

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, March 15- Friday, March 19

Monday, March 15- Read Mark 14:1- 9, John 12:1- 8. Someone (probably Jesus) had healed Simon, “the Leper,” or he could not have hosted a dinner like this. Mark identifies the host; John names the woman, as well as the disciple who criticized her lavish act. Jesus, keenly aware that within 48 hours he would be crucified, said Mary had anointed him in advance of his burial. Imagine the deep love and gratitude that led Mary to do this extravagant act for Jesus. What does Jesus’ response say about how much her fervent love meant to him as he faced death? How can you show your love for Jesus, both in your inner “sacred space” and outwardly, with Mary’s spontaneity and urgency? “Leave her alone,” Jesus said to those who criticized Mary’s act of worship. Are you ever critical of the way someone else praises or serves God? How can this story help you move beyond a critical spirit to value the uniqueness of each giver and each gift?

Tuesday, March 16 –Read Mark 14:10- 11, Luke 22:1- 6. Judas spent three years with Jesus, but he never gave up control of his heart and will. Yesterday we read that John saw him as a money-hungry embezzler. Today we see him selling his knowledge of Jesus’ whereabouts. Luke says Satan entered him—but, tragically, it was Judas who opened the door to that. Judas may have realized that Jesus had no intention of being a conquering, military Messiah. Perhaps he hoped to force Jesus’ hand through this betrayal. Are there any areas of life where you think you know a better way than God’s? Pray for clarity in understanding what God wants. Then submit your will to God’s. Judas may have betrayed Jesus (his teacher, mentor, friend and Lord) for no larger reason than sheer greed. Have you ever been betrayed by someone you loved and trusted? If so, invite Jesus into your deepest being today to begin healing the wounds left by betrayal. He knows exactly how it feels.

Wednesday, March 17 – Read Matthew 22:1- 10, 23:1- 39. In Jesus’ very pointed story, a king held a wedding banquet. Amazingly, to their great loss, the guests he invited turned down the invitation. Then Jesus bluntly laid out the case against the religious rulers plotting his death. At the end, his holy anger shifted to aching words of sadness and regret. Jesus told so many stories like this one that turn our usual expectations upside down. Is it good or bad news to you that, in the end, anyone the servants found, the bad as well as the good, made up the banquet crowd? Are you open to sharing heaven’s banquet with anyone God invites? Jesus addressed the same rulers who, while making pious speeches, were paying Judas to betray him. In what areas are you tempted to sound more peaceful, loving or holy than you really are? How can you set pretense aside? Are you willing to let Jesus gather you under his wings just as you are?

Thursday, March 18- Read Luke 21:1- 4, John 12:20- 37. The widow’s devout generosity was such a contrast to the hostile authorities and the betraying Judas. Jesus noticed and prized it. The Greek pilgrims who asked for him were a sign that his self-giving on the cross would conquer hearts (verse 32). In its radical, self-sacrificing way, His Kingdom would triumph. We sometimes use the phrase “all in” to describe a person who is completely committed to a belief or a course of action. How, quite literally, was the widow Jesus noticed in the Temple “all in” for God’s Kingdom? In what ways are you “all in” with Jesus? In what ways, if any, are you holding back? Jesus said unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains but a single kernel. When it dies, it bears many seeds. How does this image explain the spiritual power of Jesus’ death? What goals or ambitions, if any, might need to die in order for your life to have the fullest spiritual impact?

Friday, March 19- Read John 13:1-30. John wrote about the meaning of the bread and wine in John 6:30-59. In this passage he takes the meal as a given. Instead, he shows us Jesus' servant heart in action. Notice the tragic deeper meaning of "it was night" in John 13:30. Palestine was dusty, and most people wore sandals. Having a servant wash your guests' feet was not a symbol, but a practical act. How did Jesus explain to his shocked disciples the meaning of his doing this menial task? What are some practical ways you can "wash the feet" of your fellow Christians? John weaves the ideas of light and darkness all the way through his story of Jesus (John 1:4-9, 8:12, and in chapter 12, which we read yesterday). Now we see Judas turn from "the light of the world" and walk into the night. How do you keep your vision focused on the light rather than the darkness?