

Beauty and Betrayal - the message of the Cross announced

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bibles this morning and to our readings, which you'll find in Matthew's Gospel at chapter 26. And we're beginning this morning a series which is going to lead us right up through Easter on the passion of Christ and the preaching of Matthew in these last chapters of his Gospel about the meaning and the challenge of the cross and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we're going to read this morning beginning at chapter 26 in verse 1 through 2 verse 16. And I'm going to read these verses in a slightly different order just to help us see how Matthew's put these verses together.

Matthew 26 in verse 1. When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, You know that after two days the Passover is coming and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest whose name was Caiaphas and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.

But they said, Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people. Look down to verse 14. Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?

[1 : 36] And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. I go back to verse 6 in this little story that's nestled just right in the middle of that ongoing narrative of the plotting and the betrayal of Jesus.

Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask, a very expensive ointment. And she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, Why this waste? This could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor. But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, Why do you trouble the woman?

For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. 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.

[2 : 54] Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Matthew 26, and to the passage that we read together.

Now let me ask, is your life today, and the legacy that you will leave for posterity, is it a thing of beauty in the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Or, will it ultimately be told as a story of betrayal? That's the question that Matthew's asking us in this passage.

And he's asking it of everyone who professes to be a disciple of Jesus. Whether that's amid the pressures and the persecution of the first century church, the people who first read this, or indeed in the 21st century, with all the temptations that we face.

to lead us away into denial and to betrayal of our Savior. And it's the only question of ultimate importance, isn't it? Matthew has just had ultimate issues in view.

[4 : 06] Look back to chapter 25. Jesus is very stark there, isn't he? He's saying to us that the ultimate word to all men and women at the bar of God will either, either be chapter 25, verse 34, come you blessed of my Father and inherit the kingdom, or verse 41, depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire.

And that great separation depends entirely, according to Jesus, on the reaction that people make to the Lord Jesus himself and his message.

And above all, to his cross, which is what comes into such sharp focus here as the crucifixion of Jesus is announced in chapter 26, verse 2. Do you see? After two days, the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.

So, how do we respond to the cross of Jesus Christ? Is it to us a message of the utmost wonder and beauty so that we embrace it and we rejoice in it and we submit to it as the guiding light for our whole life here on earth?

Or is the cross and all its shame just foolishness, just ugliness so that we scorn it, we reject it, we refuse its claim on us?

[5 : 32] And those are the only two reactions that there are ultimately to the real Jesus Christ and to the gospel of Christ. And all through Matthew's gospel and the other gospels, you see Jesus' ministry and it provokes either one response or the other.

But now you see the story's coming to its climax and we see that division more starkly than ever as the cross is so clearly announced.

And here in verse one, the final stage is set when Jesus had finished all these sayings. That's the last of that little phrase that Matthew always uses to round off a section of Jesus' teaching.

But here he's saying he has finished all his earthly teaching. Look at verse two. He's predicted his death many times but now it's imminent.

It's just two days away. And look at verse 16. That's the final of another little markers that Matthew uses elsewhere also. From that moment on.

[6 : 33] From that moment, Judah's path is set on betrayal and the final stage of countdown to the cross has begun. And our passage here in verses one to 16, it acts like a kind of overture to that grand finale of the gospel, the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And as such, it brings into sharp relief two things that are clearly seen throughout all the unfolding events of the passion. They've been clear all the way through Matthew's story, but they're especially clear here.

Firstly, it's the unstoppable promised redemption of God as it's being sovereignly worked out by him. But also, there's the unavoidable personal response that God demands from all people in Jesus.

Think of that first thing, the unstoppable promised redemption of God. Matthew's whole gospel is presented as the fulfillment of all God's plans and purposes from the beginning in Jesus Christ. So chapter one begins, remember, with the genealogy taking us all the way back to Abraham, fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus is born as the king, the promised king that fulfills all the hopes of the prophets.

[7 : 46] The opening words of his ministry tell us that he has come not to abolish, but to fulfill all the law and the prophets, that is to bring all God's sovereign purposes to fulfillment and fruition.

And all through the gospel you see that unstoppable purpose unfolding for the kingdom of Jesus. And Jesus says, plainly here in chapter 25, this kingdom was prepared from before the very foundation of the world.

It is a serene, unstoppable sovereignty that's at work. And nowhere is that seen more clearly than in the passion story. Jesus is absolutely in control at every single point.

