

Ministry of Grace Church

Matthew 26 – Part 1

Preface:

In the previous chapter, Matthew told us about the Olivet Discourse in which Jesus taught the parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents. We learned that we need to be prepared for Jesus' return at the rapture and that we need to be busy using the gifts He has given us to build up the church until He comes. Matthew then told us about the Sheep and Goat Judgment where the non-Jewish survivors of the Tribulation will be judged. Those who are faithful believers during that terrible time of testing, those who protect and care for the Jewish believers, will be ushered into the Millennial Kingdom.

That Olivet Discourse was the last of Jesus' teaching during His earthly ministry. In this chapter we will now see Jesus turning His focus to the cross. Meanwhile, the religious leaders (the chief priests and the elders) have become even more determined to have Jesus killed to get Him out of their way.

The Plot to Kill Jesus

Matthew 26:1-5

¹When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, ²“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” ³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. ⁵But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”

Mark 14:1-2 – ¹It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, ²for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

Luke 22:1-2 – ¹It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, ²for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

John 11:45-57 – ⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ⁴⁶but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” ⁴⁹But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” ⁵¹He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵²and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. ⁵⁴Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. ⁵⁵Now

the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?” ⁵⁷Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

Notes:

This is now the fourth time that Jesus has told His disciples that He will be surrendered up to the authorities and that He will be killed. This time He even specifies that He will be crucified. And yet – in spite of His repeated announcements, it appears that none of His disciples truly believed it. Its likely that the disciples were all focused on the Passover celebration that was at hand. A time of remembering what God did to rescue the Jews from slavery in Egypt.

In the midst of all this, let’s take a minute to look at how amazing God’s sovereignty is. Jesus is the Lamb of God, the Passover Lamb. In order to completely fulfill all that has been written about the Passover Lamb, he will have to be killed before sundown on the day before the Passover. He has already fulfilled the requirements of being brought in on the 10th of Nissan and has passed the external (religious) inspection by the religious leaders (see Matthew chapter 22). But in order for Him to be the Passover Lamb, He will have to be taken by the religious leaders and sacrificed on the specific day, the fourteenth of Nisan, and at a specific hour, 3:00 PM, which seems unlikely given all that’s going on.

We see here in verse five that the religious leaders were assembled at the palace of the High Priest, Caiaphas. (Slide 2A) They didn’t want to arrest Jesus during the feast because they were afraid that it would stir-up the people so much that they might not be able to kill Him as they wanted. (Slide 2B) So, God had to do some working in their hearts to change their minds. What could possibly make them go against their own wishes and kill Him before their plan called for. Before we get to that, however, let’s take a look at what happened a few days earlier ...

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

Matthew 26:6-13

⁶Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, ⁷a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. ⁸And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? ⁹For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.” ¹⁰But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. ¹²In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. ¹³Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

Mark 14:3-9 – ³And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. ⁴There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my

body beforehand for burial. ⁹And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

Luke 7:36-50 – ³⁶One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. ³⁷And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.” ⁴¹“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” ⁴³Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.

John 12:1-8 – ¹Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. ³Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵“Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” ⁶He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

Notes:

We have noticed before that Matthew does not follow a strict chronology in his description of the life and ministry of Jesus. In **Matthew 26:2**, Jesus told His disciples that the Passover was in two days. However, in John's gospel account, as he describes this dinner in Bethany, he says that it was six days before the Passover. So, we have to skip backwards in time a few days. John also gives details that Matthew leaves out. Here's what John says:

Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. (**John 12:1-3**)

In Matthew's gospel account, we are told that this dinner took place at the home of Simon the leper. (**Slide 3A**) Wait a minute! What did that say? The man who owned the house where this dinner took place was named Simon. That's not so startling, but he is called Simon “the leper”! If he was a leper, he couldn't have been with people, because lepers were required to keep their distance from everyone. Some sources say that lepers had to maintain a social distance of 40 yards (and we think our current social distancing is bad)! Maybe Matthew means that they ate dinner at Simon's house but he wasn't there. However, if we look at Luke's account, that doesn't seem to be the case.

