

Let's pick up our study now in Matthew 26 via John chapter 12, and the closing exhortation that we saw regarding the poor and the improper invocation of the poor and the benefit that might have accrued to them by selling this ointment. Jesus gives the more reflective and proper interpretation of this circumstance, and you find it most clearly perhaps in Mark chapter 14, where Jesus says, "You have the poor with you always," in verse 7, "and whenever you wish you may do them good. But Me you do not have always."

And Jesus has given them this information that He is not always going to be around time and time again, and you find this in Matthew. Since this is the most recent Gospel we've covered, turn back to Matthew chapter 16, verse 21. This is after the great confession: "And 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 be raised the third day."

He didn't just give them the dismal news that He would be taken in hand by the religious authorities and crucified, but that He would be raised the third day. Along with the message of suffering and trial and seeming defeat at the hands of evil men, it is accompanied by the message of assurance and hope of the resurrection.

Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord. This shall not happen to You." Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan. You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but of the things of men."

"You are an offense to Me." You cannot imagine, perhaps, how this must have stung, being Peter, being recognized as in Jesus' inner circle and, along with James and John, privy to many things that the other disciples were not. He has just been complimented: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." And so Peter's feeling pretty good about himself. He got the right answer, and Jesus recognizes it. And hard on the heels of that: "You are an offense to Me. You are a scandal to Me. You're a stumbling block to Me." Why? "You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

I would say, if there was a single diagnosis for the problems among Christians today, Christian churches, Christian denominations, the Christian world in this nation and around the world, it is this. And instead of being representatives of the Lord Jesus, instead of shining a light in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, many Christians and much of Christianity are partaking of darkness and are reflecting the thinking of Satan and are thinking like people and not like God.

The disciples are guilty of this on our occasion in Bethany, and only Mary figures it out, bringing to life Jesus' words that the last shall be first and the first shall be last. I think there are going to be many wonderful women who will be prominent and in places of enormous service and function and opportunity in the kingdom of the Son and the kingdom of the Father. They were in a subservient role, a servant role, in this life, just as the Lord Jesus was. He took on the form of a servant. He will rule and reign, and many of those who were in service roles and subservient, submissive roles in this life are going to be ruling.

And people with the mind of man want to try to elevate women just because they are women, or they want to elevate the downtrodden or the oppressed just because they are downtrodden and oppressed. The Lord Jesus is not going to promote and elevate all women. Who are those He is going to promote and elevate? It isn't that they are women or that they were subservient or dominated or oppressed or held back or hit the glass ceiling. Who are those who will be first in the kingdom? Those who had the thinking of God in their hearts and their minds and not the mind of man.

"You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men. You are a hindrance to Me. You are a scandal. You are an offense. Get behind Me." Don't be in front of Me; get behind Me.

This was one of the earlier occasions. You can flip forward to chapter 17 of Matthew and look at verses 22 and 23. "While they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.'" And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

This made them sad. It doesn't seem to have sparked any questions. How will this happen? Why will this happen? How can we prepare? What should we do? This would have made for some great extended Bible class. They just get sad.

My first point here in reviewing these predictions of Jesus' death is, anytime you have a prediction or a description of the future from the Lord Jesus, it is well for us to think about it, pay close attention to it, and seek the mind of God rather than the mind of men in regard to it, and not to emote, not to panic, not to dismiss and disregard it. The response of sorrow isn't really helpful.

What good does this sorrow do? How does it help? How does it serve? How does it prepare anyone? They're sorrowful. Sorrowful about what? For what reason? Our happy band of brothers will be coming to an end, potentially. We're going to lose the Lord Jesus, potentially. How can You let this happen? I thought Your Father is God in heaven. What is the meaning of this? What is the purpose of this? What is the outcome of this?

And if the third day He will be raised, why are you not concentrating on the ultimate end result? You're tangled up in the journey, and you're not looking at the destination.

Jesus will tell us things, and it's a fascinating study to try to find them. And it's not easy. I tried this past week. I would love to find somebody who has summarized all of the things that Jesus predicted. You have a great set of predictions in the opening verses of the Gospel of Matthew, in the teaching on the hill.

I think Elizabeth and I were looking at this a few days ago, back in Matthew chapter 5, because in both the teaching on the hill and the sermon on the plain, Jesus sees great multitudes, but it doesn't say He taught great multitudes. Jesus, seeing the multitudes, went up on a mountain, and when He was seated, did the multitudes come to Him? Matthew 5:1. Jesus sees the multitudes, and He says, "I'm not going to send this message to the multitudes."

