

Encounters with Christ

Week 9 — **Jesus is Anointed by a Woman** — Matthew 26:1-16

Prepare...

As you begin, take a moment to pray and focus on the Lord as you come into his presence and study his word.

Lord, I place what I have in offering to you. And not just my money, but my life – my energies, my abilities and my goals. Let everything be fragrant in devotion to you. Amen. (Eugene Peterson)

Jesus' public ministry is at an end. As the Passover festival approaches events start speeding up. In an atmosphere of hatred and treachery shines the story of one woman's love for Jesus...

Begin... by familiarizing yourself with the text. Read the passage two times.

Answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Record in detail what you learn about the woman who anointed Jesus.

Record any other questions or thoughts you have about the text. Are there parts you don't understand? What spoke to you the most?

Memory Verse for the Week...

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Mt. 6:21)

A closer look...

Foolishness

Jesus was the Messiah (= "anointed") predicted by the Old Testament. His mission was to open up a way back to God and to make a relationship with Him possible once again. Jesus' death was the fulfillment of this mission. Despite human plotting and intrigue, Jesus deliberately accepts His death. In faithful devotion, the woman prepares Jesus for His burial, accepting Jesus' gift of life to her. Judas saw only defeat and weakness in Jesus' death; the end of his hopes. This is not what he had joined the group for. Maybe Jesus was even dangerous and had to be stopped!

1 Corinthians 1:18

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

Isaiah 8:14

"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

A Year's Wage

Note that a working man earned one *denarius* (silver coin) a day. The precious perfumed oil the woman poured out in a lavish, extravagant gesture of affection was worth nearly a year's wages.

Disappointed?

"Ambition has its disappointments to sour us, but never the good fortune to satisfy us. Its appetite grows keener by indulgence and all we can gratify it with at present serves but the more to inflame its insatiable desires."
—Benjamin Franklin

"We read the world wrong and say that it deceives us."
—Rabindranath Tagore

"Maturity is giving up your illusions without losing your enthusiasm."
—Linda Oyer

1. The feast of Passover is two days away. What is on Jesus' mind? (26:2)

2. The religious leaders of Israel have a lot on their minds as well. What dilemma are they facing? (v. 3-5) Considering the setting, what is the significance of the woman's act in v 7?

3. How does Jesus justify the woman's gift to Him? (v. 11-12)

4. The disciples, however, were indignant. What was bothering them?

5. What does Jesus want them to understand?

6. Jesus' rebuke pushes Judas over the edge. Even though he was not the only one who could not understand the woman's extravagant expression of love toward Jesus, he decides to join those who oppose Jesus and to betray his friends. How could the events of that evening in Bethany have caused Judas to change so drastically? (Read the information in the side bar to help you answer.)

7. The disciples' concern for the poor is admirable, but their priorities are not in order. How does Jesus see what they regard as waste? (v. 10)

8. What does Jesus prophesy about the woman in v. 13?

9. Look back at your responses on page one. Are there questions you still have that are unanswered?

10. Jesus' love for you is wasteful! He did not calculate the cost of bringing you back to himself. The essence of the gospel is extravagant and a "beautiful thing." How do you respond to that idea?

"The one who is indeed about to follow wholeheartedly his call must fear those of his own house more than all the devils."
—Teresa of Avila

Are you seeking great things for yourself? (Jeremiah 45:5)

Not seeking to be a great one, but seeking great things from God for yourself. God wants you in a closer relationship to Himself rather than receiving His gifts, He wants you to get to know Him. A great thing is accidental, it comes and goes. God never gives us anything accidental. There is nothing easier than getting into a right relationship with God except when it is not God Whom you want but only what He gives.

—Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*

1 Corinthians 13:5

"Love doesn't seek it's own."

1 John 4:19

"We love because he first loved us."

Perfect love is rare indeed—for to be a lover will require that you continually have the subtlety of the very wise, the flexibility of a child, the sensitivity of the artist, the understanding of the philosopher, the acceptance of the saint, the tolerance of the scholar and the fortitude of the certain.

—Leo Buscaglia

Filled with Fragrance

The generous gift of Mary and the stingy complaint of Judas are placed in contrast. Mary used what she had to adore Jesus; Judas used Jesus to enrich himself. Mary is led into a life of devotion that is beautiful; Judas is posted as a warning against letting money get between us and God.

—Eugene Peterson, *A Year with Jesus*