



## **Matthew 26:14–16**

14 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests 15 and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. 16 From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

# Reflection

(Today's reflection is given by Craig Tubman)

What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you? That's the central question in our passage today from Matthew 26. What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you? These are the words of a man who has lost interest in his cause and is looking for better offers.

What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?

Matthew's account of the life of Jesus is coming to a close. The opening words of chapter 26 inform us that the chief priests and teachers of the law are now actively scheming the death of Jesus. It seems

the hatred in their hearts has now taken root in a tangible plan of action and there is nothing more tangible than seeking someone's death.

Fourteen verses into chapter 26 we now hear that the threat is also coming from within Jesus' circle. Nowhere in the accounts of Jesus' life are we given a clear and conclusive motive for Judas' betrayal. But Matthew's placing of it here in chapter 26 is telling. The disciples have just witnessed an event at the house of Simon the Leper where a woman came and poured expensive perfume over Jesus' head.

Matthew records the disciples' outrage at such a waste of costly perfume but Jesus rebukes them, indicating that her's is the right response to both his kingship and

his impending death. Interestingly, it is the apostle John in his account of Jesus' life who recalls that Judas was most outraged at the actions of the woman that day.

In John chapter 12 he writes,

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

Whilst this does not provide a clear motivation, it does give us an indication of Ju-

das' heart. It seems he was always with Jesus but only on his terms. At Simon the Leper's house a beautiful moment has just occurred, a woman who had badly lost her way has seen in Jesus a way forward, a new life. She came to honour him but Judas could only think of the money; the money that he could have skimmed off for himself from that encounter. It appears that Judas' approach to Jesus was, 'What can I get out of this for me?'

Throughout the book of Matthew Jesus has declared the coming of God's kingdom which invades our world and calls us to repent and redefine our view of God, ourselves and our place in his world. Jesus has spoken of a God who is generous and loving with an open invitation into his kingdom through himself. But to become

part of this kingdom involves enthroning a new king in our lives, that is, to see life as a story about Jesus and his work to reunite us and our world to God, rather than seeing life primarily as a story about ourselves.

When I was young, my favourite TV show was the Wonder Years. Set in Middle America it followed the life of Kevin Arnold. A kid growing up through High School with all the ups and downs of navigating family, friends, and of course, falling in love with Winnie Cooper. As I grew up, I liked to think of life as a story all about me. There were plenty of supporting actors, friends, family and teachers but ultimately I was the main character and my life was all about what I could gain for myself.

When I became a Christian this view took a massive hit. I realised that life is about much more than just me. I realised that God has plans for our world which he has begun through his Son Jesus, plans that will continue into eternity. To follow Jesus is to realise that we are in fact supporting actors in his show, as the Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians about Jesus,

‘All things were created by him and for him’.

This shift in understanding and purpose has clearly not occurred in the heart and mind of Judas. It appears that he still understands life to be primarily about himself and what he can gain. Thus at the point of witnessing an apparent waste of perfume on Jesus, he seems to realise that he won't

be gaining anything more than what he already has, and so he leaves the disciples, going to the religious leaders and asking them,

What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?

There is great warning here in Matthew 26 for us and our approach to Jesus. If we see faith in Jesus as primarily a way of furthering our own kingdom then we will ultimately find ourselves walking away from Jesus and asking of our work place, our relationships, and our success: ‘What are you willing to give me, if I give my worship to you’?

But if we come to Jesus with open hearts we will see that our kingdom is not worth



building in comparison to the invite to come and join the work of God's kingdom in this world. The consistent movement in Matthew's gospel of people walking away from Jesus or actively seeking his demise is ultimately a condemnation on those who realise that Jesus' claim on their life is all encompassing and that they do not want such a claim upon them. What they fail to see is that this claim is the gateway into freedom and joy, because it recognises that Jesus is the Son of God, the King of God's kingdom, the creator, redeemer and judge of all. To be on his side, and to see life as ultimately an arena in which we receive good gifts from a loving God rather than an arena in which we seek gain for ourselves, is the shift that all followers of Jesus must experience.

## Think & Pray

Take some time today to consider and pray over the areas of life you may have mistakenly turned into a pursuit of self-gain. Where have you drifted from seeking first the kingdom of God and instead begun to feather the nest of your own kingdom, trying to wear the crown that is only worthy of Jesus' head?

To be part of God's story is the greatest life. You aren't the main character, but you are a loved, valued and transformed character in his eternal plans for this world. It is here in this identity that Jesus promises us joy and meaning both now and into eternity.