

Players in the Drama of the Cross, Part 2

Scripture: Mark 14:3–16

Code: 41-72

Well, let's turn back to the fourteenth chapter of the gospel of Mark, the fourteenth chapter of the gospel of Mark. With the beginning of this chapter, we enter into the events that lead up and include the crucifixion and the resurrection. This, as I said this morning, is the section in Mark's gospel that we would call the Holy of Holies. This is where we go behind the veil, as it were, into the place where the blood is shed and sprinkled. This time symbolically, but genuinely to satisfy God and to provide redemption for all who would ever believe. This part of the life of our Lord, these final hours of His life, really are the Holy of Holies of Scripture. All of the Bible has led up to this point and all redemptive history, beginning in eternity past with God's plan to slay His Son as a Lamb comes to its highpoint, its fruition here. So from chapter 14 on through chapter 15, into chapter 16 is going to occupy our attention and keep it focused on the death and resurrection of Christ, the long-awaited glorious atonement and sacrifice and ransom and redemption provided for sinners.

Now as this scene unfolds, all the way through the Resurrection, the director of the drama is God Himself. And He's really behind the scenes in this unfolding drama. Looking at the stage, you don't see God. Christ is the main character in this drama, obviously. There are a number of bit players. There are walk-ons, you might say. They have a short role to play in the drama, that includes the enemies of Jesus, friends of Jesus, betrayer of Jesus, and followers of Jesus. They all play a minor role orchestrated by the providential sovereign, mighty, purposeful hand of God. God is the unseen power in everything that is going on. He literally controls the behavior of the enemies, the friends, the betrayer and the followers of Jesus to effect exactly what He has planned and purposed to be accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now in our message this morning, we took a look at how God works behind the scenes to accomplish His goal. His goal is that Jesus would die as a sacrificial lamb on Friday at three o'clock on the Passover, exactly at the time when lambs will be slain on that Friday Passover afternoon. He will die when the lambs begin to be slaughtered at three o'clock on Friday and He will be the true Passover Lamb. In fact, by the purpose and plan of God, Christ will die as the sacrificial lamb at precisely the time when His enemies would not want Him to die. They didn't want Him to be a public issue. In verses 1 and 2 of chapter 14, they were meeting, you remember, in the courtyard of Caiaphas. They knew they had to kill Him. Caiaphas said, "You must kill Him and save the nation." And so they began to plot His arrest by stealth and His murder.

But the one thing they did not want was to do it, as verse 2 says, during the Passover, Unleavened Bread festival otherwise there might be a riot of the people who in their estimation were drawn to Jesus with massive attachment. They were afraid of the people, Luke puts it. In spite of their fears, it was God's determination that not only would He die during the eight-day period which started with the Passover, followed by seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread when Jerusalem had been swelled by hundreds of thousands more people. Not only would He die during that festival, but at the most unlikely, and from their viewpoint, inappropriate and threatening moment and that was in the afternoon of Friday when the Passover lambs themselves were being killed and the mass of the population was in and around the very temple area, not far from the hill of crucifixion. But God

schedule was the only schedule that mattered and God's purpose would be unfolded. They would never have planned to have Jesus arrested, tried, crucified and dying on that very Friday. But that was what happened because that was God's plan.

So the leaders, while they play their little petty games, are merely pawns in the purposes of God. They're guilty. They're culpable for their hatred and their rejection. They are also to be held responsible for the murder of the Son of God. They're accountable to God everlastingly for their unbelief. But they do not determine what happens or when it happens. Our Lord will die by the predetermined foreknowledge and purpose of God. He Himself is directing everything by His providence, even though it is invisible to everybody except the Lord Himself.

So we see the invisible hand behind everything. We saw it this morning in looking at the first group of bit players in the drama, His enemies, the Sanhedrin who are described in verses 1 and 2, the Chief Priests and the scribes.

