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The Gospel of Matthew

The Passover Lamb

June 21, 2020

Sermon Text: Matthew 26:1-13

Scripture Reading: Exodus 12:1-38

In this chapter, the momentum picks up markedly in Jesus' journey to the cross. Of course this is not the first time the cross has been in view. As someone wrote, *the shadow of the cross was cast upon Jesus ever since Bethlehem's manger.*

Matthew 16:21-23 ESV 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. (22) And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." (23) But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are

a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

Matthew 17:22-23 ESV As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, (23) and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.

Luke 18:31-34 ESV And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. (32) For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. (33) And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." (34) But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

We will also see in this chapter how the forces of Satan's kingdom worked energetically to kill Him, and yet in

every single detail of their plots and efforts, they were carrying out God's eternal decree that His Son would be the Savior of His people. This, as we will emphasize, should serve as a great encouragement to us as we live in increasingly evil days.

Follow along then as I read –

Matthew 26:1-13 ESV When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, (2) “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

(3) Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, (4) and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. (5) But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”

(6) Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, (7) a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. (8) And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? (9) For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the

poor.” (10) But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. (11) For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. (12) In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. (13) 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.”

The Passover

Jesus is the Lamb of God, as John the Baptist described Him. Specifically, He is THE Passover Lamb.

Now you all know that the Passover, which we just read about in Exodus, served as a picture of God's redemption in Christ. The lamb was to be killed and its blood put on the doorways, delivering those in that household from the death of the firstborn. Redemption by the blood of the lamb – a picture of our redemption by the blood of the Lamb of God.

Of course all of this is denied and reinterpreted by unbelieving Jews and Gentiles. Here is a sample:

Passover is a celebration of spring, of birth and rebirth, of a journey from slavery to freedom, and of taking responsibility for yourself, the community, and the world. ... The Torah states that Jews are to observe **Passover** for seven days, beginning on the 15th of the Jewish month Nisan (usually in April).

Notice then the timing here - Jesus is coming to Jerusalem at Passover. As we will see next time, it is no coincidence that Jesus went to the cross at this time. Listen to William Hendriksen explain the time frame: [New Testament Commentary]

The expression 'holding' or 'celebrating' the Passover obviously refers here to the eating of the Passover lamb on Thursday, the 14th of the month of Nisan. The entire Festival of Unleavened Bread lasted 7 additional days; that is, until the 21st of the month. It is clear therefore, that when Jesus reminds his disciples that 'after two days' the Passover would be held, Tuesday – that very memorable day on which so many events transpired and so many words were spoken (beginning at 21:20) – is not yet over.

The disciples knew of course, when the Passover would be held. They also knew, at least should have known, that Jesus was going to be crucified, for this he had predicted again and again. Something new is added when Jesus now designates the very day when this being handed over for crucifixion would take place, namely, during the night from Thursday to Friday, with the crucifixion itself to occur on Friday.

Now, notice Hendriksen's observation here of something we already mentioned –

The clash between God's counsel [ie, His eternal decree] and man's collusion is indicated in 26:3-5; 27:1, 35, 50, 62. These passages clearly show that while the Jewish authorities insisted that the arrest, trial, and death of Jesus must not take place during the Festival, the divine decree that it would indeed happen at that particular time triumphed. Even in and by itself this victory of God over every wicked design of man is a source of comfort for every believer –

Isaiah 46:10-13 ESV declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my

purpose,’ (11) calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it. (12) “Listen to me, you stubborn of heart, you who are far from righteousness: (13) I bring near my righteousness; it is not far off, and my salvation will not delay; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory.”

See also Ephesians 1:11-12.

Moreover, was it not also very appropriate that *the type, namely the slaying of the Passover lamb, and the antitype, the crucifixion of the Lamb of God, who was taking away the sin of the world, should follow each other in such close succession?*

‘Not at the Festival,’ said the plotters. ‘At the Festival,’ said the Almighty. ‘After two days,’ echoed Jesus. The divine decree always wins; in the interest of the kingdom, and to God’s glory.

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Psalms 2:4

We live in incredibly and increasingly wicked days. Behind all of the evil we are seeing is a hatred of Christ. It is the very same spirit that always craves to

murder God and throw off his shackles so that the wicked can run free.

But it isn’t going to happen. *Not only are the wicked today, as they always have been, not foiling God’s decree, they are in fact furthering it! God uses them for His purposes. The more they rage, the more they carry out His decrees!* And that needs to be embraced and serve as a great encouragement to us.

A Memorable Woman

Listen to these verses again:

Matthew 26:6-13 ESV Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, (7) a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table.

(8) And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? (9) For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.”

(10) But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. (11) For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. (12) In pouring this ointment on

my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. (13) 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.”