The Chosen presentation notwithstanding, Jesus works on His speech for weeks and tries out various phrases and reorders it and gets Matthew to help Him, and then the disciples build a big stage. They hand out flyers, they assemble the multitudes, and then the curtains are pulled back, Jesus steps out, and here's the Sermon on the Mount. It's a big production, much like The Chosen itself is a big production. Everybody has a part. They all feel real good about it: publicity, popularity, and so on.

What does Matthew 5:1 say? Pay attention. Jesus saw the multitudes, so He left the multitudes. He went up on a mountain, and it doesn't say the multitudes came to Him. The disciples came to Him. Covered this 21 chapters ago, but it's a helpful reminder. This teaching is for the disciples, for those who are willing to climb the mountain, just as when Jesus called them to be the twelve. Even though He had individually had contact with them and invited them to follow Him, and there was a nucleus that went with Him in John chapter 2 and chapter 3 and chapter 4, but when He officially composes the twelve, He goes up in a mountain, and they have to climb the mountain to see Him.

There's a bit of a challenge. It's a bit of a climb to get there. And He said, "These are predictions. When you see the poor, they're blessed." Why? Because people that have alabaster boxes full of expensive perfume will sell it and give them money. Why are the poor blessed?

It's a wonderful thing, that not discounting charity. It was copious amounts of Scripture that the people of God should look out for their brothers who are in need. "If you do it for the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me." This isn't an exhortation to general, worldwide, blind, unconscious charity. It is targeted charity to these My brethren, to widows and orphans and the poor and the strangers in Israel, not strangers in other countries, not strangers abroad, not nameless, faceless people. You don't know whom you hand some money to somebody and say, "Be my proxy. Go help the poor." This is targeted at those who are known, who are brethren, and who are in need.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted." Jesus says there is a current condition, but there is a future expectation. Currently, you can be poor, poor in spirit, but comfort is coming. You can be mourning, but comfort is coming. You can be humble, but you will inherit the earth. This is having a part in the first resurrection and inheritance. You can hunger and thirst after righteousness, and you will be filled. If you are merciful, you will obtain mercy.

Mercy is a wonderful quality, and we look for opportunities to be merciful. Mercy is often an expression of the character of the one being merciful more so than a reflection on the merit or the worthiness of its object. We can be merciful to someone who the world might say doesn't deserve mercy. And there is a real need for mercy in a world that is full of hardship, that is full of failure.

And Jesus was merciful, but He didn't go out of His way to find people doing their own thing and express mercy on them. They came to Jesus with the sick. They came to Jesus with the demon-possessed. They came to Jesus with their own afflictions. "Son of David, have mercy on me," is the cry outside Jericho, right? Those looking for mercy, and those who are merciful will obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the peacemakers. They shall be called sons of God. Blessed are the pure in heart. They shall see God." God doesn't reveal Himself to just anyone. Is any one of us born with a pure heart? How do we obtain a pure heart? We go to God and ask for that purification. Psalm 51. To cultivate a pure heart and a contrite spirit is the way to see God.

And persecuted for righteousness' sake, you possess the kingdom. You are an owner. When you are reviled and persecuted and they say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake—our episode, Mary ill-spoken of, motives impugned, actions criticized sharply, called out as doing something wrong, when her entire focus is on the Lord Jesus, their entire focus is on her and on the perfume and its value and the words of a nefarious, soon-to-be-active traitor—"Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Well, much that we could say about this. As Jesus says, "Wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." Why is Mary memorialized? Interestingly, the passage that says it will be told in the whole world as a memorial doesn't give her name, although it was known to all of the disciples. They are all present on this occasion. They know that it's Mary.

I personally think that the observation is correct that this is witness to the early date of the composition of these Gospels: Mark, of course, writing down the recollections and the preaching of Simon Peter; Matthew, the tax collector Levi, writing his Gospel. Only John writes late, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke—Mark evidently is in hand for both Matthew and Luke, who appealed to it and quoted verbatim in many places. I share the rather common belief that in the priority of Mark, it was written first. Matthew and Luke used it as one of their sources, and then added Matthew having his own recollections, Luke having gone around and interviewed the living eyewitnesses, including Jesus' own mother.

So, this will be told as a memorial to her. Why? She's the only one who took time to reflect on these earlier predictions that the Lord Jesus gave. The third one, you can look at Matthew chapter 20. We saw fairly recently Matthew chapter 20, verses 17 through 19. Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road. This wasn't a casual delivery of this material that He has given them before. He took them off the road. He stopped them and said, "Behold, we're going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes. They will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify." To mock, to scourge, and to crucify. "The third day He will rise again."

Every single time Jesus has given this prediction of the near future, He has included rising on the third day. They don't remember it. They don't even take the prediction of His death to heart. Mary does. Mary does.