Now we want to move from His enemies to His friends, one in particular...one in particular, a worshiper, verses 3 through 9. "While He was at Bethany at the home of Simon the leper and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard, and she broke the vial and poured it over His head. But some were indignantly remarking to one another, 'Why has this perfume been wasted? For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor.' And they were scolding her. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone, why do you bother her, she's done a good deed to me? For you always have the poor with you and whenever you wish, you can do good to them. But you do not always have Me. She has done what she could. She has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.'"

Matthew records this, Matthew 26, John gives us further detail in John 12. Here is a woman who is a true worshiper of Christ. She is preparing for Christ's death by an act of loving worship intended to anoint Him for His burial, in a sense, the only way she can at the moment, even before His death. And by the way, as a footnote, Luke chapter 7 verses 36 to 50 has a story about another woman in another place on another occasion anointing Jesus' feet. That event occurred in the house, interestingly enough, of a Pharisee also by the name of Simon. This was a sinful woman. The Simon there was a Pharisee. That is a different story on a different occasion.

By the way, there are ten Simons mentioned in the New Testament and twenty more mentioned by Josephus, a very, very common name so that someone was named Simon doesn't necessarily mean the same event. And pouring perfume on people was a routine kind of function. If nothing else, it was a precursor of the modern use of deodorant. It was a common courtesy. It also was a way in which because it was necessary in a world of heat and perspiration without the kind of access of bathing and perfumes that we have today, it was a gesture of kindness, not only to the person but to everybody in proximity to the person. This was commonly done. Perfume was kept around for such purposes.

In this case, it is not a sinful woman. We know who the woman is, though Mark doesn't tell us who the woman is, and Matthew doesn't tell us, John does. John tells us in chapter 12 of his gospel and verse 3 that it is no other than Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. So this is a gesture, not by a sinful woman, i.e. a prostitute, but by a devout woman, Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

Now you notice in verse 3 there's a certain vagueness as this story is told. While He was in Bethany, while He was in Bethany. Well that doesn't tell us anything because He's been in Bethany since when? Do you remember? Saturday, when He arrived to celebrate the Passover, He came a previous Saturday. So since Saturday He has been spending His time in Bethany. He spent Saturday there. He spent Sunday there. And even when He came in to Jerusalem Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, He would go back to Bethany and spend the night. John gives us the identifying day. John 12:1 says, "Six days before the Passover." The Passover is on Friday, that puts it back to Saturday.

So what you have described in verses 3 through 9 is a flashback to Saturday. It takes you back to Saturday, Saturday night. It is out of chronological order but it is an event that speaks to the preparation for the death of Christ. God, we saw, is the main force in the preparation. The enemies of Jesus have their preparation, as they seek a way to arrest Him and kill Him. And here is a worshiper of Jesus who provides preparation for His death and burial in her own way. And so it is the gesture of preparation that causes Mark to fit it in here, even though it occurred six days earlier on Saturday. And that chronology is perfect because that's the day that He came to Bethany.

This occurs, we are told, in verse 3 at the home of Simon the leper. He would be a former leper or he wouldn't be having a dinner party. You do understand that. Lepers were outcasts, right? They were outcasts. They didn't interact with people at all. They were societal rejects, they were put out of society in every way and people kept as far from them as possible, fearing the contagion of such a disease. Likely then, this is a man who has been healed by Jesus and that was something Jesus did all over the land of Israel during His ministry. It is not a stretch to assume that this man named Simon who had been healed by Jesus, planned this meal knowing that Jesus was coming to Bethany to be with His friends and to be there for the Passover to say thanks. It would have been him, Mrs. Simon, if there was such a woman, and all the little Simons. There would have been the Twelve and it would have been Mary, Martha and Lazarus, so anywhere from 15 up, not including his family of 15 and other friends and his family would swell the number.

It is a typical meal in that it is an evening meal, reclining is the posture. You lounge, in a sense, in a reclining position. That means you're going to be there a while, that's how meals were taken in those days. They were really prolonged conversations...prolonged conversations. This is a normal posture for the prolonged conversational meal. This would be the antithesis of drive-through fast food.

