

## Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 4-23-17

April 23 we will study Mark 14:43-52 Due to the condition of the building we will only have 2 adult classes: (1) The upstairs class will meet as usual; (2) All other adults will meet together in the auditorium where Bill Nelson will be teaching.

Discussion ideas are:

1. Did you ever break a promise to anyone? How much damage did it do to your relationship?
2. Why do all the disciples flee?
3. Did Peter, James and John mean it when they made declarations of their intent to stand with Jesus?
4. What do you learn from Judas' betrayal of Jesus?
5. How did "religion" interfere with the chief priests, teachers of the law, and the elders' understanding of who Jesus was?
6. From what you recall about Mark's emphasis on the commitment required to be a follower of Jesus, what would you assume is the concern that caused Mark to write his gospel?
7. Why would Mark tell the incident of the young man in vs. 51? (Many scholars conclude that the young man was Mark himself and this is his way of showing himself as having the same problems as the other disciples.)
8. When the disciples fled were they behaving in a cowardly way?
9. What would you have done if you had been there at the arrest of Jesus? How do you know?
10. How does a person know if he is committed to following Jesus?

Sermon: *Come Out of the Shadows*

The first three days of July 1863 marked a turning point in our nation. Two armies gathered in little known Gettysburg, Pa. George Meade commanded the Army of the Potomac – Robert E Lee the Army of Northern Virginia. In three bloody days of battle 51,000 men were killed, wounded or captured. Those three days marked the turning of the tide in the war that made our Nation what it is today. Three days that shaped the future of our country and the future of the world as we know it today. From the shadows of Gettysburg a nation would rise – no longer a confederation of states – one nation under God would rise and live to seize the reigns of world history.

Those three days in 1863 pale in comparison to three days in 33 A.D. Three days that marked the turning of the tide in the war of all mankind, past and present. Three days that have shaped history and eternity. Three days spent in the shadows of the Cross.

The story begins in the shadows of Gethsemane where brokenness reigns. In the shadows of Gethsemane we find...

## *A Place of Broken Promises*

“Then everyone deserted him and fled.” Mark:14:50

They all left Him and fled. Remember that these are the same men who just hours before had been fighting amongst themselves over which one would be sitting at his right hand. Men who had declared wholehearted allegiance and undying loyalty. Peter went so far as to say – “even though all may fall away, yet I will not.” Then they left the lighted upper room where they shared the Passover – and entered the shadows of the cross. The world is full of broken promises. Our faithfulness waxes and wanes. Our commitment often falters – and our best intentions go awry. Paul described his struggle in the shadows, “I need something more! For if I know the law but still can’t keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don’t have what it takes. I can will it, but I can’t do it. I decide to do good, but I don’t really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don’t result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.” (Romans 7:21-25) Jesus comes to 3 apostles and asks, “Couldn’t you stay awake for just an hour. Could you not keep watch for one hour?” The ultimate broken promise walks in the shadows in the heart of Judas. One who had walked with Jesus for so long – for three years he had seen all that the other disciples had seen – but his heart was far from God. Ambition was his god. These men walked in the shadows of Gethsemane not because of the darkness around them but because of the darkness within them. We walk in the shadows today not because of the darkness around us but because of the darkness within us. Something has gone wrong deep within us.

In Gethsemane there is a place of broken promises. There is also...

## *A Place of Broken Religion*

Here in Gethsemane’s shadows stands the Messiah of God. And here in Gethsemane’s shadows stand men blinded by religion. There stood the chief priests, officers of the temple, and elders – all blinded in their religion. Their eyes so blind that they see in the Savior of the world a criminal, a traitor, a blasphemer of God. So blinded in the darkness that they feel hatred toward the one who has come to save them. To one blinded by his religion, only the light of Jesus can lift the shadows of Gethsemane from his heart and allow him to see. Only when our religion becomes relationship with Jesus, do the shadows begin to recede.

In Gethsemane there is a place of broken promises. There is a place of broken religion. And there is also...

