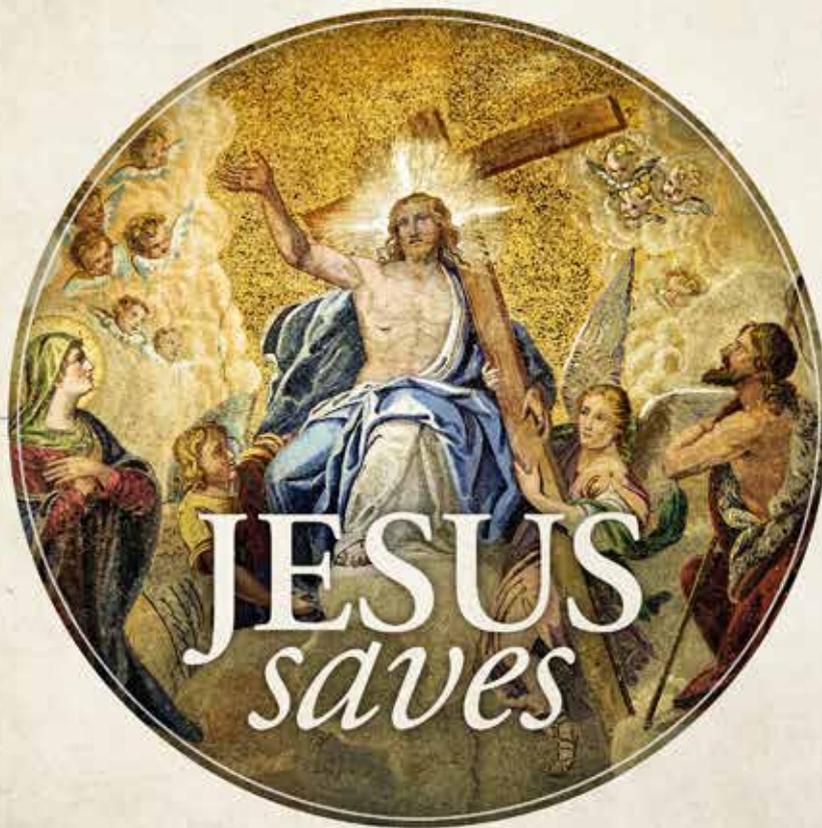


THE  
**GOSPEL**  
PROJECT<sup>®</sup>  
CHRONOLOGICAL



B.C.

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Volume 9

**FALL 2017:** *Leader Guide ESV*

*Ed Stetzer & Trevin Wax* GENERAL EDITORS

*Brian Dembowczyk* MANAGING EDITOR

LifeWay | Adults



# God's Word to You



## A Summary of the Bible

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.





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Myths in Light of the Gospel*

In this volume of *The Gospel Project*, we get to the very heart of our faith—the cross and resurrection of Jesus the King. We’ve seen how Jesus lived a perfect life of obedience to the Father. We’ve seen how He proclaimed and demonstrated the glory of the coming kingdom of God through His authoritative teaching and amazing miracles. But all of Jesus’ words and deeds were building to the greatest demonstration of God’s glory—Christ’s willingness to die on the cross in our place for our sins. The perfect Son of God chose to lay down His life in order to save sinners like you and me and give us eternal life as adopted sons and daughters of God. “Christ crucified.” This is our message for a world in need of salvation.

But the story doesn’t end with the cross. Not only did Jesus lay down His life, but He also took it up again and now reigns as the King of kings. The Gospels show us Jesus in the week leading up to the cross but also in the weeks following His resurrection. We see Him appear again and again to His followers, giving them blessing and benefit as they see the risen Lord.

Before returning to the Father, the risen King appeared to His followers and gave them the Great Commission and promised them the Holy Spirit to fulfill it. This is a great story—this is the best story—and by faith in Jesus, we are part of it. Our prayer for you is that this volume of *The Gospel Project* will empower you to share the good news of Christ crucified and raised so that Jesus the Savior may gather even more brothers and sisters into His holy family.



## Brian Dembowczyk

Managing Editor  
AUTHOR OF *Gospel-Centered Kids Ministry*

For the past three years, I have had the privilege and joy of serving as *The Gospel Project for Kids* team leader, and now I am grateful to transition and serve as *The Gospel Project* Managing Editor. Before coming to LifeWay, I served in local church ministry for nearly 17 years, as a senior pastor or discipleship pastor during much of that time. One of my passions in ministry was to come alongside others, dive into God’s Word, and experience gospel transformation together. That’s why I was a small group Bible study leader then and why I continue to be one today.

