

## Week 5: In the Company of Friends (Mark 14:1-52)

*Sometime before the discussion, take a moment to read through this week's passage: Mark 14:1-52*

1. Was there anything in the message for this second week of Lent that resonated with you or that seemed timely? What did you find surprising or uncomfortable? Was there anything you disagreed with?
2. Read Mark 14:1-2. Why are the religious authorities having to be secretive about their pursuit of Jesus? What does this say about the level of control they have over the situation?
3. Read Mark 14:3-11. Why do you think the woman goes unnamed in this passage when the author also says the memory of her will endure for ages? What do the woman's actions reveal about how she views Jesus and what he has been teaching? What does the disciples' reaction reveal about their view of the same things?
4. Why do you think Judas goes to the authorities in the reading above? How do you relate to Judas in this whole chapter? What is Jesus' reaction to him in Mark's account? Why do you think the other gospels say more about Judas?
5. Read Mark 14:12-15. Why do you think Jesus has such intricate instructions for the disciples about finding a location to celebrate the Passover meal? How do these passages in Isaiah 25:6-8 and Jeremiah 31:31-34 relate to what Jesus is saying and doing during the meal?
6. Read Mark 14:26-62. What echoes of Jesus' previous teaching in Mark do you see here? In vs. 35-36 how is Jesus challenged personally by the same things he has previously taught? What is his response?
7. The author of the Gospel of Mark uses irony for dramatic effect throughout and in this week's section especially. Read the following quote from Frederick Douglass' "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" speech on July 5, 1852:

*At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, today, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.*

How do these words and context relate to how the author writes the Gospel of Mark? How are they relevant to our present-day situation?

8. Break into groups of 2 or 3 and discuss the theme of fear in this week's passage as a whole. How do you see fear playing out in the religious authorities, in the disciples, and in Jesus? For each group discuss why they are afraid and how they respond to that fear? Then share about fearful situations you are each currently going through and spend some time praying for one another.

## **Practice for the week: Imaginative reading of scripture**

Set aside some time this week to read the story in Mark 14:3-11 using your imagination. This is a modified form of an ancient method of reading scripture developed by Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century.

Read the scripture 3 times. Don't try to analyze its meaning, but just try to feel it. In the first reading, let yourself sink into the story. Creatively imagine the scene and immerse yourself in it. Become aware of what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. Who is there, and what are they doing? How does the situation make you feel? Let the story wash over you, and take some moments of silence afterward. Let yourself become aware of who you identify with in the story. This could be one of the specific characters or someone just present and observing. Who are you drawn to?

Then, read the story again. This time, allow yourself to be that person with whom you identified. Experience the story from their perspective, through their eyes, and let your imagination engage with their thoughts and feelings. Again, take some moments of silence after this reading to reflect on the experience.

In the third and final reading, imagine that Jesus is communicating with you in this scene. How does Jesus look at you, what does he say? What do you hear, and how does it make you feel? Sit in silence for a moment after the reading and invite God to speak to your heart.