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. (Luke 7:36)

Now we see that Simon was a Pharisee and he invited Jesus to eat *with him* at his house. What we can conclude from this is that Simon must have previously been healed of his leprosy. And, we have to assume that Jesus was the one who healed him. Luke also tells us that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were there at the dinner. That would seem to indicate that the two families were acquainted with each other, perhaps because of the miracles performed for each family and both living in Bethany. Luke also tells us that it was Mary who anointed Jesus with the expensive ointment. Matthew tells us that she anointed His head, but John says that she anointed His feet and wiped them with her hair. Apparently, she anointed both His head and His feet.

Judas, being the treasurer of the group and a thief at heart, objected to this act of love because he was focused on the financial aspect of what Mary did. This was expensive ointment! It cost a year's wages. Today, its value might be equivalent to \$50,000! Oh, how Judas could have used that money. But, Mary was not thinking of the cost, she was thinking about the fact that Jesus was about to die. Apparently, she was the only one in Jesus' inner circle who actually believed Jesus when he told them that He was about to die. Add to that the fact that here in Matthew's gospel account we are told that Judas was not the only one who objected to this "waste." Matthew tells us:

And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste?"

Poor misunderstood Mary. She knew her place and that's where we always seem to find her, at the feet of Jesus. Remember, earlier when Jesus was teaching at their house, Mary was at Jesus' feet (Slide 3B) listening:

And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. (Luke 10:39)

Martha didn't understand Mary's devotion to Jesus' teaching and complained to Jesus about it. But Jesus, seeing her heart, commended her for it.

And, when Lazarus died (the first time) remember what Mary did? When Jesus had finally come to raise Lazarus, Mary ran out to meet Him and *fell at His feet*. That was Mary's favorite place.

When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (John 11:31-32)

Mary was there at Jesus feet because she believed that Jesus could have prevented her brother from dying. But when she ran out to meet Him, the people with her misunderstood her intentions, believing that she was going out to the tomb to mourn. Again, Mary was a misunderstood woman.

Now, in the house of the Pharisee, Simon the leper, as she was anointing Jesus for his burial, being the only one present who understood that Jesus really was going to die, she was misunderstood again! And, criticized again, for wasting money. Instead, they should have commended her for her noble act. Mary had a sincere love for and devotion to Jesus that nobody except Jesus recognized. But, Jesus did recognize it, and memorialized her for it.

It's no wonder that Jesus had a special place in His heart for Lazarus' two sisters. Martha had the gifts of helps and hospitality and she loved to use them. She loved to serve. And Mary truly loved Jesus and His teaching. She believed in Him in a way that His closest disciples did not understand. They would only understand, and truly believe, after His resurrection.

Judas to Betray Jesus

Matthew 26:14-16

¹⁴Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Mark 14:10-11 – ¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Luke 22:3-6 – ³Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

Notes:

What was it that caused Judas to go to the Chief Priests at this point in time? It was God's sovereignty at work. Was it perhaps because of Jesus' rebuke?

But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.

According to Matthew's gospel account, it was not just Judas who objected to the “waste” of the ointment. However, he was probably the one who objected initially. The others just seemed to join in on his criticism. Nonetheless, Judas would probably have felt the sting of this rebuke more than the others. I'm pretty sure that he wanted to “get back” at Jesus for so publicly criticizing him. And, since he was being denied access to the money that would have been brought in if the ointment had been sold, he may have seen here an opportunity to get something out of it anyway. Besides, he, like everyone else, had wanted a Messiah who would fight the Romans, and Jesus was clearly not going to do that. This was his opportunity and he was going to make the most of it ... for himself. Then, according to Luke's gospel account, Judas was possessed by the Devil and ran off to see the chief priests and the elders.