We should begin by filling in some details from the other Gospels:

John 11:1-2 ESV Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (2) It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.

John 12:1-8 ESV Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. (2) So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. (3) Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. (4) But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, (5) “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” (6) He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and

having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. (7) Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. (8) For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

So they were not gathered at Lazarus’ home, but at another home in Bethany, that of one Simon, known as Simon the leper. We don’t know anything more about Simon, but it is reasonable to assume that he had been healed by Jesus. Lazarus and Lazarus’ sisters were present of course. And it turns out that Mary is the woman who anointed Jesus with the expensive ointment.

I want us to consider something vital at this point. Who were the people present in that home who had particularly great love for Jesus? While all the disciples (except Judas) loved Him, the fact is that Lazarus (raised from the dead), Martha and Mary (Lazarus’ sisters), and Simon the leper had a particularly great love for Him. And herein is a vital truth:

Only when we really understand what Christ has done for us will we begin to love Him as we ought.

And I suppose that largely this will not fully happen until we see Him.

Many people who profess to be Christians do not truly love Christ. Why? Because actually they do not believe they ever were “all that bad.” They do not understand that they were rotting away from the corruption of the leprosy of sin and that they were dead in their sins just as much as Lazarus was dead and buried.

Mary understood this. And it is also quite probable that she understood that Jesus was going to be crucified and buried in Jerusalem, just as He had said many times. As a result, well, let’s have Hendriksen describe it – I cannot do better than he does:

The true meaning of what happened here will never be grasped until it is realized that when Mary was pouring out her perfume, she was also pouring out her heart, filled with genuine religious love, gratitude, and devotion. She broke this jar of exceedingly expensive ointment so that its entire contents poured out, not just a few drops.

Now, the reaction of the disciples is instructive to us as well.

(8) And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this

waste? (9) For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.”

John gives us more detail – Judas was the ringleader in this objection. He was a hypocrite and a thief and wanted the money from the ointment sale for himself. Nevertheless, the other disciples objected too. The practical notion that the money for the ointment could have been given to the poor seemed quite reasonable to them.

Let’s consider some principles here:

1. One hypocrite among Christ’s people spreads his evil leaven to all.
2. A hypocrite quenches the Spirit in true believers just as Judas quenched the work of the Spirit in the other disciples. It was the Holy Spirit who moved Mary to do what she did and the Spirit would have everyone else join in that loving worship. Judas wants to stop it, just as every hypocrite among Christ’s people does.
3. Earthly practicality must not be permitted to rule every decision in the church. For example, I am typically opposed to extravagant church building designs because in most cases they are built for the glory of man, not to the glory of

God. BUT, there is a place, as we see in this Scripture, for “extravagant” gifts to the Lord, given in authentic love and worship.

Understand? How many times have you been moved out of love for Christ to give or do something that may be regarded as rather, well, *foolish*. And how many of those times were you “counseled” by some other professing Christian that to do such a thing would be unwise, impractical, and, well....stupid!?

This is nothing less than the quenching of the Spirit and we must not let other people put us off of what our true love for Christ leads us to do.

Not too long before my father-in-law died, we had him staying in our home. He had cancer and needed a fair amount of help. One morning I made him breakfast and while we were eating, seemingly right out of the blue, he said to me... “taking your money out of PERS when you left the police department was really a stupid thing to do.”

Now, I actually did not have that much money in that account and I closed it out when we moved to Montana and I became a pastor. We needed the money

and we used some of it to help one or two needy people. But, you see, to him that was stupid. Yet we did it out of a real desire to serve Christ.

When I resigned from my police career in order to accept the call to our first church, I was told by numbers of friends who professed to be Christians that I was being foolish. That there was no way the Lord would be directing me to do such a thing. That I would never make it. That was 37 years ago, and it was indeed the Lord leading us.

I know several Christians who have been led by Christ’s Spirit to take some step that seemed radical and would be called foolish by many. Taking into their homes, for example, someone who was oppressed and in need. Many if not most “wise” counselors would tell them not to do it. But the Spirit may well be telling them just the opposite.

And I know many real Christians who give generously to the Lord’s work out of a real love and devotion to Christ. And I know that many people, including professing Christians, would tell them this is a foolish thing to do.

And this, you see, is the very thing that was happening to Mary. “What a stupid move! What a waste! At the root of all

these objections *was the spirit of Judas!*
Of a traitor. Of a servant of the devil.

But the Son God...what does he say
about what Mary did? Listen again:

Matthew 26:10-13 ESV But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. (11) For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. (12) In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. (13) 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.”

And sure enough. Here we are thousands of miles away from that house in Bethany, thousands of years after Mary broke that jar, *remembering Mary and her love for Christ.*