



# EYES ON JESUS

**Community Group Study Guide**

# Eyes on Jesus: Misjudging Eyes

## Week 1 of Lent

### Mark 14:1–9

Pray: Almighty and everlasting God, You despise nothing You have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent. Create in us new and contrite hearts that lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness we may receive from You full pardon and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Ash Wednesday, *LSB Altar Book*, p. 578)

*Introduction: When the characters in the Passion narrative look at Jesus, what do they see? This series, based on the Gospel according to St. Mark, will examine how the various people around Jesus viewed Him—and how we should view Him. In most cases, people misunderstood who He is and what He was doing. In some cases, by faith, people recognized Him aright. Above all, we will “fix our eyes” on what Jesus has done to save us from our sins by His holy, precious blood and innocent sufferings and death, and celebrate what God sees on account of His work: our justification for His sake.*

*Eyes on Jesus will continuously focus our eyes on Jesus Christ and Him crucified, buried, and risen for our justification. This is a vision that will never disappoint, for by trusting in Jesus, we see His promises that we will gaze upon His beautiful face now by faith and forever in heaven!*

*During Lent (actually, at all times), our eyes should be firmly fixed on Jesus Christ and Him crucified for our salvation. Through the eyes of faith, we look behind the shame and apparent folly of the cross and find the central event in human history and God’s plan to save the world through His Son. However, the unbelieving world misjudges “the word of the cross” as folly (1 Corinthians 1:18), and Jesus’ own disciples fall into this same trap in the days leading up to Good Friday. In spite of Jesus’ repeated predictions about His upcoming Passion, the disciples fail to recognize that soon He will not be with them, and they cannot see the anonymous woman’s anointing of Jesus as preparation for His burial.*

Read Mark 14:1–9.

**1. When Mark begins his Passion narrative by mentioning the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, along with the fact that the Jewish leaders were seeking to kill Jesus, what is he trying to evoke in his readers' minds? See John 1:29 and 1 Corinthians 5:6–8.**

*The plotting of the Jewish leaders sets the stage for what is to come, but much needed to be accomplished before the Passover Lamb could be sacrificed. First, He needed to be anointed beforehand for burial.*

**2. Contrast the actions of the unnamed woman who anointed Jesus with those present at the meal who chastised her deed. In what ways did these men misjudge what had just taken place? How does Jesus correct their vision?**

*The title Christ (or Messiah) means “anointed one.” In Acts 10:38, Peter says that Jesus was “anointed . . . with the Holy Spirit and with power” by His Father.*

**3. How does this woman's deed highlight Jesus' role as our great High Priest? See Exodus 29:7–9 and Hebrews 7:23–27. In what ways is Jesus different from the priests of the Old Testament?**

*Jesus Christ crucified for our sins is the heart of the Gospel.*

**4. Jesus says that the woman would be remembered “wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world.” Why is proclamation of the Gospel central to the mission of the Christian Church? See Mark 1:14–15. What are the effects of this proclamation, according to Romans 1:16 and Colossians 1:3–6?**

*One of the fruits of the Gospel is good works done by disciples of Jesus, including giving to the needy (cf. Matthew 6:2).*

**5. Compare Deuteronomy 15:11 with Mark 14:7. Why was giving to the poor not the right thing for the woman to do at that particular moment? How do we reconcile Jesus saying “you will not always have Me” with His promise to His Church, “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20)?**

*The quantity of perfumed ointment must have made Jesus' body quite fragrant.*

Read Ephesians 4:32-5:2 and 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

**6. According to Ephesians, what “smell” metaphor does Paul use to describe Jesus’ work for us? How does he describe Christians in 2 Corinthians?**

*One thing unbelievers (and even some Christians!) often misjudge is the role of good works in the Christian life.*

**7. How does Jesus warn us *not* to view good works in Matthew 6:1–4? What is the source of our good works, according to Ephesians 2:8–10?**

### Closing

*God had prepared the “beautiful thing” of anointing Jesus’ body “for burial” as a good work for one particular woman to perform, even though those around her misjudged its value and purpose. While no mention is made of the resurrection, the mention of burial will recall for the reader of Mark’s Gospel Jesus’ previous predictions of not only dying but also rising (Mark 8:31–32; 9:30–32; 10:32–34). As we begin the penitential season of Lent this week, we will keep our eyes focused on the cross, but we also will look forward to celebrating a joyful Eastertide soon.*

Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, today in contrition we enter the holy season of Lent in order to meditate on the sufferings and death that You endured to save us. Help us never to misjudge the value of Your sacrifice for us, but always to hold it as our dearest treasure and fix our eyes upon You, the author and perfecter of our faith. May Your willingness to deny Yourself, take up the cross, and suffer for us inspire in us a hatred of sin and a zeal to follow Your example for the sake of our neighbor; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## **Leader Guide Answers:**

A1. By mentioning these festivals, Mark focuses us on the Old Testament background of Jesus' last days. In Exodus 12–13, the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were instituted. The people ate of the sacrificed Passover lamb and marked the doorposts and lintels of their doors with its blood, which preserved the Israelites when the Lord executed judgment on the Egyptians. Jesus is the Passover "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), "Christ, our Passover lamb" who has been sacrificed (1 Corinthians 5:7), who will replace the Passover meal with the festival of bread that is His body and wine that is His blood, given and shed on the cross for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 14:22–25).

