KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 26:1-30 – *by Jenny Laithwaite*

Week of Sunday 6th October

And so it begins. . .

Leader Preparation

The last chapters of Matthew contain many climactic elements. As much as we want to focus in on the wonderful truths of these final events of Jesus' life, our groups can't spend the next 2 months at peak emotional and spiritual focus all the time. Try to find ways to vary the spiritual tone of your evenings. While some evenings may be spent meditating on the sombre and wonderful events, include some worship music, share testimonies, take communion together and plan an outreach. This study is a bit like having Easter (or Good Friday!) every week for 6 weeks – make room for different ways to explore it.

Group Time:

In a bit of an aside, Matthew 26:30 (the last verse of this week's passage) says *"When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives"*

- Basing it on the Old Testament, what song do you think Jesus might have wanted to sing?
- What truths would he have wanted to affirm for the disciples?
- Being Passover, Jewish believers would likely have sung one of the "Hallel Psalms" from the Psalm 113-118. Psalm 113 or 114 were typically sung before the Passover meal, and Psalm 115 – 118 afterwards. Choose one to read together as a group now.

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 26:1-30

1. Preparation of Christ – vv1-16

Have you noticed through the book of Matthew how many times Jesus has told the disciples about his death that is now about to happen? – not vaguely or subtly, but clearly and specifically!

What aspects of this do you think the disciples understood? Which aspects do you think they had not grasped?

How can we be more attuned to God's plan taking shape in the world?

What words would you use to describe each of the following people? What do their actions tell us about what they think about Jesus?

The chief priests and elders (v3)	
The woman (v7)	
The disciples (v8)	
Jesus (v10)	
Judas Iscariot (v14)	

Which of these characters can you identify with? What are some of the responses that you can identify with?

2. The Passover Meal

When Jewish people celebrate(d) Passover, it was a remembrance of the freeing of the Israelites from Egypt by God's power. As part of this feast, the head of the household introduces food and drink each carefully chosen to symbolize and express aspects of this great event. This celebration was also a foreshadowing of Jesus' sacrifice that frees us from sin.

Read Exodus 12:3-14

What is the significance of Jesus acting as the host and guiding the disciples in this celebration?

How does he change the old celebration into something new? What does he do differently?

Jesus has anticipated his sacrificial death throughout his ministry. As you read his description, what do you feel?

Jesus also anticipates his betrayal by Judas. As much as we are familiar with Judas being the one who betrayed him, consider the fact that when Jesus spoke of this betrayal, none of the disciples automatically knew that it would be Judas! To them, he was just one of them, another of Jesus' followers in his inner circle.

Consider the love it took for Jesus to still share this love feast with all his disciples, knowing that Judas had already taken steps to hand him over.

Just as Judas asked "It isn't me is it Master?", we also find ourselves being the cause of Jesus' suffering. Do you think he also looks lovingly toward you, even as he anticipates his death?

> At the heart of this uniqueness is the fact that Jesus was not a martyr. A martyr believes so strongly in a principle or cause opposed by the surrounding society that death becomes inevitable. In that sense, the martyr loses control of his or her own destiny. Not so with Jesus! A martyr could never say, "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" (26:53). We must conclude that the Lord Jesus went to His death knowing full well that it was His Father's will that He should perish alone and abandoned as the sacrificial Passover lamb.
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> *DA Carson*

The betrayal of Judas contrasts strongly with the worship of the woman who came to anoint Jesus.

> Here is a dinner party, the last supper before the Last Supper; and here is an unnamed woman whose love for Jesus has overflowed, quite literally, in an act of needless beauty, like a stunning alpine flower growing unobserved half a mile up a rock face. Of course, some people always want to pick such flowers and make them do something useful – to grow them in a garden at home, perhaps, to make a profit. God's creation isn't like that, and nor is devotion to Jesus. When people start to be captivated by him, and by his path to the cross, the love this produces is given to extravagance.
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> *NT Wright*

Pray together that God would guide your community group in worshiping Jesus whole-heartedly and extravagantly.