

**How's Your Heart?****Matthew 26:1-16**

St. Francis of Assisi once quipped that “what a man is before God, that he is and nothing more.”

As I pondered that statement, I became more acutely aware that no one but God alone knows my heart and the motives of the heart. We can't hide anything from Him.

In Basil, Switzerland there is an annual event much like Mardi Gras where each year the good protestant townspeople hold a festival. They all don masks and go through the city doing things and going places they would never consider doing or going under normal circumstances. The mask, which veils their identity, emboldens them to do these things. One year, the Salvation Army, concerned about the abandonment of moral standards, put up signs all over the city, which read, "God sees behind the mask."

God knows the heart and its motives.

I would like to share a short devotional from Dr. Tim Clinton, founder and president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. You may think it an odd place to begin a message on Palm Sunday but hopefully you will see the connection between this and our passage in **Matthew 26:1-16**. Turn there please.

*Delilah said to him, “How can you say you ‘I love you’ when your heart is not with me?... So Sampson told her all that was in his heart... when Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called the lord of the Philistines... and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair... she said, “The Philistines are upon you, Sampson!” And he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had abandoned him. (Judges 16:15-20 ESV)*

Sampson. Powerful and strong. It is interesting that his strength was not really in his hair. His strength was in his heart. He was a Nazirite. The Hebrew word *nazir* means *consecrated* or *separated*. And it was by choice. His mother Manoah had dedicated him to this Nazirite vow before his birth. However, Hebrew law required that when he was old enough to understand, he recommit his life... permanently... to this vow. His heart belonged solely to his God, until he gave it up to Delilah.

In a similar story, Amaziah served as king in Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles 25:2 records this indictment, “*And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.*” Again, the original Hebrew language gives incredible insight into this verse. The word *perfect* (shalem), denotes *complete... full... finished*. Most of Amaziah's heart was God's. But he had saved out a little portion for himself. In the end, he was defeated and captured by Joash.

Could it be that many of the struggles in our Christian walk can be traced back to the same issue that Sampson and Amaziah had? A heart that is not “perfect” toward God, those tiny areas that we hang onto for ourselves, the hidden parts. It has been said, “You're only as sick as your secrets”. Perhaps that is why the Psalmist David pleaded “*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me.*” Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV) Again in Psalm 19:12 (KJV) “... *cleanse thou me from secret faults.*”

The “grace” piece in all of this is that God will do just that. He will show you the fragment of your heart that is not His. His Light will shine in the dark places of your heart to reveal the “secret place”. The sin that we cover, He will uncover — the sin that we uncover, He will cover. Surrender your whole heart to Him. Without a doubt, it will turn your life around.

In the passage that I have selected for this morning, the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem has already occurred. The event took place a week

before the Passover feast. Because Jerusalem was home to the Temple, Jews from all over would be there to celebrate. It was a town bursting at the seams. Spirits were high. Jewish historian Josephus estimates that over 250,000 lambs were sacrificed during a typical Passover celebration. No fewer than 10 people could eat the sacrificed lamb making the number of people in Jerusalem to be roughly in the neighborhood of two million.

Many of them had participated in the revelry that ushered Jesus into the city, throwing their coats down on the ground or hoisting palm branches shouting Hosannas to God. Confident were they that this was the long anticipated Messiah. Confident were they that He would deliver them from political oppression they had been subjected to for centuries at the hand of one nation or another. This heightened their spirits. At last, the Messiah. Some had witnessed His miracles. Some had heard His teachings. He was a balm to a deep wound. He was a feast to a starving stomach. He was a cool drink of water to parched lips. He was the answer to their prayers.

**In keeping with the segment read from Dr. Tim Clinton, where was their heart? Did it truly belong to God?** We see a number of characters in our passage. The passage reveals their heart for God. Note these three points.

There is a desire that is revealed.  
There is a devotion that is rewarded.  
There is a dowry that is requested.

