

3/29 Mark 14-16

Chapter 14

Vs. 1-25, Two days before Passover, Jesus is anointed. In Mark's gospel this takes place at Simon the Leper's house and it is an unnamed woman who does it (ironic that her name is not mentioned, given that Jesus said that she should be remembered). She anoints Jesus head, not his feet, and this anointing is for burial (as Jesus' burial will take place hastily and he will not have the usual honorable burial... his female followers go on the 3rd day to anoint him after the Sabbath, but they find an empty tomb). This anointing also reminds us that Jesus is the Messiah –the Christ- which means “anointed one.” One denarius was a single day's wage, so this was an act of extravagance, 300 days wages! Jesus urges us to care for the poor through all time. In Mark's gospel this anointing takes place after Palm Sunday, in John's gospel it takes place before Jesus enters Jerusalem.

Mark offers no motive for Judas' betrayal. In Matthew it is greed, and Luke and John it is satanic possession. The Last Supper is a tense scene, the first thing Jesus says to his disciples is that one of them will betray him. Given how Judas has been portrayed through all of history, Jesus' words ring true that he would have been better off not having been born. To share food is to be bound together as one family –this amplifies the drama of Judas' betrayal. Jesus celebrates the Passover with his disciples as he institutes Holy Communion. Jesus' blood, not the lambs, is the seal of God's promise to God's people (covenant). Holy Communion is the assurance of God's promises to us. Poured out for many means “all.”

Vs. 26-52, Seders end with the singing of hallel psalms (115-118). Jesus tells them now that they will all desert him, but gives them directions on where to find him after he is raised from the dead. Jesus returns to the place where he began his ministry –Galilee- to the place where he first raised people from the dead! Jesus becomes deeply distressed and agitated and confesses his grief to his inner circle of disciples –the same ones who witnessed his transfiguration, saying that he has become deeply grieved even to death! He asks his disciples to stay awake, but they all fall asleep (just like the parable in 13:35 foreshadows). “Not my will, but yours be done.” Even Jesus prays this prayer, so we should also. Peter made some pretty lofty claims about his loyalty, but in the end his human nature couldn't keep up with the desire of his heart to remain loyal to Jesus. Even before he was put to the test, he failed in the very simple task of staying awake to offer support to Jesus in his hour of grief. Jesus offers prayer as

the solution for times such as these when our will to follow Jesus is seemingly no match for our flesh. He finds them sleeping 3 times.

Judas betrays Jesus with a greeting of intimacy and peace, this only adds to the depth of his betrayal. Jesus calls out the temple officials for the hypocrisy that they failed to arrest him on any of the other days that week when he was in the temple teaching (because they were afraid of the crowd), but now come with a lynch mob to arrest him like a criminal. All of the disciples deserted him, just like he predicted. The naked man could function metaphorically as a newly baptized Christian taking off their old garment and taking on new life, or could foreshadow the “young man” who appears at the tomb in 16:5.

Vs 53-72, The trial at the high priest’s house continues through the night, Peter does follow Jesus to watch and see what will happen. They eye witnesses disagree in their testimony, and so their “evidence” is inadmissible. Ironically, they correctly predict both the physical temple’s destruction, as well as the resurrection (the temple not built with human hands –both Jesus’ own body, and the Church which would arise after the resurrection). These witnesses statements would not have condemned him, but Jesus’ own statement brings condemnation upon him as he quotes Daniel 7:13 & Psalm 110: 1 to refer to himself as the Son of Man, the divine Son of God. FINALLY Jesus affirms the truth of his identity which he has tried to keep hidden through the whole gospel. This truth is what condemns him to death as the Sanhedrin views it as blasphemy. Peter, being recognized by perhaps his Galilean accent, denies his association with Jesus 3 times, just as Jesus said. When he realized that Jesus’ prediction had come true, he felt remorse.

Chapter 15

Pilate came from Caesarea to Jerusalem every year at Passover. His question for Jesus “are you the king of the Jews?” could be translated “are you the king of the Judeans?” While the Sanhedrin was concerned about blasphemy, Pilate was concerned about treason. Jesus’ identity as the Messiah was a threat to Roman rule. If Jesus was the king of the Jews, then Caesar was not. Pilate names jealousy as the true reason for the Sanhedrin’s desire to get rid of Jesus, and Mark’s display of Jesus’ time teaching in the temple could point to that also. Jesus’ was far more popular and viewed with far more authority than those who were the “official” religious elites, and Jesus called them out on their hypocrisy repeatedly. Ironically, Pilate

releases the one who was in prison for actively stirring up political rebellion.

Jesus is mocked ruthlessly –fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy of the suffering servant. Cyrene is in modern Lybia, Simon is conscripted to carry the cross for Jesus. The drink offered to Jesus –myrrh mixed with wine- was a common narcotic sedative used in ancient times. It was meant as a mercy, but Jesus insisted on being fully alert and fully aware in his senses of what was happening through his suffering and death. On the cross Jesus fully identified with us in our own pain, suffering, shame, and ridicule. No matter what we face in life, Jesus has been there and knows what it’s like. Jesus’ experience on the cross absorbed all of the suffering in our world into his own person, and redeemed it. They bystanders thought Jesus was crying out for Elijah, for Elijah was supposed to herald the Messianic age... they didn’t realize that Elijah had already come in the person of John the Baptist. Jesus was quoting psalm 22 when he said, “My God, why have you forsaken me?” and in so doing, was calling to mind the whole psalm. This is a statement of desperation, and also of hope. For the psalm which begins in such utter desolation ends in triumph, this is the pattern of Jesus’ own experience of suffering and death which ends in the ultimate hope and triumph of the resurrection. Jesus was reminding himself what was to come.... On the third day he would be raised!

The curtain to the holy of holies in the temple tears in 2 when Jesus dies, just like the cloud tore in two at his baptism. The barrier between heaven and earth is broken open once more. The centurion, who witnessed Jesus’ death, affirmed Jesus’ true identity –the same identity that God had proclaimed from the heavens at his baptism- “truly this man was God’s son!” Mark’s thesis statement is true, and even the Gentiles affirm it so!

While the male disciples abandoned Jesus, the female disciples stood and watched in vigil. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joses (who is also Mary the mother of Jesus!) and Salome saw where Jesus had been buried, and these are the same women who go to the tomb on the 3rd day. Joseph of Arimathea buries Jesus, even though he himself was a member of the Sanhedrin who sentenced him to death. It’s possible that Joseph was not present or that Joseph repented for his association with them. Pilate asked if Jesus was dead because crucifixion could sometimes take days to kill the victims.

Chapter 16

The women wait for the Sabbath to be over. They bring spices, expecting to find a dead body to prepare properly for burial (even though Jesus said repeatedly that he would rise on the 3rd day, and even though he said that the anointing with nard in Bethany was to prepare his body for burial). Had the 12 not told the women about this prediction? The women found the tomb opened, and a “young man” whom we can assume is an angel sitting in the tomb, who told them the same thing that Jesus had already said “he’s going ahead of you to Galilee, there you will see him!” “And the women fled with terror and amazement and said nothing to anyone”.....This is obviously hyperbole, for if they said nothing to anyone, then none of us would be here still today remembering this story and following Jesus as his disciples in the 21st century. This is how Mark’s gospel originally ended, with fear and amazement and silence!

Vs. 9-20 is a later addition to the gospel and combines themes and material from the Matthew, Luke/Acts, and John traditions. The emphasis on miracles conflicts with Mark’s consistent emphasis on suffering.