

Mark 14. 27-72: Jesus' Betrayal and Trial

Jenny Douglas

1. A quick return to last week's lesson and the anointing at Bethany: One commentator suggests that the disciples might have thought something sensible like "you've got to set limits" or "balance is the key to happiness." In contrast, he suggests that Mary is showing true faith and extravagant devotion, truly sold out for Christ. Do you think this captures the point of this passage? (Tim's question)
2. Vs. 27-31: Jesus predicts the disciples' failure and Peter's denial in particular. In vs. 27, he quotes from Zechariah 13.7. Read this passage and discuss the messianic implications in Zechariah's prophecy.
 - a. In light of Peter's vehement words, has he learned anything since his denial of Jesus' passion prediction in chapter 8 (the "get behind me, Satan" passage)? Look at the events in this night from Peter's perspective. What's his mindset at this point, just after the Last Supper and before Gethsemane?
3. Vs. 32-41: the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus' use of the term "Abba" to refer to God was unique; contemporary Jewish writing does not contain similar references to God.
 - a. When Jesus prays that the "hour might pass from him," is he praying for a release from physical suffering? What other reasons might his soul be "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death"?
 - b. One commentator (Williamson) reminds us that Jesus' direction to "watch" in 14.34 echoes the last word of chapter 13. What are the disciples keeping watch for? In what ways should we also be vigilant in keeping watch?
 - c. Mark's gospel does not include the Lord's prayer. What hints of it can we see in Jesus' prayer here?
 - d. How do you understand Jesus' exclamation "Enough!" in vs. 41? Is he simply frustrated with his disciples?
4. Vs. 43-52: Judas' Betrayal and Jesus' Arrest
 - a. Contrast Judas' betrayal with Peter's denial of Christ. Why is Peter later reinstated and Judas permanently lost?
 - b. Consider Jesus' words in vs. 48-49. What is his response to the motley crowd of armed men? What qualities is he evincing in his reply? How does this account of the arrest scene differ in tone from the other gospels?
 - c. Vs. 51-52 describes a young mystery man who flees the scene naked. Many commentators have speculated on the identity of this person. Possibilities include the following: Mark himself, John, James the

brother of Jesus, a resident of the house where the Last Supper was celebrated, a reference to Joseph fleeing Potiphar's wife, an allusion to Amos 2.16 where warriors flee naked, and a typological figure for desertion. Regardless of the man's identity, what does his rapid flight tell us about the situation?

- d. Identify the different ways in which the disciples abandon Jesus throughout this series of events, beginning in the garden.
5. Vs. 53-72: Peter's Betrayal and Jesus' Trial. Another Mark sandwich: Jesus' trial is set between the halves of Peter's story. The Sanhedrin wanted to execute Jesus but needed the Roman authorities in order to pass a death sentence. Jewish law required unanimous evidence from 2 witnesses, so we can see the bungling attempts to assemble a viable charge against Jesus.
- a. The two main charges brought against Jesus have to do with the destruction of the Temple and with his claim to be God's son. Evaluate the charge of destroying the Temple in light of the relation between Old Covenant and New Covenant.
 - b. Earlier in Mark, Jesus has referred to himself as "Son of Man," but not as Son of God. Now he is directly asked to accept this identity, and he answers, "I am." What other passages in the Bible use this formula referring to God?
 - c. Jesus' answer in vs. 62 draws together Psalm 110.1 and Daniel 7.13.
 - d. Contrast Jesus' responses during trial with Peter's responses to questioning; what are we to learn from these two instances of testing? Mark tells Peter's story in great detail. Why spend so much time emphasizing Peter's mistakes?
 - e. Williamson notes that Peter's denials should be read in relation to the experiences of early Christians. How should they, and we, learn from Peter's denial of Christ?