So, her perception, her reflection, her willingness to sit at the feet of Jesus and not just hear what He has to say but take it to heart and then act on it, is unique. She's not among the twelve. Her name's not going to be on one of the gates of the New Jerusalem. She's going to be inside the New Jerusalem with a wonderful estate of her very own. And this action, which reflects what she understands and her love for the Lord Jesus and, through Him, her love for God the Father—she doesn't become bitter and say, "I love this Jesus. I so appreciate He raised my brother from the dead, and how can God in heaven take Him away from me? How can God in heaven allow Him to suffer and die?"

She has worked through all of this information in her mind, and she has said, "What can I do right now? Can I do like Peter and try to dissuade the Lord and have Him not go to the cross? Can I pray to the Father and ask Him to let this cup pass? What can I do?" She can indicate to the Lord Jesus that her love for Him is greater than her love for anyone else.

Remember, Jesus said, "If anyone loves father and mother more than Me, he cannot be My disciple. If anyone loves son or daughter more than Me, he cannot be My disciple." The Lord Jesus, the personification of God Himself, has to be first. This is an expression of that love and an expression, at the same time, of her understanding of the plan and the purpose of God. She has realized that this is necessary. Jesus has spoken of it, predicted it, and when He says, "Rise again the third day," what's her experience of someone rising from the dead? He's sitting at the table while she does this, right? Her brother Lazarus, according to John, is sitting at the table. Remember John 11: "The one who lives and believes in Me will never die. Believest thou this?"

The reason her memorial will be spoken of everywhere the gospel is preached is that everywhere the gospel is preached, there will be people who come to that same understanding, who have that same heart. Maybe not many, maybe not a majority, but everywhere the gospel is preached, there will be some who follow the Lord Jesus, who listen to Him, who reflect on His words and His example, His mission and His purpose and His role as the way, the truth, and the life in order to come to the Father. And they are going to find in Mary that kindred spirit, that same attitude, that same heart and love and faith and hope.

Interesting that she does it on Saturday night and doesn't save the alabaster box for the actual burial. Why is that? Jesus says, "She's been saving this for the day of My burial," and she uses it that night. I've often thought there are such wonderful memorials to people at their funeral or at their memorial service, and people come from all over the country and gather together that have known someone across the span of their life, and they share reminiscences and stories and appreciations and insights and things that other people might not have known.

And every time you have one of these and it's really going well, people say, "I wish the guest of honor were here to enjoy this and to celebrate and to realize how much they are appreciated. We waited to do this until they were blown away and gone to glory, and now we're doing it. Wouldn't it have been great if they could participate?"

You think about Mary, and she says, "I'm not going to do this to the body of the Lord Jesus after His spirit has left. I'm gonna do it now." And this is probably her last opportunity. There's not going to be another time, and she knows it. She is sensitive to God's timing as well.

So, why is Mary appreciated everywhere the gospel is preached? Look at the depth of her insight. Look at the closeness of her relationship with the Lord Jesus. And this expression comes while Jesus is there. And Jesus makes this point, doesn't He? "The poor you have with you always, and you can help them anytime you wish. Me you will not have with you always." And Mary does it on this night, at this time, because she knows that the time is short.

Wouldn't it be great to have such a close relationship with the Lord that you understand His timing? I've known people well that had that sense and acted accordingly, and it is a status devoutly to be wished, that you are close enough to God that God can share His timing, knowing that we are going to do something with it. We're going to be productive. We're going to plan ahead. We're going to express our stewardship, our love for others, our love for God, because we are sensitive to God's timing. We have asked, we have sought, we have knocked, we have cultivated that pure heart and contrite spirit. Those are the ones with whom God can share His heart and His plan and His purpose. That's why Mary is memorialized wherever the gospel is preached, Mark 14, verse 9.

And back now in Matthew chapter 26, the same statement in verse 13. That brings us to verse 14: "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?'"

So Judas sees over 300 denarii poured out on the head and the feet of Jesus and mourns the loss of that money. And he says, "Well, I know where I can get some money," and he goes to the chief priests. That's why it says then in verse 14 Judas goes to the chief priests. "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him 30 pieces of silver. Thirty pieces of silver. This has been estimated to be about 60 denarii. It's less than 20 percent of what the perfume was calculated to be worth.

Thirty pieces of silver. Keep your finger here in Matthew and turn back to Exodus chapter 21. Exodus chapter 21. If you start in verse 28: "If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined so that it has killed a man or woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death."

You are culpable if you leave a known danger free. Verse 30: “If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him. Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him. If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master 30 pieces of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.”

If the ox gores a slave, the price of redemption is 30 pieces of silver. So Judas gets from the chief priests the price of a slave, price of a slave who is killed.