Look at verse two. Here he is, he announces both the fact and the time of his death. So before the wicked plotting of verses three and four, Jesus has decided it all.

And verse five just brings that to highlight, doesn't it? They say, what do they say? Not during the feast. It must be stealthy. It must be secret. But Jesus says, no, in two days, in the middle of the feast, right out in public.

[9 : 00] And notice, all the way through this passage, Jesus is recorded as speaking in the first person. It just emphasizes that he is dictating all the events that are happening.

Verse 12, he speaks, doesn't he, about his coming burial. In verse 13, he speaks about this gospel of his death and resurrection going out and being preached in the whole world.

Down in verse 29, he speaks about feasting in the Father's kingdom. In verse 32, he speaks himself about being raised up and going ahead of his disciples to Galilee.

Everything is in his sovereign power and control. Verse 24, I suppose, sums it right up. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him.

There can be absolutely no doubt, can there, in this message. God is utterly sovereign. This is unstoppable promised redemption. And yet, at the same time, there's a second strand, again, that's been seen all the way through Matthew's gospel and all the more so, again, as it comes to the passion.

[10:08] And that is the unavoidable personal response that God's sovereign act of redemption demands of every single person in the world. Jesus and his kingdom confront the world and men and women are absolutely responsible for the response that they make to Jesus.

And all the way through the gospel, Matthew records Jesus proclaiming his kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, and demanding submission to the Lord of heaven, which is Jesus himself.

And that means rejection of this world and absolute submission to heaven's rule here on this earth in Jesus' rule, in Jesus' unique lordship over life.

And that means, of course, an inevitable clash of masters because you can't serve this world and the king of heaven.

Jesus is plain, isn't he? He cannot be done. You'll hate one, he says, and love the other. You'll be devoted to one and you'll despise the other. So Jesus' sovereign demand is absolute.

[11:16] It's either God or mammon, he says. This world's values and valuations or the values and the treasure of the kingdom of heaven.

It's an absolute demand and it demands an absolute response. And all through Matthew's gospel, you'll see these responses. The same responses that we still see just as clearly today when the claims, when the challenge of Jesus are put to people.

Some people come with joy embracing Jesus and his cross, turning their back on the world and following him. But many sadly still reject those absolute demands.

And they do so all the more when the real path of discipleship becomes clear. Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me, says Jesus, is not worthy of me.

Whoever finds his life will lose it. It's he who loses his life for my sake. Who will find it? You see, the nearer you get to that challenge of the cross of Jesus, to seeing the real meaning of following Jesus for you, the more intense your reaction to his call is going to be.

[12:34] Either it will be a thing of growing beauty and growing wonder, and you will embrace it with all the love in your heart. Or it will be a thing of mounting ugliness and horror that you increasingly reject with scorn and derision.

The cross either fills your heart with beauty or with scornful betrayal. And alas, it's that latter reaction that we see so much of in Matthew's final chapters.

It's when the cross is imminent. It's when it's thrust unavoidably into the consciousness of men and women, forcing them to reckon with the real Jesus, with the real servant king, with the one who is, yes, the Lord of all, but is a crucified savior and Lord.

It's then, above all, that all people stand absolutely exposed. Exposed to God and exposed to the world. And the real allegiance of their heart is seen.

And sadly, friends, too often, what is exposed is a way of betrayal. That's verses three to five here, isn't it? The way of betrayal. Here's God's chosen people and the most privileged generation in their history with Emmanuel, God himself, come right into their midst and they're exposed as full of hatred for the God whom they say that they live and serve.

[14:05] Verse three, the chief priests, the elders, the representatives of the whole nation, they're plotting to kill the Son of God. Yes, it's God's sovereign plan of redemption.

Yes, he was delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. That's what Peter says on the day of Pentecost. But he also says, yet you crucified him and killed him by the hands of wicked men.

There's no compulsion, is there? They're not puppets. They kill him because they hate him. And they are absolutely responsible for what they do.

Verse four, they plotted together to kill him. And that's shocking enough, but isn't the greater shock when you read verses 14 to 16 that Jesus is hated and betrayed not only by his enemies but by his own friends.

One of the twelve, verse 14. Verse 16, he sought to betray him. And the story of Judas just encapsulates the sheer hideousness, the treachery.