A2. The woman's loving action toward Jesus stands in stark contrast to the guests at the meal who criticize her. These men expressed their anger to one another over her apparent wastefulness and then scolded the woman. Jesus' response to them in Mark 14:6 suggests that they were even intimidating her. They misjudge when they believe that the financial value of the ointment (at least thirty thousand dollars in contemporary currency) was a concern for Jesus and that the proceeds from its sale would have been better used to help the poor. Jesus corrects their vision by explaining that with this beautiful deed, the woman was anointing His body beforehand for His burial soon to come after His upcoming death and, in fact, that what she did would be remembered until He comes again in glory on the Last Day.

A3. The Lord commanded that the priests of Israel be anointed as part of their ordination rite. Jesus' anointing by this woman reminds the reader that He has been anointed by God for the purpose of sacrificing Himself to God on our behalf and making intercession for us as our great High Priest forever. Unlike the priests that came before Him, Jesus is one rather than many, since He will remain forever after His resurrection, which means that He can save us from death and hell. Also unlike the other priests, He was not in need of forgiveness of sins because He is perfect and holy and, in fact, sacrificed Himself on the cross once for all mankind.

A4. The term "gospel" is more prominent in Mark than in the writings of other evangelists. Mark starts out, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1) and then presents Jesus proclaiming "the gospel of God" and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (vv. 14–15). Since the Gospel is a message, it must be preached in order for it to be heard and believed. It is "the power of God for salvation" to all

who believe (Romans 1:16) and is “the word of the truth” (Colossians 1:5), which presents a hope laid up in heaven for us and bears fruit and increases wherever it is proclaimed in the world (Colossians 1:3–6).

A5. Jesus’ praise of the woman’s deed is not intended to detract from the goodness of caring for the poor; rather, she did just the right thing for this momentous occasion, so normal “doing good” must give way to doing “a beautiful thing” for the Lord (Mark 14:6). When Jesus says, “you will not always have Me,” He is referring to His upcoming death, for which the woman anointed Him. After His resurrection and ascension, He is always with His Church until the Last Day (Matthew 28:20). In fact, one of the reasons we do not simply give all of the church’s offerings to the poor, but devote some of the proceeds to outfitting appropriate worship spaces, is because we are confessing that Jesus is really with us wherever two or three have been gathered in His name (cf. Matthew 18:20).

A6. The “fragrant offering and sacrifice” of Christ to God (Ephesians 5:2) pleased the Father and turned away His wrath against our guilt. Now, as God in Christ has forgiven us, we are to share the sweet “aroma” of forgiveness with one another. In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul uses “smell” language to describe how Christians carry the Gospel message everywhere they go, which is a fragrance enjoyed by believers but rejected by unbelievers.

A7. Jesus cautions us against viewing good works as opportunities to put on a show of our piety and receive praise from other people. Rather, we do good works to serve our neighbor, confident that our Father in heaven will reward us as He sees fit. Paul also warns us not to view good works as a means of being saved; rather, salvation, faith, and good works are gifts from God, and we have been created in Christ Jesus “for good works, which God prepared beforehand” for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10).

# Eyes on Jesus: Betraying Eyes

## Week 2 of Lent

### Mark 14:10–21, 41–50

Pray: O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for the First Sunday in Lent, *LSB Altar Book*, p. 580)

*Introduction: The Jewish leaders desired to destroy Jesus, but they knew they would need to do it surreptitiously, since Jesus was popular among many Jews. At Passover, there were a large number of pilgrims in Jerusalem, and the leaders did not want to risk stirring up Jesus' supporters to rebellion, which would alarm the Romans. So they found in the "Betraying Eyes" of Judas an ideal partner in crime. While Judas was a willing betrayer of Jesus, God was still always in control and executing His saving plan, as Peter later proclaimed on Pentecost: "This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (Acts 2:23).*

Read Mark 14:10–11 and Luke 22:3 and John 13:27

**1. According to Luke 22:3 and John 13:27, who urged Judas Iscariot to betray his Lord? Does this fact in any way exonerate him? What essential task of a disciple did Judas fail to employ? See Mark 14:38.**

*James writes, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (4:7). St. Paul says, "Give no opportunity to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27). But when we commit willful sins as Judas did, we give an opening for Satan to slither into our hearts.*