We've seen more recently in Zechariah chapter 11, verses 12 and 13, the mention of 30 pieces of silver and the potter's field, and we did an extensive study on that. But this price is paid immediately. There is a line in a song by the Eagles that you may recall, “Life in the Fast Lane,” where a guy is in extremis and the doctor says, “He's coming, but you've got to pay in cash. He doesn't think you're gonna last.” And so he will only come if you pay cash. Pay now; your fate is unlikely to be a good one.

Same thing here. This is not paid upon delivery. Judas wants the money now, so they measure out, they weigh out to him the 30 pieces at this point. So it's cash in hand, and it's a paltry sum to them, and they're willing to gamble that Judas will be good for his word. You're talking to a betrayer and a thief, but they give him this money on the promise that he will find an occasion to let them arrest the Lord Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. They counted out to him 30 pieces.

Instead of looking ahead as Mary does, instead of looking at the Lord Jesus, His work, His role, His servanthood, Judas sells Him out for the price of a dead slave, and cash now. And from that time he sought the opportunity to betray Him, and it won't be long. It'll be less than a week when he lets them know where He's going to be.

So, what do we take away from this? There is an opportunity for us to have the Mary heart. There is an opportunity for us to have the Judas heart. We choose. We decide. Judas makes a series of decisions, and ultimately Scripture is going to say Satan entered into him. And he is one of the twelve. He's been blessed with the presence of the Lord Jesus for three-plus years. He has had the gift of the Holy Spirit placed upon him. He's going to have his feet washed in the upper room. He's going to partake of the bread and the cup before he goes out into the night.

He is—people don't like to hear this from me, and I've had strenuous opposition and objections from several different people—but to all appearances that I can see in Scripture, he is a believer. And that's scary, that we can be given so much proximity, so much teaching, so much from the Lord Jesus, and yet be a traitor to Him, to His cause, to the plan and purpose of God.

And yet God weaves even that failure into the fabric of His plan, and it was foreknown in the Psalms: “The one who shares bread with me has lifted up his heel against me,” and so on. “Man's enemies will be the members of his own household,” and these are Jesus' brothers, in a sense.

So it emphasizes the role of choice when we come to the words and the works of the Lord Jesus. What do we choose to do with them? How do we respond to believers who misuse, mishandle, misrepresent, misinterpret? Mary doesn't criticize the disciples. The disciples criticize Mary. Mary simply does what she understands in her heart is right, and she does it as unto the Lord, not unto the disciples.

Let me close by having you turn quickly to Luke chapter 7, because at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, there was another anointing. In verse 36 of Luke 7, in a different place, at a different time—they've tried to amalgamate this, as I said earlier—but Jesus is in Galilee at this time. “And one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him, and He went to the Pharisee's house and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table at the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping. And she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. She kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.”

“When the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, ‘This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner,’” most likely a harlot.

And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you,” hence the conflation, yet another Simon in Scripture. This is Simon the Pharisee. So he said, “Teacher, say it.” “There was a certain creditor had

two debtors. One owed 500 denarii, the other 50. When they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him the more?"

Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house. You gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

So many contrasts here, which we'll quickly review next time. But it is worth reflecting: earlier in Jesus' ministry, when He's still in Galilee, and at the end of His ministry, when He is in Bethany, there is a woman who recognizes who Jesus is, who appreciates Him for who He is and for what He has done and is going to do, and treats that work as already completed.

I'll close by quoting from the Gospel of John. Remember when Jesus said, "In this world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer"? Why be of good cheer? "I have overcome the world." What is the tense of that last conquering verb? It's past perfect. He did. He's in the upper room. He has not gone to the cross. He hasn't borne the sins of the world. He hasn't been the Lamb of God. He hasn't been the perfect Passover lamb. But He tells the disciples, "In this world you have tribulation, you have hardship, you have persecution, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. I have already overcome the world."

Interesting to see these women recognizing the Lord Jesus as though He has already done what He is about to do. "She has prepared this for the day of My burial." She already recognizes the death as having taken place, the work as having been accomplished. She lives in the future now. Great inspiration, an example for us.

We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the wonderful presentation we have of it in these Gospels. The words of the Lord Jesus at firsthand are such a blessing to our soul. We pray that, as we reflect on them, that Your Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts, impress them on our souls, enable us to have that presence of mind and that faith and hope to share the heart of Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and this woman who had the humility to appreciate the Lord Jesus Christ without regard to how they were perceived or thought of by others.

We pray that Your Holy Spirit will give us that clarity of sight and shine that light in our hearts so that we can shine as a light to others in this crooked and perverse generation. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.