

Matthew 26B

- We pick up today in our study of Matthew right where we left off, with Matthew's introduction of Jesus' betrayer, Judas
 - Last week at Simon's house, Matthew described a moment when Mary poured out her vile of perfume on Jesus to anoint Him for burial
 - She made a tremendous sacrifice of what amounted to her life savings to honor Jesus in obedience to the Father's will
 - And I assume she was willing to obey the Spirit's leading at that moment because of what she had experienced earlier with Jesus
 - For example, we remember Mary sat at Jesus' feet to hear Him teach when her sister, Martha, worked away in the kitchen
 - Clearly, Mary understood the significance of Jesus' earthly presence
 - Then just a few days earlier she witnessed Jesus raise her brother, Lazarus, from the dead
 - So obviously she understood Jesus' power over death
 - Moreover, by raising her brother, Lazarus, from the dead, Jesus gave Mary and Martha's family a financial blessing as well
 - In that patriarchal culture, a woman left without a father or husband or brother was vulnerable and a candidate for poverty
 - Having Lazarus restored ensured that Mary and Martha regained the benefit of their brother's protection and provision
 - So Mary also appreciated Jesus' ability to provide for her in miraculous ways
 - All these experiences changed Mary, moving her heart to greater faith and giving her understanding of Jesus' purpose and power in her life
 - Mary recognized that there were things in life more important than her life savings...namely, Jesus' presence in her life
 - Mary knew she could trust Jesus with her life savings, she knew Jesus had given her eternal life

- That fact alone made it possible for Mary to sacrifice anything of this world for Jesus' sake knowing better things are coming
- So seeing this moment with spiritual understanding requires spiritual maturity, which Mary clearly had
 - But as we remember, there were other disciples of Jesus who couldn't see it the same way, specifically Judas
 - Judas suggested that Mary would have done better to sell her perfume and give the money to the poor
 - But John tells us Judas' true motive wasn't so selfless
 - In reality, he frequently stole money from the disciples' money box so he hoped to get his hands on some of that wealth for himself
 - In that exchange, Judas revealed himself to be an unbeliever in two ways
 - First, Judas imagined that we obtain God's favor through doing works of charity and piety...good works in other words
 - Unbelievers don't understand that good works are filthy rags to God and the only way to please God is by accepting Jesus' sacrifice
 - So naturally an unbeliever like Judas would favor selling the perfume for the poor over making it a sacrifice to honor Jesus
 - That's why Jesus responded to Judas in v.11 saying we will always have the poor but Mary would not always have Jesus
 - He meant that if we feel moved to give to the needs of the poor, we will forever have opportunities to make that sacrifice
 - But Mary would not always have this opportunity to make this special sacrifice for her Creator
 - So Mary wisely prioritized dedicating her perfume as a sacrifice to honor Jesus over making it a sacrifice for lesser earthly needs
- Which leads to the second way in which Judas' remarks reveal him to be an unbeliever...he could only understand Jesus' ministry in earthly terms
 - Judas stole from the disciples' money box because for him, earthly gain was the sole attraction to being a disciple of Jesus

- In the beginning, Judas was probably a little star struck and honored to receive Jesus' call to be a disciple
- I also suspect Jesus expected this opportunity might translate into financial opportunity
- But soon it became apparent to Judas that Jesus wasn't into fame and fortune, and neither were His disciples
- So at some point Judas decided to make the best of his situation by helping himself to the money box from time to time
 - At least in that way he figured he could profit from his association with Jesus
 - Since following an itinerant rabbi around the Galilean countryside hadn't exactly turned into a great a career move
- So Judas' reaction to Mary's sacrifice revealed a heart of resentment and greed, which too is a mark of his unbelief
 - Judas lacked the ability to see anything beyond this world, much less to prioritize spiritual things over earthly things
 - And it also explains why he would be willing to betray Jesus to the Jewish leaders
 - His frustration over not gaining more from Jesus' ministry reached a tipping point

[Matt. 26:14](#) Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests [Matt. 26:15](#) and said, "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him.

[Matt. 26:16](#) From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus.

- So the next day on Wednesday, Judas leaves the rest of the disciples at some point and goes to the chief priests with an offer to betray Jesus for money
 - The Greek word used for betray is literally the word deliver, as in deliver over, so Judas asks what will you pay for me to hand over Jesus
 - First, why would the religious authorities be interested in paying anyone to betray Jesus? Why not just go get Jesus?
 - We heard last week how the religious leaders were concerned about how the crowds would react if they seized Jesus

- They needed a way to seize Jesus outside the view of the people
- Preferably, they wanted to take Jesus at night when it would be easier to conceal their actions
- But in an age without instant communication, it was nearly impossible to find someone like Jesus wandering the hills around the city at night
 - Even if they paid someone to follow Jesus and report his position, Jesus could move again before they returned
 - Then the religious leaders would look foolish for having enlisted Roman soldiers for no reason
- So they needed to know Jesus' position with assurance which required insider information
 - They needed someone who knew Jesus' movements and patterns to tell them where to find Him at night
 - And Judas is offering to be that informant for a price, and they agree to 30 pieces of silver
- We know Judas had a greedy heart, as evidenced by his willingness to steal from the disciples, but there's another reason he's acting against Jesus
 - In Luke's account we read this

[Luke 22:2](#) The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people.