[15:15] But friends, here's the fact, it wasn't Judas alone, was it, who betrayed Jesus? One of the starkest features of this whole sad story is the utter failure, is the betrayal of every single one of

those disciples.

Despite Peter's grand words down there in verse 33, read, you see, I'll never fade away and fall away. We all know what happened, don't we? And despite all the disciples, verse 35, they all said the same thing.

What do you read when you get right to the end of the section, verse 56? It's bleak and it's dreadful, isn't it? All the disciples left him and fled.

and Jesus Christ is left alone. In the end, the Son of God is betrayed and rejected by the religious authorities, by the Roman civil authorities, by the entire mass of Israel and most bitterly of all, surely, by every one of his closest friends.

And Matthew doesn't hide any of this from us, does he? Why? Well, remember that all through his gospel, he's showing us not only Jesus fulfilling his sovereign mission to bring in his kingdom, but also he's showing us Jesus teaching his followers about that kingdom and what it means, what it means for him and what it means for everyone who will follow him to that kingdom.

[16:50] He's teaching them, isn't he, that he must embrace the cross in order to save his people and build his church, but he's also teaching that every disciple must likewise embrace his cross.

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. And they too, you see, must see it as a beautiful thing to embrace the shame and the scorn and the rejection of this world and to show that true devotion to the way of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just because in Jesus and in his cross and its message, they have found that pearl of great price, that treasure that surpasses all other earthly treasure.

And see, that's Matthew's challenge to us in these verses in front of us. He's preaching the cross to us and he's asking us when the chips are really down, when it really comes to action and not just talk, will you be real disciples, true friends of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Or would we end up just betraying him too? So let me ask you again the question I began with, but in a different way. I think this will help us to see what Matthew is saying to us.

[18:14] In your eyes, is the Lord Jesus such surpassing worth that to take everything that you have in this world, all the gifts you have, the talents you have, the money you have, the relationships you love, the praise, the reputation, everything you have, and to waste it all in the eyes of the world by pouring it all out to be wasted for Jesus?

Is that, in your eyes, really the most beautiful thing that you could ever do? The answer to that question will tell us whether at the last our legacy will be like the woman that we read about here whose action beautified the Lord Jesus or whether it will be like Judas whose action betrayed him. See, Matthew's preaching to us passionately and he cares how we respond to Jesus and so he's challenging us. He's holding up these two pictures in front of us today, the brightest beauty and the bitterest betrayal and he's saying to us, which side, which side, are you on?

And he's urging us not to betray Jesus, to desert him because he knows that this world is full of so many things that could and would draw us away from him, make us deny him, make us betray him. That's true, isn't it? It won't be long this coming week at work or at school or at university before every one of us comes under great pressure to deny Jesus, to go along with all the false talk, the backbiting, the dirty jokes at work or to hide our faith, to avoid scorn, to avoid contempt or to just follow our own passions and to bury the things that we know to be the way of true purity in following Jesus.

[20:06] We're friends of Jesus, I take it, every one of us here this morning. But even his friends can deny him and disown him and betray him and hurt him.

But you don't have to, says Matthew. Ponder these verses of mine. Look at these two friends highlighted here and see what makes one's friendship a thing of beauty and the others a thing of terrible betrayal.

That's what explains the structure of this passage, you see. That's why I read it the way I did because the story moves straight from verse 5 to verse 14, doesn't it? Verses 4 and 5, the leaders are plotting, looking for a quiet way to arrest Jesus and avoid a riot.

And in verse 15, immediately, here's the solution, Judas' scheme. There's absolutely no need.

Verses 6 to 13. And why are they here?

Well, Matthew clearly puts them right here in the midst of this awful story, both to explain the betrayal of Judas, why he did what he did, as a warning, and also to give us the inside story about how not to betray Jesus Christ.

[21 : 25] Is that something that's relevant to you and me this morning? Well, I think it is, isn't it, to all of us? Could you or I be betrayers of the Lord Jesus? What was Judas' motive in verse 14 in turning on Jesus like that?

Well, it's after Jesus announces his coming death in the clearest, in the most unambiguous way in verse 2 that Judas precipitates his action. It seems that that was the last straw for him.

He's mortally offended by this talk of crucifixion. He's had enough. And in fact, every time previously in the gospel where Jesus announces his own death, the reaction he meets is one of scorn and disgust.

