

Journey to the Cross – *Double Denial* – wk 3

Rev. Scott McGinnis - First Presb. Church of Newton, KS - March 22, 2020

John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷ "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.

⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

Matthew 26:14-16

Then one of the Twelve – the one called Judas Iscariot – went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

Have you ever prepared for something and maybe you were nervous or excited and you started preparing really early? Too early, perhaps.

You're getting ready for Prom or your wedding day and you get dressed hours early, only to change out of your dress or tuxedo, because you still have four hours before you need to be ready. Anyone go early to the extra airport?

We see in this story in John 12 two people preparing for a big event in their lives. Actually, as Christians we'd say it is the biggest event of their lives, but neither fully knew what it would be like, at this point.

When John writes this story, his introduction is very short, but without it, we will totally miss the context of what is happening. John writes, "**Six days before the Passover...**"

Passover is a holy day in Israel where the Israelites remember God sparing them His judgment, when they obeyed God and spread the blood of lamb over their door frames. So they sacrificed a lamb and they remember this annually at Passover.

A lamb saved them from being judged for their sins, but then it became an annual holy day. Why? Because the lamb never absolved them of their sin. It would be Jesus who does that.

The Bible calls Jesus the **“Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”** It is Jesus who is the final Passover Lamb.

Knowing this context of Passover, we see that **“six days before...”** two of the Jesus’ followers are preparing in very different ways.

Mary Magdalene approaches Jesus and pours out an expensive perfume on Jesus’ feet as a preparation for His sacrifice. She probably didn’t know anything about crucifixion, but she knew that Jesus was with her and she just had to anoint him. To Mary Jesus was the most important thing in the room and she offered her worship.

Seeing this Judas was indignant. He knew what was valuable to him and he saw it being poured out on Jesus feet and probably on the floor.

⁵ “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.”

When we read Matthew’s account we know Judas had a bargain with the chief priests to turn Jesus over to them for 30 silver coins. Six days before the Passover, and Judas is more concerned about money than the Jesus’ the Passover Lamb. But Jesus replies,

⁷ “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my

burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

Now I think Jesus' response is sometimes troubling. He says we'll always have the poor with us. I mean, shouldn't Jesus show more concerned for the poor than His feet smelling good?

But consider who made the comment to Him, Judas probably wouldn't be happy with the money going to the poor either.

Judas' comment about the poor was probably more of a distraction, than his real concern. In fact, at this point he cared more about the money than Jesus. He could have recognized the tradition of anointing for burial, but you know, I think it's fair to assume Judas didn't really grasp the big picture of what was happening. His sins were about to be forgiven forever by Jesus sacrifice on the Cross.

Jesus wasn't going to let anything stop His plan to be the final Passover Lamb. Judas didn't see God's plan, because he already had his plan: *Get 30 silver coins for betraying Jesus.*

Do you like to make plans and stick to them? Don't worry, I'm not going to compare you to Judas.

Sometimes we get so set on our plan, that we don't notice things that will affect the outcome. The goal we have won't happen anymore, but we're so focused, we don't notice it.

Lent is a time in our year where we can examine where we're at and what's important to God for our lives.

As we approach Easter, I want us to consider where Jesus is in our vision of the future? As we deal with the Covid 19 pandemic, where is Jesus placing a call on your life?

You may remember I've talked about "the other six days," that we're not just Christians on Sundays and it's not just pastors and missionaries that receive a call from God.

We've all received a call to follow Jesus and use our talents to shine God's light into the world.

Where is Jesus calling you to serve Him now, to worship Him, to represent Him, to follow Him?

Let me ask you some questions to help you get at what God may be calling you to. If money was no object, what would you do for the next five or ten years?

What do you love to do? It's possible there's a connection between what you love to do and how God made you and is calling you to live for Him?

While none of us expected the difficulty we're going through now, we can find some hope in knowing that God still has a good plan for us, because there are now new opportunities to think of how we can be a blessing to our family, our neighbors, our church family, and city. I've heard it said, "*When God closes a door, He always opens a window.*" If some of your plans are changing, some really good plans you had, take some time to grieve those losses, then find the open window and look for the good God can and will do in this time. One of our Christian hopes is that good can come from difficulty.

Even in this difficult time, there is something God can use you to do. Maybe this video is evidence of the new God is doing in my life, I hope it is a help to you. I'm looking for the good God wants to do and I'm open to it. As followers of Jesus, we can receive the Holy Spirit's power today to take our next step following Him. Look for the good He's going to do.