

Mark 14:1--15:47

The reading of the gospel will be interspersed with meditations and pauses for you to reflect.

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people."

The Passover, as you most likely know, was and is a Jewish festival which celebrates the release of the Hebrew people from Egyptian captivity.

God sent 9 plagues on the Egyptian people to force the Pharaoh to release the Hebrews, but it wasn't until the 10<sup>th</sup> plague that he released them.

The 10<sup>th</sup> plague was the death of all the firstborn males, even the animals, who were not in a home marked by the blood of the lamb.

A perfect lamb.

Specific rules were given as to how to choose the lamb with no blemishes, how to cook the lamb, what attire to wear, and how to mark the doorframes of the homes of the Hebrew people with the lamb's blood. (pause)

While he (Jesus) was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show

kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

Jesus was aware that his time as a human on earth was coming to an end.

The woman, most likely because she had been forgiven her sins and was able to live a whole, fulfilling life, brought a jar of nard.

Nard is a class of aromatic, amber-colored essential oil derived from a flowering plant in the honeysuckle family which grows in the Himalayas of Nepal, China, and India, the reason for its expense.

The smell would have spread from where she broke the jar and anointed Jesus’ head throughout the entire banquet space.

Think of the best smell you can imagine wafting over us as we hear the words of the gospel.

And think of what it meant to Jesus to know he was being anointed for his burial. (pause)

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

Let’s think outside of the box.

Perhaps Judas was disappointed that Jesus wasn’t living up to his expectation of a Messiah.

Perhaps Judas wanted a confrontation between the religious elite and Jesus to initiate the incoming kingdom of God.

How differently our faith would have been formed if Jesus had acted as the historical Messiah Judas was trying to provoke instead of the Messiah God sent for us. (pause)

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, “Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.” So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, “Surely, not I?” He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.” (Pause)

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, “You will all become deserters; for it is written,

‘I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep will be scattered.’

But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Peter said to him, “Even though all become deserters, I will not.” Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.” But he said vehemently, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And all of them said the same.

Jesus knew his fate.

His followers would betray him, his followers would desert him.

Jesus would be alone to face the most terrible night anyone could face.

None wanted to believe him; they all wanted to be faithful followers.

What if we were in this position, not knowing the end of the story, how would we react? (pause)

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.” And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.” He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him. But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled." All of them deserted him and fled.

A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

**Jesus' disciples couldn't stay awake.**

Perhaps because it was so late at night.

Perhaps it was because they had eaten too much at their last meal with Jesus.

Perhaps it was because they did not grasp the significance of the event that was to come very soon.

When Jesus woke them the last time it was to an influx of religious men who were armed with clubs and swords.

Jesus received the kiss of death from his betrayer.

He challenged them, saying, you could have done this out in the open but you choose to do it under the cover of darkness.

Think a minute, why would they choose the darkness?

When Jesus was taken into custody one of the disciples pulled his sword and cut off the ear of the slave of the high priest.

Jesus, even though he knew what lay ahead of him, compassionately healed the man.

And all his closest followers ran as Jesus was taken out of the garden. (pause)

They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "I am;

and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.' "

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?" All of them condemned him as deserving death. Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" The guards also took him over and beat him.

Jesus admitted, using the words God gave to Moses, "I am."

In the eyes of the religious leaders this was the ultimate blasphemy; this man was claiming to be God! He was guilty of nothing. (pause)

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." But he denied it,

saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about." At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept. (pause)

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

The religious authorities did not have the power to put a man to death, so they took him to Pilate.

Pilate was interested, he had heard of Jesus, he wanted to hear him speak.

Jesus didn't have much to say.

Pilate wasn't foolish, he knew the religious men were jealous, so he offered to release Jesus as was the custom during the Passover festival.

But the priests went through the crowds, stirring them up against Jesus and the crowds asked for Barabbas to be released.

A man who had murdered during an insurrection!  
They asked that Jesus give his life for a sinner to be released. (pause)

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Pilate turned Jesus over to the soldiers who mocked him, beat him nearly to death, and sent him on his way to Golgotha. (pause)

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the



cross!” In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

After his ordeal with the governmental authorities Jesus was too weak to carry the cross on his own. Simon of Cyrene was pulled from the crowd, away from his sacrificial lamb, away from his two young sons.

Hear the lyrics to a song by Ray Boltz, Watch the Lamb:

Walking on the road to Jerusalem

The time had come to sacrifice again

My two small sons, they walk beside me on the road

The reason that they came was to watch the lamb

And they said, “Daddy, Daddy, what will we see there?

There’s so much that we don’t understand”

And so I told them of Moses and father Abraham

Then I said, “Dear children, watch the lamb”

There will be so many in Jerusalem today

We must be sure the lamb doesn’t run away

And I told them of Moses and father Abraham

Then I said, “Dear children, watch the lamb”

When we reached the city, I knew something must be wrong

There were no joyful worshipers there, no joyful  
worship songs

And I stood there with my children in the midst of  
angry men

Then I heard the crowd cry out, let's crucify Him

We tried to leave the city but we could not get away  
Forced to play in this drama, a part I did not wish to  
play

Why upon this day were men condemned to die?  
Why were we standing here where soon they would  
pass by?

I looked and said, even now they come

The first one cried for mercy, the people gave him none  
The second one was violent and he was arrogant and  
loud

I still here his angry voice screaming at the crowd

Then someone said, "There's Jesus", I scarce believed  
my eyes

A man so badly beaten, He barely looked alive

Blood poured from His body, from the thorns upon His  
brow

Running down the Cross, falling to the ground

I watched as He struggled, I watched Him when He fell

The cross came down upon His back, the crowd began  
to yell

In that moment I felt such agony, in that moment I felt  
such loss

Till a Roman soldier grabbed my arm and screamed  
“You, carry His cross”

At first I tried to resist him, then his hand reached for  
his sword

So I knelt and took the Cross from the Lord

I put it on my shoulder and we started down the street  
The blood that he’d been shedding was running down  
my cheek

They led us to Golgotha, they drove nails deep in His  
feet and hands

Yet upon the Cross I heard Him pray, “Father, forgive  
them”

Never have I seen such love in any other eyes

“Into Thy hands I commit my spirit”, He prayed and  
then He died

I stood for what seemed like years, I’d lost all sense of  
time

Until I felt two little hands holding tight to mine

The children stood there weeping, I heard the oldest  
say

“Father please forgive us, the lamb ran away”

“Daddy, daddy, what have we seen here?  
There’s so much that we don’t understand?”  
So I took them in my arms and we turned and faced  
the Cross  
Then I said, “Dear children watch the lamb”

(Songwriters RAY BOLTZ Published by  
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Pause.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “Listen, he is calling for Elijah.” And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.” Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

The last breath was taken.

The curtain in the temple that separated the Holy of Holies from the outer temple had been torn in two.

No longer was God separated from humanity.

No longer was God human.

A centurion, a Roman soldier, the cruelist of the cruel, was the first to be converted by Jesus' death.

(pause)

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

The Sabbath was approaching, the day of rest was drawing near, Joseph of Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus.

Pilate confirmed Jesus was dead, and Joseph was granted his wish.

A new tomb, one that had never been used, was where Jesus' body was laid.

The sacrificial lamb was laid to rest.

Or so it seemed.....