He agreed to thirty pieces of silver, which was the normal price to purchase a common slave in the slave markets. In today's money, it may have been equivalent to about \$4,000. And, he didn't have to commit any act of violence to earn the money. All he had to do was to lead the authorities to Jesus.

One has to wonder how Judas could have spent three years with Jesus, listening to His teaching, watching Him perform miracles, and seeing His manifestations of love and compassion, and then betray him. Obviously, he didn't expect that they would actually kill him.

Preparing The Passover

Matthew 26:17-19

¹⁷Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?” ¹⁸He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” ¹⁹And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

Mark 14:12-16 – ¹²And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” ¹³And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, ¹⁴and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” ¹⁵And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.” ¹⁶And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Luke 22:7-13 – ⁷Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.” ⁹They said to him, “Where will you have us prepare it?” ¹⁰He said to them, “Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters ¹¹and tell the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” ¹²And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there.” ¹³And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Notes:

To those of us who like to plan ahead and not leave anything to “chance,” it might seem that Jesus was being careless about preparations for the Passover meal. After all, Jerusalem was bursting at the seams with people and finding an empty room large enough for him and his disciples would have been difficult. However, Jesus knew ahead of time where they would be dining and simply informed his disciples how to find the upper room. Coming from anyone else, His instructions might have seemed a little far-fetched. However, Peter and John already knew that Jesus was the Messiah and had seen Him do many inexplicable things, so this would not have been all that unusual to them.

The man carrying the water, which incidentally, was normally a woman’s task, apparently knew Jesus and had heard His teaching. Peter and John were simply to tell him that “the teacher” said that He and His disciples would keep the Passover at this man’s house. He didn’t even question the request and immediately showed them the room.

The Betrayer Identified

Matthew 26:20-25

²⁰When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. ²¹And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” ²²And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?” ²³He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. ²⁴The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.” ²⁵Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said so.”

Mark 14:17-21 – ¹⁷And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” ¹⁹They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, “Is it I?” ²⁰He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. ²¹For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”

John 13:21-30 – ²¹After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” ²²The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. ²³One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, ²⁴so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” ²⁶Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” ²⁸Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

Notes:

I have often wondered why the other 11 disciples did not react when Jesus told Judas that he was the betrayer. Well, let's back up just a little bit and piece together what transpired that evening, so we can all understand. The 12 disciples were reclining with Jesus at the table. (Slide 4A) They did not sit at the table as we do today (even though the famous Leonardo DaVinci painting shows them sitting). They actually lay on their left side with their head nearest the table and ate with the right hand. John was in front of Jesus (to the right of Him) with his head very close to Jesus. Judas, apparently was directly behind Jesus (to the left of Him).

Jesus said to the twelve, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” Then, one-by-one they all said, “Is it I, Lord?” (Slide 5A) Jesus told them it is the one who has dipped his hand in the dish with Him. The problem is that they all had dipped their hand in the dish because of the traditions of the Passover supper. Then, according to John's gospel account, Peter motioned to John to ask Jesus. And, John was very close to Him, in fact, John's gospel says that he was leaning on Jesus' chest. So, when John asked Him and Jesus responded, nobody heard their conversation. Jesus told John that it was the person to whom He was about to give the morsel of bread.

It appears that at this point Judas also asked Jesus if he was the one. Notice, however, that Judas did not refer to Jesus as “Lord.” Instead, he called Him “Rabbi.” (Slide 5B) When Judas said this, Jesus turned to him and said, “You have said so.” Then Jesus gave the morsel of bread to Judas and told him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” According to John's gospel account, it was at this point that Satan possessed Judas for a second time (Slide 6A) and Judas rose and went out. During this exchange between John, Jesus, and Judas, their conversations could not be heard by the other disciples. The other disciples assumed that Jesus had just sent Judas on an errand.

