



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dr. Ian Hamilton

Matthew 26: 1-16

Spring 2024

"Because He is Worth It"

TRANSCRIPT

Dan Duncan: Thank you Seth, and good morning. If you were here for the Sunday School class you've heard my introduction to Dr. Hamilton. But if you weren't, it's our privilege to have Dr. Ian Hamilton with us this morning—and we're also pleased to have Dr. Hamilton's wife, Joan, with us also. Ian told me last night that "She is the best part of me." So we're very happy to have both of them with us. And I thought it would be nice of us, rather than have a hot sunny Texas day, we'd give them some Scottish weather *[Laughter]* with clouds and rain—and only at Believer's Chapel.

They live in Inverness, Scotland; and Dr. Hamilton doesn't spend as much time, I'm sure, at home as he would like. He's president of Westminster Presbyterian Theological Seminary in New Castle, England. He's also Adjunct Professor at Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina—as well as a trustee with The Banner of Truth Trust. He's traveled to America many times, (I said 40 times, and he corrected me this morning), it's 77 times and I think he's been to every state in the union except 17?...13. He corrected me again. *[Laughter]*

He's been to Texas at least four times, but this is his first time at Believer's Chapel; and so we are pleased, privileged to have Dr. Ian Hamilton. He told me, just call him, 'Ian', so you can call him, 'Ian'; and it's our privilege to have you here.

Dr. Hamilton: Well the privilege is all mine, I assure you. Please turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 26, and we will read the first 16 verses. The Lord Jesus Christ is heading deliberately, purposefully, inexorably to the cross and we read these words;

26 When 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.”

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.”

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.

Matthew 26: 1-16 (ESV)

Let us pray together.

LORD, You have given us Your Word as a lamp to our feet and light to our path; You've given us Your Word to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. You've given us Your Word, LORD—and even more, You've given us Your Spirit that we may understand the things freely given to us by You. And so we ask, LORD, that the Holy Spirit will minister among us and to us, that He would shine the light of understanding upon Your Word that we may read it, and hear it, and reflect upon it as for what it truly is, the very Word of the living God.

You know every heart, LORD, every burden, every hope, every fear. You know those of us who are sad or even broken hearted. You know those of us who are bewildered and perplexed. You know those of us who face dark providences in our lives. We ask You, LORD, to minister to us Yourself, to be to each and every one of us the God of all grace. And what we ask for ourselves here, we pray for the body of Christ in all the earth, brothers and sisters who today will face hostility, suffering, and even death. We ask, holy, heavenly Father that You will be with them to bless them, to encourage them, to strengthen them; and may their witness confound the devil and his emissaries. May the darkness be punctuated by the light of the Gospel of the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

LORD, come into the darkness of this dying, passing world and cause the Gospel of our Savior, Jesus Christ to be gloriously heralded that multitudes might be brought from darkness to light, from the prospect of hell to the hope of heaven. Meet with us, we pray; bless us, gracious God. Cleanse us from all our sin, we pray. And we ask it in our Savior's name, Amen.

(Message) "He makes the saddest heart to sing", One of the great hymns of Christian hymnology; *(Fairest Lord Jesus)*, and goes back many centuries. I was singing the hymn to myself earlier this week, and it was great to have this in worship this morning.

Well, it really is my privilege, and I don't say this lightly, my pleasure—and it's a joy to be with you here this morning.

When you read the four Gospels, you need to understand that at times they're to be read theologically, and not simply chronologically. The Gospels, as you know, are not mere biographical accounts of the life of our Savior, Jesus Christ. They are deliberately constructed, *theological* accounts of our Lord Jesus Christ. What I mean by that is simply this: That there are places where the Gospel writers bring their material together in a very deliberately, theologically constructed way.

And you find that here in Matthew's account of Jesus' anointing at Bethany, by this unknown woman. The account is sandwiched between the opening verses of the chapter where we read about the chief priests and the elders of the people gathering, plotting together to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill Him. And then, the concluding verses, fourteen through sixteen, we read of Judas Iscariot going to these Jewish religious leaders and offering to deliver up Jesus to them. And Matthew is saying to us, 'Now, do you see the contrast? The Jewish religious leaders and Judas place no value on Jesus—but this woman places all the value that she can muster upon Jesus.'

And I think Matthew is deliberately framing the account to *accent*, to *highlight*, to *underline* the dramatic difference between the way the world looks at Jesus, (the religious world), and the way a true-hearted believer looks at Jesus.

It's very interesting that Matthew, unlike John, (because Matthew's account, probably if not certainly, is the same account that we read of in John chapter 12), that Matthew deliberately does not mention the woman's name. Now we know from John chapter 12, that it's Mary, of 'Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus'. So why doesn't Matthew mention her name?...Because the woman is not the subject of the narrative.