**2. Judas was willing to betray Jesus in exchange for money (Mark 14:11). We know he was greedy and even a thief (John 12:6). How is Judas an appropriate negative example for the warning from the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 6:8–10? What is the spiritual antidote for this form of idolatry? See Hebrews 13:5.**

Read Mark 14:12-16

*On Mount Moriah, Abraham learned that “The Lord will provide” (Genesis 22:14) when God provided the ram in the thicket as a substitute to die in place of Isaac.*

**3. How do Jesus’ actions in Mark 14:12–16 reassure us that He knows exactly what we need and will always provide for us?**

Read Mark 14:17-21

*The betrayal of Jesus was necessary because it had been prophesied in the Old Testament. In Mark 14:18, Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9 to explain why He would be betrayed by one of the Twelve.*

**4. Read Psalm 41:9–13. How does reading the verses following the prediction of His betrayal add insight into what it meant that “the Son of Man goes as it is written of Him” (Mark 14:21)?**

*In other words, Psalm 41 contains a note of gloom, but if the disciples had remembered the entire context of the prophecy, they would not have been so distressed! Judas, however, would have done well to remember that the psalm predicted that the enemy of the Messiah would be repaid for his betrayal.*

**5. Jesus spoke woe upon His betrayer and said that it would have been better for him not to have been born (Mark 14:21). What do Matthew 27:3–5 and Acts 1:18–19 say about Judas’s demise? Even after betraying his Lord, what might he have done differently?**

Read Mark 14:41-50

*After Jesus prayed in Gethsemane (which we will study next week), He announced, “The hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, My betrayer is at hand” (Mark 14:41–42). Gethsemane had been a regular meeting place for Jesus and the disciples, so Judas knew where to find Him. But it was dark, so he needed a way to identify Jesus to the soldiers; this is why he had given the signal of the kiss.*

**6. *Rabbi* means “teacher” (John 1:38). In light of Mark 10:46, what is ironic about Judas looking Jesus in the eye and calling Him “Rabbi” before he kissed Him?**



*Mark 14:43 notes that Judas had come with a crowd brandishing swords and clubs. In the following verses (vv. 48–49), Jesus will point out the absurdity of this action, since He was no robber but had taught in the temple day after day, which would have provided the opportunity for them to arrest Him. Then He concludes with these words: “But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.”*

**7. Jesus was seized and arrested like a guilty criminal. How is the scriptural prophecy of Isaiah 53:9 fulfilled in Mark 14:48-49 and Matthew 27:57-60? What does this mean for sinners like us?**

*The verb we translate as “betray” (παραδίδωμι) in reference to Judas’s sin can also have the meaning “to give up” or “to hand over.” This verb is used in Romans 8:32 and 4:25 to refer to Jesus’ death.*

**8. While Judas “betrayed” Jesus, who “gave Him up”? See Romans 8:31-34 and 4:24-25.**

## Closing

*That verb we translate as “betraying,” but which also can mean “giving up” or “handing over” is used by St. Paul twice in 1 Corinthians 11:23: “For I received from the Lord what I also handed over to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was given up took bread” (emphasis added). It is true that Holy Thursday is the night when Jesus “was betrayed” by Judas, but what’s more important is that God “gave Him up” on the cross for our redemption. On that same night, Jesus handed over to the Church a means of participating in that redemption in the Sacrament of His body and blood. The apostles handed down to us the Words of Institution for Holy Communion, and through the Holy Christian Church, Jesus continues to hand over His body and blood into our mouths so that we may find comfort for our guilty consciences and assurance of resurrection for our dying bodies.*

Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when You were betrayed, You handed over to Your Church the blessed Sacrament of Your body and blood. The next day, You were handed over by Your Father to death on our behalf. Grant that, as our faith is strengthened by feasting on You, the Bread of Life, we may never betray You but steadfastly confess You as our Redeemer; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## **Leader Guide Answers**

A1. Satan entered Judas and urged him on. However, this does not remove Judas's guilt or excuse his willing participation. "The devil made me do it" is never an excuse for sin, as Eve had discovered in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:13, 16). Jesus will say in Gethsemane to Peter, James, and John, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Mark 14:38). Prayer is an effective weapon for disciples of Jesus against Satan; it was a tool Judas had not employed.

A2. Judas placed a greater value on money than on loyalty to his Lord. This love of money, a root of all sorts of evil, led him into temptation by Satan and the ultimate "ruin and destruction": wandering "away from the faith" (1 Timothy 6:9-10). The remedy for this covetousness is to cling to the Gospel truth that Jesus is our eternal treasure and that God promises never to leave or forsake us, so that we are empowered to be like St. Paul, content "in whatever situation I am" in (Philippians 4:11) and "free from love of money" (Hebrews 13:5).