At that meal, it says, there came a woman. And as I said, John tells us this is Mary...Mary of the family of Martha and Lazarus. Why does John name her and Matthew and Mark not name her?

Well I don't know if there's any particular reason. The focus is not necessarily on her but it may just be a thought, as I think about it, Matthew and Mark were written very early in the life of the church. Mark may be very early. Matthew may be the earliest. But they're written very early in the 50's and 60's. John's gospel isn't written until the 90's. And maybe Matthew and Mark were just being sensitive not to mention the names to protect the family. John would have no need of protecting the family. They, very likely, were not an issue, maybe even gone 30, 40 years later. But John does give us the name and that's very, very helpful.

It was a common custom at a meal to wash feet. If you were in a reclining position, that would be of

great benefit because as you recline your feet necessarily appear in some way. And so, anointing feet, washing feet, we see that, didn't we, in John 13 where Jesus washed the disciples' feet. So this was a normal thing, even putting perfume on feet was somewhat of a tradition or custom. It was a courtesy. In this case, this act by Mary is way beyond common courtesy, way beyond sort of normal custom because what she does is lavish. She has an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard. Matthew says, "A very precious perfume." This marble bottle typically would have a long neck...a long neck and perhaps some kind of small plug from which small drops of this perfume could be poured out, sprinkled. This kind of bottle would contain this perfume and the perfume might last a long time. It is said here that the value of it was three hundred denarii. That's a year's wages. Can you imagine spending a year's salary on a bottle of perfume? First of all, you say, "Who would do that?" People would do that who needed to do that because even though it cost that much, it could be stretched out and used a very long period of time because a small drop would satisfy the social need. But she has an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard. Nard is a plant from India. Pure nard means its undiluted. Now you ladies know the difference of perfume and cologne and toilet water, or whatever they call that, I don't know. But the perfume is the undiluted, pure form.

By the way, nard is still...nard from India is still used for perfume. She does something that never would be done. She doesn't drop a drop out, she breaks the neck of this vial and it says poured it over His head. And John adds, "Then anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair." She has dumped a year's value of perfume on His head and on His feet. And John adds, this would be obvious, "The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." You can understand that. You spray a little on you and you can smell it through the house. This dousing of a year's worth of perfume all over Jesus would have dominated the environment. This is lavish love. This is profound, sacrificial affection.

The response is interesting. Some were indignant and so they remarked to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted?" You know, Mark is a little vague here, too. He says, "Some were indignantly remarking." Well, the truth is, it was Judas. John tells us it was actually Judas Iscariot. John says in the same account that he gives of this event, John 12:6, it was Judas Iscariot who was intending to betray Him. By the way, even on Saturday he was intending to betray Him. He didn't come up with that in the middle of the week. He was ready to betray Him on Saturday when they arrived. He had been ready a long time before that. It was Judas, according to John's gospel, who said, "Why has this perfume been wasted?" And then some others chimed in. This reveals what motivated Judas...money. "For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor." A year's wages. Wow! What lavish love, supreme act of adoring, generous affection.

You know, she symbolizes all who love the Savior with all their hearts and hold nothing back, doesn't she? Beautiful gesture. She can't just drop a few drops on Jesus, her heart won't restrain her. Her heart loves lavishly. "And they were scolding her," means to be indignant, the verb, to be indignant, an expression of anger. They were angry and the anger was simply picked up off Judas. And they come up with this thing that Judas really was the one who authored it, it could have been given to the poor. All of a sudden they're so concerned about the poor now.

Judas had no real interest in the poor, by the way. John 12:6 says this, "Now he said this not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief and as he had the money box, he used to steal what was in it." Huh, how long had he been doing that? Well, all along...all along he was embezzling the money out of the little bit that this group had, money that was provided

for them by many of the women in the group. He was a thief, he was a devil, Jesus said. And he wanted the money in the box because he stole it. And now, of all times, as he comes to the end of this thing, he wants all the money he can get and he is unmasked. "We could have sold that and put it in the box and I could have stolen it."