A few years ago, when I was ministering in Cambridge, I had a succession of really outstanding young men who were my assistants. It was just the greatest privilege I had to have these men, who are now, all of them, engaged in pastoral ministry or in theological teaching.

And one of the young men preached a sermon on 'The First Anointing' that we read of in Luke chapter 7, where, 'a sinful woman', (this very 'euphemistic description' of

‘a woman of the night’), clearly, who had come to saving faith in Jesus Christ as the hoped for Messiah of God, comes and pours out this extravagant ointment on the Savior.

And the young man, who was my assistant, preached on the passage...and it was a very fine sermon. And so the following week I met with him. [It was the thing I least enjoyed doing as the senior pastor, was to meet with my assistants, and to reflect with them on their preaching. I'm so aware of the inadequacies that I have personally, but it was something I had to do.] So, I said to my young friend, "That was a very fine sermon," and he relaxed and smiled. He said, "Thank you, Ian." "Well", I said, "you're welcome."

I then said, "Tell me in a sentence what your sermon was about." "Oh," he said, "I can do that. It was about the extravagance of the woman's love to the Savior." I said, "That's exactly what your sermon was. —Now tell me what it should have been."

[Laughter]

And he looked at me, and in an instant he said, "I got it all wrong, didn't I?" I said, "You did." He said, "It's really about the extravagance of the Savior's love to the woman." I said, "Yes, that's what the passage is about."

And here, we misunderstand Matthew if we think that he is supremely holding before us the example of an extravagant, heart devotion to the Savior from this unnamed woman. Now he's doing that, (now don't misunderstand me, and we will touch on that point), but clearly Matthew, in the way he frames this incident, wants us to see that the great issue is not the extravagant devotion of the woman, but the *grace* and *glory* of the One she anoints.

Now the disciples, you'll notice, are indignant. So this translation that I have, "...the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." (vs 8-9). And, humanly speaking, you can understand that. This woman is lavishing on Jesus a vast, probably, (what we can gather), maybe a year's wages salary—and she's expending it on Jesus. And the disciples, (Matthew tells us), they all were indignant.

John tells us specifically, it was Judas; but they're all infected with the same sin of Judas. They did not put on Jesus the value that this unnamed woman put upon Him. And so Jesus rebukes His disciples. He rebukes them. —"Why do you trouble this woman?" Why?! 'For she has done something beautiful...beautiful, to Me.' (vs10)

I love those words.—But they have a double-edged love for me. I love the words because they highlight what the Savior looks for from my life; and from the life of all His redeemed children: That we do something "beautiful" for Him. But it's double-edged in this sense that her extravagant devotion exposes how shallow my own devotion to the Savior is.

So Jesus rebukes them; "In pouring this ointment on My body she has done it to prepare Me for burial." (vs12).

Now Matthew doesn't pause—and the Bible is very frustrating in the way it recounts narratives; you always want to pause and say, 'Now Matthew, can you tell us what she really understood here?' Well, he doesn't tell us because we don't need to know.

But if you go back to John's account, and to the previous chapter, John 11, where the Lord Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, you remember Jesus says to Martha, "Your brother will rise again." (Jn 11:23). And Martha says, 'Well, I know he will rise again; there will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust.' She understands there will be a final resurrection. —She had 'resurrection theology.'

Now we don't know how deep and profound Mary's actions were here; all Jesus says is that, "...she has done it to prepare me for burial." (vs12)—and, "...wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done...", (what this unnamed woman has done), "...will be told in memory of her." (vs13).

How much did she really know? How much did she understand that the death that the Savior was embracing was a sin-atoning death? —We're not told.

How much did she understand that here was, 'The Priest offering up Himself in the place of sinners?!' —We're not told.

What did she understand of 'Atonement Theology'? Well, she was a Jew; she knew that without the shedding of blood there was no forgiveness of sins. —But we're not told, because the great issue is not really, 'How much did she know.' The great issue is: 'Look what she did!'

And the question I want to ask of our text this morning is this: Why did she do that? Why did she take this flask of very expensive ointment, pour it on Jesus' head as a preparation for His burial? —Why? And the answer is simply this: Because she saw, 'He was worth it'... He was worth it!'

I can't remember when I first read this missionary biography of William Borden of Yale. Have any of you read the biography of William Borden of Yale? 'Ah...Good lady, good lady!'

William Borden was a very wealthy young man who had come to saving faith in Jesus Christ while he studied at Yale, (one of the minor universities in the world, at least compared to the UK), *[Laughter]*, and he had a passion from his conversion. He wanted to go to the land of *Burma*, (now *Myanmar*), to be a missionary of the cross.

But he was persuaded to spend a few years traveling throughout the United States encouraging young men in particular to give up their small ambitions and to go out east and preach the gospel of Christ. And so William Borden traveled throughout the United States.