A3. Jesus' foreknowledge of all the details of the room's arrangement and availability demonstrate His omniscience and control of the events leading up to His betrayal. It is important to be reminded that Jesus is not a helpless victim in His Passion but had a very specific purpose in mind: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). As the Lamb of God who dies as our substitute under God's wrath, what He wants to give us above all is forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation—our greatest needs.

A4. While "the Son of Man goes as it is written of Him" certainly refers to all the Old Testament prophecies of the suffering of the Messiah, in this context, looking at Psalm 41:9-13 is insightful not only because of the direct prediction of His betrayal but also because the story doesn't end there. Jesus would pray that His Father would raise Him up (v. 10), His enemies would triumph only for a short time (v. 11), and He would be set in the presence of God forever in His resurrection and exaltation (v. 12). The psalm ends on a note of doxology, praising the eternal Lord for His goodness in sending and vindicating the Messiah (v. 13).

A5. St. Mark does not mention anything more about Judas's fate, but Matthew and Luke fill out his sad story. Judas "changed his mind" but did not have contrition that led to repentance and asking forgiveness from God. (The chief priests also did a disservice to Judas by refusing to speak the Gospel to him.) Judas tried to atone for his sin with his own blood, just as Jesus was about to atone for the sin of the

whole world—even Judas’s betrayal!—on Mount Calvary. *Note:* There is no contradiction between Matthew 27:3–5 and Acts 1:18 regarding Judas acquiring the field. “He bought the field indirectly, because the Council did this with the money Judas returned” (*The Lutheran Study Bible*, p. 1832).

A6. Jesus had taught Judas the way of love and forgiveness, not the way of treachery. Yet Judas had betraying eyes. Ironically, blind Bartimaeus was able to see that Jesus was a true Rabbi and recognized Him as the Christ, the “Son of David.” While Judas handed Jesus over without mercy, the beggar cried out to Jesus for recovery of his sight. Judas was blinded by greed and treachery; the blind man had eyes of faith to believe that Jesus could both heal and save him. After he recovered his sight, he became a true disciple of Jesus, following Him “on the way” of truth.

A7. The prophecy of Isaiah pointed to the Messiah dying alongside wicked criminals (Mark 15:27), as well as to His burial in the tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57–60). At Calvary, the Innocent One died on behalf of the guilty. This is what Martin Luther called “the great exchange”: innocent Jesus dies, and we wicked sinners are set free from our sins. The immortal God dies for us; we mortals share in immortality. Jesus fulfills all righteousness by being condemned on the cross for our unrighteousness; now we become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21) as a free gift.

A8. Judas was the human agent in “giving Jesus up” to the Jewish authorities, but God was the divine agent who gave up His Son in death to achieve forgiveness of sins and justification for us. Now seated at the right hand of the Father, Jesus has prepared an eternal home for us and intercedes for us constantly until we join Him there. We now know that we will not be “handed over” to eternal death, since God justifies us!

# EYES ON JESUS: SLEEPY EYES

## WEEK 3 OF LENT

### MARK 14:32-42

Pray: Lord, as we open up your Word, open our hearts to Your truth. Fix our eyes on You and show us what you want us to see. If we've come with heavy hearts, lighten them, that we would seek You in peace. If we've come with noisy minds, quiet them, that we might hear Your voice. If we've come with sleepy eyes, brighten them, that we might see what it is You're doing, and what we should do in response. Amen.

Introduction: It's been said that the best way to fall asleep is to try your hardest to stay awake. This might say something about will power, self-sabotage, or even something deeper about human nature. We will see in Mark's account of Gethsemane how the disciples reveal their fallenness in their failure to "watch and pray." We will also see how Jesus triumphed over temptation in submitting to the Father's will, and how He continues to be faithful to us.

Read Mark 14:32-42

#### 1. Verses 32-33

Prior to going to Gethsemane, Jesus had just told the disciples that they would all "fall away" from Him (verses 26-31). Yet, he still lets them tag along up to the point of His betrayal. They certainly didn't think that they would abandon Him, even though they eventually did. Their good intentions don't make them "good disciples." He even takes Peter, who He predicted would deny Him. He even takes James and John, who thought that they could "drink from the same cup" as Jesus (Mark 10:38-39).

**What do you find striking about Jesus' "inner circle"?**

**How does this relate to Jesus saying, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,"?**

**What does this say about Jesus' faithfulness to His followers, then and now? Consider the troubled state He was in. Would it have been easier to send the disciples away? Why or why not?**

**Do you sometimes share the same cavalier attitude of the disciples, but fail also?**

## 2. Verses 34-36

This is the first time in Mark's Gospel that we actually get to see the content of Jesus' prayer. We see Jesus at His most vulnerable, it's just Him and the Father. He pours out His heart to the Father, and only asks that His disciples "watch".