[Luke 22:3](#) And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

[Luke 22:4](#) And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them.

[Luke 22:5](#) They were glad and agreed to give him money.

- Now we see the real motivation behind Judas' actions
- No less than Satan himself enters Judas at this moment and propelled Judas to betray Jesus to suit his evil purposes
- So from a human perspective, Judas' betrayal was the result of greed and malice

- But now we know there was also a spiritual actor working behind the scenes with Judas' sin to move him to action
- Judas wasn't aware of Satan's presence or activity I'm sure
- Judas had his own reasons to act, but Satan took advantage of Judas' evil heart leading him to betray Jesus
- Judas is an example of what Paul taught when he said the battles we have in this life are always more than they seem on the surface

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- When we clash with the world, we need to recognize these conflicts are the consequence of a much larger battle taking place outside our view
 - We can't see Satan or his demons, but we can see them working in the lives of unbelievers who come against us
 - Every unbeliever is a potential pawn that the enemy can enlist into his army to oppose God and His people
 - Satan and his demons can plant ideas in their hearts, tempt them into action and even indwell them when needed
- So from a human perspective, when an unbeliever opposes our faith or hates us for preaching Jesus, we may see them as our enemy
 - But Paul reminds us we're actually observing the effect of the enemy working in and through that person to oppose God
 - So as we deal with that person, we need to recognize they are a victim of a greater spiritual force, they are not our enemy
- By the way, the fact that Satan entered Judas and led him to betray Jesus is our best proof to know Judas was an unbeliever
 - We know from John 6 that Jesus said He selected Judas to be the "devil" among the 12 apostles
 - The term "devil" was Jesus' way of calling Judas an agent of the enemy, which means Judas was an unbeliever
 - First, a believer in Jesus as Messiah would never have betrayed Jesus in this way

- Nor would a believer have been available to Satan in the same way, since Satan and his demons can't indwell a believer
- So Jesus had to select an unbeliever to ensure someone would be available to betray Him in this day
- Jesus' choice to include Judas among His twelve is one of my favorite examples of God's sovereignty in all the Bible
 - God controls every single event on earth, and His control is so complete that He even picks His own enemies
 - He chose the man that Satan would use, and ultimately that means God was also directing Satan in this plan
 - Truly, no one put Jesus on that cross...He placed Himself there willingly to obey the Father in the plan of our redemption
- So Judas and his fellow conspirators agree to a price of thirty pieces of silver in exchange for Judas helping these men capture Jesus
 - The price was not arbitrary...it was the religious leaders sending a not-so-subtle message
 - In the law, 30 pieces of silver is the price that must be paid if an animal kills another man's slave
 - So in effect they were assigning Jesus the same value as a dead slave, which was a insult
 - The prophet Zechariah foretold that the Messiah would be betrayed for the same price (Zechariah 11:13)
 - So Judas sells out Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, and to be more specific, Judas was probably bribed to do three things specifically
 - First, Judas told the Jewish authorities where they could find Jesus later that week in Gethsemane
 - All the Gospels record Judas fulfilling this part of his agreement
 - Secondly, we know the Jewish authorities would have needed Judas' help to convince the Romans to send soldiers to arrest Jesus
 - Roman officials didn't dispatch soldiers in the middle of the night simply because a Pharisee showed up asking for it to be done

- The Roman authorities would have required someone to make a formal accusation against Jesus to justify His arrest
- So though the Gospels don't record it, we assume Judas gives a statement to the Romans before the soldiers are dispatched
- Finally, at the Roman trial of Jesus, Judas would likely have been expected to testify against Jesus
 - Here again, there's no record of Judas appearing, and perhaps he doesn't follow through on that part of the arrangement
 - But given the very high price paid to him, it make sense to assume he was expected to do all these things
- So now the stage is set for Jesus' betrayal, and all that remains is for Judas to find the right opportunity to betray Jesus...a moment Jesus selects too
 - And to set the stage for that moment, Matthew now moves us back to a scene with Jesus and His disciples

Matt. 26:17 Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

Matt. 26:18 And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is near; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'""

