

I don't believe anyone marries their spouse and thinks, 'ah, we are going to have such a nasty divorce.' No. We enter relationships with the intention of 'as long as we both shall live.'

But interpersonal relationships are not as mechanical as changing the oil in the car or as simple as washing the dishes. We accidentally or lazily do things that hurt relationships. It is an art form to learn how to overlook the failings of those we love.

Since January, we have been going through the book of Mark, segments by literary segment.

- In the first half, Jesus served people through miracles, deliverances, and preaching repentance. Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah (8:29) is the turning point to the second half.
- In the second half, Jesus is the suffering savior who purchases our salvation with his life.

Unlike the story blocks that teach us something, since Jesus and the others arrived in Jerusalem, Mark has carefully and chronologically given us details of Jesus' last week.

- On Sunday, Jesus enters Jerusalem and gets to the Temple late, so he looks around and returns to Bethany for the night.
- On Monday Jesus drives out the merchants and states with authority that worship in the Temple has lost its way. He curses a fig tree as an illustration.
- Tuesday was a very long day. It took us three Sundays to go through Jesus' Tuesday. There was, 1) the fig tree is withered and is symbolic of the Temple, looked good on the outside but it was really dead; 2) he responds to three waves of attacks by Jewish religious leaders and finds faith only in a widow who gave an offering; 3) in the evening, on the Mount of Olives, he teaches his disciples about the suffering they will go through and the destruction of the Temple.

Today, we look at Wednesday and begin his Thursday; it is the Jewish Passover.

**Passover**  
Mark 14:1-31



Wednesday was a quiet day for Jesus. Scholars believe that Jesus took it as a day of rest before the taxing events that led to his death.

Mark begins with a behind the scenes look at the religious leaders:

### **1. Scheming, 14:1-2.**

'It was now two days before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and kill him. <sup>2</sup>“But not during the Passover celebration,” they agreed, “or the people may riot (Mk 14:1-2 NLT)?”'

We have been told repeatedly that the religious leaders want to put Jesus to death.

Mark includes this conversation to give context for what follows.<sup>1</sup>

- It was Caiaphas the chief instigator in the plot, who is quoted.<sup>2</sup>
- During Passover, Jerusalem's population swelled from 50,000 to 250,000. The Romans and the Jewish religious leaders were afraid of riots and revolts.
- We have low expectations from the religious leaders, they have been oppositional from the start.

In contrast to scheming to kill, we see love and devotion.

### **2. Anointed, 14:3-9.**

'Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head. <sup>4</sup>Some of those at the table were indignant. “Why waste such expensive perfume?” they asked. <sup>5</sup>“It could have been sold for a year's wages and the money given to the poor!” So they scolded her harshly. <sup>6</sup>But Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me? <sup>7</sup>You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup>She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. <sup>9</sup>I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman's deed will be remembered and discussed (Mk 14:3-9 NLT).”'

- Bethany is where Jesus was staying, only two miles from Jerusalem. Simon the former leper must have been well known to be mentioned.
- The perfume was nard, an oil extracted from a root in India. It was likely a family heirloom. This nard had enormous value which kept the disciples from seeing

---

<sup>1</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 489.

<sup>2</sup> C.f., Mt 26:57; Jn 11:47-53, Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 490.

the depth of her devotion. It was common to give a 'second tithe' during the feast that would help the poor.

- Anointing someone was common at feasts, but it is clear this was a special act of devotion given his upcoming death. Criminals were denied an anointing after their death. Her anointing is an anointing for his death in advance because he will be denied it later.
- This is a good relationship; we should model her sacrifice. Her act is remembered even this morning.

Jesus experiences love and behind the scenes there is betrayal.

### **3. Betrayal, 14:10-11.**

'Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests to arrange to betray Jesus to them. <sup>11</sup> They were delighted when they heard why he had come, and they promised to give him money. So he began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus (14:10-11 NLT).'