**What is comforting about Jesus' distress in the face of death?**

**Where do you see similarities between this prayer and the Lord's Prayer? Why is this significant?**

**What do you see that reveals the nature of the relationship between the Son and the Father?**

**What about this prayer shows Jesus' humanity? His Divinity?**

**How do you normally pray when you are distressed? Is it difficult to give your sorrows, anxieties, and agony to God, but follow with "Thy will be done,"?**

## 3. Verses 37-38

We see here the disciples' failure. Not only do they fail to physically stay awake, disobeying Jesus, but they display their fallenness. Jesus was prepared to endure crucifixion, while the disciples could not endure even an hour of Jesus' agony. Yet He does not send them away. He remains faithful and exhorts them to "watch and pray".

**Consider Jesus' warning to the disciples to "stay awake" at the end of Chapter 13. In light of that, what did it really mean for the disciples to "watch and pray"?**

**Staying awake carries a connotation of "being vigilant". What does it mean for us to "be vigilant" in our time and place?**

**What does verse 38 share in common with the Lord's Prayer, why is that significant?**

**Our flesh, too, is weak. We're sinners, no doubt about it. What comfort does this text give to sinners who just can't seem to be faithful?**

## 4. Verses 39-42

We, like the disciples, have been unfaithful. But Jesus was, is, and will always remain faithful. He returns to prayer and *repeats* the same prayer to the Father. Despite the faithlessness of the disciples, despite His distress, despite what was to come, Jesus prayed fervently to the Father.

**Jesus knew what was to come in His crucifixion. The Father knew His Son's agony. Yet Jesus prayed the same prayer again. What does this say about prayer?**

**Jesus found the disciples sleeping again. How does the Christian life mirror this cycle of failure and striving to “stay awake”?**

**“The hour has come,” Jesus passed through His temptation. Ever faithful, He triumphed over it again. What is comforting about this?**

**Read Psalm 121. Note the description of the Lord never sleeping. How does that change the way you read this narrative? How does the narrative change the way you read Psalm 121?**

This week:

Look for places in your life where you are “spiritually asleep.”

Look for places to “be vigilant”.

Remember that Jesus was faithful, even unto death.

# Eyes on Jesus: Denying Eyes

## Week 4 of Lent

Mark 14:26–31, 66–72

Pray: Lord, as we open up your Word, open our hearts to Your truth. Fix our eyes on You and show us what you want us to see. If we've come with heavy hearts, lighten them, that we would seek You in peace. If we've come with noisy minds, quiet them, that we might hear Your voice. If we've come with denial, give us Your truth. Remain faithful to us and show us what we are to do in response to Your faithfulness. Amen.

*Introduction: Have you ever known a "flaky" person? Someone who makes grand commitments, but either never follows through or even does the exact opposite of what they said they would do? Flaky people can be frustrating. Sometimes we might think it would be better if they didn't make the commitments in the first place if they're just going to "flake off". We see in this text that Jesus knowingly picked, taught, and loved His disciples, flakes and all. If we're honest with ourselves, we have been just as flaky as Peter who denied Jesus. But Jesus was faithful to His disciples and is forgiving to us as well.*

Read Mark 14:26-31, 66-72

### 1. verses 26-31

Jesus predicts that the disciples will abandon Him and that Peter in particular will deny Him three times. Jesus has never made a prediction that has proved false. While this prediction is jarring, especially considering His crucifixion, already Jesus is pointing to His resurrection.

**The disciples "fell away" because their shallow faith was met with persecution. Most of us have not been persecuted like that. What does "falling away" look like today?**

**Jesus quotes Zechariah 13 to predict the disciples abandoning Him. Even when predicting the disciples falling away, He uses the language of a shepherd and sheep? What is striking about this? What is comforting?**

**The disciples certainly had good intentions, but they didn't have the faith to back it up. Does this same attitude persist today? What does it look like?**

**Why was it so hard for the disciples to "get" the Resurrection? Is it the same today?**

2. verses 66-72

*Note that while Peter is denying Him in the courtyard, Jesus is with the council, making a faithful confession. While Peter denies being with Jesus, being His disciple, or even knowing him, Jesus confesses that He is the Christ and that He will be seated at the right hand of Power. While Peter makes a shaky denial, Christ makes a powerful confession. The failure of Peter is juxtaposed with the faithfulness of Jesus.*

**The servant girl accuses Peter of being *with* Jesus, Peter denies it by saying “I don’t know what you are talking about,”. What do you think Peter is specifically afraid of? His denial seems duplicitous at best. What does this say about denial?**

**What fears lead us to deny Jesus?**

**The second denial is of being “one of them”. What is distinct about this denial? What would a similar denial look like in our context? Is it more concrete than the last one?**

**The third denial is more explicit. He outright denies *knowing* Jesus. Does this say something about the progression of sin?**

