

Week 3: Matthew 24 – Mark 5

Study Guide for the week of January 17-23, 2011

Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week reflect on the three parables of judgment in [Matthew 25:1-46](#).

Robert Capon classifies these three among the *Parables of Judgment* that Jesus told during His last week. Capon teaches that in the parables of judgment there is often *inclusion* of those being judged before the *exclusion* of some of those being judged. (All ten virgins begin as guests to the wedding. All three servants begin in the master's house with talents. Both the sheep and the goats begin in the shepherd's flock.) Do you think this is a fair reading of these parables? What does that do to your understanding of the parables? What does that do to your understanding of the final judgment? Which of the three parables is most challenging to you? Why? Are there any changes in your life that the Holy Spirit is moving you to make because of your reflection on these parables?

Discussion starters

If you are leading a small group, may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.

1. Ice breaker question: What are your first memories of celebrating Holy Week and Easter? Do you have any traditions surrounding Easter?
2. *(This question will be asked each week at the start of the discussion on the Bible readings for the week.)* Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. [Matthew 25:1-13](#) Of the major beliefs about Jesus found in the Apostles' Creed, His coming again to judge the living and the dead is the one that people more often have trouble believing. What do you think about the second coming of Christ? Do you have a belief about when that will happen? Would you say that you are ready if Jesus were to return today?
4. [Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75](#) When we think of Peter's blustering confidence we also remember the rooster crowing. Are there "roosters" crowing in your life, asking those difficult questions you'd rather not entertain?
5. [Matthew 26:36-46](#) Recent movie portrayals of Jesus' praying in Gethsemane have the Devil there tempting Jesus like the Devil tempted Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11 (See also Luke 4:13). Do you think these theatrical embellishments are fair to the accounts found in the synoptic gospels (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46)? Jesus has unlimited power at his disposal to protect himself (see Matthew 26:53). How do you think this effected Jesus wrestling with the Father's will? Is being tempted a sin?
6. Three times Jesus told his disciples that He would rise from the dead (Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19). Jesus said the same to the religious leaders. How did the disciples react to Jesus' claims of resurrection ([Matthew 26:56](#))? How did the religious leaders react to Jesus' claims ([Matthew 27:62-66](#))? Are you more like the religious leaders or the disciples? Why?
7. [Mark 1:35-37](#) The disciples didn't understand how Jesus could spend time alone in prayer when so much had to be done. Have you ever had a similar feeling? Martin Luther once said that on the days he was the busiest, he needed to spend an additional hour in prayer. How do you react to Luther's assertion? Are you too busy to pray? Are you just too busy?
8. [Mark 1:40-45](#) Just as He had done with the evil spirit, Jesus told the Leper who was healed not to tell anyone what had happened. As you read through the beginnings of Mark and the other gospels, you see Jesus doing this often. Some have called this the "messianic secret". Why do you think Jesus did this? What was the result of His strong warning to the leper?
9. [Mark 2:1-12](#) The teachers of the law speak truthfully in verse 7 when they imply that only God can forgive sins. How does that affect your understanding of whether you can forgive someone that has wronged you? How would you answer Jesus' question in verse 9? In the

story of the paralyzed man the crowd becomes a barrier to meeting Jesus. What barriers to meeting Jesus are present in people's lives today? What could you do to remove one of those barriers?

10. Mark 2:13-28 These verses contain three accounts of how the religious leaders were reacting to how Jesus and His disciples behaved. Notice how seriously the religious leaders took their religious traditions in Mark 3:6. Are there any religious traditions that, for you, are getting in the way of having a more authentic relationship with Jesus? What do you learn from these accounts about acting "religious"?
11. Mark 3:20-21, 31-35 What is your family's reaction to your faith? How is your faith the same as or different from the faith of your family members? If your family misunderstands your faith, criticizes or mocks you for your faith, where do you find brothers and sisters in Christ to encourage and support you? Name one or two people who are Christian brothers or sisters for you that encourage you in your faith.

Bible verse to memorize: Matthew 28:19-20

Caring Time

It is important to make time in your group to care for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end the time together with a question like this:

- What prayer needs or praises would like to share?

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that small groups is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in small groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time.