## **I. THERE IS A DESIRE THAT IS REVEALED – v. 1-5**

Our first main character is the one who is central not just to the Gospels and to the Easter story, but to all of Scripture. Something about Jesus is revealed in every book of the Bible. He is the revelation of

God's redemptive plan for mankind because of our fall recorded in **Genesis 3**. The central figure of Scripture had come to live among men and to pursue the purpose for His coming. His life encapsulated the desire to do the will of the Father culminating in offering His life for the sin of man. From the moment He stepped foot onto the scene of ministry to the context of our passage He had but one goal, one aim, one aspiration. Upon entering the city of Jerusalem He was now just days away from fulfilling His purpose. During the week between the triumphal entry and the Passover He had been active in teaching. With His face resolutely set on Passover and the events that would transpire, He used every opportunity to instruct. In verses 1-2 we see that Jesus shares His plan with His disciples.

### **A. Jesus Shares His Plan – v. 1-2**

There comes a time when the teacher is done teaching. Matthew records that Jesus had finished saying all these things. What things? During the week Jesus is in Jerusalem awaiting the Passover Jesus had been very busy. He purged the Temple of those who had desecrated it by selling animals in it. He taught in the Temple. Here we find that He has finished teaching what has come to be known as the Olivet discourse. It was teaching that Jesus gave specifically to the disciples about end time events. His prophetic word outlined the future of the nation of Israel concluding with a word about the judgment of the nations regarding their treatment of Israel.

When He had finished these sayings, He had one more piece of instruction for them. Jesus moved from a discussion about the future as it related to Israel to the present as it related to Him.

**“As you know, the Passover is two days away – and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”**

This was a prophecy about Himself. Jesus gives a definite date for His crucifixion, something that He had been predicting for six months. In earlier instruction Jesus had told them that He would die, now He is telling them when and how. At the Passover He would be crucified. This was a Tuesday evening and the Passover would begin on Thursday evening.

In a broad scope Luke records the words of Jesus as to His purpose **“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost.”** He temporarily gave up His throne in heaven to become incarnated in the flesh, to become human, to live among us so that in time He would die for us. **Luke 19:10** tells us that His sole desire and purpose was to seek out and save the lost from sin. **Romans 3:23** is explicitly clear that we are all sinners. We have all missed the mark of God’s standard which is perfection or holiness. Consequently we are reminded that the only destiny we have is death as payment for our sin. **Let me ask you this morning, how many sins does it take to be branded a sinner?** Only one. If we ever think that we are good enough for heaven on our own we need only remember that one sin condemns us for the death sentence as we read in **Romans 6:23**. That one sin causes us to miss the mark of God’s standard of perfection. We have all fallen short.

Jesus states that He is the good shepherd and that it is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. **(John 10:11, 15)**

During His time with the disciples Jesus had repeatedly informed them that it was necessary for Him to die and He had told them why. Now He was telling them it would be in two days. This is the answer to those who would question how He would save the lost – He would die for them.

Bible scholar William Hendriksen writes **“Apart from this voluntary sacrifice salvation for sinners would be impossible.”**

In this act that will take place in just two days’ time Jesus demonstrates His heart of obedience to the Father and His love for those who were His enemies. In just two days Jesus would be handed over to be crucified. Understand that God’s redemptive plan centered on the cross.

You need to understand as well, this is according to God’s plan. It was His timetable. But where God has a plan there is always a collision with the enemy between God’s will and man’s will.

Jesus shares His plans.

The religious leaders suggest a plot.

## **B. The Religious Leaders Suggest a Plot – v. 3-5**

The religious leaders are lumped together as the second character. They show the kind of heart they really had for God. They are more concerned about political pull than godly character. They don’t know it but they are a tool of the devil. Satan, through man, is always attempting to overthrow the eternal plan of God.

Angered by His many miracles, His rebuke of their hypocritical piety, parables and seven woes brought against them, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the triumphal entry, and the scourging of the Temple incited them to carry out something they had been thinking for a long time – kill Jesus.

Truly their heart was not with God. Theirs was not a heart after God. They sought the attention of man not the approval of God and Jesus was on a course that would dismantle all they had worked toward accomplishing.