In this volume of *The Gospel Project*, we have the opportunity to point one another to the core of the gospel message—the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ Jesus. My hope and prayer is that God uses the sessions in this volume to deepen your awe, love, and gratitude for who God is and what He has done through Christ and that hearts are stirred to live each day on mission meaningfully so that others may come to be part of God’s people through Christ.

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**Suggested for  
the week of**

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**Unit 1: Jesus the Savior (Gospels)**

September 3	<b>7</b>	<i>Session 1</i>	The Savior Is Anointed for Burial
September 10	<b>19</b>	<i>Session 2</i>	Jesus in Jerusalem
September 17	<b>31</b>	<i>Session 3</i>	The Last Supper
September 24	<b>43</b>	<i>Session 4</i>	The Savior Is Arrested
October 1	<b>55</b>	<i>Session 5</i>	The Savior Is Crucified
October 8	<b>67</b>	<i>Session 6</i>	The Savior Is Raised

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**Unit 2: Jesus the Risen King (Gospels, Acts)**

October 15	<b>79</b>	<i>Session 7</i>	The Risen King on the Emmaus Road
October 22	<b>91</b>	<i>Session 8</i>	The Risen King Sends His People
October 29	<b>103</b>	<i>Session 9</i>	The Risen King and the Doubter
November 5	<b>115</b>	<i>Session 10</i>	The Risen King Forgives and Restores
November 12	<b>127</b>	<i>Session 11</i>	The Risen King's Commission
November 19	<b>139</b>	<i>Session 12</i>	The Risen King Ascends
November 26	<b>151</b>	<i>Special Session</i>	A Song of Thanksgiving



### Tips from Trevin on how best to use this Leader Guide

Welcome to *The Gospel Project*! Think of yourself as a guide leading your group on a tour of God's Word, journeying through the Bible's grand story and encountering the riches of Christ's redemption. We hope *The Gospel Project* will provide you with the tools and resources you need as you prayerfully seek to apply the truth of the gospel to the people God has placed in your group. Here are some things to remember as you use this Leader Guide:

**Pray.** Pray for your group. Don't lead in your own strength.

**Adapt.** You know the style of your group. If more discussion-oriented, then encourage group members to read the session ahead of time. Use the "Further Discussion" questions in the Session Plan to facilitate discussion that stays grounded in the session. If you take a more master-teacher approach, then spend time familiarizing yourself with the Expanded Session Content. Select questions that make the most strategic sense for moving the session along.

**Cut.** If it seems to you that *The Gospel Project* provides too much material for one session, you're right. We chose to deliver more than you need and to include the bulk of the content in the Personal Study Guide (PSG) so you don't feel pressed to get all the content delivered in the session time itself. Refer your group members to the PSG.

**Add.** The PSG has the bulk of the content from the Leader Guide, but not all of it. Throughout the Expanded Session Content, you will see portions of leader-only content marked off in the margin, as this portion is. These sections might be transitions between points, illustrations, answers to questions, content for interactive portions in the PSG, and even theological connections. The Session Plan will reference the more vital sections, but as you shape each session, consider how these leader-only sections can benefit your group.

**Personalize.** Take the truths in *The Gospel Project* and enhance them. Add personal stories. Ask penetrating questions that go to the heart of the people you know and love.

**Resource yourself.** (Encourage your group to take advantage of these resources too.)

Make use of the additional resources suggested at the end of each session.

- Read a suggested chapter or section in a book.
- Learn from the "Tip of the Week" to grow as a teacher and a group in spiritual maturity.

Visit [GospelProject.com/Blog](http://GospelProject.com/Blog) for the following:

- Read blog posts related to the overall study theme and specific sessions.
- Listen to a brief video as I point out the highlights to focus on for the upcoming session.

Visit [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources) to access these resources:

- Read online articles and blog posts related to the session content.
- Listen to helpful podcasts from pastors and church leaders.
- Download suggestions for interactive options to help address a variety of learning styles.

**Overflow.** Remember...*The Gospel Project* is not just a curriculum. WE are the project. As we immerse ourselves in the great story of redemption, God's Spirit uses the gospel to change us. Don't prepare simply for the content you're going to deliver. Let the truths of God's Word soak in as you study. A great leader is not a dispenser of information but an overflowing river of gospel passion. Let God work on your heart first, and then pray that He will change the hearts of the people He has entrusted to your care.