Our Lord is kind. He doesn't expose Judas at the moment. Verse 6, "Jesus said, 'Let her alone, why do you bother her? She's done a good deed to Me. She's done excellently. She's done beautifully. This is not a waste. Lavish love on Me is not a waste.'" And then He says this, "For you always have the poor with you and whenever you wish, you can do good to them. But you do not always have Me." You always have the poor with you. That's borrowed, by the way, from Deuteronomy 15:11...Deuteronomy 15:11 says, "You always have the poor of the land."

What's going on here? Just a simple principle, if I might. Adoring worship of Christ is the ultimate priority. Did you get that? Giving to the poor has a place. Deuteronomy 15:11 says, "Give to the poor." You always have the poor of the land and make sure you care for the poor and give to the poor. That's a priority. But the ultimate priority is to worship Christ, isn't it? The ultimate priority is to worship Christ. Care for the poor is important, worship of the Lord is more important. And Jesus wasn't going to be there very long.

We should give for needs. We should minister to the poor. But far more, we should worship our Lord sacrificially. You give to the poor doesn't really have a lasting value. But when you worship the Lord, that has an eternal impact. She had her priorities right. Poor people will always be around, Jesus said, but I will not always be around.

Charity is good. Charity is necessary. Worship is always better. And true worship will lead to charity.

This is a very devoted lady. Do you remember the story in Luke chapter 10 when Jesus went to the house of Mary and Martha? What was Martha doing? Martha was serving, serving, busy, busy, busy. What was Mary doing? Sitting at the feet of Jesus, learning, hanging on every single word He said. She sat at His feet.

Listen, His enemies knew that He said He would die and rise. They knew that. His enemies knew He said He was going to die and rise. He was going to die, be buried, rise from the dead. His enemies knew that. I have to assume that Mary also knew it, understood it and believed it. And she would have good reason to believe it because He had raised her brother from the dead. She just had the recent experience of anointing her brother for his death and burial. And he was raised from the dead by Jesus.

I think Mary really understood things. And that's exactly what Jesus says in verse 8, "She's done what she could, she can't stop My death, but she's anointed Me, My body, beforehand for the burial." Amazing. I think the disciples fought against the idea of Jesus' death, didn't they? But Mary had a firsthand resurrection experience living in her house every single day. She couldn't stop His death but she could show her love in a lavish, lavish anointing for the burial that she knew was coming, because that was the right and proper and dignified and honorable thing, and that was an expression of her love.

She must have thought, "What can I do? What can I do for my Lord from whom I've learned so

much?" By the way, He was in their house a lot and I'm sure she was always sitting and learning. She said, "I could anoint Him," and that's what she did. She knew that He would die but she also believed that He would rise. But she did what she could do. What could she do? Jesus said, "She did what she could do."

"And truly," verse 9 says, "wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her." We're doing it tonight, aren't we? Two thousand years have gone by, the testimony of her adoring, sacrificial, selfless worship, her gesture is a memorial. Her act of grateful love, looking to the cross and the burial and resurrection of Christ, is a lesson of worshiping love that is extravagant, lavish, unselfish, grateful. So against the ugliness of the enemies of Jesus and against the ugliness of the betrayer of Jesus is the beauty of the love of Mary. I think she saw in the eyes of Jesus and heard in the words of Jesus the cross, the shadow of the cross. And her act stands as a tribute to love.

The next person we need to look at, after we have considered the enemies of Jesus and a worshiper of Jesus, is the betrayer, verses 10 and 11. "Then Judas Iscariot who was one of the Twelve went off to the Chief Priest in order to betray Him to them. They were glad when they heard this and promised to give him money. And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time."