To plot their strategy as to what to do with Jesus they met in the home of Caiaphas, the high priest. According to the Law they could not hold their meeting in the Temple since meetings could not be

conducted there at night. Their discussion did not center on what to do, but rather when to do it. Jesus' death did not originate with this meeting. Jesus said it would be in two days. The religious leaders had other plans about the when. Their plan included a quiet arrest with His execution to take place shortly after the Passover. The delay in the execution was because they feared the people would riot. Remember there were somewhere around two million people, most who thought He was the Messiah, or even just a great prophet and teacher. If anything should happen to Him there would be an uproar. The religious leaders didn't want that for religious reasons because the people wouldn't trust them anymore and they didn't want it for political reasons. They didn't want the Roman government to come down on them.

The wording in the Greek indicates that they had a puzzled state of mind. They had no problem finding Him, just look for the largest crowd. Their problem was how to subtly arrest and kill Him. After all, based on the response at the triumphal entry and His debate that day with them revealed that Jesus had a tremendous following. Based on that alone they concluded that it would be best to wait for a time when the crowds had dispersed and were a more manageable size. Their best scheme was to take Him by trickery.

From the time Jesus was born Satan had incited others to plot the murder of Jesus.

At His birth Herod sought out the Christ child, but an angel warned Joseph in the night to flee.

When He was in Nazareth teaching, the people were incensed at His claim to be God and sought to throw Him off a cliff, but He walked away from them.

In **John 5:18** after the healing of the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda the Jewish leaders sought to kill Him but he escaped.

In **John 7:44-46** the temple guards were sent to arrest Him for healing on the Sabbath.

John the Baptist foretold that Jesus would be a sacrifice when he announced **“behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”**

The religious leaders wanted to take His life, but Jesus said no one would take it from Him, but He would give it freely in His own time and according to His will.

Jesus posed a serious threat to their power and position over the Jewish people so they wanted to kill Him. They had no real heart for God.

Jesus reveals His desire to be the Passover sacrifice. The religious leaders reveal their desire to kill Him.

**There is a desire that is revealed.**

**There is a devotion that is rewarded.**

## **II. THERE IS A DEVOTION THAT IS REWARDED – v. 6-13**

In this section there is an expressed love, an exasperated look, and an explained lesson. Luke is now reflecting on something that occurred earlier in the week. He reflects on the dinner party where Jesus is the guest of honor. Based on verse 2 we assume this party was two days before the Passover. However, when you compare this passage to John 12 which states that it was six days before the Passover you can assume there is either a contradiction or there were two parties. It is the same event; John records it chronologically, Matthew records it as a flash back.

Here we see our next characters in Mary and the disciples.

### **A. There Is An Expressed Love - v. 6-7**

They are in the home of Simon the Leper. This is obviously someone whom Jesus had healed of leprosy since the law forbade anyone with the disease from mingling with others. John tells us that this woman is Mary. She came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume. Elsewhere

we see that it is called Nard. Alabaster was a composite material of lime named after the town in Egypt where this stone was found. It was a vial chiefly used for precious ointments. It was of great value. A typical wage was 1 denarii a day and Mark records that it could have been sold for over a year's wages.

Nard is a plant found in regions of China, Nepal and India and used in making perfume and medicine. It has a very intense aromatic scent.

To put this in perspective, I was curious to find out the cost of the most expensive perfume you can buy. With Mother's Day approaching you may want to start shopping. On a website listing the eight most expensive perfumes in the world it notes that "a great perfume can make all the difference in the world."

A 2oz. bottle of Caron's Poivre will cost \$2,000.  
A 2.5oz. bottle of Ralph Lauren's Perfume Notorious, sold exclusively at Harrod's of London will cost \$3,540.

To resemble the images of luxury and femininity Herme's Perfume 24 Faubourg sells for \$1,500 per ounce.

Clive Christian's Imperial Majesty Perfume of which there were only 20 bottles made, 10 for women and 10 for men, featuring a diamond crusted bottle with an embedded white diamond sells for \$215,000.

Here's my point. Mary's actions reveal a deep devotion to Jesus, not just for raising her brother from the dead, but for all He had done for her. Jesus was worth the best she had to offer. That's how much she loved Jesus. She loved Him with all her heart, mind and soul. If the best you had was a \$215,000 bottle of perfume would you give it to Jesus? I believe Mary would have. She understood the kind of sacrifice that is required from a heart that is truly changed. Mary was at the same time

displaying an act of worship for her Lord and preparing Him for His impending sacrifice. She was not only pouring out her bottle, she was pouring out her heart.