## SESSION 1

# The Savior Is Anointed for Burial

## Summary and Goal

The account of Jesus' anointing at Bethany contrasts the generosity of a woman and the greed of Judas. In their respective responses to Jesus, we see the importance of giving Him priority and honor over everything in our lives. The distinction between these two people serves as an opportunity for us to consider our own hearts in light of the opportunity we have to express our devotion through visible acts of worship.

### ***Main Passage***

Matthew 26:6-16

### ***Session Outline***

1. Mary prepares Jesus for His coming death and burial (Matt. 26:6-7).
2. Jesus praises Mary's extravagant gift of love (Matt. 26:8-13).
3. Judas plans the betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14-16).

---

### ***Theological Theme***

Our heart's condition is revealed either by our giving or by our greed.

### ***Christ Connection***

Pouring expensive oil on Jesus was not a waste but an act of worship. By allowing Mary to anoint Him, Jesus showed that He is more valuable than anything. This act of devotion foreshadowed Jesus' death and burial.

### ***Missional Application***

God calls us to treasure Christ above all wealth and to express our devotion through visible acts of worship.

Date of My Bible Study: \_\_\_\_\_

## Session Plan

# The Savior Is Anointed for Burial

## Session 1

### Pack Item 1: Jesus Saves

Display this poster in a place that will help group members follow the storyline of Scripture, to remember where we've been and where we are going.

### Introduction Option

Ask the group to share about the most memorable presents they have ever given or received. Their answers can pertain to any occasion (e.g., Christmas, birthday, anniversary, etc.). Allow for 3-4 responses and then pose the following questions for the group as a whole:

- What do these memories of giving or receiving gifts have in common?
- Why do you think the people giving the presents were willing to go to the lengths that they did?

### Pack Item 2: Jesus' Passion Week Map

The city of **Bethany** is included on the map.

## Introduction

Connect the joy of parents giving presents to their children with the concept that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Still, we struggle with greed and self-gratification (leader p. 10; personal study guide [PSG] p. 10).

- ? In what areas of your life do you feel as though you are generous?
- ? What compels your generosity?

Summarize the session noting the contrast we will see between Judas and the woman who anointed Jesus (leader p. 10; PSG p. 11). Use the *“Further Commentary” sidebar* (leader p. 10) and **Pack Item 3: Passion Week Timeline** to explain that this event most likely occurred prior to the triumphal entry (Matt. 21) and that Matthew included in Matthew 26 for thematic reasons.

## 1. Mary prepares Jesus for His coming death and burial (Matt. 26:6-7).

Read Matthew 26:6-7. Provide some cultural background for this scene. Then point out that throughout Scripture we find that the kingdom of God turns cultural expectations upside down (leader p. 11; PSG p. 11).

- ? What are some other evidences you can think of from Scripture of the kingdom of God reversing expectations?
- ? How does seeing this context help us better appreciate who Jesus is and what He does?

Note the multiple uses for anointing oil in Scripture (leader p. 12). Comment on the woman's identity as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and the reason she anointed Jesus—preparing Him for His burial (leader p. 12; PSG p. 12).

- ? What feelings do you think Mary might have experienced as these events unfolded?
- ? How have you faced humiliation and shame for devotion to Jesus?

## 2. Jesus praises Mary's extravagant gift of love (Matt. 26:8-13).

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 26:8-13. Consider finding articles or images online for the three examples of trash-to-treasure stories to help illustrate the disciples' disdain for the "waste" they witnessed (leader p. 13). Explain the disciples' condemnation of the woman's act in contrast to Jesus' incredible commendation of her sacrifice (leader pp. 12-14; PSG pp. 13-14).

 How do you measure the value of your giving?

Highlight that the Bible teaches us to care for the poor but also that there is a time for all things. Therefore, Jesus praised her action and declared that it would be forever etched in the narrative of the gospel as an example of devotion and love for God's people to follow (leader pp. 14-15; PSG p. 14).

 Why do you think Jesus singled out Mary's act of devotion as an enduring example?

## 3. Judas plans the betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14-16).

Read Matthew 26:14-16. Tell of the Sawi tribe and how they viewed Judas as a hero for his skillful duplicity and infidelity (leader p. 15; PSG p. 15).

 What are some forms of betrayal that are common in our culture?

 What underlying motivations can fuel the betrayal in these cases?