Remember Peter's great confession in chapter 16. You are the Christ and Jesus immediately starts speaking about his death. What does Peter say? No, no, no. That'll never happen to you. And Jesus has to rebuke him.

That's a satanic attitude, Peter. That's not the way of God, but that's the way of the world talking. Again in chapter 17, he announces his coming cross.

[22 : 32] Immediately he has to rebuke the disciples again because of their opposite attitude of worldly status and gain. He says at the beginning of chapter 18, unless you humble yourselves and come like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Same again in chapter 20, announces his suffering and death again. And again he has to rebuke his disciples worldly ambitions, their pride jockeying for power and position.

Not so with you, says Jesus. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. Whoever would be first must be your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

You see, even to mention the cross and the way of the cross, the great emblem of the way of rejection by this world and rejection of this world's gain, even to mention the cross, causes huge offense.

When people's hearts are really gripped by the things of this world. And you see, that was Judas. He was a man of this world.

[23 : 38] When the chips were down, he showed that he was possessed by this world. That's why presumably in verse 15, the issue of money is right to the fore. Do you see?

What is Judas saying? He's not saying, what can I give to Jesus? He's saying, what can I get right now from betraying Jesus? Shouldn't surprise us that in John chapter 12, we're told Judas, who kept the disciples' money bag, was actually a thief.

Because you see, ultimately, if this world is your real love, then you will steal. You will cheat. And you'll do it even to those who love you for your own selfish gain. Isn't that right?

from your friends, from your employer, even cheat from your own husband or your own wife. And you'll even do it to Jesus.

If what you'd hope to get out of Jesus doesn't meet your expectations. See, what Judas' story tells us is that it's possible to follow Jesus and to be around Jesus, apparently to be well in with Jesus and all his people.

[24 : 41] But actually, whether you're conscious of it or not, actually, you're only in it because you have worldly ambition for what you want out of Jesus in this world's terms.

And if that's so, in the end, when your ambitions are not met, you will very likely abandon him and betray him. You're probably thinking, I could never do that.

I would never do that. But that's what the disciples said, too, wasn't it, in verse 35? Even if it means death, Jesus, we will never deny you. But they did, every single one of them.

No follower of Jesus ever thinks that they'll end up as a betrayer, do they? But you see, friends, no disaster like this ever comes right out of the blue, either. No, it's the final visible fruit in action of an attitude of heart that has grown up and festered for a long, long time.

An attitude that has denied the cross as a thing of beauty and resented and resisted the servant way of the cross as a waste, as a robbery, as something that denies you the ambitions and the hopes and the desires that you have had in this world.

[25 : 59] But at last, it comes out into the open in an act of betrayal that betrays the Lord Jesus. And that's true of all betrayal of Jesus, isn't it?

That's what happens when the Christian pastor abandons his wife and family for an adulterous affair or a homosexual relationship. It means, doesn't it, there's been a hidden history of resentment of the demands of the cross of Christ, a resentment about a death to this world's desires and lusts,

a resentment of a surrender for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

That's what happens when a young ministry trainee becomes bitter and cynical and so starts to spread poison and falsehood about his church and its leadership to others. It's because his desires, his ambitions haven't been fulfilled in the way he thought and wanted.

And at heart, although he wanted to really admit it himself, he blames Jesus. Or when any professing Christian gives up the faith and leaves church altogether, there's been a long struggle with the cares of this world, with the deceitfulness of riches that have risen up to choke that devotion to Jesus, just as he spoke about in the parable of the sword.

Or because trouble has come perhaps. And your desires have not been satisfied as you hoped they would be. For the marriage that you wanted.

[27 : 31] Perhaps the children that you wanted. Or the career that you hoped for. Or the good health that you wanted. And in the end, you see, you're offended, you're angered at the way of the cross.

And resentment builds up. And you say, well, why should I waste my life any longer for Jesus? I won't do it any longer. Look what I can get if I trade him in and get my life back again.

That was Judas, wasn't it? A man whose heart was never really set on the things of God, but on the things of man, on this world's treasures. And that attitude, as Jesus had said so plainly to Peter, was a satanic delusion.

In fact, both Luke and John tell us, don't they, that Satan entered into Judas as he betrayed Jesus. And it was a delusion. He got his 30 pieces of silver, but he never got to spend them.

