

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

Week 44: The Last Supper

1. Jesus Remains In Control Even Over The Details Of His Death

- Read Mark 14:12-16

Though commentators throughout history have often looked back on the circumstances surrounding the death of Jesus, and have felt sorry for him, believing that he was the victim of terrible circumstances, the Biblical account of what happened paints a very different picture. Jesus knew about every part of the process and willingly submitted himself to it, knowing that it was the plan of God. He pre-arranged the details so that events would happen according to plan. He knew Judas would betray him, he knew he was going to die, and he also knew that he needed to teach his disciples the meaning of it all.

2. Jesus Remains In Control Even When Great Sin Abounds

- Read Mark 14:17-21

Jesus knew that Judas was going to betray him, and yet he still included him in the Passover meal as one of the 12. In John 13:26, Jesus handed Judas a piece of bread, indicating to him that he would be the one that would betray him. But it was also an opportunity, given in the spirit of friendship, for him to repent. But we know from the rest of the story that Judas was not going to be persuaded or moved to repent, as his sin, for which he was fully responsible, had already hardened his heart. Sin is always our own issue. We cannot blame God's plan for the sin that we allow to take root in our hearts. Jesus was going to die on the cross, whether Judas had betrayed him or not, as it was his plan to do so.

It's incredible to see his mercy and kindness to those, who he knew were going to kill him. They didn't deserve it and neither do we. This is amazing grace – a gift.

- ❖ Q: Why is it important for us to know that Jesus was in control of his own death?
- ❖ Q: Why is it true to say that Judas was fully responsible for his own sin when he betrayed Jesus, even though it was somehow part of God's plan?
- ❖ Q: What should this teach us about our responsibility for our choices, in the midst of God's absolute sovereignty over all things?
- ❖ Q: Do you think that it should help us to know that God is still fully in control even when others around us are sinning? (E.g. Criminals, corruption in government, cheating spouses, gossips and slanderers etc.)
- ❖ Q: What impact should it have on us when we read about how Jesus treated Judas, knowing that he would betray him?

3. Jesus Left Us Powerful Reminders Of The Gospel

- Read Mark 14:22-25

Passover was the most significant reminder to the Jews of God's faithfulness. The yearly Passover meal was done in a very specific way, where the head of the table would explain the significance of each of the 4 stages of the meal. They would focus on and celebrate the promises that God had given to them as a nation, when He had rescued them out of Egypt.

At the last supper, Jesus led the meal. Instead of saying what the disciples expected, he took the bread and said, "... *This is my body*". In doing so, he was giving new meaning to the exodus. His ensuing suffering and affliction would mark out a new exodus – the rescue from slavery to sin. When he took the wine and said, "... *This is my blood*", he was saying that he was the new sacrificial lamb and that his blood would soon be the blood to cover their sin. He redefined what the exodus meant, so that all of the symbols up until this point in their history actually all pointed to him and his coming work on the cross. Every time we see the symbols of bread and wine today, we remember that they point back to Jesus and everything he accomplished on the cross as the sacrificial lamb.

Jesus ended this teaching by saying that he would not eat or drink of the Passover meal again. This was because he was the real Passover Lamb.

- ❖ Q: Why do you think it was such a shock to the disciples when Jesus changed the meaning of the symbols at the table?
- ❖ Q: Why was Jesus saying in essence that all the past symbols of the Passover all pointed to him?
- ❖ Q: Why is it so important that we as a community participate in the communion meal regularly? What should it do for our faith?