- 'The primary concern of the Sanhedrin was the avoidance of a riot.'<sup>3</sup>
- The fact they needed an inside informer 'demonstrates how difficult it had become to locate and seize him' before the Passover and among the Jewish crowds.
- When he was chosen to be among the twelve, Judas did not set out to betray Jesus. We do not know his motive: money for a sick mother, to force Jesus into a political Messiahship, to get a job with the Romans. He did not set out to fail in their relationship, but he did.

Now Mark begins Jesus' Thursday.

### **4. Preparation, 14:12-16.**

'On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover meal for you?" <sup>13</sup> So Jesus sent two of them into Jerusalem with these instructions: "As you go into the city, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him. <sup>14</sup> At the house he enters, say to the owner, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?' <sup>15</sup> He will take you upstairs to a large room that is already set up. That is where you should prepare our meal." <sup>16</sup> So the two disciples went into the city and found everything just as Jesus had said, and they prepared the Passover meal there (14:12-16 NLT).'

---

<sup>3</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 495.

- Sundown on Thursday evenings began the Passover, which went until midnight.
- Jesus has made careful arrangements and that a man carried a clay pitcher was a signal. Normally, women carried the small clay pitcher and men carried large flasks. They communicate without words; Jesus took care to avoid detection in Jerusalem (Jn 11:57).
- This host was a brave man who furnished the room, the sacrifice, and the meal. His risk is a model for us today.

### 5. Betrayal Revealed, 14:17-21.

'In the evening Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup> As they were at the table eating, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, one of you eating with me here will betray me." <sup>19</sup> Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, "Am I the one?" <sup>20</sup> He replied, "It is one of you twelve who is eating from this bowl with me. <sup>21</sup> For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays him. It would be far better for that man if he had never been born (14:17-21 NLT)!"'

- David prophesied that, 'Even my best friend, the one I trusted completely, the one who shared my food, has turned against me (Ps 41:9 NLT).'
- Psalms 113-118 were either recited or sung during Passover. These Psalms retell the suffering of Israel, the chains of slavery, death at Egypt's hand, and Israel's ultimate victory. Psalm 41 also says, 'You have not let my enemies triumph over me. You have preserved my life (Ps 41:11b-12a NLT).'

### 6. Passover Reinterpreted, 14:22-26.

- Before we go look at the next passage, let's go over what a normal Passover at that time looked like.
- Generally, the family head led the celebration. As the teacher, Jesus would have led the Passover celebration.
- Participants would sit quietly to hear the liturgy.

### **The Passover Liturgy of Jesus' Day**

The context of Passover was Israel's suffering in Egypt. It is based on Exodus 6:6-7. Jesus' full Passover message is not preserved, but we can assume it was a normal Passover experience up until he reinterpreted it for the disciples.

There are four cups of wine that organize the Passover.

The 1<sup>st</sup> cup is thanksgiving for the Passover blood, Ex 6:6. – 'I will bring you out (Ex 6:6).'

- There is the eating of bitter herbs and retelling of the Passover story (Ex 12).  
The 2<sup>nd</sup> cup washes away the bitterness of slavery, Ex 6:6. – ‘I will free you (Ex 6:6).’
- There is a prayer of blessing and eating of unleavened bread.

Mark picks up the Passover here ... ‘While they were eating, v. 22.’  
The meal of roasted lamb, v. 22.

Jesus reinterprets the bread ... ‘This is my body, v. 22.’

The 3<sup>rd</sup> cup brings salvation, Ex 6:6. – ‘I will redeem you (Ex 6:6).’ It normally symbolized thanksgiving for their deliverance. But ...

Jesus reinterprets the 3<sup>rd</sup> cup .... ‘This is my blood, v. 24.’

The singing of the Hallel (Ps 113–118). ‘When they had sung a hymn, they went out, v. 26.’ These Psalms center on the coming of Elijah and the Messiah.

Jesus refrains from the 4<sup>th</sup> cup ... ‘I will not drink again, v. 25.’

The 4<sup>th</sup> cup celebrated the coming kingdom, Ex 6:7. – ‘I will take you as my own people (Ex 6:7).’  
Drinking the 4<sup>th</sup> cup usually concludes Passover, but Jesus refuses to drink the cup of consummation.

