

# sermon study guide

March 6/7, 2021

## The Week that Changed the World: The Anointing Ashwin Ramani

### IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. If you had a year's wages to blow on one special gift, what would you buy and for whom?
2. What gift from God are you most thankful for today?

### UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Matthew 26:1-16 and John 12:1-8

3. What was significant about the setting in these verses? Who was the woman in this account and why did she anoint Jesus?
4. Judas was hand-picked by Jesus to be one of his disciples and for three years he lived and served alongside Jesus. Why do you think Judas responded the way he did in Matthew 26:14-16?

### OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. The theme in this passage is extreme devotion or extreme treachery. Imagine a line between these extremes. Where is your life trending to on that scale? Have you any course corrections to make? What are they?
6. Mary sidestepped a number of cultural norms in her devotion to Jesus. What cultural norms might we have to sidestep in our devotion to Jesus? How is our view of the cross central to our response?

#### **For Personal Reflection/Prayer:**

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:18. Pastor Ashwin said: "Embracing the cross is a non-negotiable for any disciple of Jesus. The Christian life is a cross-shaped life." In what ways are you embracing a cross-shaped life?**

### THE WORD (NIV)

#### **Matthew 26:1-16**

When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, <sup>2</sup>"As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified."

<sup>3</sup>Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, <sup>4</sup>and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. <sup>5</sup>"But not during the festival," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."

<sup>6</sup>While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, <sup>7</sup>a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

<sup>8</sup>When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. <sup>9</sup>"This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."

<sup>10</sup>Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>11</sup>The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. <sup>12</sup>When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. <sup>13</sup>Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

<sup>14</sup>Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup>and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup>From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

# sermon study summary

## The Week that Changed the World: The Anointing Ashwin Ramani

The final week of Jesus' life comprises a third of the Gospel narrative, the culmination of three-and-a-half years of ministry with His disciples. That week was not pretty. Judas betrayed Him. The religious leaders plotted His murder. The adoring crowds turned against Him. Peter denied Him. The other eleven abandoned Him. Contrasted with this dark, tumultuous week was one shining example of discipleship by an unlikely individual who anointed Jesus in an act of sacrificial worship, showing an unequalled understanding of His mission. Jesus declared that this story would be told throughout the world. It was that important to Him. This singular event told in Matthew 26:1-16 (also Mark 14:1-11; John 12:1-8) was sandwiched between the scheming of the religious leaders (vv. 3-5) and Judas' betrayal (vv. 14-16).

If you had but one week to live you would be judicious as to your activities. The frivolous, unimportant things would be quickly discarded, and whom you spent your time with carefully chosen. Jesus chose to spend His time with friends in Bethany, in particular Mary, Martha and Lazarus in the home of Simon the Leper (John 12:1-3). Recently, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, and now a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. The custom then was to anoint a guest's head with a few drops of perfumed oil; Mary used half a liter of pure nard! This was an expensive oriental perfume that would cost approximately \$30,000 today. This shocking act of heartfelt devotion was magnified even further by Mary untying her hair in public and wiping Jesus' feet with it – a culturally inappropriate act.

Judas Iscariot strongly objected to Mary's actions (John 12:4-5) and openly criticized her, the rest of the disciples joining in (Matt 26:8-9). Jesus contrasted Judas' counterfeit discipleship with Mary's act of true discipleship. Ultimately, Judas sold out Jesus for a fraction of the cost of Mary's generous sacrifice; he never truly understood Jesus' mission and the cross.

What was significant about Mary's act of devotion? Jesus had just flatly expressed that he was to die within days (Matt 26:1-2) and His disciples just didn't get it. When we previously saw Mary she was sitting, as a disciple, at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:39). Of all of them there, Mary got it, and she responded in profound worship and sacrifice. Jesus got it too (Matt 26:10-12) and knew she was anointing Him for His burial not many days hence. The fragrance of that much perfume would have lingered for days. The joy set before Jesus while enduring the cross (Hebrews 12:2) was the memory of Mary's devotion, and the knowledge that others who understood His worth would give themselves fully to His cause and mission.

Judas had been with Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, for over three years and both witnessed amazing miracles and performed them. He preached the Gospel though never allowed the truth to impact him personally. This is cause for reflection for us. Every person is responsible for their choices. We can immerse ourselves in religious activity and never allow the truth to transform us. We must embrace the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18). Apart from it we cannot understand God's love. When we 'get it' we, like Mary, will give our lives, talents and resources wholeheartedly to Jesus. Our expressions of devotion to Jesus may seem insignificant but in God's eyes they hold great meaning, using them for His purposes and glory. No sacrifice made for Jesus is forgotten.

There is no middle ground. Which way is your life headed – towards God or away from Him? The choice is yours.