Judas is one of the Twelve. Here he comes from behind a curtain, Judas Iscariot. Judas is a form of Judah and the root of that is either Jehovah Leads, or one who is to be praised. He had a very noble name. Iscariot means he's from the village of Kerioth, twenty-three miles south of Jerusalem. He is the only non-Galilean among the Apostles. He joined the group for selfish, proud, materialistic reasons, for goods and glory. And when that Kingdom dream, that dream of goods and glory began to collapse, the uncured malignant cancer in his wretched soul metastasized until it corrupted his brain totally. He wanted out but not without compensation for three wasted years. He wanted a Kingdom, not a cross.

So, he went off to the Chief Priests in order to betray Him to them. After the Saturday supper, I suppose, at Bethany, he went to the Sanhedrin that night and set it up. He knew it all week long, then. Started on Saturday. He had it in his heart the whole week. He knew the plan was in motion because the details had already been established. Jesus said, "I do not speak of all of you, I know the ones I have chosen. But it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled. He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me." Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9, a prophecy concerning Judas. From now on I'm telling you before it comes to pass so that when it occurs you may believe that I am He.

Jesus predicts His own betrayal. The one who eats bread with Him lifts up his heel against Him.

Luke 22:6, by the way, says Judas from this time on began looking for an opportunity to betray the Lord, quote: "In the absence of the crowds...in the absence of the crowds." He too was fearful like the leaders were, that it wouldn't be a good idea to do it in the crowds.

So while Jesus is going through the week, Judas is looking for the best way to hand Him over to the Sanhedrin for money, a deal already done. And Matthew 26:15 says, "He agreed to do it for 30 pieces of silver...30 pieces of silver," according to Exodus 21:32, that's the price of a slave. The prophet Zechariah acted out a drama in Zechariah 11 that depicts this transaction and even refers to the 30 pieces of silver.

So behind everything is the plan of God. And Judas knew when everything was going the direction he didn't want it to go that he just wanted to get as much money as he could possibly get and run. He knew that when Jesus was arrested, the disciples would be in disarray and chaos and he would have the money and he would disappear while the rest scattered in fear.

So, for one whole week, he looked for his moment. Much to the pleasure of the Sanhedrin, verse 11, they were glad when they heard this and promised to give him money. They began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time.

By the way, Judas didn't operate alone. Luke 22:3 says, "Then Satan entered Judas." Not just demon possessed, Satan possessed. "Satan was moving on him." John 13 verse 27 says, "Satan went inside." Satan operated through Judas, the unregenerate, unbelieving, greedy man. Satan fully possesses Judas.

What is Satan trying to accomplish? What was he trying to get done here? What's he after? Some people have said, "Well, you know, Satan wants to kill Jesus." Really. That's the opposite of what he wanted to do. He didn't want to kill Jesus. Satan didn't want to put Jesus on the cross because Satan knew what the cross meant. He was not seeking Christ's crucifixion. Do you remember back in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus said, "I'm going to die." And Peter says, "No, no, Lord, You're not going to die." And Jesus says to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan." Satan wanted to keep Christ from the cross. Keep Christ from the cross. Halt the plan of God.

Did he know that he was going to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world? Of course. Did he understand all the Old Testament prophecies? Perfectly well. Did he understand all the Levitical sacrifices point to the death of the one sacrifice, the Son of God? Did he know he came to save His people from their sins? Did he know the shadow of the cross was over His entire life? Of course. Did he know that that was the satisfying atonement that God had planned? Yes. Did he know that if Jesus died on that cross, his Kingdom and dominion would be forever destroyed? Yes. It was God who wanted Jesus dead. It was Satan who wanted to stop it.

Then the question is, Why does he move on Judas to betray Jesus? The answer is pretty simple. If he can get Judas to betray Jesus and he can get the Sanhedrin to move fast and arrest Jesus, the crowd will rise up and stop the crucifixion. That's what Judas feared. That's what the leaders feared. That's what Satan wanted. He had no desire to see Jesus on the cross.