But then the date came when he set sail for Burma. He was full of high hopes—at last what he longed for was coming to pass. And so he sailed off from New York, crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and the first main port of call was Alexandria in Egypt.

But while he was in Alexandria he was struck down with cerebral encephalitis—and he would die in Alexandria. As he lay dying some doctors gathered around his bed, looked at his charts, and one of them said, "What a waste...what a waste."

Absolutely, humanly speaking, what a waste that this young man, full of passion, full of Gospel hope, well, he's never going to see Burma. He's going to die in Alexandria. "What a waste!"

But with the little strength he had, William Borden raised himself a little in his bed and said, "No reserve, no retreat, no regrets."

He would never see Burma. He would die in Egypt... 'what a waste, no reserve, no retreat, no regrets.' Why? ...Because Jesus Christ was worth it.

So I want to develop that a little in the time we have left this morning: Why is He worth it? Why is He worth your and my utmost devotion? Why is He worthy of our *everything* and our *all*? Some of you who are a little older might remember the book by Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*; and I want to suggest there are four reasons 'Why He is worth it.' Number *one*, He is worth it because of who He is.

He is the eternal God the Son, who became flesh for us and for our salvation.

He is the One who created all things with the Father and the Spirit.

He is the One who upholds all things and in Whom all things hold together.

He is the everlasting One.

He is neither beginning of days nor end of life.

All heaven ceaselessly adores Him.

When He left the glory He actually never left the glory, (we might come to that).

He is God made flesh for us, and for our salvation.

Some of you will know the writings of John Owen, the greatest of the Puritan pastor/theologians. In his wonderful work on *The Glory of Christ*, (Volume One of his collected 24 volumes), he asks this question: "What is the glory of our religion?"

How would you answer that? Someone says to you leaving this place this morning, "Now you're a Christian believer, what's the glory of the Christian religion?" I would guess instinctively, if you're anything like me, our answer would be, "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the glory of our religion."

That's not what John Owen says. He says, "The glory of our religion, the sole ground of all our hope for present grace and future glory is *the hypostatic union*—the union in Jesus Christ of God and man.

Now if you were to say, "But, Dr. Owen, didn't Paul say, 'God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ?' Galatians 6:14."

And Owen would say, "Absolutely. Wherein lies the glory of Calvary? In the One who was crucified there. The glory of Calvary, the wonder of Calvary lies in Who it was who offered Himself by the Spirit, unblemished to God. What gave virtue and eternal value to His sacrifice was who He was." —And that's what Owen means: The glory of our religion rests on the hypostatic union.

Who Jesus Christ is, makes Him worthy of everything you are and of everything you have. Your memory text for this week, Romans 12:1, "Therefore I beseech you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable and pleasing to God, which is your reasonable, (*or acceptable, or rational*), worship."

Who He *is* makes Him worthy. He is the One before whom all heaven bows in ceaseless adoration.

But *secondly*, He's worthy because of what He has done. Now, we don't know, as I said, how much Mary understood of the approaching death of Christ, that she had some little sense of the sacrifice that would be offered on that tree, we don't know. But Jesus Christ by His sinless life, and by His sin-atoning death, has won everlasting life for all who believe.

He came into this world, despised and rejected by man. The Lord of Glory despised by the very creatures, that every breath they breathed that cursed Him and spat on Him, He gave to them. Every breath they breathed that caused them to despise and reject Him...He was giving to them. And He took that life and offered it unblemished to God as the propitiation for our sins.

He came, not just to *make* propitiation for sins, He came to be the propitiation for our sins. Jesus Christ *is* the salvation of God. He doesn't give us salvation, He gives us Himself, the Savior. He is worthy, not just because of who He is, but because of what He's done. And that's why, as I was saying earlier today, that in Christian worship we need to be absolutely focused on who God is—and what God has done.

The cross must ever be at the forefront of Christian ministry and Christian worship. Not that we preach the same sermons every week, or give the same studies, because eternity will be too short to plumb the depths—the infinities and the immensities of Calvary. We will always be going about the heavenly glories saying, "I never knew how great it was, how profound it was!" I remember, as a young Christian and someone pointing me in the direction of John Murray's *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. [Has anyone else read *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*? Necessary reading for every Christian; you need to read it. I never knew the Gospel was as profound as it was.] I read it...(now Murray's not the easiest man to read...forget the first chapter, and come back to it at the end)...but oh, my!

