

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 16

Mark 12-16

This week's reflectors are
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Monday

Mark 12

Mark tells of Jesus' parables. Literally, a parable is something *laid beside* – to the end that when one thing is laid down beside the other – there becomes a greater understanding of the first.

We find ourselves amidst the season of Easter. You may find it helpful, as you read the parables in Mark, to read them in light of an ultimate parable – the laying down of Jesus' life.

In other words; consider the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as a tangible message of God's love for us; something laid down for us. Then take this notion and *lay it beside* the biblical text as a whole. In doing so, may you be blessed by a profound understanding of the gospel message.

Tuesday

Mark 13

Time and again people make predictions about the end of the world. One of the latest has to do with the end of the Mayan calendar set to happen on Dec. 21, 2012.

When Mark's community was reading this text, it was at a time when the great temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed in 70 C.E. (A.D.). There were many false prophets who were claiming that to be a sign that the end was near.

It can be easy to fall into "clock watching" while we wait for things to fall apart. Or maybe feel that we are running out of time. Yet as Christians, we are called to watch for Christ and to be ready to follow when he calls us.

Wednesday

Mark 14

We can spend a lot of money for flowers at a funeral. Perhaps it would be more meaningful to be this extravagant for someone who is still living. This chapter is all about costly acts of love for the sake of the living.

First, Jesus is the recipient of the nard poured over him by the woman. This initial scene sets the tone for the chapter.

Then we have the words and actions of Jesus during the Last Supper. The power of this costly act of love is the life of Jesus given for his disciples and the followers who will remain after his arrest, suffering, and crucifixion.

The Last Supper was a way of preparing the disciples for what was to come. The faith of the disciples is weak—embodied in the threefold denial by Peter. Yet the Last Supper becomes a source of strength and a real expression of hope for reconciliation with God.

Thursday

Mark 15

Life is all about making choices. In this chapter, there are a number of choices made by groups and individuals. The chief priests choose to hand Jesus over to Pilate. Pilate chooses to hand Jesus over to the crowd. The crowd chooses Barabbas. The disciples choose to abandon Jesus. And on the cross Jesus chooses not to save himself.

Instead, in his willingness to go to the cross, Jesus reveals the choice that God has made for the sake of others:

- the choice to remove the barrier that organized religion had constructed between humans and God (symbolized in the split curtain);
- the choice to include Gentiles as a part of the people of God (symbolized in the centurion's confession);
- the choice to have a more prominent role for women (symbolized by their presence);
- and the choice of Jesus to lay down his life in order to make this happen.

Ultimately, each and every choice made leads to the cross.

Friday

Mark 16

Mark's ending reminds us that the resurrection is exaltation to God's glory, not just another event in history.

The response of the women brings us face to face with the mystery of faith. In reaction to the choices that put Jesus on the cross, it is likely we too can relate to the flight, and fearful silence. Never the less, God brings faith out of such weakness and failure.

Jesus appears frequently after his death and resurrection but there comes a point when the disciples are left to bear witness themselves. Despite all the appearances, Jesus accomplished the will of God through suffering on the cross. We can fall back on the story of the cross. However imperfect our faith and however many times we remain silent in place of testifying to the gospel, we can always return to the Lord.

None of us can get so far away from Jesus that we cannot be touched by God's healing presence. Jesus is our story, a story laid down for us that we too might know and tell of God's glory.