

WEEK 25: EVENTS PRIOR TO JESUS ARREST & HIS ARREST

HIGH SCHOOL

GOALS

Why was the anointing of Jesus by Mary significant?
What are the sequence of events in Matthew 26 in relation to Holy Week?

LESSON

Materials Needed: Bible, Plastic sleeve page protectors for timeline activity, Tape

Extended Learning Opportunity for Teachers:

The Gospel of Matthew: Torah for the Church by Fr. Lawrence Farley, pgs 339-362

The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Matthew by Blessed Theophylact, pgs 222-238

Holy Week <https://www.goarch.org/en/holyweek>

THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

Read Matthew 26:6-13

Jesus is in the town of Bethany at Simon the (former) leper's home for dinner. Lazarus, Martha, and Mary are also at this dinner, along with all of the Disciples.

A woman comes up to Jesus with an alabaster flask of extremely expensive spikenard oil. It was a common practice at this time to anoint your guests with oil when they came to visit you. This oil was different though and was worth about a year's worth of pay. If you spent an entire year saving up money and bought one bottle of oil with your money, you're going to save it for a super special occasion.

A woman at this dinner, breaks off the top of the alabaster flask and pours the entire bottle of oil over Jesus' head and also anoints His feet with the oil. We'll learn when we study the Gospel of John that this woman is Mary, the sister of Lazarus.

Judas Iscariot (John 12:4) asks why this oil was basically wasted when it could have been sold and the money given to the poor. Jesus reprimands Judas and tells him, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. **For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial.** Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a **memorial to her.**”

When are some of the times we still anoint our bodies with oil today?

- **At our baptism / chrismation:** the priest will anoint us with oil (Holy Chrism) and say, “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
- **Holy Unction:** anointing with holy oil for physical and spiritual healing
- **When we are sick:** James 5:14, “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

What is the purpose of a memorial? Fr. Lawrence Farley explains (page 344), “A memorial (Gr. Mnemousunon) was something done or offered as a memorial (*a reminder or a commemoration*) before God, so that He would remember the person thus commended and reward him.” As Christians, we always place everything we do within the context of our relationship with God and eternity. The earthly world seeks to remember people for their accomplishments in this world with the use of statues, writings, awards, and so forth. We still read about Mary anointing Jesus with oil today. Obviously, this moment has continued to be a memorial for over 2,000 years.

How do we offer memorials to God for people today? We oftentimes bring kollyva to church and have a short memorial service for the person after they have passed unto the Lord. We also comfort one another by saying, “May his/her memory be eternal!” We do this because we want God to remember this person in His Kingdom when Christ comes to judge the living and the dead at the Second Coming.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN MATTHEW 26

If time permits, go over the rest of the events in Matthew 26. For a lesson / activity, you can provide the students with the icons at the end of this lesson and ask them to place them in the correct order on the white board. Then they can write a brief description of what happened under each icon.

As we enter into Holy Week, these events pertain to the services we will be attending:

Mary, sister of Lazarus, anoints Jesus in preparation for His upcoming burial.

Judas agrees to betray Jesus to the chief priests. Hundreds of thousands of people have traveled to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover and the crowds of people loved Jesus dearly. He healed countless numbers of them. The Jewish leadership, however, did not feel the same way about Jesus and wanted to get rid of Him. They could not arrest Him publicly because the crowds would likely riot against Jesus' arrest. They had to do it secretly and deceptively - and when Judas came to them asking what he would receive if he told them where to find Jesus, they agreed to pay Judas 30 pieces of silver.

Jesus celebrates the Passover with His Disciples. The Passover meal had to be eaten in Jerusalem, but this was an extremely dangerous place for Jesus to be right now given how most of the Jewish leadership felt about Him. During this meal, we read about the very first celebration of Holy Communion. We refer to the icon for this event as "the Mystical Supper."

Jesus predicts Peter's denial of Him. During the meal, Jesus tells His Disciples that tonight all of them will stumble because of Him. They can't believe this! Surely not! Peter speaks up and promises Jesus that there's no way he would ever say he doesn't know Jesus! Jesus responds, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." *(No icon provided in this lesson)*

Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus knows that He will be arrested today and all the events that will follow. He willingly allows all of this to happen because He knows that ultimately His death and resurrection is for the salvation of all of humanity. It's a super huge deal! His disciples are tired, however, and fall asleep multiple times while Jesus is praying.

Judas Iscariot betrays Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The chief priests and elders of the people had sent soldiers with Judas to arrest Jesus. It is late at night and extremely dark. In order to make sure they arrest Jesus and not someone else in the dim light, Judas agrees to show the guards who to arrest by giving Jesus a common greeting of the time, a kiss. Peter tries to protect Jesus when he realizes what is happening and cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus stops Peter and insists that he put up his sword. Jesus is teaching us that the Kingdom of God is never taken by force, but rather by voluntarily aligning our will with God's.

Jesus then faces the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leadership council. They had to secretly attempt to convict Jesus in the middle of the night when everyone else was asleep, but they also needed a legitimate reason to convict Him guilty of the death penalty when they presented Him to Pilate the next day. All night long, they called up witnesses that would testify against Jesus, however they could not find two people in agreement about Jesus' wrongdoings - and they needed at least two witnesses. Finally, the high priest directly asks Jesus if He is the Son of God. Jesus tells the high priest yes. Surely, Jesus was not actually the Son of God. The Sanhedrin could convict Him for blasphemy!

