

Anointed and Betrayed
Matthew 26:1-16, Ash Wednesday
March 1, 2006

Beloved of the Lord.....Out of love for the Lord, the Christian Church long ago set up and recognized the season we know as Lent. This season is for the distinct purpose of remembering the Passion of Christ, namely His suffering and the events leading up to His death. Lent is to be a time where we understand the great cost paid by Christ in order to redeem us from the powers of darkness. When we consider our Lord Jesus hanging on the cross, when we see His hands and feet nailed to the cross, when we see a crown of thorns upon His head, then we see the great darkness of sin. God's own Son had to give His life in order to win us back from the power of the devil and death!

But in the Passion of Christ, there is also great beauty and love in each lesson. Tonight we will see the great love Mary had for Jesus. She anointed Him for His burial. She poured costly perfume upon Him. She dried His feet with her hair. But in the Passion of Christ there is a far greater love than this. Consider the love of Jesus, hanging on the cross. True, it is a most shameful picture - the guilty crucifies the innocent! Yet there is great love in the crucifixion of Jesus. For why was He there? Why did He permit Himself to be nailed to the cross? Why didn't He come down from the cross? The answer is the love of God. The love of God kept Jesus on that cross, not the nails. The love of God kept Jesus on that cross until every single sin committed in this world was paid for. The love of God kept Jesus on that cross until every single sin of ours was paid for. "God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." I Jn 4 It is through His death that we are given life. It is through His suffering that we are healed. Let us live through Him this evening, as we hear God's holy Word concerning His betrayal and anointing.

I. The Son of Man is betrayed. The wonderful anointing of Jesus by Mary, has a dark background behind it. For in this world, where there is the light of Christ, there is also the darkness of evil. Our chapter reveals such darkness beginning with the blackened hearts of the scribes, elders, and chief priests. These men truly hated Jesus, His miracles, and His Gospel. They could only think evil continually. So they met secretly by night at the home of Caiaphas, the high priest. They decided that they had to murder Jesus, for if they didn't, the whole world would follow Him. The only question was when. If Jesus was murdered during the Passover there would be an uproar. What were they to do?

When we hear of such murderous plots and schemes we should remember that the Lord rules and governs this world in the interest of His Church, the believers. God is so powerful and so wise, that He even uses such wicked men as these to carry out His plan of salvation. So the Bible says, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed,....He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Ps. 2 The plotting and scheming of the minds of men is infinitely small and trivial, compared to the Master above who rules all things. For God had already appointed the day and manner the Son of Man would be betrayed. Jesus would indeed allow Himself to be betrayed during the Passover. It was God's will, and so it was done.

The Lord used Judas in this manner. For it was because of Judas, that Jesus was betrayed at a time which was contrary to the wishes of the scribes and elders. Judas "went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." Here we see how far Judas had fallen. In his heart unbelief reigned supreme. Judas loved the world more than Christ. For 30 pieces of silver, he sold his own soul to the power of darkness. Jesus was betrayed at the

time of the Passover, because He was "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world."

When we see and read about wicked men like Judas, we should be reminded of the great power of sin and what it is able to accomplish. These men who murdered Jesus, first murdered Him in their heart when they first hated Him from the heart. Jesus said, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." To hate your brother is to murder your brother. No murderer goes to heaven when he dies.

But who of us will go to heaven then? Which of us has never hated in one way or another? Aren't we all guilty? Indeed we are, and we cannot be saved by God's law. Therefore when convicted of this or any other sin, we must flee to the Gospel, run to Christ and beg His forgiveness. Look and see Him on the cross, dying for your sins. That is why He came. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." That is why we are here this evening. To receive His forgiveness, be absolved of all sin, and be healed.

II. The Son of Man is anointed. Jesus came into this world to seek and to save, that which was lost. He was anointed for the purpose of delivering mankind from sin. With the anointing of Jesus for burial by Mary, we see a great token of love and faith which stands out in sharp contrast to the heinous deeds of Judas and the Jews. Let us now focus on the good work performed by Mary which took place at the house of Simon the Leper.

It was an evening meal, a supper, where not only Jesus and His disciples were gathered, but also Lazarus and his sisters, Simon and his household. Out of love, Martha was busy serving, but Mary wanted to do more. She brought with her a very expensive perfume which she poured upon the head and feet of Jesus. She "wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment." Jn 12 Such an incredible devotion Mary had for Jesus! It took both humility and love to dry the Lord's feet with her own hair. What moved Mary to do this? It was her love for Jesus. Why did she love Jesus so? Because Mary knew Jesus to be her Savior from sin. Faith cannot but help to bring forth love. Faith and love go hand in hand.

When the disciples foolishly rebuked Mary for this great waste, Jesus rebuked the disciples. "Why trouble ye the woman?" She had done a good work for Jesus! "For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." This act of devotion in a prophetic way, pointed to the burial of Jesus. In life He was anointed and chosen for death. He would be the Lamb of God, that God would allow to be slain in sacrifice for the sins of the world. As John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." This anointing of Jesus by Mary is a Gospel sermon in its own right. For the burial of Jesus preaches to us deliverance from sin. And the anointing of Jesus by Mary, preaches to us thankfulness to God for being delivered from sin. To this day wherever the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, there Mary's act of devotion testifies to the world the love of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As we close for this evening, let us remember the great love our Lord Jesus has for us. While the cross of Christ can bring to our mind images of sin and shame, let it also bring to our hearts comfort with the sweet remission of sins. For there is no better place to see the sacrificial and selfless love of God, than at the cross of Jesus Christ. Know, understand, trust, and believe this Lent season that He gave absolutely everything for your sake, that you may live with Him for all eternity in heaven. He gave life to you through His death. He delivered you from eternal death by His suffering and death. Rejoice dear Christian this Ash Wednesday, for He gives you spiritual life through the remission of sins. "God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." I Jn 4 Amen.

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