantee that you would be safe from the dreadful judgement that fell on some. And yet for others, it was the passport to freedom from slavery that they'd known.

So as Jesus enters Jerusalem, the place would have been panned in a monument. People everywhere were gathering to celebrate Passover.

The bleating of lambs that had been brought to sacrifice so loud, chances are you wouldn't have been able to make yourself think. But Jesus had one thing on his mind.

[19:47] And that was to give the Passover an upgrade, a rebranding. This is Passover, version 1.1 or 2.

I believe in verse 22. While they were eating, Jesus took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, Take, eat.

This is my body. Then he took a cup. And when he had given thanks, he gave it to them. And they all drank from it. This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many, he said to them.

Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. When John the Baptist saw Jesus three years before this night, he said, Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The Apostle Paul, writing after this night, said, Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. So are you clear that faith has little to do with us and what we may or may not do, but everything to do with what God has done for us in his son Jesus.

[21:22] You see, Jesus alone has lived the perfect life that you and I have never hoped to live. And Jesus alone has died the death that we each deserve for falling short every day in so many ways.

Judgment falls on the lamb and not on us, so we can enjoy the freedom that he has won for us. So we need to have faith to feast on.

Jesus is the lamb. There are a few things that I enjoy more in life than sitting at a table with family and friends, those I love, enjoying good food and drink.

And that's something we can all enjoy at whatever our age. And to remember and celebrate his lavish goodness to us.

God could have asked us many things. He could have said, you've got to go to a special place, and you've got to wear special clothes, and you've got to pray so many times a day.

[22:31] He doesn't do any of that. He's so generous and good. He gives us a simple meal with friends, one that we're going to enjoy in a moment. How good is that?

How good is he? How good is he? So having seen and smelt the love from the woman's lavish act of love at the first meal, will we now taste the love as we receive the bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus giving himself for us?

We are willing to taste and know that God is good.

Let me lead us in a prayer.  
Thank you.