

A Busy Week

This is a busy month for me. One Saturday I was leading a workshop, the next weekend I was out of town teaching classes, and the next I had board and committee meetings (again, out of town!). Happily, not every month is like this. And while sometimes life can be busier than we prefer, staying active seems to be something we are designed for.

Jesus once had a week that was busier than the entire month I've experienced, and we know more about that week than any other of his life. In the seven days before he died, Jesus spent time with friends, taught in the temple, debated religious leaders, and declared his authority through words and actions.

Each day in this week's study will focus on a particular day of that week, though you will notice that we do not look at Saturday (the Sabbath day of rest) or Wednesday (just a day in the middle of the week). Even though there is no record of Jesus' actions those days, you might make some reasonable guesses of what he did as you learn more about the other days. Let's get busy learning about Jesus' busy week.

Monday – A night in Bethany (Friday)

"The road to a friend's house is never long." Danish proverb

1. Please read John 12:1-11. Summarize in your own words the significance of Jesus spending time with Lazarus, when Jesus knew his own death was only a week away.
2. Why were Lazarus, Mary and Martha honoring Jesus? How did each of them do so?
3. Imagine you were with Jesus in that house. How would you have expected Jesus to respond to Judas?

Digging Deeper: Read John 11:1-44, and describe the connection between verses 16, 21 and 44.

Tuesday – The ride into Jerusalem (Sunday)

"I love a parade!" Harold Arlen, 20th c. American songwriter, I Love a Parade

1. Please read Matthew 21:1-11 and Mark 11:1-11. How did the people respond to Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem? Describe the scene and the feelings as best you can. Why were they celebrating so?

Text Insight: Jews at that time thought that the Messiah would be a political and military leader who would defeat the Romans and deliver the Jewish people from foreign oppression.

2. How does the prophecy about Israel's Messiah in Zechariah 9:1-9 help you understand why the people were so excited about Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem?

Digging Deeper: Read Psalm 118:1-29. Note that verse 26 is used by the people praising Jesus. Why would they use this psalm in particular?

Wednesday – Cleaning house (Monday)

"Certainly this is a duty, not a sin. 'Cleanliness is indeed next to godliness.'" John Wesley, 18th c. English theologian

1. Please read Matthew 21:12-17. What did the priests complain about? What do you think was really bothering them?

Text Insight: The area of the temple Jesus cleared was originally set aside for non-Jewish foreigners who wanted to experience temple worship in God's presence. The business activity prevented their ability to do so.

2. In Isaiah 56:1-8, what did God promise to do for those outside the nation of Israel? Why do you think Jesus was bothered so much by what he saw in the temple?
3. The priests would have been familiar with the passages Jesus quoted. Read Jeremiah 7:1-8, and describe what the priests might have felt in response to Jesus' accusations.

Prayer Focus: Ask God to reveal any way that you might be a hindrance to someone who is seeking to come to Christ. Ask him to give you the privilege of helping those who do not yet know him.

Thursday – Teachable moments (Tuesday)

"If you be a lover of instruction, you will be well instructed." Isocrates, 5th-4th c. BC Greek educator

1. Please read Luke 20:1-19. Why might the religious leaders have challenged Jesus' authority? Why do you think Jesus answered as he did?
2. Read Luke 20:20-26, and keep in mind the expectations of the Jewish people for their Messiah. In what way (or ways) was Jesus' response astonishing?
3. In Luke 21:27-47, Jesus answered more questions and then declared his authority. How does he use the question on marriage (see v. 38) to support the reason that the Messiah would have that authority?

Making it Personal: Are you familiar with the teaching of Jesus? If not, make a plan to read through the gospels that you might know him and his teaching better.

Friday – One last night together (Thursday)

"Treason and murder ever kept together, as two yoke-devils sworn to either's purpose." William Shakespeare, Henry V, Act 2 scene 2

1. Please read Mark 14:12-26. How did the evening begin and end? What would you have thought if you were one of those eating dinner with him and heard Jesus reveal that one of you would betray him?
2. In Mark 14:32-42, what did Jesus ask his friends to do for him? What did they do instead?
3. What happened to Jesus' followers in Mark 14:43-50? Where did this leave Jesus?

Making it Personal: Pray for God to give you the strength to stay with him under all circumstances.

For the Weekend: Dead and Buried (Friday) – Read Matthew 27:27-50 and describe Jesus' death.