Matt. 26:19 The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

- As we prepare to study the Last Supper moment between Jesus and His disciples, we need to return to our timeline discussion for a moment
 - Matthew says this scene takes place on the first day of Unleavened Bread, which itself is a confusing reference
 - In the Jewish feast calendar there are two feasts that come one right after another on the calendar
 - The first feast of the year is the feast of Passover, which happens on the 14th of the Jewish month of Nisan (March/April)
 - Remember, the Jewish day starts at sundown, so the Jewish calendar flips over from the 13th to the 14th at sundown

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- Then the very next day, on the 15th of Nisan starts a seven day feast called the Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - Once again, this feast starts at evening following the day of Passover
 - And because this feast followed immediately after the Passover, over time Jews came to see both feasts as a single event
- So by Jesus' day Jews had come to call the entire 8-day period the Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - We can see that here as Matthew says the first day of Unleavened Bread had come, referring to the Passover day
 - Mark gives us confirmation in His Gospel

Mark 14:12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

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- Notice Mark also calls this day the first day of Unleavened Bread
- But then Mark goes on to clarify this was the day the Passover lamb was sacrificed, which means it was the 14th of Nisan
- So it's Wednesday night, after sundown, the start of the 14th of Nisan, and the disciples ask Jesus what were his plans for the Passover meal that evening
 - Their questions gives us opportunity to clarify another Passover practice of that day: the timing of the Passover sacrifice and meal
 - On our timeline from last lesson, we can now add Mary's anointing of Jesus on Tuesday evening (the start of Wednesday)
 - And sometime during Wednesday Judas received 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus
 - Now Mark say we've reached the day the Passover lamb was sacrificed, which means it's Wednesday evening, the start of the 14th
 - In the Law, here's what God told Israel concerning the Passover

Ex. 12:5 'Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

[Ex. 12:6](#) 'You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.

[Ex. 12:7](#) 'Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

[Ex. 12:8](#) 'They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

[Ex. 12:9](#) 'Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails.

[Ex. 12:10](#) 'And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire.

- Each family in Israel was to take an unblemished lamb and kill it at twilight on the 14th of Nisan, which was Wednesday night on this week
 - Twilight refers to the moment two stars are visible in the night sky after sundown
 - So after nightfall on the 14th of Nisan, each family killed its own lamb at its home and roasted and ate the lamb that same night
 - That's the meal the disciples are asking Jesus about, and they expect to eat it with Jesus that night
 - Of course, we know this Passover meal will be a special one, and eventually it will be memorialized as the Last Supper
- But by Jesus' day, rabbis had concluded that the Passover lamb could only be sacrificed in the temple under the supervision of the priests
 - So each family had to bring its Passover lamb to the temple and killed it in the temple court on the day before Passover, the 13th of Nisan
 - The animal's blood was drained into bowls held by priests, who sprinkled the blood on the altar
 - The animals were then skinned, gutted and a portion cut away and burned as a burnt offering on the altar
 - Throughout the process, great care was taken to ensure that no one broke any of the lamb's bones
 - Then the rest of the animal went home with the family to become the meal later after Passover began that night on the 14th of Nisan

- So all these family lambs were sacrificed in the temple during the daytime of the *13th of Nisan*
- Which means none of the Passover lambs were actually killed on the 14th, the day of Passover, as required by God's Law
- So, to ensure that at least one lamb was killed on the actual Passover, the rabbis sacrificed a symbolic lamb during the daytime on the 14th
 - In the same way that the U.S. has a national Christmas tree, Israel had a national sacrificial lamb
 - One lamb was brought into the temple courts on the morning of the 14th and sacrificed at 9:00 AM
 - This lamb satisfied the Passover requirement for a lamb to be sacrificed on the actual day of Passover
- And that's why as Jesus goes to the cross on Thursday morning, He will serve as Israel's national Passover Lamb
 - It's noteworthy that Jesus' betrayal was purchased by the Temple priests with money taken from the Temple treasury
 - This is ironic because temple treasury funds were used for (among other things) purchasing the national Passover lamb
 - So unknowingly, the priests used temple funds to purchase the true national Passover Lamb that year when they bought Jesus
- So as Wednesday comes to an end and everyone else was taking their lambs to the temple to be killed, the disciples ask Jesus how they will celebrate Passover
 - Jesus tells His men to enter Jerusalem looking for a certain man in the city
 - Luke tells us that Jesus specified to look for a man carrying a pitcher of water, which was a very clever sign
 - It would have been unusual to see a man carry a water pot in Jesus' day, because in that day men didn't do domestic chores
 - Only women did the job of carrying water, so this was a clever sign that would catch the disciples' attention
 - Why must Jesus be so mysterious about where to find this room? Why not just tell them plainly? Because Jesus knows His betrayer is present