Peter denies Jesus three times. As soon as Jesus was arrested, His Disciples ran off and hid. They knew they were in danger of being arrested too for being associated with Jesus. Peter wants to see what is happening with Jesus even though he could not directly see Jesus being questioned. Peter tried to discreetly hide in the courtyard of the high priest amongst the servants. However, this didn't work because people started recognizing him. Peter wanted to help Jesus anyway he could - he didn't know how, but he knew if he got arrested too then he couldn't help Jesus. So, each time someone asked if he knew Jesus, Peter promised enthusiastically three times that he did not! Then Peter heard the rooster crow and realized what he had done. In his attempt to try and help Jesus in some way, he had actually denied Jesus. He ran off crying bitterly.

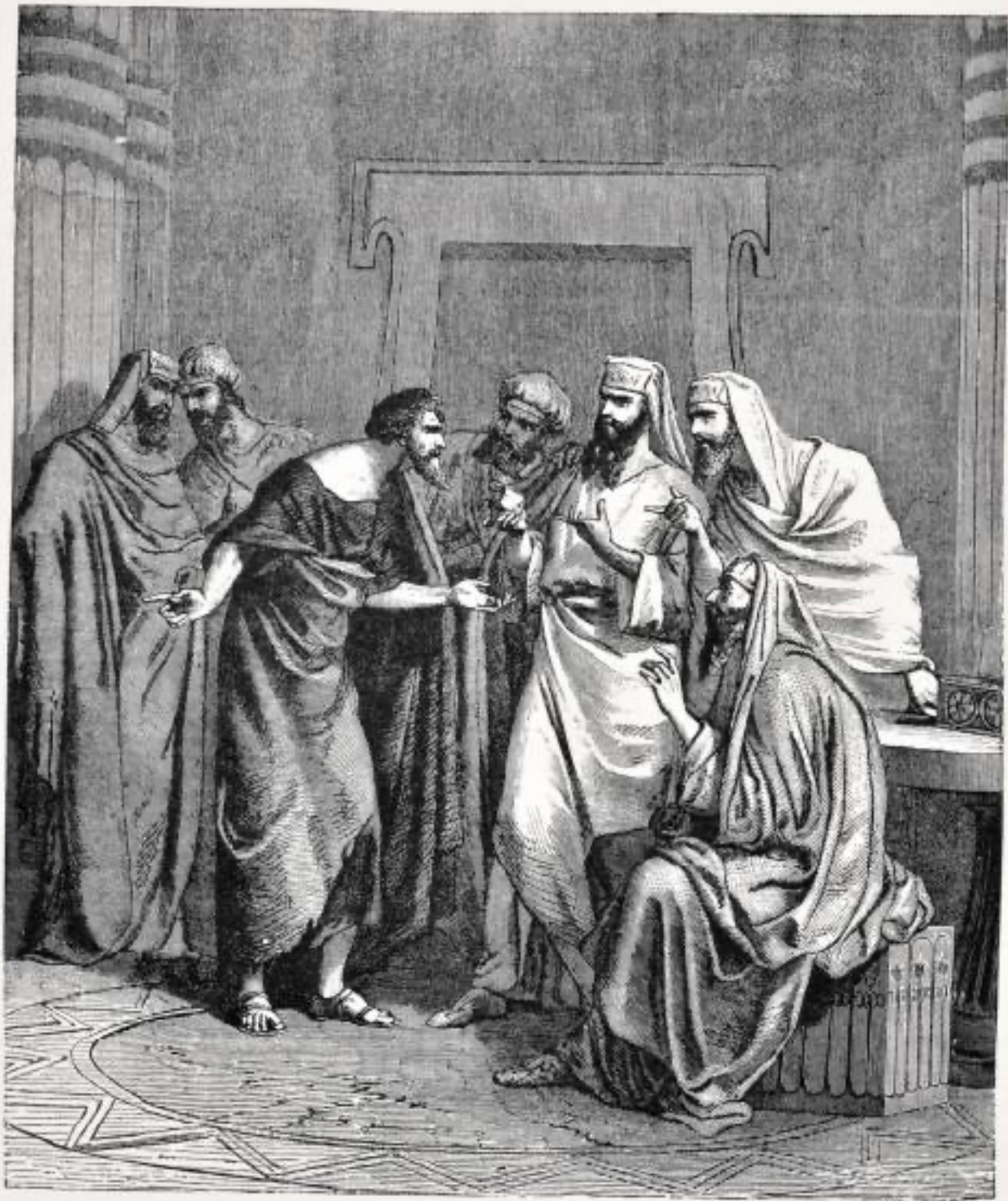
AN ALABASTER FLASK OF OIL

Alabaster is a soft mineral or rock that was used for carving. This flask does not have any openings. The only way to get to the oil inside of the flask is to break the neck of the bottle. You would have to use all of the oil immediately.

Spikenard oil was used to anoint the bodies of the dead and was expensive. Mary, the sister of Lazarus, uses this oil to pour over Jesus' head and to wipe His feet. This event is read in the gospels as a memorial to her.









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