

GROW. PRAY. STUDY.
First United Methodist Church - Weekly Study Guide
"Equipping people in becoming deeply committed Christians"

The Final Week – Wednesday: A Leper, a Grateful Woman and a Traitorous Friend

Yesterday we looked at Matthew's portrayal of Wednesday, the day before the arrest of Jesus. It seemed to be a quiet day, but that quietness can be deceiving. Wednesday was the day Simon the Leper opened his house for fellowship with Jesus and his disciples. It was at that meal Jesus was anointed for burial. That seems like a normal Wednesday, right? Yet, we read about Judas' betrayal of Jesus. How could Judas betray his friend and teacher? How could a nameless and faceless woman spend an entire year's wage on perfume and "waste" it on Jesus? Perhaps, our response to the question of whether or not we will follow Jesus with all our heart, soul, mind, body, and strength resembles one of their responses. Let us prayerfully examine our hearts and minds this week.

This week as we look to hear about more pieces to the puzzle of what might have happened on Wednesday we will read variations of this story from the other Gospels. As you continue to read throughout the week, I would encourage you to ask yourself two questions: Do I believe in the message of the gospel only when it's convenient for me? What is the message of the gospel portrayed by my life? I also encourage you to pray that God would open your eyes and ears to see and hear places that you might speak the love of God through Jesus Christ in deed and word.

MONDAY Mark 14:1-9

Someone (probably Jesus) had healed Simon, "the Leper." Jesus (perhaps) aware that within 48 hours he would be crucified said "this woman" had anointed him in advance of his burial.

- Imagine the deep love and gratitude that led this woman to do this extravagant act for Jesus. What does Jesus' response say about how much her fervent love meant to him as he faced death? How can you show your love for Jesus, both in your inner "sacred space" and outwardly, with the woman's spontaneity and urgency?
- "Leave her alone," Jesus said to those who criticized this act of worship. Are you ever critical of the way someone else praises or serves God? How can this story help you move beyond a critical spirit to value the uniqueness of each giver and each gift?

Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer

TUESDAY Mark 14:10-11

Judas spent three years with Jesus, but he never gave up control of his heart and will. Today we see Judas selling his knowledge of Jesus' whereabouts.

- Judas may have realized that Jesus had no intention of being a conquering, military Messiah. Perhaps he hoped to force Jesus' hand through this betrayal. Are there any areas of life where you think you know a better way than God's? Let us pray for clarity in understanding what God wants. May we have the courage to follow God.

Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer

WEDNESDAY Matthew 22:1-10

In Jesus' very pointed story, a king held a wedding banquet. Amazingly, to their great loss, the guests he invited turned down the invitation. Then Jesus bluntly laid out the case against the religious rulers plotting his death. At the end, his holy anger shifted to aching words of sadness and regret.

- Jesus told so many stories like this one that turn our usual expectations upside down. Is it good or bad news to you that, in the end, anyone the servants found, the bad as well as the good, made up the banquet crowd? Are you open to sharing heaven's banquet with anyone God invites?
- Jesus addressed the same rulers who, while making pious speeches, were paying Judas to betray him. In what areas are you tempted to sound more peaceful, loving or holy than you really are? How can you set pretense aside? Are you willing to let Jesus gather you under his wings just as you are?

Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer

THURSDAY Luke 21:1-4

The widow's devout generosity was such a contrast to the hostile authorities and the betraying Judas. Jesus noticed and prized it.

- We sometimes use the phrase "all in" to describe a person who is completely committed to a belief or a course of action. How, quite literally, was the widow Jesus noticed in the Temple "all in" for God's Kingdom? In what ways are you "all in" with Jesus? In what ways, if any, are you holding back?

Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer

FRIDAY John 12:20-37

The Greek pilgrims who asked for him were a sign that his self-giving on the cross would conquer hearts (verse John 12:32). In its radical, self-sacrificing way, His Kingdom would triumph.

- Jesus said unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains but a single kernel. When it dies, it bears many seeds. How does this image explain the spiritual power of Jesus' death? What goals or ambitions, if any, might need to die in order for your life to have the fullest spiritual impact?

Pray the Wesley Covenant Prayer

SATURDAY Matthew 26:26-28, 36-39; Mark 14:53, 65

Today we will be reading the passages we will deal with in worship tomorrow. As you read this Scripture pray that God cleanse your heart and prepare you for worship tomorrow.

I invite you to pray the following prayer: Dear God: As I read this passage today help me do so with an open heart, sincerely listening for your voice in my life. Use this passage to prepare me for worship tomorrow. As I read it help me to set aside my own agenda and my own desires so that I may come to worship tomorrow prepared to be molded by you as I continue my journey to becoming a deeply committed disciple of yours. In Christ's name I pray, AMEN

Here at FUMC we believe part of becoming a Deeply Committed Christian is praying daily. If you find yourself struggling with what to say, we suggest you try praying Wesley's Covenant Prayer.

A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low by thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. AMEN