Session 10: Mark 14:1–15:47

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: Despite being abandoned, Jesus accomplished his mission on the cross, laying a victorious foundation for our eternal hope.

Head Change: To know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus loves us.

Heart Change: To feel genuine affection for Jesus.

Life Change: To set out to proclaim the wonderful thing that Jesus accomplished for us on the cross.

OPEN

Are you a "lone ranger," or do you prefer to face challenges with a partner or team? Which approach works better, in your opinion?

In this session Mark takes us with Jesus right into the hardest part of his mission. He has support up until a point, but eventually he faces his cross alone.

READ

Read Mark 14:1–15:47. (In the video, Francis picks up his teaching at Mark 14:22. Read at least 14:1–21 to give you a background for what's to come.)

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Francis's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions:

How did Jesus feel about gathering with his disciples for Passover?

In what way does Jesus's suffering point to the love of God for us?

What is the cross about, according to Francis?

Show Session 10: Mark 14:1–15:47 (14 minutes)

DISCUSS

In the session, Francis pointed out that Jesus was looking forward to celebrating Passover with his disciples—his friends. **As you listened to Francis tell the story of the Last Supper and the events in Gethsemane, what emotions surfaced in you toward Jesus?**

Jesus knows full well what he's going to face the next day. And he knows that the friends that have stuck by him through everything on this journey to Jerusalem are going to abandon him. And yet he still shows them love—promising that his death is for their sake.

Think about the people in your life that you love more than anything. **How would you respond to them if you knew, in just a few hours, that they would betray and abandon you? What would you be feeling?**

Hold that response and those feelings in your mind for a moment. **What does it say about Jesus's love for us that he *wants* to spend time with us despite what he knows about us?**

Before we immerse ourselves in the Passion narratives, let's read Mark 14:3–9.

How would you describe the woman's gift to Jesus?

What were the guests at the dinner concerned with in regard to the woman?

How did Jesus respond?

Mark describes Simon as a leper, but he would have had to be healed since no leper would have

dined with healthy people. Whether Jesus was the one who healed him or not, we can only speculate, but it's possible that this was Simon's way of thanking Jesus.

To pour perfumed oil over a guest's head at a dinner was a sign of high respect and adoration, which is exactly what she does. But rather than recognize the display of deep love and affection for Jesus, the gathered guests criticize her.

[Note: For further study on anointing with oil, and the deeper significance of the woman's act, see Go Deeper section 1 at the end of the session.]

Jesus's response should stop us in our tracks. He calls the woman's action beautiful because she honored *him*. Throughout the book, Jesus's expectation for his disciples is that they join him in his mission by serving others. But here at the end, knowing there's little time he has left with his followers, he acknowledges the woman's love and devotion to him.

What value do you find in praise and worship, whether in song or reading or praying? How does that practice enhance your relationship with God?

Often we equate worship with singing, but it's much more than that. Worship involves obedience, prayer, speaking well of God, appreciating his works, and more. **What is your favorite way to worship God?**

Read Mark 14:12–42. **What are the disciples doing or saying? What does Jesus do? How is he feeling?**

The road to the crucifixion winds ever closer for Jesus. After supper he takes his friends to the Mount of Olives, where he tells them what is about to happen. They then make the short walk to Gethsemane, where Jesus goes off alone to pray.

In the session, Francis talked about the deep anguish that Jesus finally gives vent to in the garden. Jesus is wrestling with the road ahead of him. And his friends can't stay awake with him for even an hour. In a way, they've already begun to abandon him.

Nothing on this road of discipleship is beyond Jesus's experience. He knows your pain. That's why he can completely represent us to God. That's why he can stand in our place at the cross. That's why he can weep with us in our own pain.

Empathy is much more powerful than mere sympathy. **How has someone comforted you out of an experience of their own that was similar to yours?**

Jesus's time in the garden helps us see how human he really is. **How does his anguish there, anticipating his coming suffering, help you identify with him more closely?** (See Hebrews 5:7.)

Read Mark 14:53–72.

Recall how Jesus's identity as the Son of God was affirmed by the Father twice: at his baptism and at the Transfiguration. Jesus gradually revealed his identity only to his disciples, keeping that information close.

The Jewish high priest asked Jesus if he was the Messiah (14:61–65). **How did he answer, and how did the high priest respond?**

Peter subsequently was questioned about his relationship to Jesus. **How did he respond?**

It is ironic that two Jews heard the Son of God affirm his true identity, yet the one who should have recognized the Messiah (the high priest) rejected him as a blasphemer and the other (Peter), who knew beyond a doubt who Jesus was, denied knowing him for fear of human authorities. It may be tempting to mock them, but let's turn the question to ourselves. **Would you recognize God's Holy One? Or do you have a certain image in mind of what he'll look like? Have you ever turned your back on him in fear of others' opinions?**

Read Mark 15:1–15.

Pilate, a Roman governor, asked Jesus an equivalent question (15:2). **How does Pilate's response compare to the high priest's?**

How does Mark describe Barabbas?

Based on 15:7, what does Barabbas offer the people that Jesus doesn't or chose not to?

The crowds that followed Jesus, much like the disciples, didn't want a suffering savior—they wanted a conquering Christ. Barabbas the murderer had earned his executioner's sentence in an anti-Rome uprising. *He*, not Jesus, was the warlike champion the people wanted.

