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Beauty and Betrayal; Matt 26:1-16
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Introduction – Chapter 26 opens with these words, “When Jesus had finished all these sayings.” “All these sayings” is referring to the things Jesus had taught His disciples in these final moments. In ch23 He spoke to the crowds and the disciples about hypocritical faith. Religious activity and rules will never save, only blind our need of a Savior. In ch24 He teaches the disciples how to recognize when His second coming is drawing near. Finally, in ch25 He emphasizes to the greatest degree that His disciples should be prepared and ready when the Son of Man comes. Live every day like Jesus is coming tomorrow. We could sum up “all these sayings” this way: don’t trust in your goodness, trust in Christ; as the world grows darker, it will be increasingly difficult to live for Christ but take courage for His coming is near; be ready. Those words are even more applicable in our day than when Jesus first spoke them. Now He turns His attention to His coming suffering and death, which at this point are only a couple days away.

- I. The Sovereign Savior and the Plans of Men
 - a. V2 – this is the fourth time Jesus has predicted His suffering and now He puts it in a timeframe. It will happen during the Passover celebration. In this moment Jesus is two days away from the cross.
 - i. Remember Peter’s sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2:23 he declared, “this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” Peter understood the death and resurrection of Christ after they took place. Jesus understood them before they took place, even down to the timing. He is the Sovereign Savior.
 - ii. This was God’s plan to redeem sinners, and Jesus, God in the flesh, the Son of God, knew the plan for salvation and willingly gave His life that we might live.
 - b. Then in vv3-5 we see the plans of men. The chief priests and elders were plotting and scheming with the high priest to have Jesus arrested by stealth and kill Him. They thought they were devising the perfect, surprising scheme, all secretive. Nobody else knew. They would take Jesus by surprise and by force.

- i. Little did they know their sinful, secretive plans to kill were actually part of God's larger plan to save. They won't take Him by surprise or have Him killed by force. The Sovereign Savior will simply lay down His life to save His people from their sins. That's what the angel told Joseph back in Matt 1:21.
 - c. The Sovereignty of Christ over these evil schemers is demonstrated in their own plans. They concluded their wisest move would be to wait until after Passover. They knew Jerusalem would be filled with people, and they might have a riot on their hands if Jesus' followers resist their intentions. So they'll wait until things are back to normal and then make their move.
 - i. But Jesus was to die during Passover as the final Passover lamb. Passover was a celebration of God delivering His people from Egypt. The people of God were to take a lamb without blemish, slaughter it, and take some of the blood and put it on the doorposts of their dwellings. So when the Lord went throughout Egypt that night, every firstborn would be struck down, but when He saw the blood on the doorpost, He would Passover that home. In that way, the unbeliever would be judged and the believer would be saved.
 - ii. That deliverance from slavery in Egypt was a picture of deliverance from the slavery of sin. Jesus is our Passover lamb. All who are in Him, cleansed by His blood, will escape the coming judgment of God upon evil and unbelief. So Jesus had to die during the feast.
 - d. But these priests and elders planned to wait until after the feast. Then enters Judas and provides them a way to enact their plot under the cover of darkness, and they just couldn't resist. You see the Savior is Sovereign over the plans of men.
- II. The Beauty of Worship
 - a. In this next scene, Jesus speaks of His coming death again, not in the context of His suffering but rather in the context of an act of worship.
 - b. Matthew says a woman came up to Jesus and anointed Him by pouring a flask of very expensive ointment on His head. John, in his gospel, gives us the monetary value of this ointment which comes to about a year's wage. John also tells us in his account that it was Judas who spoke up here as sort of the spokesman for the rest of the

disciples. He said what they were thinking. But John says Judas' motive was not for the poor, but for himself. You see Judas was in charge of the moneybag and he used to help himself to some funds from time to time. That was his real intent behind this spiritual claim to care for the poor.

- c. Notice with me though what the disciples called a waste, Jesus called a beautiful thing.
 - i. Now it wasn't the amount to which Jesus refers. He wasn't saying here only very expensive things given in worship to me are beautiful. He was referring to the act itself and the heart behind it. Why would this lady spend such an expense on this one time act? Listen – she believed Jesus was worth the best she had to give – that's what was so beautiful. In that one act of worship she demonstrated how much she believed Jesus was worth. In fact, the word worship is understood to mean worth-ship. In other words, we worship that in which we believe is worthy of worship.
 - ii. Remember in Luke 21 Jesus observed the rich putting their gifts in the offering and a poor widow put in two small copper coins. Remember what Jesus said? He said that widow put more in the offering than the rest, for they gave a small portion of their abundance, but her small gift was all she had to give. You see, she believed God was worthy.
- d. The disciples said, in the hearing of the woman, this should have been sold and the money given to the poor. Listen, anytime you do something for Jesus, more than likely someone will be close by to criticize. You didn't do it the right way. You should've done something else. No good deed goes unpunished, right?
- e. Jesus corrects their criticism, not by dismissing the poor, but rather by referring to His soon departure. The poor will always be here, and so we will always have opportunity to extend kindness and help to the less fortunate. But Jesus will not always be with the disciples. In fact, He will soon depart.
- f. So Jesus says what she has done, by pouring this ointment upon Him, was preparing His body for His coming burial. You see, her intent to worship and the act itself was a beautiful thing in the eyes of God.

- g. In fact, it was such a remarkable act of worship, Jesus declares as the gospel advances around the world in the coming age, what she has done will be told in her memory. And so it is, here 2000 years later, all the way across the Atlantic, we've heard her story once again.
- h. True, sincere worship of Christ is far more meaningful and significant than we realize. Whether we're singing God's praises, giving God's blessing for gospel ministry, studying God's Word, or living our lives for His glory – we were created to worship Him, and every act of worship that displays His worth is beautiful in the eyes of our Savior!

III. The Darkness of Betrayal

- a. Judas goes out and agrees to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. In Exodus, the law stated if a slave was accidentally gored to death by an ox, the owner of that ox would owe the master of that slave 30 pieces of silver.
- b. This woman believed Jesus was worth the best she had. Judas thought Jesus was worth nothing more than the value of a slave. He'd rather have 30 pieces of silver than Jesus. What's your silver pieces? What is it, or who is it, in your life that you think is worth more than Jesus?
- c. Why did Judas betray Jesus for such a meaningless amount? He was one of the 12. He lived with Jesus for 3 years and observed all His wondrous miracles and heard the truth. Why sell Him out?
- d. Here's why. Because Jesus didn't turn out to be the Jesus Judas wanted Him to be. The Jesus Judas wanted was going to enter Jerusalem and take over. And since Judas was one of the 12, he would surely benefit. But instead of entering Jerusalem to take over, Jesus was talking about entering Jerusalem to be crucified. That Jesus didn't fit Judas' plan. And yet, that Jesus was the only one who could've saved Judas.
- e. Let me ask you, have you left following Jesus because He didn't turn out to be the Jesus you wanted Him to be? He didn't fit your agenda, your plans, so you've traded Him for silver pieces.

Conclusion – time ran out for Judas, but you're here today and time hasn't run out for you yet. Come back to Christ – He's worth more, far more, than whatever or whoever, you traded Him for!