

Day 78 (Tuesday 20th November)**Read Mark chapter 14 verses 12 to 21**

The Passover with the Disciples

Mark's Gospel is now building up to its all-important climax. Amid the authorities closing in on Him, Jesus carefully gives His disciples instructions on how to spot a man who will lead them to a secret upper room to get things ready for a Passover meal. It has been suggested that this was in the house of Mary, Mark's mother, which became something of a centre for the first Christians (Acts 12.12). A man carrying a jar of water would have been noticeable – that was normally a job for women. Judas would indeed come to regret his actions in this life: he had failed to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6. 64-71). He had also not repented of his sins and come to Christ for cleansing (John 13. 10-11). He had failed to believe the *good news* that Mark's Gospel is all about (Mark 1.1).

Questions to think about

1. Do I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God?
2. Have I repented of my sins and come to Christ for cleansing?
3. Are there any two questions that are more important?

A prayer you may wish to say

Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, cleanse me from my sin and let me feel the assurance of forgiveness and new life with You. Amen

Day 79 (Wednesday 21st November)**Read Mark Chapter 14 verses 22 to 25**

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

This event is what we remember at every communion service. Christ's death was to be the fulfilment of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New. The Old had been sealed with the blood of animal sacrifices. Their blood could not take away sin, it just pointed to something much greater to come. The New Covenant would be sealed with Christ's blood, poured out for many *for the forgiveness of sins* (Matthew 26.28). Christ tells us to 'take', accept the forgiveness His sacrifice brings. We are not cleansed from our sins by just taking part, but by putting our trust in what Christ has done. One interpretation of verse 35 is that Christ dedicates Himself for the Passion before Him, with a Nazirite vow (Numbers 6, 1-4): He won't drink wine again until it is accomplished. Samson, the strong man, had taken this vow and by his death rescued Israel from the Philistines (Judges 16.30).

Questions to think about

1. Do we need to be worthy in order to take communion? What do we need to be?
2. Is it a good idea to read the Old Testament? Why?
3. In the communion service, who is our 'communion' with?

A Prayer you may wish to say

Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body and our souls washed through his most precious blood and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen

Day 80 (Thursday 22nd November)**Read Mark chapter 14 verses 26 to 31**

Peter's Denial Foretold

Traditionally, Jews sang from Psalms 115 to 118 at this time. Psalm 118 finishes with 'O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.' Christ foresaw what would happen but knew everything was in His Father's control. He foresees the disciples deserting Him and Peter denying Him three times, but tells them He will rise from the dead and meet them in Galilee. As before, they don't listen – or don't believe it. (If they had done they wouldn't have been surprised by what happened on Easter Morning.) As before, Peter contradicts Christ. His confidence is still in himself and he still reckons he is better than all the other disciples. The other disciples all then boast they also won't deny Christ either.

Questions to think about

1. Have there been times when we could have said we knew Jesus and didn't?
2. When we read God's Word in the Bible do we believe it?
3. Where can we put our confidence?

A Prayer you may wish to say

Then I called on the name of the Lord: "O Lord, I pray, save my life!" Psalm 116.4

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation Psalm 118.21

Day 81 (Friday 23rd November)**Read Mark Chapter 14 verses 32 to 42**

Jesus prays in Gethsemane

At the foot of the Mount of Olives is an area called Gethsemane ("Oil Press"). Here Christ went through the most intense inner agony. Translators struggle to show the full force of the words. 'Distressed', 'agitated' and 'deeply grieved' need to be understood in terms of being completely overwhelmed with grief. Christ's humanity is plain: He asks His three closest disciples to stay with Him as He wrestles in prayer. He again stands firm though against temptation and submits his will to the Father's. "Abba, Father" is a combination of the deeply personal Aramaic child's word for 'daddy' and the respectful Greek word for Father. The 'cup' in the Old Testament was a symbol of God's wrath against His people's sin which God Himself would 'drink' for them (Isaiah 51. 22). Christ was not just facing extreme physical torture as man; as sinless God, He was going to take our sin and death upon Himself (2 Corinthians 5.21).