**Note that Peter does not even say Jesus’ name. Do you think he thought that would help his case? That he already felt guilty?**

**Some sins happen “in the heat of the moment,” some are more deliberate. In Which category would you put these denials? Why?**

**Peter realized what he had done. He remembered Jesus’ words. Can you think of a time where you remembered God’s Word only after failing Him?**

**That isn’t the end for Peter. Look ahead to John 21:15-19. Note the number of times Peter is invited to proclaim his love for Jesus. What does this say about Peter? What does it say about Jesus?**

**After Jesus died, rose, and ascended, Peter eventually did make good on His promise, dying for His faith. What changed? How was this possible? What does this say about faithfulness?**

**We, too, have denied Jesus. We, too, are redeemed by Jesus’ faithfulness and the forgiveness we have in Him. We, too, receive the same invitation Peter did: “Follow me.” How has this invitation changed your life? How might it?**



# Eyes on Jesu: Murderous Eyes

## Week 5 of Lent

### Mark 14:1–2, 53–65

Pray: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Lent, *LSB Altar Book*, p. 583)

*Introduction: The chief priests and scribes saw Jesus as an obstacle to be rid of by violence. The hatred that leads to murdering one's neighbor was as old as Cain killing his innocent brother Abel (Genesis 4:1-16). The Jewish leaders refused to believe that the source of all murderous thoughts is Satan, who "was a murderer from the beginning" and "the father of lies" (John 8:44). Yet during the Passover festival, their murderous plans for Jesus would unwittingly bring about the Father's sacrifice of the ultimate Passover Lamb.*

Read Mark 14:1–2, 53–65.

*Mark does not name the high priest, but the other Gospels identify him as Caiaphas. In John 11, we learn that he was a key player in hatching the plan to destroy Jesus.*

**1. Read John 11:45–53. Why were the Jewish leaders concerned about Jesus continuing His active ministry? How did God make good use Caiaphas's ruthless plan?**

*The Jewish leaders were seeking testimony to put Jesus to death (Mark 14:55). Under Roman rule, the Jews did not have authority to put anyone to death. Rather, they would establish charges against someone and then convince the Romans of that person's guilt. However, the Jewish leaders could not find witnesses to agree to charges against Jesus.*

**2. Mark 14:56 tells us that the "testimony [against Jesus] did not agree". Why might this have been problematic under Jewish law (see Deuteronomy 17:6)? What about when the Jewish leaders tried to convince the Romans of Jesus's guilt? How would conflicting testimony affect the outcome of a case today?**

*A sample of the false testimony against Jesus was "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands'" (Mark 14:57-58). Just as Satan twisted Scripture in his temptations of Jesus, so the Jews twist the words of Jesus to try to convict Him.*

**3. What was Jesus actually referring to when He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"? See John 2:19-21.**

*Jesus refused to answer the false charges against Him, but finally the high priest asked Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (Mark 14:61). (This was another way of asking, "Are You the Son of God?") Now that Jesus had received a question that got to the heart of the matter, the central truth of the Gospel, He would answer.*

**4. Jesus responds to the high priest's query with the words "I am" and calls himself the "Son of Man" (Mark 14:62). Why is the significance of Jesus saying "I am" greater than if he had answered merely "Yes"? What is the significance of Jesus calling himself the "Son of Man"? See Exodus 13:13-15, John 8:56-59, and Daniel 7:13-14.**

*The high priest asserts that Jesus's words are self-evident blasphemy and declares Jesus guilty. At his prodding, "they all condemned [Jesus] as deserving death" (Mark 14:64). Then some began to spit on Jesus and strike Him.*

**5. How does the spitting and the striking of Jesus by the mob fulfill Scripture? See Isaiah 50:4-9. How does this passage show that the disgrace suffered by the Lord's servant will not end in defeat?**

*We have focused on the "Murderous Eyes" of the Jewish leaders in this lesson. While few humans today have physically murdered another human being, we need to recognize that, according to God's standards of justice, we all have been guilty of murder and are in dire need of Jesus' salvation from sin.*

**6. Read 1 John 3:11-15. How does this passage show that none of us passes muster before God on the basis of the Fifth Commandment? How does the murder of Jesus at the hands of the Jewish leaders comfort us in the face of this revelation? See 1 John 3:16-20.**

## Closing

*Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:43-45). Our hatred of others has rendered us no less guilty than the Jewish leaders whose murderous hearts led them to hand Jesus over to the Romans for execution. May we find comfort in the fact that God the Father has been kind to us rebellious sinners and has accomplished the full forgiveness of all our sins through the murder of His innocent Son.*

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, we often have gazed with murderous hatred upon our fellow man. Look upon us with favor, forgive all our sins, and replace any hatred in our hearts with love for You and our neighbor; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## **Leader Guide Answers:**

A1. While some Jews had come to believe in Jesus, many of the Jewish leaders saw Him as a threat to their own influence and to the stability of Judea. The Romans controlled the region, and while they were willing to grant local control to traditional authorities, they would not tolerate disorder. They viewed Jesus as a political threat, since people who thought He had come to be a powerful military Messiah might try to gather a rebellion around Him. Caiaphas thought it would be better for Jesus to die rather than risk the nation being thrown into turmoil through a rebellion, but unwittingly, he was prophesying on behalf of God that “Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11:51–52). Jesus as Messiah had come to die for the sin of the whole world and usher in a Kingdom that is in the world but not of the world.