Show how Jesus was a man driven by greed. Then contrast Judas with Mary and also with Jesus. Judas sacrificed others for his own gain. Jesus sacrificed Himself for the gain of others. Warn your group that we all share within us the natural inclination for our own kingdoms and glory that Judas succumbed to (leader pp. 16-17; PSG pp. 15-17).

 How might you begin to cultivate a greater love for Christ that compels you toward generosity and sacrifice?

## Conclusion

End with challenging the group to consider their heart motivations for giving, or for not giving. As God has given His Son for us out of the overflow of His heart, so He calls and compels His people to express their devotion through visible acts of worship (leader p. 17; PSG p. 17). Apply the truths of this session with "His Mission, Your Mission" (PSG p. 18).

### Point 2 Option

Ask groups of 2-3 to read the "Voices from Church History" quote by Blaise Pascal (leader p. 13) and discuss the following questions (consider writing the quote and questions on a board or sheet of paper for groups to have; also available on the DVD in *The Gospel Project for Adults: Leader Pack*):

- Do you agree with Pascal's statement about man's constant will toward happiness? Why or why not?
- How would people in our culture generally respond to this sentiment?
- How can we seek happiness without being self-centered?

After a couple of moments, allow the groups to share some of their responses and reflections.

### For Further Discussion

In what areas of your life do you feel as though you are greedy?

What desires or fears lie at the root of your greed?

**Christ Connection:** Pouring expensive oil on Jesus was not a waste but an act of worship. By allowing Mary to anoint Him, Jesus showed that He is more valuable than anything. This act of devotion foreshadowed Jesus' death and burial.

**Missional Application:** God calls us to treasure Christ above all wealth and to express our devotion through visible acts of worship.

## Expanded Session Content

# The Savior Is Anointed for Burial

## Session 1

### Voices from the Church

“Authentic worship always involves *obedience* and *sacrifice*.”<sup>1</sup>

—Herbert W. Bateman IV

### Further Commentary

“This event [the anointing of Jesus in Matt. 26] actually occurred the previous Saturday night, before “Palm Sunday” (John 12:1-8) [before the triumphal entry in Matt. 21]. Matthew does not contradict John’s chronology but thematically places this episode here as another in the series of preparations for Jesus’ death.”<sup>2</sup>

—Craig L. Blomberg

## Introduction

Not much can compete with the joy of a young child on Christmas morning. For days or even weeks she has seen wonderfully wrapped presents under a lit and decorated tree. Her anticipation has built until it is nearly ready to erupt in joyful consummation as paper and bow fly through the air in an unwrapping frenzy.

Not much can compete with that feeling, except perhaps the joy of the parent. For months, Mom has planned the perfect present and enlisted Dad to purchase and hide it away somewhere in the dark recesses of the attic. Weeks earlier, it was wrapped with love. Days before, it was placed under the tree until that moment when unbridled childhood anticipation collides with the patient longing of the parents to see joy’s consummation in their child.

In those moments, it is abundantly clear that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Still, we all have within us the struggle to gratify ourselves, the struggle of greed.

-  In what areas of your life do you feel as though you are generous?
-  What compels your generosity?

## Session Summary

In this session, we will see a contrast between the generosity of a woman and the greed of Judas as manifested in the account of Jesus’ anointing at Bethany. In their respective responses to Jesus, we see the importance of giving Him priority and honor over everything in our lives. The distinction between these two people serves as an opportunity for us to consider our own hearts in light of the opportunity we have to express our devotion through visible acts of worship.

## 1. Mary prepares Jesus for His coming death and burial (Matt. 26:6-7).

<sup>6</sup> *Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,*  
<sup>7</sup> *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.*

At first glance, it is hard to appreciate what is happening in this scene. First and foremost, who among us would be at all honored by someone sneaking up behind us and pouring an entire bottle of canola oil or Chanel No. 5 on our heads? Rather than honored, we would be humiliated if not extremely confused.

Second, we miss the social boundaries from a historical perspective. Here we have a woman who is interrupting a feast of men. In this particular cultural context, this would have been quite the cause of confusion and conversation.

We know that the culture of a people determines what is socially acceptable and permissible, but throughout the Scripture, we find that the kingdom of God turns expectations upside down. We see this evidence of upside-down expectations even from the beginning of the scene with Jesus eating in the home of a man identified as a “leper” (see Lev. 13–14 for the requirements of the Mosaic law as it relates to leprosy).

