

Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

26:1-13

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

We now approach the closing scene of our Lord Jesus Christ's earthly ministry. Hitherto we have read of his sayings and doings: we are now about to read of his sufferings and death. Hitherto we have seen him as the Great Prophet; we are now about to see him as the great High Priest. It is a portion of Scripture which ought to be read with peculiar reverence and attention. The place we on we stand is holy ground. Here we see how the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head; here we see the great sacrifice to which all the sacrifices of the Old Testament had long pointed; here we see how the blood was shed which "cleanseth from all sin" (1 John 1:8), and the Lamb slain who "taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). We see in the death of Christ the great mystery revealed, how God can be just, and yet justify the ungodly. No wonder that all the four Gospels contain a full account of this wonderful event: on other points in our Lord's history, we often find that when one evangelist speaks the other three are silent; but when we come to the crucifixion, we find it minutely described by all four. In the verses we have now read let us first observe how careful our Lord is to call the attention of his disciples to his own death. He said to them, "Ye know, that after two days is the feast of the passover and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified." The connection of these words with the preceding chapter is exceedingly striking. Our Lord had just been dwelling on his own second coming in power and glory at the end of the world; he had been describing the last judgment and all its awful accompaniments; he had been speaking of himself as the judge before whose throne all nations would be gathered. Then at once, without pause or interval, he goes on to speak of his crucifixion. While the marvelous predictions of his final glory were yet ringing in the ears of his disciples, he tells them once and again of his coming sufferings: he reminds them that he must die as a sin-offering before he reigns as a King; that he must make atonement on the cross before he took the crown. We can never attach too much importance to the atoning death of Christ: it is the leading fact in the Word of God, on which the eyes of our soul ought to be ever fixed. Without the shedding of his blood, there is no remission of sin. It is the cardinal truth on which the whole system of Christianity hinges. Without it the Gospel is an arch without a keystone, a fair building without a foundation, a solar system without a sun. Let us make much of our Lord's incarnation and example, his miracles and his parables, his works and his words, but above all let us make much of his death. Let us delight in the hope of his second personal coming and millennial reign, but let us not think more even of these blessed truths than of the atonement on the cross. This after all is the master-truth of Scripture, that Christ died for our sins. To this let us daily return. On this let us daily feed our souls. Some, like the Greeks of old, may sneer at the doctrine and call it "foolishness"; but let us never be ashamed to say with Paul, "God forbid that I should

glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ» (i» Galatians 6:14). Let us observe in the second place in these verses what honor Christ loves to put on those that honor him. We are told that when he was in the house of Simon the Leper, a certain woman came while he sat at meat and poured a box precious ointment on his head. She did it, no doubt, out of reverence and affection: she had received soul-benefit from him, and she thought no mark of honor too costly to be bestowed on him in return. But this deed of hers called forth from some who saw it: they called it waste; they said it might have been better to sell the ointment and give the money to the poor. At once our Lord rebuked these cold-hearted fault-finders. He tells them that the woman has wrought a good work, and one that he accepts and approves; and he goes on to make a striking prediction: Wheresoever this gospel is preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told, for a memorial of her. We see in this little incident how perfectly our Lord knew things to come, and how easy it is for him to confer honor. This prophecy of his about this woman is receiving a fulfilment every day before our eyes: wherever the Gospel of St. Matthew is read, the deed that she did is known. The deeds and titles of many a king and emperor and general are as completely forgotten as if written in the sand; but the grateful act of one humble Christian woman is recorded in 150 different languages, and is known all over the globe. The praise of man is but for a few days: the praise of Christ endureth forever. The pathway to lasting honor is to honor Christ. Last but not least we see in this incident a blessed foretaste of things that will yet take place in the day of judgment. In that great day no honor done to Christ on earth will be found to have been forgotten. The speeches of parliamentary orators, the exploits of warriors, the works of poets and painters, shall not be mentioned in that day; but the least work that the weakest Christian woman has done for Christ, or his members, shall be found written in a book of everlasting remembrance. Not a single kind word or deed, not a cup of cold water, or a box of ointment, shall be omitted from the record. Silver and gold she may have had; none rank, power and influence she may not have possessed; but if she loved Christ, and confessed Christ and worked for Christ her memorial shall be found on high: she shall be commended before assembled worlds. Do we know what it is to work for Christ? If we do, let us take courage, and work on. What greater encouragement can we desire than we see here? We may be laughed at and ridiculed by the world. Our motives may be misunderstood; our conduct may be misrepresented; our sacrifices for Christ's sake may be called waste; waste of time, waste of money, waste of strength. Let none of these things move us. The eye of him who sat in Simon's house at Bethany is upon us: he notes all we do, and is well pleased. Let us be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. (i» 1 Corinthians 15:58).

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