A2. In order to convince the Jewish council of the validity of the charge against Jesus, the Jewish leaders would need to convince the Romans that Jesus was guilty according to Roman law. Deuteronomy 17:6 says that one may be put to death only on the evidence of two or three witnesses. Deuteronomy 19:15 extends this rule to any crime. Furthermore, because the witnesses did not agree, this would have made it harder for the Jewish leaders to convince the Romans (or a court today) of Jesus’s guilt.

A3. The Jews could not fathom how Jesus could tear down a building that had taken forty-six years to build (and still wasn’t finished!) and rebuild it in three days. Of course, as God the Son, He could indeed do that (and more!), but He wasn’t even referring to a “temple that is made with hands” (Mark 14:58). Rather, St. John says, “He was speaking about the temple of His body” (John 2:21). In the New Testament, the temple of God is the body of Christ! His body would be given on the cross, and His blood would be shed to win forgiveness for the world. Then He would be raised up on the third day in order to serve as the permanent temple of God for His people.

A4. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, “I am” (ἐγώ εἰμι) is how the Lord of Israel identifies Himself in Exodus 3:14. Likewise, these are the same words Jesus speaks to the Jews who wondered how He could have “seen Abraham” (John 8:51): “Before Abraham was, I am” (v. 58). The same Lord who created the world, who had called Abraham, who had preserved Israel in Egypt and then saved them by the exodus was now standing before the high priest in the flesh! Jesus also calls

Himself the “Son of Man” (Mark 14:62), which is a reference to Daniel 7:13–14, where a heavenly “son of man” is given an everlasting kingdom—clearly a prophecy of Jesus Christ. The high priest’s reaction tells us that he understood exactly what Jesus was claiming about Himself: that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Son of Man who will come from the right hand of the Father as judge on the Last Day.

A5. In Isaiah 50:6, the Lord’s Suffering Servant says, “I gave My back to those who strike, and My cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not My face from disgrace and spitting.” The broader context of the passage (v. 4-9) shows us that in spite of Jesus’ own death by murder, He would not remain in disgrace. The Father would help Him during His sufferings to set His face like flint to endure them and would help Him emerge from the tomb victorious on Easter. Because of this, He sustains all who are wearied by their sins, teaches us the way of life, and grants that none who believe in Him will be put to shame on Judgment Day.

A6. The law of Christ is the law of love. Even in the face of the world’s contempt and persecution, we have no reason to hate others, since all have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 3:16). It is sobering to hear that “everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). From the cross, Jesus prayed even for His enemies that His Father would forgive them. So also, our enemies do not need our enmity but our love and prayers. We can all recognize the murderous thoughts we have harbored toward others, but Jesus’ murder on Calvary satisfied the Father’s anger against our sins and promises us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Even when we are guilty of hate or murder, God’s love for us in Jesus is greater than our guilt and covers our sin (1 John 3:19-20).

## Eyes on Jesus: Worldly Eyes

Week 6 of Lent 5

Mark 15:1–20

Pray: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. (Collect for the Fifth Sunday in Lent, *LSB Altar Book*, p. 585)

*Introduction: Last week, we saw how Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders coldly set aside the Law of God to make way for the worldly goal of preserving their political power by bringing false charges against Jesus. In this lesson, Pilate likewise views matters in a worldly, pragmatic way, wishing to placate the Jewish leaders and crowd, so he consents to handing Jesus over for crucifixion. The soldiers see the opposite of a worldly king, but their ironic hailing of Him as “King of the Jews” (Mark 15:18) proclaims who He really is. The world looks for power and glory; God’s way is suffering and the cross.*

Read Mark 15:1–20.