Regarding the law with respect to skin diseases, Leviticus 13:45-46 reads:

The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, “Unclean, unclean.” He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Since Simon welcomed visitors into his home, perhaps he had been healed of his skin disease, but still being identified as “Simon the leper,” it may be that he was considered unclean by his neighbors. Whether he was clean or unclean, in the middle of this house belonging to “the leper” sat Jesus, and He was reclining at the table as they shared a meal together.

- What are some other evidences you can think of from Scripture of the kingdom of God reversing expectations?
- How does seeing this context help us better appreciate who Jesus is and what He does?

### Further Commentary

“The narrative of Jesus’s anointing is located between two sections of the betrayal story (cf. Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-11). Bethany was a village on the Mount of Olives, less than two miles east of Jerusalem (Matt. 21:17; John 11:1,18). Spending time in the home of Simon the leper, who is mentioned only here in the NT, would render Jesus ritually impure just before Passover (cf. Matt. 8:2), and so some scholars speculate that Simon has already been healed by Jesus...The unnamed woman (but see John 12:3) surprisingly anoints Jesus’s head with expensive ointment (cf. Ps. 132:2 LXX [133:2 Eng.]; Josephus, Ant. 19.239) from an alabaster vial while he is eating.”<sup>3</sup>

—David L. Turner

### Voices from the Church

“Matthew’s unnamed woman is Jesus’ invitation to all women, and men and children, to come to the table of Christian *koinonia*... There is no hierarchy of holiness upon entrance, and there is no pedigree and no degree requirement for entrance. The only prerequisite is faith in Jesus. All who have faith in Jesus can come for a meal.”<sup>4</sup>

—Sean Douglas O’Donnell

## Voices from the Church

“Jesus’s teaching consistently attracted the irreligious while offending the Bible-believing, religious people of his day...That can only mean one thing. If the preaching of our ministers and the practice of our parishioners do not have the same effect on people that Jesus had, then we must not be declaring the same message that Jesus did.”<sup>5</sup>

—Timothy Keller

## 99 Essential Christian Doctrines

### 59. *Christ as Sacrifice*

There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was able to permanently, “once and for all,” take away sins.

The scene being set, we now turn our attention to the anointing, which was in preparation for the task ahead of Jesus, namely, His death and burial.

Anointing oil was used for a number of purposes in Scripture. People are most familiar with it in its symbolic function to confirm an Israelite office or authority. For example, priests were to be anointed with oil (Ex. 29:7), as were kings (1 Sam. 10:1), and sometimes even prophets (1 Kings 19:16). Additionally, certain objects were anointed, such as the tabernacle and everything in it (Ex. 40:9). What all of these examples have in common is the consistent theme of setting apart a person or thing for devotion to God.

From the parallel account in John 12, we learn that this woman who anointed Jesus was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Mary’s original intentions are not entirely clear. Was she expressing in this act of devotion her belief that Jesus is the *Christ*, meaning the anointed One of God? Since neither Matthew nor Mark used the verbal form of *christos* to refer to her act, it seems they chose not to emphasize that aspect of her intentions, if that were part of it.

Perhaps Mary was one of the first in the Gospels to really understand that the messianic mission would march through a tomb. Whether Mary was initially and intentionally aware of the significance of her action or not, Jesus clearly saw the act as stretching beyond the present into the future. In this simple glorious act, she has prepared Jesus for His upcoming burial (Matt. 26:12).

-  What feelings do you think Mary might have experienced as these events unfolded?
-  How have you faced humiliation and shame for devotion to Jesus?

## 2. Jesus praises Mary’s extravagant gift of love (Matt. 26:8-13).

*<sup>8</sup> And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste?” <sup>9</sup> For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.” <sup>10</sup> But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>11</sup> For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. <sup>12</sup> In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. <sup>13</sup> 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.”*

A rare 1823 copy of the Declaration of Independence was once purchased for less than \$3 and later sold for nearly \$500,000. An Andy Warhol sketch reportedly was purchased for less than \$5 and valued around \$2 million. A rare 1,000-year-old Chinese bowl was purchased for about \$3 and sold at auction for more than \$2 million. Occasionally the national news will share an epic story like these of one man's trash becoming another man's treasure. We marvel at the lucrative discovery, but we can also look with derision at the one who sold the fortune for a pittance. This feeling is what fueled the disciples' response to Mary's anointing of Christ.

### **“Why this waste?”**

A simple question from the perspective of the disciples. For them there was no compelling reason to empty an entire bottle of valuable oil upon the head of Jesus. Regardless of their true motivations, they missed the significance of this act of devotion and expressed their belief that her gift was wasted. But in demeaning this woman and the value of her act, the disciples unknowingly demeaned Jesus and His coming death and resurrection.