Let’s return to Mark’s story. ‘As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take it, for this is my body.”<sup>23</sup> And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.<sup>24</sup> And he said to them, “This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many.<sup>25</sup> I tell you the truth, I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.”<sup>26</sup> Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives (14:22-26 NLT).’

I believe Mark emphasizes the change from the traditional Passover to himself as savior, God’s Passover lamb.

Jesus used common objects to say ‘this is like that’ for new meaning:

- Jesus’ body, like the bread will be broken for our sins.
- Jesus’ blood, like the cup of bitter suffering, is poured out for our sins.
- Just like the first Passover lamb’s death spared the people of Israel from God’s wrath on Egypt, Jesus’ death is like the sacrificial lamb whose blood covers us sinners from God’s punishment.
- Jesus serves by ‘Giv(ing) his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45 NLT).’
- The Passover cups become the cup of salvation.

- The unfinished Passover, the 4<sup>th</sup> cup, is a promise of a future and ultimate celebration. At that time God will be with his people.

Jesus changed the ancient Passover to illustration that his life and blood would bring salvation. Later, the disciples would remember this significant change and understand its meaning.

One of the more encouraging points my study revealed is that Jesus had an attitude of victory not defeat throughout his passion.

- Jesus and the disciples left the upper room singing Psalm 118: 'The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation ... <sup>17</sup>I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done. <sup>18</sup>The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death (Ps 118:14, 17-18 NIV).<sup>4</sup> A song of victory as he goes off to his death.

The next section should personally challenge us.

## 7. Denial, 14:27-31.

'On the way, Jesus told them, "All of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say, 'God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'<sup>28</sup> But after I am raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there."<sup>29</sup> Peter said to him, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will."<sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me."<sup>31</sup> "No!" Peter declared emphatically. "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!" And all the others vowed the same (14:27-31 NLT).'

- 'The profession of loyalty made by Peter ... serves to heighten the completeness of their failure.'<sup>4</sup>
- Despite the loyalty oaths, all would fall away in shame.
- There is hope: even though there is betrayal and denial, Jesus said 'after I am raised from the dead' I will meet you in Galilee.

If Peter and these disciples who had been with Jesus would fall away, what about us? Just like no one imagines divorce on their wedding day, we might have the best of intentions to follow Jesus, but we stumble and fall. They saw the miracles, heard the teaching, ate with him, and still fell away.

Remember, Mark is writing to Christians in Rome who are going through persecution.

---

<sup>4</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 512.

Mark's solution for persecution is to point to the person of Jesus - 'You are the Messiah (Mk 8:29 NLT).'

- The Messiah's suffering was worth it; it was purposeful and valuable.
- Our suffering is purposeful and is a part of following him. 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me (Mk 8:34 NLT).'

Conclusion.

We are like his disciples. No matter how devoted and committed we say we are, we are human and regularly disappoint God. We desire the throne and not the cross; we find ourselves denying and betraying rather than declaring the Good News. From the beginning the twelve disciples ...

- Don't understand the sacrifice of the woman who anointed Jesus for burial.
- Cannot work miracles like the woman who reached out and touched him.
- Lack faith of the poor widow woman who gave her last two small copper coins.

We are these disciples.

After his resurrection, Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith and 'stubborn refusal to believe (Mk 16:14 NIV).' Immediately after the rebuke, Jesus commissions these failures to 'Go into all the world and preach the good news (Mk 16:15 NIV).'

How is this possible?

'Repentance is not just how we start following Jesus; it is how we continue to follow Jesus after we wander from the path of discipleship.'<sup>5</sup> We are to repent and get behind Jesus, to follow him (8:34).

""The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News (Mk 1:15 NLT)!"

'The disciples went out, telling everyone they met to repent of their sins and turn to God (Mk 6:12 NLT).'

'For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45 NLT).'

'I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me (Phil 3:12 NIV).'

**Never give up.**

---

<sup>5</sup> John J.R. Lee and Daniel Brueske, *A Ransom for Many: Mark 10:45 As a Key to the Gospel* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023), p. 161.

Prayer.