

Study Guide for the Week of April 1, 2007

*This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. **For 2007 the study guide is designed to help you read through the New Testament in a year.** Study these passages on your own, with a friend, or with a group. If you or someone you know needs a Bible, please take one from under a chair in the Worship Center. They are there for you to take home and use! Sermon manuscripts are available at www.spwired.com.*

Monday, April 2. Read Matthew 25:31-46. This is one of the clearest parables of Jesus. It is teaching us that God will judge us according to how we reacted to human need. As William Barclay writes, God's "judgment does not depend on the knowledge we have amassed, or the fame that we have acquired, or the fortune that we have gained, but on the help that we have given." How might you live out your faith in the simple ways that Jesus points to in this parable?

Tuesday, April 3. Read Matthew 26:1-25. Once again, Jesus warns his disciples about what is going to happen—he tells them about the cross he is going to face. The incident in the house of Simon the leper is the foreshadowing of Jesus' death. The woman poured a costly ointment or perfume on Jesus that would typically be used for burial. We also see here the plot of Judas. Notice that Jesus does not try to stop him, instead he continues to show him love. This is the way we see Jesus work even in our own lives. He allows us the freedom to make our own choices and appeals to us with his never-ending love.

Wednesday, April 4. Read Matthew 26:26-46. This is the celebration of the Last Supper, or the Lord's Supper. It was a traditional Passover Feast that Jesus was using to teach his disciples one final powerful lesson—that he was in fact the Passover lamb. The Passover lamb was a sacrifice for sin, and Jesus is saying that he is the final sacrifice to be made--his broken body and his shed blood. Notice Peter's statement of loyalty and how the other disciple follow suit. Keep that in mind through the rest of this week's readings. The disciples' sleep shows that they did not understand what was about to happen. What does today's reading say to you? What does it tell you about Jesus? About his followers? **Don't forget that tomorrow is the Maundy Thursday service at church, 7:00 pm. It will help bring the meaning of Easter to light!**

Thursday, April 5. Read Matthew 26:47-75. Why did Peter betray Jesus, especially having said what he said, and having heard Jesus' words? What happened to the other disciples who had pledged their support and loyalty to Jesus? What must have been going through Peter's mind when he heard the rooster crow? **Tonight at 7:00 pm is the Maundy Thursday service at church. You won't want to miss this powerful event.**

Friday, April 6. Read Matthew 27:1-31. In this section we see the action of Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. His main job was to keep the peace and many of the decisions that he made regarding Jesus were oriented to that end. He tried to please the religious leaders by having Jesus crucified, even when he knew that Jesus was innocent. What does this tell us about Pilate? What does it tell us about the religious authorities?

This day, the Friday before Easter, is known as Good Friday. The name Good Friday comes from the result of this day, the day that Jesus was crucified, not the events themselves which are truly brutal.

Saturday, April 7. Read Matthew 27:32-66. After being scourged—a whipping where flesh was torn off and bone was exposed—Jesus was forced to carry his cross-beam through the city to the hill where crucifixions were carried out. Keep in mind that the Romans crucified many criminals using it as a way to deter crime. Jesus is mocked along this journey to the hill and as he weakens another man is forced to carry that cross-beam for him. Then he is crucified. Crucifixion was not just an execution; it was a torture where the crucified person ultimately suffocated, no longer able to pull themselves up to breathe. All the while they were tormented by people, flies, gnats and birds. But the crucifixion is not the end! **Please plan on attending one of the 5 worship services tomorrow at 6:45 am, 8:15, 9:30 and 11:00 am at the main campus, as well as 6:00pm at The Salvage Yard.**

Sunday, April 8. Easter Sunday! Read Matthew chapter 28. Notice the various reactions to the resurrection. How might you have reacted? The resurrection is the center point of the Christian faith. It validates all that Jesus said, it gives us power, and reminds us that death does not have the final word. Spend time in prayer asking God to help deepen the meaning of Easter for you.