This was an extravagant gift. Matthew described the perfume as “very expensive”; both Mark and John include that it was an expensive oil valued around 300 denarii (Mark 14:3,5; John 12:3,5). Considering that a denarius was roughly equivalent to a day's wages, this jar was worth nearly one year's salary. Imagine someone today taking \$50,000 and setting it on fire and you will understand the confusion of the disciples.

Now imagine someone giving her life savings for the sake of Christ and you will understand the devotion of Mary. Since women generally were not able to have jobs that would provide such income, this was probably a family heirloom with sentimental value in addition to its monetary value.

Mark also noted the significant detail that she broke the flask in the act (14:3). The jar, itself of some value, could never be used again either. Together, the sacrifice of the jar and the nard symbolize the totality of the gift. Nothing was held back.

Imagine you have \$50,000 in your life savings, how certain would you have to be in an investment that this is truly a worthy pursuit? So Mary's act demonstrated not only her generosity but also her faith and confidence in Jesus. She had witnessed firsthand His provision and power (including the raising of her own brother, Lazarus, from the dead), and so she came and freely gave.

In return for her devotion, she was met with disdain by the disciples. They were indignant in their response and sought to scold her. But their anger was motivated more by love of their own kingdoms than love for the kingdom of God.

### **Further Commentary**

“Curiously, Jesus rebukes the disciples for their seemingly laudable objection. He views Mary's act as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to demonstrate a special kind of sacrificial love (vv. 10-11). She has created an object lesson for everyone present; Jesus points out the symbolism in her anointing him as preparation for burial (v. 12). There will always be opportunities to help the poor; this may be the last opportunity for Mary to minister to Jesus before his death.”<sup>6</sup>

—Craig L. Blomberg

### **Voices from Church History**

“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”<sup>7</sup>

—Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)



## Voices from Church History

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”<sup>8</sup>

—Jim Elliot (1927-1956)



## Voices from the Church

“Still he seeks the fellowship of his people, and sends them both sorrows and joys in order to detach their love from other things and attach it to himself.”<sup>9</sup>

—J. I. Packer

The condemnation from the disciples, however, is juxtaposed with Jesus’ incredible commendation.

**“Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me.”**

This “beautiful thing” that she has done bears hints of Jesus’ earlier commendation of the widow’s offering (Mark 12:41-44). Though on opposite ends of the spectrum in regard to the intrinsic value of their individual gifts, both acts share the common denominator of wholehearted devotion, thus demonstrating that an act of sacrifice has value by virtue of motivation and intent, not inherent worth.



How do you measure the value of your giving?

**“You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.”**

The desire to provide for the poor is a noble desire as well. After all, the Bible commands it and the apostles exemplified such a longing:

- “Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered” (Prov. 21:13).
- “Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor” (Prov. 22:9).
- “Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do” (Gal. 2:10).
- “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17).

But the Bible also suggests that there is a time for all things (Eccl. 3:1-8). There is a time to give your oil to the poor and there is a time to pour your oil on Christ.

**“Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”**

Not only did Jesus praise her action, but He declared that it would be forever etched in the narrative of the gospel as an example of devotion and love.

Throughout Scripture, the people of God are marked by their giving. King David refused to give a sacrifice that cost him nothing (2 Sam. 24:24). Abraham prepared himself to lose his beloved son (Gen. 22). The Macedonian Christians gave even beyond their means for the sake their poor brothers and sisters in Christ in Judea and Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8).

As Jacob's sacrifice of 14 years for Rachel seemed as nothing to him because of his love for her (Gen. 29:20,30), so the people of God are compelled by love to give to the work of God's kingdom:

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:32-35)

 Why do you think Jesus singled out Mary's act of devotion as an enduring example?

### 3. Judas plans the betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14-16).

*<sup>14</sup> Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup> and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup> And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.*

When Don Richardson, a missionary to New Guinea, first began to share the gospel with the Sawi tribe, he became aware of the extreme cultural divide that separated the tribe from a Christian understanding of the last days of Jesus' life. In particular, the Sawi understanding was distorted by their cultural commendation of betrayal. For the Sawi, treachery was a virtue to be celebrated.

As Richardson progressed through telling the narrative of the gospel, the narrative tension and suspense increased until the events of Judas' betrayal, at which point the Sawi began to celebrate. Rather than seeing the betrayal as the wicked rejection of the King, Judas was viewed as the hero of the story, given his skillful duplicity and infidelity.<sup>10</sup>

 What are some forms of betrayal that are common in our culture?