I don't think...I don't know what Satan thinks, I'm not particularly interested other than to speculate from the strategy. It seems to me that Satan was moving Judas to betray Jesus to start a riot. And the people would prevent the murder of Jesus. He's against the cross. He wants to create the scenario which will halt the direction of Christ to the cross. So he moves into Judas.

The saddest thing about Judas, by the way, verse 10, who was one of the Twelve. Is that not sad? Twenty-four/seven with Jesus for three years and he turned out like this. The most heinous crime committed by man with the greatest privilege and opportunity that anyone could ever have, walking and talking with the living God every day, living in His glorious, holy, pure presence, experiencing His truth and beauty and power and wisdom and fellowship. And he violated it monstrously. Judas makes Faust look like a children's bedtime story.

The sin of Judas has no equal. But the closest parallel to the sin of Judas is the sin of Adam because Adam walked and talked with God. The two are easily the most heinous crimes ever committed. So once Satan moved in, Judas moved on the plan.

There's other elements to this as you study the gospels, other details that come in to play. But it's so hard to imagine a betrayer among the Twelve. But in spite of that, God was in complete control. The betrayer was fulfilling Scripture. Jesus even says in the gospel of John, "I've not lost any of you except that son of perdition, that betrayer that Scripture might be fulfilled." Greatest illustration of wasted opportunity, Judas plays a role. The betrayal happens at a time when Judas didn't want it to happen, at a time when the rulers didn't want it to happen. But I think at a time when Satan did want it to happen, potentiating a riot and they all underestimated the fickleness of the crowd.

Finally, one more...one more group take the stage. We're going to look at this in the next few minutes, verses 12 to 16, and this would be the followers. We've seen the enemies, we've seen the friends, the betrayer and the followers, the disciples.

"On the first day of Unleavened Bread when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples," that would be the first day meaning Passover which was really kind of synonymous with the feast that followed, "His disciples said to Him, 'Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?'" Where do You want us to have this? They're, you know, they all are without a home. Where do we do this?

The Lord has a plan. There has to be a Passover on Thursday night, the Lord knows that. Jerusalem is crowded. They need a private room where twelve of them, plus Jesus, can go. I think this is something Judas excitedly anticipated because this would be a perfect place to have Jesus arrested. Why? It's at night, private room, only the twelve...plus Jesus. No one in the streets late that night. The fixed, specific place, a location, easy to tell the leaders, easy to let them in and easy for Judas to get his cash.

Our Lord knows Judas' thoughts. So verse 12, they asked the question, "Where are we going to have this?" Judas is listening, I'm sure. Once he knows where they're going to have it, that's it. That's just too good to pass up. He wouldn't know what the future is and he wants the money and he wants it now because he wants out fast. Though he had fear of the crowd, this was a way to waylay that fear, do it at night, do it in a private room.

Our Lord knows this so He sent two of His disciples, this is Peter and John, by the way, two of them and said to them, "Go into the city and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water, follow him."

Now that's pretty sneaky. First of all, carrying a pitcher of water was women's work. So to find a man carrying a pitcher of water would be rather unusual and that's what they needed, they needed a sign and a signal that was unusual, go and find a man carrying a pitcher of water. He sends His two most infinite(?) confidants, Peter and John and this is very, very important. He must have the Passover with His disciples. Why? Because He must transform the Passover into the Lord's table. Furthermore, He has a lot of intimate teaching that He needs to do with them and all of it is recorded in John 13 to 17. He must die, listen, Friday, around three o'clock when the Passover lambs are being slaughtered, but He must also celebrate the Passover with His disciples so that He can give

them final instruction, His last will and testament, if you will, and so that He can institute His table, playing off the Passover. And it has been suggested that He must also fulfill all righteousness and therefore He must celebrate the Passover commanded by God because it hasn't been negated and it won't be negated until this Passover is finished. For that to happen, He must not be arrested that night. He can't be arrested until afterwards.

