

Mark - Session 13**Scripture In This Lesson:** Mark 14:27-72**Goals:**

Following the Last Supper, things start happening quickly. In this week's session, participants will explore the faithfulness of Jesus as he draws nearer to the Cross. We'll also see the disciples as they declare their devotion, but fail to stay close when things get difficult. Together we'll learn what faithfulness looks like in the example of Jesus, and give careful thought to developing our own devotion so that we'll remain close to Christ when trials come.

Part 1 - "The Sheep Will Be Scattered"

Read Mark 14:27-31

27 "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:

" 'I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.' "

28 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

29 Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."

30 "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."

31 But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

Mark 14:27-31 (NIV)

Questions To Consider:

1. The disciples had given up everything to follow after Jesus. They'd just had a meal where they were told that one of them would betray him. Put yourself in the disciples' place. How do you think they felt as they heard Jesus tell them they would all abandon him?
2. What does verse 28 tell us of the faithfulness of Christ as compared to the faithfulness of those who would follow him? How does this display God's grace?
3. Being who he is, Peter speaks up and insists, even in the face of Jesus' prediction directed at him specifically, that he will follow until death. What lessons do we learn from this interaction in light of what we know will happen?

Some Explanation:

The disciples struggled to process what Jesus was saying. They simply couldn't imagine a world where they would do what he was saying. Hadn't they just shared a meal together? Look at everything they had been through to that point! They had left everything to follow him! Who would think for a moment that any of them who had made it this far would abandon him?

And yet, that's exactly what Jesus, quoting Zechariah, says is going to happen. The shepherd will be struck. The sheep will scatter. And even the most outspokenly committed will deny him three times before all is said and done. Despite this pending failure on the part of the disciples, Jesus reaffirms his faithfulness as he says that, upon his resurrection, he'll go ahead of them to Galilee. Though they will have abandoned him, he will never abandon them.

This must be especially painful for Peter who boldly asserts that he would remain faithful to Jesus even to death. You have to think that in the moment he believed it with all that was in him. Again, there was no scenario where Peter could imagine that his resolve would fail in his teacher's time of need. But remember, Peter was still operating, to some degree, under the image of Jesus as the Messiah of his imagination rather than the reality of the Suffering Servant who stood before him. It's one thing to remain faithful when times seem good and victory is certain. The story of Peter cautions all of us to humbly consider how faithful we will be when things get tough, when tests and trials come. It challenges us to be attentive to how we respond in the day to day tests, and condition and train ourselves now to humbly follow, so we'll be close to our Savior when the storms come.

Part 2 - "Yet Not What I Will, But What You Will"

Read Mark 14:32-42

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

35 Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 36 "Abba , Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

37 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? 38 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

39 Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. 40 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

41 Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Mark 14:32-42 (NIV)

Questions To Consider:

1. Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the weight you were carrying? Do you feel like you can be honest with God in prayer about where you are emotionally, spiritually, and mentally? How have you turned to God in prayer in those times? How did you speak with him?
2. How does it make you feel to see Jesus' vulnerability and struggle here as he considered what was to come?
3. Contrast the diligence of Jesus in prayer and his faithfulness to the Father's plan to the disciples' inability to stay awake and keep watch. What do their respective actions say about their understanding of the gravity of what's happening?
4. How do you understand the statement that "[t]he spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"? How does this statement inform your understanding of what faithful discipleship looks like for a follower of Christ?

Some Explanation:

Jesus invites his inner circle to come with him and keep watch as he prays. These are the same ones he invited to join him for his transfiguration. With them he shares the heaviness of his heart; that his soul is overwhelmed with sorrow. He asks them to stay alert and faithful while he goes on to pray. And as he prays he cries out in honesty and vulnerability to his Father. In humility he makes his requests known, and in that same humility he submits to the will of the Father.

Returning he finds Peter, James, and John, these men who swore they'd be with him to the end, asleep at their post. Even now we see that, despite their best intent, the disciples can't even keep watch for the hour. After waking them, Jesus returns to pray. Again, they fell asleep, and again. Three times Jesus goes away to pray. Three times they fall asleep. Three times Peter will deny Jesus. As Jesus says, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." They know what they want to do, but they're just not up to it in this moment. And then the betrayer comes.

Again we see the faithfulness of Jesus set against the faithfulness of the disciples. Jesus calls for the disciples to keep watch and pray so they won't fall in to temptation even as he himself pours out all that he is in prayer, submitting the will of his flesh to the will of the Father. The disciples, on the other hand, fall asleep. The question we're left with is will we be diligent in prayer, and, if so, how will we pray?

Part 3 - Betrayed With A Kiss

Read Mark 14:43-52

43 Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

44 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." 45 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. 46 The men seized Jesus and arrested him. 47 Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

48 "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? 49 Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." 50 Then everyone deserted him and fled.

51 A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, 52 he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

Mark 14:43-52 (NIV)

Questions To Consider:

1. Given what we've read so far, what do you think drove the disciple's response to the crowd coming to arrest Jesus as he drew his sword and cut off the servant's ear? Compare that to Jesus' response. Why do you think they each responded the way they did? How do you think you would have reacted?
2. As Jesus hands himself to the crowd peacefully, what do the disciples do? What do we learn of discipleship, of following Jesus, as we watch this passage play out?