**1. Jesus is handed over to Pilate, who asks, “Are You the King of the Jews?” Jesus cryptically agrees. Mark does not give us details about the conversation about Jesus’ kingship, but John does. Read John 18:33–38. What does Jesus reveal about the nature of His kingdom? How does Pilate’s postmodern query “What is truth?” reveal what really matters to worldly minded rulers?**

*Pilate looked out at the crowd and heard their loud cries and decided to give them the customary release of a single criminal in celebration of their festival. The crowds demanded that Barabbas, who had committed murder during an insurrection, be set free instead of the innocent Jesus. The chief priests goaded them on.*

**2. Take another look at Mark 15:9-11. In what ways can the actions of the chief priests be understood as a betrayal of their office? How does the faithlessness of the chief priests highlight Jesus’ role as He is depicted in Hebrews 7:26–27?**

**3. How did the release of the murderer Barabbas underscore what was happening in Jesus’ Passion? See 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 1:4; 3:13. What are the implications of this for us today?**

**4. “Crucify!” the crowd shouted to Pilate, and he consented. Jesus would undergo a humiliating and excruciating death on the cross. While the world considers the idea of the crucifixion of God Incarnate “folly”, Paul says it is the power of God for those who are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18). In what ways, does the world consider the cross folly? How can Paul say the cross is the power of God? What does this have to do with us today (see Galatians 2:20 and 6:14)?**

Read Mark 15:16-20

**5. After Pilate handed Jesus over to the soldiers to be crucified, Mark tells us that they mocked and beat him. What does the soldier’s robing, crowning, and kneeling before Jesus reveal about the world’s idea of what a king should be? How does Jesus’s behavior demonstrate that he is a different kind of king?**

**6. Christians are called to love the Lord with all their heart and have Jesus as their dearest friend. How do James 4:4 and 1 John 2:15–17 describe friendship with and love of this sinful world?**

Closing

*Jesus said that His kingdom is not of this world, and He prayed to His Father for you: “[Father,] I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one” (John 17:14–15). By His righteousness, we stand justified before God. By His intercession, we are kept safe from Satan. By keeping our eyes fixed on Him, we are kept from falling back into the snares of this dying world. St. Paul writes to those baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:1–4).*

Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, the devil, the world, and our sinful nature constantly lead us to worldliness. Forgive our worldly sins and grant us the gift of heavenly mindedness so that we might live in the world while not being of the world; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## **Leader Guide Answers**

A1. Jesus says that His kingdom is not of this world or from this world. The servants of a worldly king are charged with protecting him from being apprehended by enemies; Jesus' servants do not take up arms, and Jesus willingly enters captivity. Jesus admits that He is a king, but He says He has come for the sole purpose of bearing witness to the truth, in contrast with the worldly Jewish leaders who were willing to bear false witness against Him in order to preserve their worldly power. Jesus says that everyone who belongs to the truth listens to Him, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. Pilate's skeptical question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38), reflects the worldview of one who was interested in using words to achieve political objectives rather than to speak the truth. So today, worldly minded politicians are often not interested in the truth but in power. By contrast, Jesus' kingdom is all about the truth of the Gospel, the way of the cross, salvation hidden beneath weakness.

A2. The chief priests were supposed to be spiritual leaders in Israel. They were to be men of peace who sought to provide reconciliation with God to the people, not men of wrath who stir up strife and lead the people into transgression. In contrast with the chief priests' impiety, guilt, blight, collaboration with sinners, and worldly baseness, the great High Priest Jesus is "holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). What's more, He did not ever need to perform sacrifices for His own sins, since He was innocent; rather, He offered Himself to the Father as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for the sin of the world on the cross (v. 27).

A3. While Jesus dies in place of Barabbas to spare his earthly life, the Gospel is that Jesus died in the place of all sinful humans in order to spare them from eternal damnation. God made Christ "to be sin" in place of us sinners even though He had no sin, so that in Christ "we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21), saved for everlasting life. Jesus "gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age" (Galatians 1:4), that is, so we may escape the fate of this condemned world and enjoy life in the new heavens and new earth. Christ became an accursed criminal on the cross, condemned under God's Law, so that we guilty sinners may be forgiven and set free from the eternal consequences of our misdeeds.

A4. The unbelieving world views the crucified Son of God as foolish and weak, unable to save Himself or us. In the world's eyes, the cross means defeat and



death. Yet, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has conquered death and promised life to those who belong to him (1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 54-57). On a personal level, all who have been baptized into Christ “have been crucified with Christ” so that our own lives no longer matter—all that matters is that we have life in the One who loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20). In fact, Paul would boast of nothing in this world “except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” which has made the world dead to us and has made us dead to the world (Galatians 6:14), while we remain alive in Christ.

A5. In a way, the soldiers mocking acknowledges that kings should wear the finest of robes, have crowns of gold to adorn their heads, and receive reverence from their subjects. But how does King Jesus behave? He seems as un-kingly as possible; but by humbling Himself to the point of death on the cross, He has been exalted to the Father’s right hand to live and reign for all eternity, to provide for us a heavenly kingdom with no end, and to prepare an everlasting feast for us in God’s palace (Philippians 2:5-11).

Q6. Christians are called to love the Lord with all their heart and have Jesus as their dearest friend. How do James 4:4 and 1 John 2:15–17 describe friendship with and love of this sinful world?