Read Mark 15:16–32. Throughout the book of Mark, we've seen Jesus validate his claim to be

the Christ. The Father himself twice confirmed Jesus as his beloved son. **Yet, how did the Jews, the Romans, and the passersby treat the divine king?**

Read Mark 15:33–39. Here at the end of the story, the words that were so sweet in the mouth of Peter—“you are the Christ”—become a curse in the mouths of all who see Jesus. All, that is, except one. **Who, in the end, understood who Jesus was?**

It wasn’t the disciples—they’d run from Jesus’s captors. It wasn’t the Jewish people—they traded the Son of God for a murderer. It was a pagan Roman centurion—a man who represented everything the Jews wanted the Messiah to destroy. He got it.

Over and over in the sessions, Francis has been asking us if we *really* get it. Jesus is the Son of God. He lived and walked in the places we’ve seen in the videos. He is real. His life is real. His works are real.

Who is Jesus to you? What does that mean, then, for your life?

[Note: For further study on Jesus’s final words on the cross, see Go Deeper section 2 at the end of this session.]

LAST WORD

This session ends on a somber note. Jesus is dead. He's been crucified. Those who were closest to him denied him. But remember Francis's words, "No matter what happens in your life, you should always be able to look to the garden, look to the cross and know that God loves you." Francis reminds us that nothing can compare to the love the Father showed us by allowing his Son to die for us.

Do we really get this? Have our eyes really been opened to the greatness of the gospel message? How should we respond?

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

1. Background: Anointing with oil

The most common oil in Israel was extracted from the olive trees around the country. Olive oil was so plentiful that, in addition to regular use in hygiene and medicine, it was used as currency, along with animals and precious metals. King Solomon even used it as partial payment to Hiram in exchange for construction expenses with the temple (1 Kings 5:11).

But often, oil was used for sacred events:

- Some priests were anointed with a special God-ordained blend of spices and oil (Ex. 30:22–25). We see Aaron and his sons anointed, as well as all of the holy articles used in the tabernacle (Ex. 30:26–32).
- Similarly, kings were anointed with oil during their coronation or ceremonial calling (as with Saul in 1 Sam. 10:1; David in 1 Sam. 16:13, 2 Sam. 2:4; 5:1–5; Jehu in 2 Kings 9:1–6). In this sort of ceremony, oil was poured out onto the person's head.
- Prophets, such as Elisha, were anointed in the same way (1 Kings 19:16).

The pouring out of oil over God's chosen representatives displayed physically what had already happened spiritually: that person was being set apart—designated as holy—for God's special service. So when the woman approached Jesus and sacrificed her valuable jar of nard (oil) by pouring it over his head, those in the room understood the significance of her action. The fact that Jesus accepted and approved her behavior also spoke volumes.

Remember that all through the book of Mark, Jesus has been revealing his identity as the Son of God gradually. By now, on the cusp of his crucifixion, he's not hiding it anymore. He is the Messiah, a name derived directly from the Hebrew word for "anointed." As the Anointed One, he is the savior Israel has been waiting for. Different scholars, leaders, and citizens envisioned this Messiah in a variety of ways, but under Roman occupation, few were expecting a Prince of Peace.

Read more from the Old Testament about the Messiah, also known as the Anointed One, the Servant: Psalm 2:2; Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Daniel 9:25–26.

In each passage, what do you learn about the Messiah?

The Greek word for Messiah is Christ. Reflect on these mentions of the Messiah in the New Testament:

> Matthew 1:17–18—**In what context is he mentioned? Why is it significant here?**
> Luke 2:11— **Why is this good news to the shepherds?**

Acts 4:25–26—**Which Old Testament passage is quoted here? How are Peter and John applying it in their speech?**

The coming of the Messiah was the answer to centuries of prayer—Israelites longing for God to return and rescue them. We also benefit from his coming, since he came to redeem all humanity—not from the Romans, but from the rule of sin and death.

What does Jesus's title of Messiah mean to you? In what ways do you profit from his coming, all these years later?

2. Peek at the "Greek": **"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?"**

Actually, those words were not spoken or written in Greek, but in Aramaic, the everyday language that Jesus spoke. The phrase means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus was quoting the opening line of Psalm 22.

Other gospel writers record more of what Jesus says and does in his last moments on the cross, but Mark chose only this one phrase. He wants to lean into the true depth of suffering that Jesus endures for our sake—as the righteous payment for the sins of many.

In the first century, the Jewish Scriptures didn't have chapter and verse numbers. If they wanted to refer to a passage—particularly a psalm—they'd quote the first few words or line. So too here. Mark recorded not just the despairing words of Jesus as he suffered the full weight of judgment for sin, but also the hints of promised vindication.

Read through Psalm 22—all of it. As you do, consider how it might summarize the whole of the Mark's gospel.

How does the full context of Psalm 22 color the final moments of Jesus's life? What does the poem hint at that should give us hope?

Jesus was the suffering savior. Born to die, rejected by his closest friends and family, and murdered by the people he'd come to serve. Jesus's mission as the Christ was not to conquer, but to show compassion to a world stained by sin. In his faithful obedience to the Father, Jesus purchased salvation for many.

So that, as the writer of Psalm 22 says, "It shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it."

You were one of those "yet unborn." Someone told you about Jesus. **How did you come to faith in Jesus? What was that process or event like?**

How eagerly do you tell others about Jesus? Do you feel comfortable explaining to others why faith in Jesus is so crucial for them? Why or why not?