He was utterly deceived. But he was willingly deceived. He willingly rejected Jesus. And he found to his great cost that Jesus was right, that you can't serve God and mammon, this world's gain.

[28 : 42] Ultimately, only one of these will be your true master. Because, as Jesus says, where your real treasure is there, your heart will be also in the end. And Judas' heart was firmly in this world.

And he saw no value in Jesus' message of loss. Which is so foolish to this world. To lose everything for Jesus Christ. So foolish.

And that's why Judas sold Jesus for a trifle, for mere 30 pieces of silver. That's the sum you read about in Zechariah 11. That was paid to God's messenger.

It was a measure of the people's scorn for the message that he brought them. Exodus 21 tells us it was just the price of a mere slave being lost. And you see those allusions to the Old Testament. They just flag out Judas' true valuation of Jesus. Neither this man or his message is of any real value to me anymore, he was saying. I'm cutting my losses.

[29 : 44] I'm quitting and getting out now. And J.C. Rowell is right when he says Matthew here intends Judas as a beacon for the whole church.

What he means, friends, is this. That if you are following Jesus but harboring ambitions in your heart for this world then you need to beware because in the end that is what leads people to betray the Lord Jesus.

Because where your heart, where your treasure is, your real treasure, your heart will surely follow. It's so easy for Jesus to be betrayed like that even by his friends, by people like you and me.

All the disciples, even Judas, had better credentials than all of us sitting in this room. Yet all the disciples left him and fled. And it happens.

It might be like Judas, your bank account that leads you to betray Jesus. Whether it's big or small, you can be in love with money however much or little you have. It might be your desire for reputation in this world like Peter.

[30 : 52] In your profession or with your colleagues or with your friends in society or at school or at university. Or in the sports team that you're part of. It might be your burning desire to make a mark in this world.

Your great ambition in sport or in business or your career, whatever it is, even in the church, even in Christian ministry. That can be a powerful snare. All Jesus' friends can betray him.

And we've got to be honest about that. There's no room for naivety. And we've got to be warned.

Matthew's warning us, don't. Don't you do it. That's what he's urging on us here.

But how, how are we to be faithful to Jesus and not deny him? Well there is a way, says Matthew, not to betray Jesus but to beautify him.

There's a way that does keep you faithful to the Lord and that's why verses 6 to 13 are here right at the heart of this passage. We've seen the horror, haven't we, of the way of betrayal of Judas and the other disciples.

[31 : 59] But now look at Mary here and what a contrast Matthew shows us. This is the way of beauty. It radiates in these verses. It was, by the way, Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha.

We're told that in John's Gospel. But here she's unnamed, this woman who broke the alabaster flask of the finest perfume and poured it over Jesus. And a greater contrast you couldn't imagine, could you?

To the plotting and the hatred of the leaders of Israel and to the treachery and betrayal of Judas in the verses right after. And nor could there be a greater contrast in the response to this woman's act of the disciples here and of Jesus himself.

Do you see verse 8? To them it arouses such indignance. Why this waste? What a waste is what they think. But to Jesus, verse 10, do you see?

She has done a beautiful thing to me. Why is it such a beautiful thing to Jesus? Because, he says, this extravagant gesture of pouring out perhaps the most expensive thing, the most valuable thing that this woman possessed in all the world.

[33 : 15] Because, he says, it was something that she did purely and simply to express her love for Jesus himself. She's done a beautiful thing to me. To me.

So great, so precious was Jesus to her that she joyfully wasted everything she had. She poured it out in love and devotion to him and to him alone.

She did it to him. To show her love for Jesus himself. But verse 12 says, she also did it for him. For his burial.

To anoint him for his coming death. That is, this woman loved and cherished Jesus himself as Savior and Lord.

And, and she embraced and treasured his death on the cross. The very antithesis of Judas who hated Jesus the man and scorned and hated and despised the message of his cross.

[34 : 17] Some scholars want to say that Mary couldn't possibly have any conscious thought of anointing Jesus for burial. I disagree completely. I agree with Bishop Lightfoot who says this, she and she first believed that Christ should die.

Only that can explain the tremendous praise and recognition that Jesus gives her. And there's no reason we should find that hard to believe. After all, it comes straight after. Verse 2, when Jesus is unambiguously talked about his crucifixion.

And just because some disciples were so slow, doesn't mean others couldn't get it. In fact, that's the whole point, isn't it? Matthew's whole message is that the key to real discipleship that doesn't falter, the key to understanding Jesus and his kingdom, the key to the real faithfulness that does not betray Jesus, the key is love.