 What underlying motivations can fuel the betrayal in these cases?

### Further Commentary

"Ancient narrators sometimes contrasted positive and negative moral examples; as Judas contrasts with Peter in Matthew 26:69–Matthew 27:10, he contrasts here with the extravagant love of the woman in Matthew 26:6-13. Jesus has continued to discuss his death [26:2,12], and perhaps at least Judas has now caught on. But when Judas finds that Jesus' kingdom will not profit him materially (and may even cost him his life), he chooses to get what he still can from his lengthy investment in Jesus: he sells him for the price of a slave [26:15]... Judas abandoned his spiritual birthright for better material conditions, and in saving his own life lost it for eternity [16:24-27; 27:1-10]. Judas represents all those who follow Jesus only for what they can get from him, not for how they can serve him: eventually they may decide that the cost of serving him is higher than it is worth."<sup>11</sup>

–Craig S. Keener



## Voices from Church History

“If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”<sup>12</sup>

—C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)



## Further Commentary

“In truth, the ‘why’ question about Judas remains a mystery. The Gospels do not explain; they merely record. In fact, all the guesses and observations show Judas’s crime to be within the range of all human experience. His act was not unique. Attempts to explain Judas may simply serve to excuse us, to separate Judas from the likes of us. If we knew exactly *why*, we would too easily say, ‘Well, that’s not me.’ But we need to see that Judas may not have been that unlike us. For Judas was not the last follower to betray Jesus, sometimes by word, sometimes by deed.”<sup>13</sup>

—C. Mack Roark,  
*Biblical Illustrator*

Modern translations of the Bible often break up sections of Scripture (called pericopes) using subheadings, such as “Jesus Anointed at Bethany,” “Judas to Betray Jesus,” and “The Passover with the Disciples.” Though undoubtedly helpful, such subheadings can also interrupt the flow and feel of a passage as well as separate events that are theologically linked.

Matthew’s Gospel immediately moves from the anointing by Mary to the betrayal by Judas, and what is implicit in his account is made explicit in John’s Gospel. According to John 12, it was Judas who led the chorus of condemnation of the woman’s anointing, and it was not from love of man but love of money. Thus, when he went to the chief priests and asked for payment, his motivations had already been exposed. Judas was not driven primarily by religious or theological conviction but by greed.

The contrast between Judas and Mary could not be more striking. Mary was willing to forfeit wealth for Jesus. Judas was willing to forfeit Jesus for wealth.

The contrast between Judas and Jesus is even more stunning. Judas sacrificed others for his own gain. Jesus sacrificed Himself for the gain of others.

This was no last minute and accidental betrayal in the heat of the moment. Judas was not cornered by the priests, nor did he just give in to his fleshly desires in a moment of passion and weakness. He walked two miles (the distance from Bethany to Jerusalem) over a mountain and through a valley in the middle of the night in order to seek out someone who might meet his craving for money.

The chief priests were more than happy to oblige, as they had been seeking an opportunity against Jesus for quite some time. Judas’ arrival and willingness represented the open door they needed.

Furthermore, Scripture testifies that Judas’ actions were influenced by Satanic desire (Luke 22:3-6), and it was Satan who had previously left Jesus until an “opportune time,” according to Luke 4:13. The desires of the chief priests, Judas, and Satan all converged in this one opportunity for betrayal.

Biblically, the motivation for betrayal can be rather easily ascertained. Consider the helpful heart monitor provided by the Epistle of James:

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (Jas. 4:1-4)

According to James, quarrels and conflicts arise from our cravings. Judas craved money. The chief priests craved power and privilege. Satan craved glory.

It is doubtful that anyone doing this study is compelled by the exact same motivations as Satan or the chief priests. Even the most hardened pagan is hardly actively seeking to crucify Christ. None of us has ever betrayed Jesus in exactly the same manner in which Judas did. Yet we are all creatures driven by desire; our cravings and longings are reflections of our loves and lusts. And the Bible teaches that our hearts are naturally inclined toward our own kingdoms and glory apart from the work of the Spirit to grant us new hearts and desires.

As we close out this section, let us make the most of the opportunity we have to consider the condition of our own heart before the Lord. Reject the greed of Judas; strive to be like Mary, who gave her most precious possession for Christ; but even more so, strive to be like Christ, who gave Himself fully and freely to set us free from bondage to greed and lust.