We sing these songs:

*All for Jesus! All for Jesus!*

*All my being's ransomed pow'rs:*

*All my thoughts and words and doings,*

*All my days and all my hours.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*My life, my love I give to Thee,*

*Thou Lamb of God who died for me;*

*O may I ever faithful be,*

*My Savior and my God!*

*O Thou who died on Calvary,*

*To save my soul and make me free;*

*I'll consecrate my life to Thee,*

*My Savior and my God!*

\*\*\*\*\*

*All to Jesus I surrender,*

*All to Him I freely give;*

*I will ever love and trust Him,*

*In His presence daily live.*

*I surrender all,*

*I surrender all,*

*All to Thee, my blessed Savior,*

*I surrender.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Take my silver and my gold –*

*Not a mite would I withhold;*

CLLI 1292471

That was the expression of Mary's heart – full surrender to her Lord.

John MacArthur called it an "example of unselfish, sacrificial adoration."

H.A. Ironside asks "Is Christ Himself so real and precious to us that we are ready to make any sacrifice in order to show our devotion to Him?"

Expressions of true worship stem from a heart of love. It is seen in our actions regardless of what



others think. We don't know whether this act was pre-meditated or spontaneous. All we know is that she was caught up in the moment of love for her Lord and she held nothing back. Her devotion ran deep unlike the fickle crowds who cheered Christ one day and wanted Him crucified the next.

Hers was an expressed love.

There is also an exasperated look.

## B. There Is An Exasperated Look – v. 8-9

In a striking contrast to the act of Mary's worship there is an expression of waste. We find in the other accounts that it was Judas who incited the question for the act done to Jesus by Mary. On the outside the question shows a compassionate heart for the poor, a truly humanitarian gesture, but once again Jesus will reveal the true heart motive. What's interesting is when you consider that in their culture they didn't think it was a waste to use this and other spices to embalm their dead. But now, this act seemed unnecessary, out of place, and even outrageous since Jesus was still alive.

On different occasions Mary had been misunderstood. The neighbors misunderstood her when she came out to meet Jesus days after Lazarus' death.

Martha misunderstood her when she sat at Jesus' feet.

Judas misunderstood her when she anointed Jesus. When we give Jesus first place in everything we will be misunderstood, but often times we are chained to our own materialism and unwilling to give Him our best or our all.

There are many today who have the same cry.

Couldn't our resources be better used by caring for the poor and needy? Let's not exchange our worship for works. Let's not confuse them. Don't misunderstand me. Acts of work can be the result

of worship. We need to be careful not to replace acts of worship with acts of work.

Jesus overheard the conversation. One has to wonder if Mary's worship bubble had been burst by this harshness. We can wonder if her feelings were hurt by their question. We can only speculate about how this may have made her feel. Jesus stepped in with an explained lesson.

## C. There Is An Explained Lesson – v. 10-13

It is at this point that Jesus defends Mary's actions. His question is pointed and direct.

Why are you bothering her?

Why are you troubling her?

Why are you agitating her?

His words are chastising to them but comforting to her.

**"She has done a beautiful thing to me."**

The disciples disapproved. Jesus defended.

The disciples criticized. Jesus commended.

The disciples blamed. Jesus blessed.

The disciples considered it an act of waste. Jesus considered it an act of worship.

The disciples railed against her. Jesus rewarded her.

I believe that Mary understood all along what Jesus had been saying about His sacrifice while the disciples missed it. They were more concerned about their own greatness than God's goodness. I think the Lord is more concerned about our heart of worship than our acts of work. After all, isn't that why we were created, to worship God?

Sometimes we can look at someone's act of worship and look down on them and remark about the waste. We need to take a lesson from Mary and do things that will glorify God. Jesus' response to them was that her act of worship would serve as a memorial to her and a reminder to us that He is to be

worshipped. Her act would be spoken of along with the gospel. Her act was rewarded.