So this is how He did it. "He sent two of His disciples and said, 'Go into the city and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water, follow him.'" Just go where he goes. And that's exactly what they did. Wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, "The teacher says where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples."

What does that tell you? It tells you that the man was familiar with Jesus, the teacher. They don't even say the word Jesus in case somebody is listening. They don't want anybody to know where this is going to be. You just follow the man with a pitcher on his head. This tells us that our Lord had prearranged this, either actually, or supernaturally. He says, "Follow the man and when you get to the house, the owner of the house, say, 'The Teacher says, where is My guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'"

Now this is a believer, the Teacher, *ha didaskalos*, the teacher. It has to have been someone who knew Him, loved Him, believed in Him. So go find Mr. So-and-so, follow him. Verse 15, "And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. Prepare for us there."

Why all the secrecy? Why all the mystery? Why all the intrigue? Why not just say, "Hey guys, we're all going to meet over on sixth street and such time, it's easily recognizable, the address number is so-and-so and we're all going to be there." Can't do that. Why? Because Judas will know and Judas is hungry for the money even though he's trying to avoid the crowds, he's not going to postpone this any longer than he has to, he just wants the money. He wants it fast. This is perfect, a perfect place away from the crowd and the leaders can capture Jesus who will be alone with His helpless disciples. Jesus cannot let that happen...cannot let it happen. And so that's why there's all the intrigue.

And by the way, the disciples went out and came to the city. Just a footnote, apparently Peter and John never came back. On this Thursday, this is Thursday, they went, followed the man, got to the house, were shown the room and they made the preparation so that the rest of the disciples went out from where they were, came to the city, probably back in Bethany where they've been every night, and found it just as He had told them and they prepared the Passover.

They didn't know where they were going until they got there. And by the time they got there, listen, Judas couldn't leave. He couldn't go and report where they were or he would have been revealed. The Lord covers every single detail because of the urgency and importance of His time with His own.

There is a very interesting footnote, and I'm not going to drag it out cause it's a little bit of scholarly work. There actually were two different evenings when the Passover was celebrated. I'll just leave it at this. The northern people in Galilee celebrated it on Thursday evening while the Judeans, the Sadducees and the people in the south celebrated it on Friday evening. This is perfect, so that Jesus could celebrate the Passover with His friends in Galilee when they celebrated it on Thursday and still die as the Passover lamb on Friday at the time when the southern Judeans were slaughtering their

lambs for their Passover. So there are actually two times; on Thursday for those in the north, and on Friday for those in the south. And that's an important reckoning because there are texts in John's gospel, in particular, that make it necessary to understand that.

It's an absolutely astounding array of persons that are all moving around in the scene, right? All these people doing what they're doing, and our Lord moving inexorably to the cross as God directs everything. Maybe in summation we could say He borrowed human life for 33 years. He was born in a borrowed manger. He lived in borrowed houses all through His ministry. He entered Jerusalem on a borrowed animal. Borrowed lodgings from friends in Bethany. Borrowed a room for Passover, borrowed a Roman cross for a few hours and borrowed a grave while He actually owned everything. That's His condescension, isn't it?

Father, we thank You for the Word, how refreshing and how enriching it is when people come together seemingly at random to do what they want to do, You powerfully orchestrate everything for Your own purposes. Everybody, all of us on the stage of life, playing out what we think are our own little dramas are functioning inside a great sovereign and supernatural plan to accomplish Your purpose and Your will. We see the almighty hand of divine providence in the scenes, even in the preparation for the death of the Savior so that all would be according to Your perfect plan. This is wondrous for us. This speaks of the divine authorship of Scripture as well as the divine hand in every event in history, especially this one. How encouraging it is, Lord, again we see the truthfulness of Your Word. What a gift is the truth. We thank You for Your precious Word, even in that passage which has been opened for us tonight and we look forward with eagerness to what lies ahead thankfully in Christ's name. Amen.

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