But what was it George Herbert, the 17th century metaphysical poet said? "Even eternity's too short to extol Thee"—to praise Him because of what He has done; the penal, substitutionary, atoning sacrifice of the God-man. And He's worthy because in our place and for our sake, He was damned that we might never be damned; He was cursed that we might never be cursed; God laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

But *thirdly* He is worthy because of what He is presently doing. I wonder if you've ever thought much about, not just the *finished* work of Christ, but the *continuing* work of Christ. There is a continuing work of Jesus Christ. What has He been doing, (if we can use spatial language), 'What's He been doing for the last 2000 years?' Sitting back on floaty beds of ease? —No!

You probably know where I'm going now; Hebrews 7:25, Romans 8:34, 'He *ever lives* to make intercession for us.' What is Jesus Christ doing at this very moment?

He's praying for His people; praying that we will be kept and preserved, praying that we will not fall into temptation, praying that the devil will not gain the victory.

"He ever lives."—Think of those words, *ever lives*. 'What are you doing, Jesus?' 'I'm doing what I've been doing for the last 2000 years.' 'But Jesus, do You not take a break?' 'No, My people need My constant prayers.'

Now there is some debate over this; what does that actually mean? And some very fine, godly expositors believe that Christ vocally intercedes for His people.

Well, I take the line that John Owen and John Calvin take, that His intercessions are not vocal; His intercession *is Himself*. As the Father beholds the Son and sees those, "Rich wounds, yet visible above"; (from, *Crown Him with Many Crowns*), the Father sees all that the Son has won for His people. He sees all the blessings that His life, death, and resurrection, and ascension has secured for His people. And the Father, as it were, 'sees and hears' the accomplishments of His people.

And that's His intercession. It's the guarantee that, though we will stumble and fail and fall to our shame, He will not lose one of those for whom He shed His precious blood. Not one. Not one.

So He's worthy of our best and highest because of *who He is*, because of *what He's done*, because of *what He's presently doing*, but *fourthly*, (and finally), because of *what He will yet do*. He will come again, subdue all things to Himself, and make "the new heavens and a new earth" the home of righteousness.

He will make all things new.

He will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

He will make our bodies, our lowly bodies like unto His glorious body.

He will transform everything, in the new heavens and a new earth.

Probably you're very unlike me. I can almost at times get over how little I think about the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe it. With all my heart, I believe that the Word of God plainly teaches it. He will come again in power and in great glory,

with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise. Those who are alive will be caught up together with them in the air, and so we shall be forever with the Lord.

But I need to think more about, 'the coming again of the Savior *to make all things new*. You see, He's not just coming again to perfect redemption and to give us glorified bodies, (which He will do). And He's not just coming again to cast the unbelieving into hell, (which He will do), and gather the righteous, those who have put their trust and hope alone in Him and bring them to glory—this He will do also.

But He's coming again ultimately to make all things *new*...and *then* to do something. What is it He's going to do?

Well, we read about it in 1 Corinthians 15;

"Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection to Him." (verses 24-27a). And, "When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under Him, that God may be all in all." (vs28).

And that doesn't mean that Jesus Christ, the God-man, is less than the Father. — It means that as the covenant head of the new humanity, He will *ever be* our covenant head. He will ever be the One *in* whom and *by* whom we're acceptable to God. He will stand before God as the obedient God-man, who offered the perfect obedience in our place—and for our sake. We don't stop being dependent on Jesus Christ when we get to heaven. The Lamb will be all the glory in heaven.

So how much did Mary understand of all of that? Well, one day you can go and ask her: 'Tell me what you knew, Mary.' I think she'll probably say, 'I didn't know very much, but I knew enough.'

Do you know enough?

Do you know enough?...You see, the Gospel confounds the world—its profound, it's immense —God become man!

You know, people say John 3:16, (the text that the LORD used to bring me to Christ), John 3:16 is beautifully simple. And John 3:16 is one of the most profound, inexplicable texts of the whole Bible: "God" (who is God?), "so loved the world", ('so loved the world?'... what does that mean? The world?!—this dark, dying, rebellious world!), "that He gave", (gave?), "His only begotten Son."

[Now, don't say, "one and only", (don't follow the NIV). It's "*monogenés*" and it means, "only begotten." (All the Greek Fathers taught that).]

The Gospel has a depth beyond fathoming—but... 'What must I do to be saved?' [not take a six month course in systematic theology, (you could do that maybe.)] ... 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you'll be saved.' Is that it!? —That's it.

But that takes you into a new world. For the rest of your life you'll be exploring the immensities and the infinities of the Savior, given by God for the life of the world.

He's worth it,
because of who He is,
because of what He's done,
because of what He's doing,
because of what He will yet do.

And so, with William Borden, may we all be enabled by God's grace to say, 'Come what may, no reserve, no retreat, no regrets.'

Let us pray.

(Closing Prayer) LORD, Your Word is truth, Your Word exposes our hearts, may the Holy Spirit take that Word and cause it to dwell richly within us. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

(End of Audio)