Questions to think about

1. How close do we want to be to Christ? The 'inner three' disciples knew Him (at the Transfiguration), the power of His resurrection (at Jairus' house) and shared with Him, albeit poorly, in His suffering (in Gethsemane) (Philippians 3.10).
2. In what sense do we need to 'keep awake'?
3. Having pledged to never desert Him, the Inner Three *immediately* failed Him three times in Gethsemane. Why? (verse 38)

A Prayer you may wish to say

Abba, Father, it is most wonderful to know Your love for me so free and sure; but 'tis more wonderful to see my love for You so faint and poor. And yet I want to love Thee, Lord; O light the flame within my heart, and I will love Thee more and more, until I see Thee as Thou art.

Day 82 (Saturday 24th November)**Read Mark Chapter 14 verses 43 to 52**

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

The authorities had not understood Jesus at all. A crowd with swords and clubs was totally unnecessary. Jesus was coming willingly. He was the one in control, even down to the timing of His arrest (verse 49). Peter used the wrong weapon, at the wrong time, for the wrong purpose. The strange little detail of the young man in verses 51 & 52 makes sense if he was indeed Mark, the writer of the Gospel. Judas might have led the authorities first to Mark's house (where he had last seen Jesus) and Mark, in the night, might have just grabbed the first thing that came to hand in order to rush out and follow after him. If Mark is indeed referring to himself, he is saying 'I was there – I saw it, trust me, my gospel is the truth.'

Questions to think about

1. Do we ever outwardly make a pretence of one thing and not mean it at all? (verse 45)
2. Luke, the doctor, adds in his account that Jesus healed the slave (verse 47).
Have there been times when Jesus has sorted out a mistake that we have made?
3. The authorities did actually see Jesus as a bandit (verse 48), taking away their power and wealth. Are we still looking at what we leave behind in following Christ?

A Prayer you may wish to say

Father forgive us for all our sins. Forgive us for any pretence we might have made; forgive us for so often making mistakes; forgive us for our slowness to follow you unreservedly. Give us your grace and power to change our lives now we pray. Amen

Day 83 (Sunday 25th November)**Read Mark Chapter 14 verses 53 to 65**

Jesus before the Council

Christ's trial before the council was illegal: the Talmud prohibited Council meetings at night. By law, someone could only be condemned on the evidence of two witnesses (Deuteronomy 17.6); of all their many witnesses, no two could agree. They couldn't truthfully just say what Christ had said but had to add to it. (Compare verse 58 with John 2 verses 19-21). Ironically, out of reverence, observant Jews will not say or write 'God'. The High Priest here says "Son of *the Blessed One*". By quoting from Psalm 110.1 and Daniel 7.13, Jesus was saying in verse 62 'Yes, I am the Messiah, the Son of God'. He was condemned for saying this, though it was the absolute truth. Mark states it at the very beginning of his gospel (Mark 1.1) but some still refuse to believe it.

Questions to think about

1. Do we fully recognize Jesus for who He really is? What difference does it make to us?
2. Christ *will* come with the clouds and "every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail" (Revelation 1.7). What will our feelings be then?
3. Even today some spit on Jesus and mock Him. What was Christ's reaction to those people?

A prayer you may wish to say (last verse of the hymn: Lo! He comes with Clouds Descending)

Yea, Amen! let all adore Thee, High on Thine eternal throne; Saviour, take the power and glory, Claim the kingdom for Thine own; O come quickly! O come quickly! Everlasting God, come down!

Day 84 (Monday 26th November)

Read Mark Chapter 14 verses 66 to 72

Peter Denies Jesus

Peter is probably giving Mark his account first hand here. He was broken by the experience. Instead of heeding Christ's warning (verses 27), Peter had decided he knew better. He had even tried to follow "at a distance" (verse 54). He was frightened to the point of vehement denial, by a servant girl and another bystander and ended up doing exactly what Jesus said he would do. Mark leaves out the worst part: "the Lord turned and looked at Peter" (Luke 22.61). Mercifully the Lord restored Simon Peter and made him 'the rock on which He built His Church'. He privately met with him after the resurrection (Luke 24.34) and later gave him the chance to publicly confess Him three times (John 21.15-17). Mark also let everyone down later, but was restored by Barnabas (Acts 15.36-40) and eventually by Paul (2 Timothy 4.11).

Questions to think about

1. Can we imagine how Peter felt when Christ looked at him? And yet all that was in Christ's heart was love.
2. Are we trying to follow Christ, "at a distance", or closely heeding His words?
3. How do we react when people let us down?

A Prayer you may wish to say

Father, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Grant us the grace to heed your words and to acknowledge you before others. Help us to be part of your great work to restore people to your kingdom. Amen