Love, real love to Jesus himself. Hearts that treasure the Lord Jesus above all other things. That's what leads you to understand his cross.

And that alone is what can lead you to walking in the true way of his cross with Jesus himself, not denying and deserting him. You see, friends, what Matthew's saying to us, he's saying, as long as we share this world's valuation of Jesus, as the disciples did here, we're in danger.

[35 : 44] Because the world can only ever see love and devotion to Jesus as an utter waste. Especially if it means we lose things that this world loves and values.

I've told you before, the words of the professor of medicine, when he heard that I was leaving medicine to go into the ministry, I saw him in the corridor of Aberdeen Royal Affirmary. He said to me three words, what a waste, turned around, walked away and never spoke to me again. And that's repeated over and over and over in so many people's lives, isn't it, in a thousand different forms. The schoolboy who will forgo all sorts of things in order to be at church and to be at Tron Youth because he loves the Lord Jesus Christ.

Or the businessman who forgoes all kinds of luxuries and better houses and all sorts of things so that he can steward his money for the gospel of Christ and his kingdom. Or just for the Christian who passes up doing all sorts of things that they would love to do with their friends and they like doing and are good in themselves because they want to commit to coming into church and cooking a meal for Christianity Explored so people can hear about the gospel of Jesus.

Or a hundred thousand other things. And the world and your friends and your workmates and your family even, perhaps even your spouse looks unmystified, in fact even dismayed and indignant and says, what a waste!

[37 : 03] Why this waste? Look at this Jesus. Isn't that right? And that voice inside us so often says the same thing, doesn't it?

Why this waste? What return am I really getting from this investment in following Christ? And it's so easy to start rationalizing it, isn't it?

Just like the disciples here in verse 9. Oh, this could easily have been spent on the poor, they say. But Jesus just exposes them. They're just virtue signaling, aren't they? And he says to them in verse 11, yes, do that anytime.

The poor are always here. I'm not going to stop you helping the poor. The truth was, of course, they had no interest in the poor. It's easy to rationalize. But the truth is, as long as you are giving to Jesus and following Jesus with secret ambitions for returns in this world's terms, you are in danger. In danger of ending up being a friend that does, in the end, deny and betray and hurt the Lord Jesus. Because, friends, this world and this world's treasures will always, in the end, disappoint.

[38 : 20] And you will be left bitter. And even if you are doing things and serving for the sake of the Lord's people, friends, the Lord's people will disappoint you. And you'll end up bitter because we're all sinners.

We are all disappointers by nature. Even if you're doing it for the church, the church can so easily disappoint you. But only Jesus and giving to him for his sake alone, only that will never, ever disappoint you.

Every other return that you might seek in life, every other ambition, even if it's good in itself, will disappoint often. And when it does, at first, it'll be thoughts that devalue Jesus and you're giving to Jesus.

And the world's treasures will begin, won't they, to glimmer again and start pulling on your heartstrings until at last, in the end, your actions will betray the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's message of Matthew to all of us here this morning. It was disciples, wasn't it, whose hearts begrudged that lavish devotion to Jesus, whose hands later betrayed him, whose legs deserted and ran from him, whose lips denied him.

[39 : 44] That's always the pattern. That's always the progression. Because where your real treasure is, there your heart will be also.

And the rest of you, in the end, when it really matters. So let me ask Matthew's question again. Will your life and mine, will your legacy and mine be told as a story of beauty or betrayal before the angels in heaven?

Matthew's saying to us here, isn't he? Make sure it's the former. Guard your heart. Guard your heart. And you can only do that, he says, by consciously wasting everything you are and have in this world and pouring it out for the Lord Jesus alone.

Anointing him like Mary did, not only as the Lord of this world, but as the real Lord of your heart. And when you do that, make no mistake, the world will constantly say, why this waste?

And it will involve you great pain, even from those who love you dearly and those that you love. And the scorn of that may at times be very, very hard to bear. But friends, listen, Jesus says, always, when you do that and when you determine to be like that, poured out all for him, Jesus says, you have done a beautiful thing to me.

[41 : 19] And only his verdict matters now and for all eternity.

Amen. Let's pray. O God, who has prepared for them that love thee such good things as past man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward thee that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.