 How might you begin to cultivate a greater love for Christ that compels you toward generosity and sacrifice?

## Conclusion

If our motivation for giving is to receive praise from others or something in return, that is nothing more than greed. If our outright greed moves us to withhold generosity, then we have revealed that God's call on our lives is secondary to our comfort. It also shows that we treasure things other than God and long for our own glory over Christ's.

The Bible is clear: the people of God are marked by their joyful giving (2 Cor. 9:7). Even when our complex hearts reveal the deadly mix of generosity and greed, the convicting power of God's Spirit moves us to repent and honor God. As God has given His Son for us out of the overflow of His heart, so He calls and compels His people to express their devotion through visible acts of worship. Let us follow the example of Mary, exemplifying love and devotion to our Savior in our generosity.

**CHRIST CONNECTION:** Pouring expensive oil on Jesus was not a waste but an act of worship. By allowing Mary to anoint Him, Jesus showed that He is more valuable than anything. This act of devotion foreshadowed Jesus' death and burial.



## Voices from Church History

"Woe betide the soul which supposes it will find something better if it forsakes you! Toss and turn as we may, now on our back, now side, now belly—our bed is hard at every point, for you alone are our rest."<sup>14</sup>

—Augustine (354-430)

## Additional Resources

# The Savior Is Anointed for Burial

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## Study Material

- "Jesus Journeys to Jerusalem"—Pages 152-154 from *The Drama of Scripture* by Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen
- "You're Probably More Like Judas Than You Think"—Article by Ed Cyzewski and Derek Cooper; find a link to this blog post at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)
- Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles, including "Judas, the Traitor," can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator). Look for Bundles: The Gospel Project.

## Sermon Podcast

Lash Banks: "Dealmaker or Disciple"

Find a link to this at [GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources](http://GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources)

## Tip of the Week

### A Tool, Not a Taskmaster

"Creative teaching is a process in which [group members] are vitally involved. Often in this process, ideas are developed and needs revealed that no writer can plan for, nor teacher predict. The teacher has to feel free in such cases to respond to the lead of his class and, when appropriate, modify his plan in order to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This may mean shortening some learning activities, adding unplanned ones, and eliminating some that were planned. This kind of freedom just isn't possible for the teacher who relies completely on printed materials."<sup>15</sup>

### GOAL

Over the course of three years, participants will journey from Genesis to Revelation and discover how God's plan of redemption unfolds throughout Scripture and still today, compelling them to join the mission of God.

### PLAN OVERVIEW

<b>Fall 2015</b>	<i>The Story Begins</i>	God the Creator (Genesis 1–11) God the Covenant-Maker (Genesis 12–50)
<b>Winter 2015-16</b>	<i>God Delivers</i>	God the Redeemer (Exodus) God the Lawgiver (Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy)
<b>Spring 2016</b>	<i>The Promised Land</i>	God the Savior (Numbers, Joshua) God the Judge (Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel)
<b>Summer 2016</b>	<i>A Kingdom Established</i>	God the King (1–2 Samuel) God All Wise (1 Kings, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes)
<b>Fall 2016</b>	<i>Prophets and Kings</i>	God the Revealer (1–2 Kings, Isaiah) God the Pursuer (Prophets, 2 Chronicles)
<b>Winter 2016-17</b>	<i>Exile and Return</i>	God the Sustainer (Daniel, Ezra) God the Provider (Esther, Nehemiah, Malachi)
<b>Spring 2017</b>	<i>The Rescue Begins</i>	God the Son (Gospels) God Among Us (Gospels)
<b>Summer 2017</b>	<i>Stories and Signs</i>	Jesus the Storyteller (Synoptic Gospels) Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)
<b>Fall 2017</b>	<i>Jesus Saves</i>	Jesus the Savior (Gospels) Jesus the Risen King (Gospels, Acts)
	<b>Coming Next Quarter</b>	
 <b>Winter 2017-18</b>	<i>The Church on Mission</i>	The Spirit Who Empowers (Acts) The God Who Sends (Acts)
<b>Spring 2018</b>	<i>Letters to God's People</i>	The God Who Directs His People (Epistles) The God Who Changes Us (Epistles)
<b>Summer 2018</b>	<i>Come, Lord Jesus</i>	God's Prisoner (Acts, Epistles) The God Who Makes All Things New (Epistles, Revelation)

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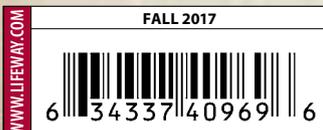
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