Take special note of how the disciples each responded when Jesus said that one of them would betray Him. The eleven each said, “Is it I, Lord?” Judas, on the other hand said, “Is it I, Rabbi?” What's the difference?

The Last Supper

Matthew 26:26-30

²⁶Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.” ³⁰And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Mark 14:22-26 – ²²And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” ²³And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” ²⁶And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Luke 22:14-23 – ¹⁴And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” ¹⁹And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. ²¹But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²²For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!” ²³And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

Notes:

In the traditional Passover meal ritual, there are four times when they drink the wine (referred to as the four cups). This new “communion” celebration was instituted between the third and fourth cups. There are a number of traditional elements that are part of the Passover meal. Jesus used only two of them, the bread and the cup, to institute this “new covenant.”

The Passover celebration is a symbol to the Jews to remember what miracles were done for them as God led them out of their bondage in Egypt. It was also to remind them that there would one day be a Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. This communion was given to Jesus’ followers as a memorial for what Jesus was about to do for them and as a reminder that He is coming back to take them home. The Passover celebration was given to ratify the covenant that God made with the Israelites and the communion celebration was given to ratify the new covenant that He made with all who accept the shedding of His blood on the cross as payment for our sins.

There are some (notably Catholics) who believe that the bread and wine actually change into the physical body and blood of the Lord. They believe this because Jesus said, “**This is my body**” and “**this is my blood.**” If, however, Jesus had meant His words to be taken literally, He would not have held up the cup and said, “this is my blood,” because the cup did not change into His blood. (Slide 7A)

Finally, at the end of the communion, Jesus said,

I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom

And, even though it is recorded that Jesus did, in fact, eat food when He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, He did not drink any wine. The next time He will drink will be at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

So What?

For the past seven months we have been looking at the life of Jesus Christ through the eyes of Matthew (or Levi) the former tax collector. We have experienced Jesus' many miracles and His healing of all kinds of disease and demon possessions. Through it all, we have seen Jesus exemplify what He referred to as the two greatest commandments,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”
(Matthew 22:37-40)

In this twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew's gospel account, we are witnessing Jesus' last days before being taken to the cross and sacrificed for the sins of the whole world. In the coming couple of weeks, we will witness the last 24 hours of His earthly life. And we will once again learn of His agony, which He suffered because it was the Father's will.

As we go through these last 24 hours with Him, let's focus ourselves on His two greatest spiritual qualities; His complete submission to doing what His Father asked Him to do, and His complete giving of Himself for the sake of others.

Now What?

At the end of the Passover meal, it was tradition to sing (or recite) Psalms 116 – 118. (Slide 8A)
I'm going to read these to you right now. As I do, consider that these are Messianic Psalms that speak of the suffering of the Christ, of His sacrifice, and of His promise to be by our side throughout this life and into the next. Consider what these words meant to Jesus as He recited them shortly before offering Himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!” Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful. The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. I believed, even when I spoke: “I am greatly afflicted”; I said in my alarm, “All mankind are liars.” What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD, I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed my bonds. I

will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD! (Psalms 116:1-19)

Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD! (Psalms 117:1-2)

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever." Let the house of Aaron say, "His steadfast love endures forever." Let those who fear the LORD say, "His steadfast love endures forever." Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes. All nations surrounded me; in the name of the LORD I cut them off! They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of the LORD I cut them off! They surrounded me like bees; they went out like a fire among thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off! I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the LORD helped me. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the LORD does valiantly, the right hand of the LORD exalts, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!" I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD. The LORD has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD. The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar! You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you. Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!
(Psalms 118:1-29)

Jesus' commitment to the Father was to always do the Father's will and to live His life focused on serving the Father with all His heart, soul, and mind.

If the rapture comes today, when you stand before the Bema Seat Judgment, will you be able to say that you have been focused on serving Him and doing His will? Or, have you been serving yourself and doing whatever you want?

Please! Take some time today and think about this. Who are you living for?

Let's pray.

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