- Remember, Matthew told us that Judas is now looking for the first opportunity to betray Jesus
- If Judas knew the place that Jesus was planning to eat the Passover, then Judas could alert the authorities to that location
- And that could allow the Romans soldiers the chance to interrupt the meal before Jesus was finished with His disciples
- So Jesus gives instructions to His disciples that offer Judas no clue as to where their final destination will be
- Jesus says this man would lead the disciples to an upper room prepared with a Passover meal waiting for Jesus and His men
 - I wonder what that man was thinking when he prepared this table with no one specifically in mind
 - Did he have his own meal prepared downstairs and then had a thought to prepare a second one upstairs?
 - Did he know Who would eat at that table? Did his wife wonder if he had gone crazy when he set the table?
 - And what did he say to her when she asked him to fetch the water on that day?
 - And what did he think when strange men approached him on the street saying they needed that extra table for their master?
- How many moments of faithful obedience did that man have to experience to be in a position to host the Messiah in his home?
 - Just one, really...he just had to respond to the first leading of the Spirit to set that extra table, and everything else came easier
 - I wonder the conversation he had in his head when the thought first came to him to set a second unneeded Passover table
 - I suspect he told himself it was crazy, foolish and sure to prompt questions he couldn't answer
 - But the Spirit of God made it clear that he should do it, and then the rest was a matter of blind faith
 - Blind faith is accepting the leading of the Spirit without challenge even though it makes no sense to us in the moment

- It's the kind of faith that led Abraham to go to a place I will show, as God said and later to take his son Isaac to be sacrificed
- It's the kind of faith that led Moses to return to Egypt and David to defeat Goliath
- Blind faith is simply trusting God's word even before you have all the answers and acting on that trust and it's a beautiful thing
 - We all aren't Abraham or Noah or David or Moses, and we all certainly don't entertain Jesus for dinner
 - But we do all get opportunity to follow the Spirit's leading as He works through us to accomplish great things
- I believe the Spirit of God works like this constantly, placing opportunities before us to obey Christ
 - And I believe in most cases we aren't given the details of how our obedience will ultimately serve God's purposes in advance
 - In fact, in many cases, we may never know this side of Heaven how God used our obedience to bless someone
 - But we will know one day and there will be blessings for our blind faith and obedience
 - For example, have you ever felt an inexplicable leading to send a check to someone you barely know or maybe someone you don't know at all?
 - I've known people who received a check like that from someone they didn't know
 - And that check came at the very moment they needed it and for the very amount they were lacking
 - And in that moment they told everyone they knew that the Lord had answered their prayers and provided in a miraculous way
 - That person's heart was lifted up and their faith encouraged and their needs met...all because someone acted in blind faith
 - Have you ever felt prompted to walk up to a stranger and tell them you felt God telling you to pray for them?
 - I've had people tell me that someone walked up to pray with them, and from that simple encounter God changed their life

- They had been feeling empty and lost inside when someone approached and offered to pray with them
- And before they even knew what was happening, their heads were bowed and they felt an incredible peace washing over them
- And when it was over, they couldn't stop thinking about Jesus which ultimately led to a profession of faith...blind faith
- Or perhaps you felt the Lord prompting you to start that conversation with your neighbor, to write a note of encouragement to someone you barely know
 - To give a Bible to someone at work, to start a Bible study in your home, to move to another country or plant a church
 - Every time God moves in our lives, He will ask us to take a step of faith and that step is almost always blind faith
 - It's a step that doesn't explain itself at the moment but in time it shows the wisdom and love of God
 - My life and ministry and my wife's life and ministry are nothing if not a testimony to countless steps of blind faith that God has used to His glory
 - And I sometimes wonder how many more I missed for lack of faith
 - I want to be more like that man who set the table on Passover with no one in particular in mind because the Lord asked him
 - I want to be that man – not because I want to show off my exemplary obedience or my mature faith
 - I just long to see Jesus walk through my door and eat at my table
 - In other words, I'm jealous for those moments when God works miracles by even the smallest acts of sacrifice that I might make
 - I want to experience the joy of seeing God blessing others and I want to see my faith grow as I become more dependent on Him
 - And I want you to be jealous for those moments too...we all need a heart prepared and ready to say yes to the Spirit's leading
- We should look forward to the moments God says "go there", "give to that person", "speak to that person", "pray with that person"

- Because in that moment, we become a part of something much bigger than ourselves as we serve the Living God
 - That man, whoever he was, had no idea why he needed to set that extra table that night
 - And had that man decided not to obey, the Lord would have found another place for the Last Supper that night
 - And his life would have gone on uninterrupted and unaware of what he missed that night
- But because he did obey, in a very simple way, he became a part of one of the most important moments in the history of all Creation
 - And perhaps most of all, I love the fact that he is unnamed in this story
 - We serve a God who can do great things through the blind faith of strangers we will not know until we see them in the Kingdom...let's all strive to be that person