



SERMON RECAP FEBRUARY 22, 2026

**First Sunday of Lent
Anointed for life
Matthew 26:1-25**

As we move into the season of Lent, we are going to zoom into the story and stretch out the last 48 hours of Jesus' life over the next six weeks. Starting with a strange dinner party at a friend's house on the eve of the Passover, these two chapters of Matthew are packed with intrigue and action. It's going to be difficult to talk about it all, but I hope we at least read it all together because most years we go from Palm Sunday in chapter 21 and then skip ahead to Easter in chapter 28. Short stops on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are 1, usually not well-attended and 2, still incomplete in the storytelling.

Two great resources for this are Adam Hamilton's *24 Hours That Changed the World*, and Marcus Borg and Dominic Crossan's *The Last Week*. Think about this though, there are 28 chapters of Matthew. Chapter 28 is about the resurrection. Chapters 1-3 are birth narratives and Jesus' baptism. The rest of the Book of Matthew covers about one year, and nearly a third of that is about the last week of Jesus' life. About 20% of Jesus' ministry story is told in chapters 26-27, which covers about 48 hours.

And it all starts with a woman interrupting a dinner party. No one understands what is going on. The disciples get annoyed, but Jesus commends the woman for doing what is right. She anoints his head with oil, and to understand the significance of this act, we need to look back in the Biblical story.

Anointing is about preparing. It is both an every day act of hygiene and an important ritual. Anointing with oil was a basic part of ancient hygiene. Combined with washing in water, fragrant oil provided skin care, scent, and a healthy look. It was a way to prepare for the day, but it was also a form of luxury and sign of blessing.

I remember the first time I read Psalm 133 I was a little turned off. "It is like expensive oil poured over the head, running down onto the beard... which extended over the collar of his robes." That image sounded kind of gross and messy - until I had a long beard and got some good beard oil. Now I love a luxuriant beard oil with a nice fragrance, but the woman provided more than just skin care for Jesus. In the Bible, there were several people who received anointing.



A Breath Prayer

INHALE:
Prepared to die

EXHALE:
Anointed for life.

Moses anointed Aaron for priestly duties. Samuel anointed Saul and then later David to be King. Elijah anointed Elisha to follow him as prophet. All of these men were anointed for leadership.

Anointing was a way to call upon God to prepare them for service. Notice who did the anointing - Prophets. Here, Jesus is the anointed one, and an unnamed woman is the Prophet doing the anointing. While the men object to what is going on, Jesus commends the woman for her prophetic voice. They wanted her to stop, but she persisted.

Just before this scene, the religious leaders decide that they need to plan for Jesus' death. In the next, Judas decides to betray Jesus to the authorities. In the midst of this death sentence, a woman breaks through the clutter of betrayal and violence.

She enters the room, uninvited and unnamed. She upsets everyone and begins the anointing of Jesus. Of course, it is very important to remember the Hebrew and Greek words that mean "anointed one." Messiah is Hebrew. Christ is Greek.

Jesus literally becomes the Christ at the hands of this uninvited woman. She is the one who understands Jesus' promises. She is the one who sees what is going on. She is the one who provides a moment of luxuriant joy for the man that would be savior. She is the one whose fragrant oil would surely linger while he hung from a Cross less than 48 hours later. Her oil anointed him for death, but death was not the destination.

Jesus was prepared to die. He knew that what he was doing and teaching would lead to crucifixion. He warned the disciples this was the case, but he also knew that his death would lead to. Jesus was prepared to die, but he was anointed for life.

As his followers, we may follow in his anointing. We all should live as if we are prepared to die. This is the purpose of Lent. It is a time to reflect, renew, and recommit. Lent is not about shame and guilt for sin. It is an invitation to acknowledge the reality of sin and then live with joy, purpose, and without fear. We should be prepared to die - not because it is a pass into heaven, but because we enjoyed this life fully. We should always be prepared to die, anointed by the Spirit to fully live.

NEXT WEEK:

The second Sunday of Lent, Matthew 26:26-56