Some Explanation:

This is a moment of heartbreak. For Jesus, one of the twelve he had chosen to teach and pour into, one who had shared meals with him and been sent out in his name, betrayed him with the intimate greeting of a kiss. He used his close relationship to hurt him for a profit.

For the disciples, these moments confirmed their worst fears. They couldn't believe it when Jesus had said one would betray him, and yet Judas came. They insisted he was wrong when Jesus said they would flee. One pulled his sword and struck the first blow. And yet, in the end, they all fled as Jesus willingly handed himself over so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

From where we sit, it's easy to criticize the disciples as they run from the scene, but remember that they themselves couldn't believe that they'd ever run as they did. These, however, were men suddenly confronted with the reality that the image they had in their heads of the Messiah didn't match up with the reality of the Son of God who had come to live and die and live again, and to usher in the very Kingdom of God rather than an earthly kingdom. Jesus had told them in countless ways, but until they saw him arrested, they didn't understand. And when confronted with a path to victory that looked like defeat, they ran, just as Jesus knew they would. And, nevertheless, Jesus loves them.

The question we're left to consider is what we would have done were we in their place.

Part 4 - "I Am"

Read Mark 14:53-65

53 They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together. 54 Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

55 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. 56 Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

57 Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: 58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.'" 59 Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

60 Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" 61 But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

63 The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. 64 "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

They all condemned him as worthy of death.

65 Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

Mark 14:53-65 (NIV)

Questions To Consider:

1. Who are the people gathered to judge Jesus? What brings them together and what is their goal? How does this influence the manner in which the trial occurs?
2. Jesus doesn't reply to the false accusations, but when asked directly if he is the Messiah, what does he say? Why do you think he waits for this question to answer and what is the significance of his response?

3. What is the reaction of those judging Jesus when he acknowledges that he is the Messiah? What does this reaction mean for those who would follow him?

Some Explanation:

Jesus is brought before the Sanhedrin, a gathering of those who have been looking for an opportunity to put an end to what they saw as a threat to their power and influence. This is a group of people whose response to the teaching and miracles of Jesus was to plot his death for their own political gain. And now, in the presence of this specially called court, they entertain every lie that would make him look guilty. This is not a search for Truth, but a quest for a specific outcome.

In the face of falsehoods and lies directed at him, Jesus remains silent. One wonders if it is because the lies were so patently obvious that they weren't worthy of a response, or if Jesus, as Lord, simply didn't feel the need or compulsion to respond to false accusations. But then, exasperated, the high priest himself asks Jesus the question he's been waiting for. "Are you the Messiah?" And Jesus answers that he is, declaring the Truth amidst the lies for any who would hear.

In the face of this declaration the high priest makes a show of rending his garment and declaring blasphemy as the crowd spits, beats, and mocks the blindfolded Jesus. This trial serves as a microcosm of the reaction of the evils of a sinful world against the glory of the Son of God. It's a treatment that Jesus himself asks those who would choose to follow him to consider carefully before we declare ourselves his disciples. If they hated, mocked, and beat him, he tells us, they would do the same to those who bear his name. As followers of Christ we much go forward proclaiming the Truth in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God amidst the lies of this world.

Part 5 - "The Rooster Crowed"

Read Mark 14:66-72

66 While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. 67 When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.

"You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said.

68 But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway.

69 When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." 70 Again he denied it.

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."

71 He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about."

72 Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

Mark 14:66-72 (NIV)

Questions To Consider:

1. Has there ever been a time when you forgot who you were? When your words or thoughts or actions weren't in line with who you wanted to be? How did that make you feel?
2. Just hours before, Peter was swearing that he'd die for Jesus. Then he ran. Now he swore he didn't even know him. What do you think Peter was thinking and feeling as he wept?
3. Think of the people with whom Jesus surrounded himself. Knowing their failures and shortcomings, knowing even this, he loved them and invited them closer, empowering them to do the work of the Kingdom. What does this say about the nature of God's love in Jesus and what it means to follow him?

Some Explanation:

This is a difficult session. It ends with some of Jesus' hardest words to his disciples coming true as he is left alone to pray, betrayed with a kiss, arrested, mocked, beaten, and abandoned. Perhaps the most heartbreaking passage from the perspective of the disciples is this one, where Peter, always outspoken in his devotion to Jesus, drops the ball. He swore this wasn't going to happen, and yet, in fear and disillusionment, the outspoken Peter swearing and calling down curses denies that he even knows Jesus.

One can only wonder what Peter was thinking as he wept.

It's important to note, however, that Jesus knew Peter when he called him, empowered him, and sent him into the world. His love for Peter has never been contingent on Peter's strength. Knowing that Peter would deny him in this hour of need, Jesus still washed his feet and shared with him the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. And, as we read elsewhere in Scripture and know from history, even after this failure God used Peter to grow the Church in the world and proclaim the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. We take confidence in knowing that, even in our lowest moments, we are beloved of God and called and claimed in salvation in the name of Jesus Christ who sees us as we are and loves us just the same.

Please Close In Prayer