

2008 LENTEN PROGRAM

THE LAST WEEK

A study guide and weekly discussion group based on The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem by Marcus J. Borg & John Dominic Crossan.



THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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Introduction

Welcome to this year's Lenten Lunch Series based on *The Last Week*. We'll spend out time together, leading up to Easter, taking an in depth look at the last days of Jesus's life, based primarily on Mark's Gospel rendering of these days, as interpreted by Borg and Crossan in their book. We will also read a few articles and other Gospel interpretations of these last days.

The book chosen for this year's study group might be considered dense. There's certainly a good deal of information – some difficult to decipher – packed into this book! Don't feel like you have to read all of it and don't feel like you have to understand it! That's what group study is all about – being able to learn from everyone's insights and questions. Each week, there will be suggested reading. For those of you that have time, please seek to do this. It will be helpful if at least some of us in the group have done some of the reading. If you don't have time, don't worry. You will still get something out of our time together, even if you haven't read the book. For some you, in fact, it might be helpful to go back and read the sections assigned *after* we've discussed them (this isn't a college course!).

Our hope is that you commit yourself to coming and being with us and commit yourself to being open to new ways of seeing and understanding God.

Each week, our time together will begin with lunch and the opening prayer laid out for each week. Then, we'll move into a discussion about the topic of the week and the reading connected with that. Most weeks, the clergy leader will present a brief summary of the theme for the week. To each of our sessions, please bring your copy of the book and a copy of the Bible (preferably NRSV). If you don't have your own copy of the Bible, please ask Scott or Rebekah for a copy.

Feel free to write in your study guide – make notes during your meetings, during your study, or during your reflection. This is yours to keep.

WEEK ONE
Introduction & Palm Sunday
2/13

Before this meeting (if you have time!): Get your own copy of *The Last Week*.

Opening Prayer: Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Where's the story: You'll find the story of the events that took place on Palm Sunday in Mark 11:1-11.

Read out loud: Mark 11:1-11

Discuss:

- † What are some of your first responses to the story of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem?

- † Where are the places of irony in this story?

For Week Two:

- * **Read Preface and Chapter One in *The Last Week*.**
- * **Re-read Mark 11:1-11.**
- * ***Who Is He Kidding?* by Samuel Wells from April 5, 2000 edition of *Christian Century***

WEEK TWO
Palm Sunday
2/20

Opening Prayer: Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Where's the story: See Week One.

Read out loud: Mark 11:1-11

Discuss:

Where is "Jerusalem" today?

Where do we see the presence or vestiges of a "domination system" as described by Borg & Crossan (pp. 7ff)?

Read:

"The conflict [that led to Jesus's crucifixion] is also not about priests and sacrifice, as if Jesus's primary passion was a protest against the role of priestly mediators or against animal sacrifice. Rather, his protest was against a domination system legitimated in the name of God, a domination system radically different from what the already present and coming kingdom of God, the dream of God, would be like. It was not Jesus against Judaism, or Judaism against Jesus. Rather, his was a Jewish voice, one of several first-century Jewish voices, about what loyalty to the God of Judaism meant. And for Christians, he is the decisive Jewish voice.

Two processions entered Jerusalem on that day. The same question, the same alternative, faces those who would be faithful to Jesus today. Which procession are we in? Which procession do we want to be in? This is the question of Palm Sunday and of the week that is about to unfold" (30).

For Week Three:

- * **Read Chapters Two & Three in *The Last Week*.**
- * **Read Mark 11:12-19 (Monday) & Mark 11:20-25 (Tuesday).**
- * **Excerpt from *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* by Richard B. Hays**

TIMELINE OF THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

- 966 BCE** King Solomon builds the Temple in Jerusalem
- 586 BCE** Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the Temple along with it. Jews are deported to Babylon, a time known as the Babylonian Exile.
- 516 BCE** Reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem completed.
- 20 CE** Herod renovates the second Temple.
- 70 CE** Jerusalem falls to the Romans; the Temple is burned for the final time. The remains that are left standing today are from this destruction.

WEEK THREE
Monday & Tuesday
2/27

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Where's the story: The story of Monday & Tuesday during the last week of Jesus' life takes up quite a bit of Mark's Gospel, spanning from 11:12 through 13:37.

Read out loud: Mark 11:12-19 (Monday) & Mark 11:20-25, 13:1-4 (parts of Tuesday)
Jeremiah 7 & Jeremiah 26

Discuss:

What's something from these chapters that stands out for you? Something new that seems important? Or something that you perhaps know before, but that seems important to underline? Something that you want to remember?

What have we typically understood the story of the fig tree and the temple as representing or meaning?

Where do we stand today on issues involving justice and worship/religion?

For Week Four:

- * **Read Chapters Four & Five in *The Last Week.***
- * **Read Mark 14:1-11 (Wednesday) & Mark 14:12-72 (Thursday)**

WEEK FOUR
Wednesday & Thursday
3/5

Opening Prayer: Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Where's the story: Read Mark 14:1-11 (Wednesday) & Mark 14:12-72 (Thursday)

Read out loud: Mark 14:1-11; Mark 8:34b-37; Daniel 7:1-14

Discuss:

What does it mean for us as “disciples of Jesus” that we are participating in the journey? How does Mark’s warning about failed discipleship resonate with us?

What is your understanding about why Jesus died? How has your reading, thus far, changed or emphasized what you believe?

What role does eating or food play in our society contrasted with Mark’s understanding of meals?

For Week Five:

- * **Read Chapter Six in *The Last Week*.**
- * **Read Mark 15:1-47 (Friday). Try reading this section *before* reading the book; then re-read this section after reading Chap. 6.**
- * **Excerpt from *Telling the Truth: the Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy & Fairy Tale* by Frederick Buechner**
- * **“Blood Covenant” from Barbara Brown Taylor’s *Gospel Medicine*.**

WEEK FIVE
Good Friday
3/12

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Where's the story: Read Mark 15:1-47.

Read out loud: Mark 15:1-21 (6am – 9am); Mark 15:22-32 (9am – noon); Mark 15:33 (noon – 3pm); Mark 15:34-41 (3pm – 6pm); Mark 15:42-47 (6pm – burial)
Psalm 22

Discuss:

Share one experience of Good Friday that stands out over the course of your life. What do you remember about what Good Friday was like when you were a child? Do you recall particular hymns associated with it? What did the death of Jesus mean to you then? What about now?

“A major theme of this chapter is ‘substitutionary atonement,’ or ‘substitutionary sacrifice,’ as a way of understanding the meaning of Jesus’s death. What do you understand this to mean? Were you taught this way of understanding Jesus’s death? Has it ever caused problems for you?”

For Week Six:

- * Read Chapters Seven & Eight in *The Last Week*.
- * Read Mark 16:1-20 (Sunday).

WEEK SIX
Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday
3/19

Opening Prayer: O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Where's the story: Mark 16:1-20.

Read out loud: Apostle's Creed; Nicene Creed; Mark 16:1-8

Discuss:

- * Are we waiting for God to transform the earth from violent injustice to nonviolent justice alone, or is God waiting for us to cooperate in doing it together?

- * What do you understand as the difference between seeing the stories of Easter as history or as parable?

The Apostles' Creed

Officiant and People together, all standing

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.