We have one more character to discuss. Jesus and the religious leaders reveal plans and plots. One is God's planning, the other is man's plotting. Mary shows us an expression of her love and devotion by giving the best she had. Her heart wholly loved the Lord. The disciples questioned her motive and considered the act a wasteful gesture. Jesus said we would always have the poor but how necessary it was to worship Him. It's as if Jesus was saying to us

Come, now is the time to worship  
Come, now is the time to give your heart  
Come, just as you are to worship  
Come, just as you are before your God  
CLLI 1292471

Our last character is revealed in the closing verses of this passage. This individual stands in stark contrast to that of Mary.

There is a dowry that is requested.

### III. THERE IS A DOWRY THAT IS REQUESTED – v. 14-16

In these three verses Judas shows a deceitful heart, a deceitful head and a deceitful hand. Notice that Matthew described him as “**one of the twelve.**” You wonder if when Matthew was writing this his mind went back to all the experiences they shared together traveling with the Lord. They saw the same miracles, they heard the same teaching, they shared in the same trials. We can only assume that as Matthew wrote this that he just shook his head that one of their own group had betrayed Jesus. I would almost imagine that he had to set his pen down and let that soak in, his mind lost in the perplexity that one of the twelve specifically chosen by Jesus would end up being a traitor. How that must have torn at his heart. It was unfathomable and inconceivable.

Judas went to the chief priest on his own. They didn't seek him out. They didn't try to infiltrate the ranks and see if there was someone who would crack with a bribe or who in a weak moment was upset with something Jesus did or disillusioned by Jesus who would sell Him out. Judas went on his own initiative. The rebuke was probably the last straw to break the camel's back for him. I don't think he paced up and down the sidewalk in front of the priest's house debating if he should go through with it. His heart had become hard to Christ.

His deceitful heart led him to the home of Caiaphas. His deceitful head led him to bargain for the price of selling Jesus out.

**“What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?”**

What would you do for a million dollars? That question is sometimes asked. Some would commit murder. Some would become a prostitute for a day. Some would cheat on a spouse. The responses vary, but the end result is the same, they're willing to get bought for a price.

Judas had a price. With Jesus as the Messiah he envisioned being the treasurer in Jesus' kingdom that would be a high profile, high paying position. Living with Jesus for the past three years earned a meager living. They didn't have a home base; they relied mostly on the gifts of others. Jesus fed thousands with some fish and bread, but He never conjured up a gourmet meal for them. So occasionally he helped himself to the group kitty. He wasn't getting what he hoped for and he was now willing to deliver Jesus into the hands of his enemies.

Seeing the answer to their dilemma, the priests offered him 30 pieces of silver. We don't know their exact value, but if you go back to the Old Testament in **Exodus 31:32** we find that 30 pieces

of silver was the price a man had to pay another man if his ox gored the other man's slave. That was his price. It was an irrevocable commitment. His heart was deceitful. His head was deceitful and his hands were deceitful. Our passage concludes by stating that from then on he **“watched for an opportunity to hand Him over.”**

I wonder if there are times we may sell Jesus out. We pray for something hoping Jesus will give us what we want and we don't get it or we get something we weren't expecting in answer to a prayer. **Do we turn on Jesus?**

Mary and Judas stand in stark contrast to one another. One loved much, the other hated much. While we didn't talk about the crowds who gathered and shouted hosannas, maybe we're more like them. **Do we give empty platitudes or like Mary do we give heartfelt gratitude?** Or maybe our heart is like the religious leaders, giving the appearance of godliness.

As we consider the passage the greater waste wasn't in the spilled ointment. The greater waste was in the life that spurned the opportunity to trust Christ and instead betrayed Him. Judas had time to repent, but chose not to. **Where is your heart today? Do you need to surrender it today for the first time by asking Jesus to be your Savior?** He came to die for your sin. **Or, are you a Christian, but you realize you need to surrender all your heart to Christ, not all of it belongs to Him?**

Jesus shared that He was to be crucified; the purpose was to save us from our sins. We can either respond in worship as did Mary or we can respond as Judas and turn our backs on Him and consider it a waste. Worship or waste, the choice is yours. **Where is your heart?**