

# SPY WEDNESDAY

Holy Wednesday is sometimes called Spy Wednesday because it is the day that Judas Iscariot agreed to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15).

***1 It was two days before the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a cunning way to arrest Jesus and kill him. 2 “Not during the festival,” they said, “so that there won’t be a riot among the people.” 3 While he was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured it on his head. 4 But some were expressing indignation to one another: “Why has this perfume been wasted? 5 For this perfume might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they began to scold her. 6 Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? She has done a noble thing for me. 7 You always have the poor with you, and you can do what is good for them whenever you want, but you do not always have me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body in advance for burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” 10 Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. 11 And when they heard this, they were glad and promised to give him money. So he started looking for a good opportunity to betray him. Mark 14:1-11 (CSB)***

## SECRET PLANS

It’s Wednesday morning. Jesus and the disciples are waking up in the small town of Bethany. But in Jerusalem, the Pharisees and scribes are already stewing about what happened on Tuesday. They had set out to question Jesus and annoy Him with debates, and He ruthlessly refuted every attack that they threw at Him, making the crowds stand in awe of the Messiah.

Who did He think he was? The Pharisees and scribes were the religious elite. People thought that they were the messengers of God. And yet, Jesus’s responses to their questions left them looking like fools! Something had to be done about the rebel from Nazareth. He must be stopped. He must be killed. However, with the way people looked up to Jesus, His arrest and death would throw them into an uproar. They needed to capture and dispose of Him in secret, but how?

## TRUE VALUE

Meanwhile, in Bethany, Jesus and the disciples are relaxing at the house of a man referred to as ‘Simon the leper’ (Mark 14:3), someone that Jesus had probably healed during His ministry. Suddenly, a woman (John’s Gospel identifies her as Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha) comes through the door, carrying a flask of oil. And it was expensive oil at that; most scholars estimate that the oil she was carrying cost about a year’s salary! What was she doing with it? Surely no one would have anticipated what happened next.

The woman breaks open the flask and pours its contents over the head of Jesus. While it was customary to anoint the head of a guest with oil before a meal, it never was with such expensive oil or the entire flask! The disciples’ mouths dropped open in astonishment. What was she doing?! Did she not realize how much that oil was worth?! They could have sold the oil and used it for other things! What a waste!

They looked to Jesus, expecting to see Him rebuke her for such squandering. Instead, however, He blesses her: “She has done a beautiful thing for me... she has anointed my body beforehand for burial” (Mark 14:6-8).

The woman recognized that Jesus was who He claimed to be: the Messiah. She realized that He was truly the promised Savior, the One of immeasurable value. How worthless, then, was her precious oil compared to the Messiah!

## THE SPY IN THEIR MIDST

One particular disciple (Judas Iscariot) could not quite comprehend the wastefulness of the woman. In fact, he was hostile towards it. From Luke and John’s accounts, we know that Satan entered into Judas. Judas chose to betray Jesus for 30 shekels of silver nonetheless (Matthew 26:15). It was the perfect agreement: Judas received his reward, and the Pharisees and scribes found their inside man that would help them get rid of this rebellious teacher.

There are two things that we must learn from the events of Spy Wednesday. For one, we must recognize that Jesus was willing to do anything to accomplish the work of salvation. Since Jesus is God, we know that he was fully aware of both the religious leaders’ murderous plot and Judas’ secret intention to betray Him. Yet, He willingly allowed these things to happen. Why? Because these things were in His plan from the beginning. Jesus was willing to endure the sting of betrayal, the pain of death, and ultimately the full wrath of His Father’s judgment so that we might be saved.

God’s plan may be confusing, difficult to understand, and even painful at times, but rest assured that God is working for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

Do you trust in the sovereignty of our good God?

Secondly, let us realize the true value of the Messiah. Judas and the rest of the disciples misplaced their values at the house of Simon the leper. They saw value in the costly oil rather than the priceless Savior. The woman found the Messiah immeasurably more valuable than the oil, so much so that she used possibly her greatest possession to bless the Lord.

What do you find most valuable in your life? Is it some sort of possession, relationship, or talent?

What in your life is keeping you from valuing Jesus above everything else? Maybe it means completely removing that object so that you can devote your full attention to Christ.

Or, it could mean using our gifts, relationships, possessions and resources to honor God, the same way that the woman used her prized possession to honor Jesus.

As you go throughout the rest of your day, actively seek to value Christ above everything else.