## *A Place of a Broken Heart*

In Gethsemane Jesus was praying so fervently His sweat became like drops of blood. How deep the darkness must have been for Jesus that night – as He fought the final battle between His humanity and His deity. Here in Gethsemane’s shadows the dark reality of

the cross finally took shape. On what we now celebrate as Palm Sunday – Jesus riding into Jerusalem stops on the hill overlooking this great city – the seat of all that should be Holy – and He weeps. He weeps because He knows that soon he will be enveloped in the shadows of the cross. He weeps on Palm Sunday and He weeps in the shadows of Gethsemane because His heart is broken for a people who have rejected Him. His heart is full of the broken promises of His people – full of the broken religion of His creation – yet He kneels in Gethsemane’s shadows and prays “not my will but thine be done.” His heart broken for a broken creation – Jesus will willingly lay down His life.

Gethsemane’s shadows are the start of three days that would shake the foundations of heaven and earth in the shadows of the cross. Three days that will move from the grief of Gethsemane to the agony of the cross to the ecstasy of the resurrection. As Jesus walks out of the shadows of Gethsemane Mark says,

Mark 14:43-52 - Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Then everyone deserted him and fled. A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

They say that when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Not so at the arrest of Jesus. All those claiming to be tough enough to handle whatever comes get going...away from Jesus – away from danger – away from their previous commitments. He had told them repeatedly, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” With great bravado Peter had boasted, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” He was willing to fight with Jesus. He was not willing to let Jesus call the shots in his life. James and John had boasted, “We can drink any cup of suffering you drink, Jesus. Bring it on!” But when the going gets tough, where are all those who spoke with such bravado? Mark says, “...everyone deserted him and fled.” One never knows for sure how one would react in a crisis until the crisis comes. Judas will try to create a crisis to force Jesus’ hand. He reacts to impending crisis by developing his own scheme, without regard for the will of God. One of those present at the arrest of Jesus brought a sword. He is ready to fight and does. But he is not ready to deny his own impulsive reactions and take up his cross. Many a man would take up a sword but rare is the man who will lay down his sword and pick up a cross. Eleven apostles scatter into the shadows. They run not so much from fear of the Romans as they do from the disillusionment of trying to follow a Messiah who will not fight. Perhaps the most mysterious character at the arrest of Jesus is the young man who is wearing a rich person’s sleep wear – a linen garment. How did this young man know to go to this spot at this hour of the night? Did he overhear the plot? Did he see the torchlight parade and

follow along behind? What is his plan once he gets to the scene of the arrest? Does he just want to see where this is leading? Is he just curious? Is he planning to join the disciples if they stand and fight? Whatever his plan, he changes his mind when they grab him by his garment. Embarrassingly as he pulls away his garment remains in the hands of whoever grabbed hold of him. The young man flees naked into the darkness.

Some call the actions of those disciples cowardice. It seems more like the bewilderment of disillusioned and confused men to me. It is easy to criticize those disciples for their running away and deserting Jesus. But, what would you have done in their shoes? You don't have to literally be in the garden to know what you would do. Just examine your behavior when you are under great spiritual pressure today and you will know what you would have done that night in the garden. What will you do when the going gets tough?

If you an adolescent dating, your hormones raging, and you find yourself in a private place with that person who is so attractive to you – what will you do when the going gets tough?

If you are married and your spouse wounds you deeply and someone outside your marriage makes overtures to you – what will you do when the going gets tough?

If you are under great financial pressure and no one will know it if your business practices are dishonest – what will you do when the going gets tough?

If someone repeatedly hurts you with their words and you hear some dirt on them – what will you do when the going gets tough?

When you pray for your circumstances to improve and they don't – what will you do when the going gets tough?

When you see that person's name in the paper having yet another success in an area where you have failed repeatedly – what will you do when the going gets tough?

When you hear an announcement at church for an opportunity to serve but you have planned all your life to have as much fun as possible when you arrive financially – what will you do when the going gets tough?

When you see the contribution plate being passed toward you but you really want a new gadget and you can't both give to the Lord and buy yourself the gadget – what will you do when the going gets tough?

In the garden everyone deserted him and fled. What would you have done? The answer to that is not found in your words. It is found in your lifestyle. If you have been living a lifestyle that indicates you would have deserted Jesus and fled, it's imperative that you acknowledge that and turn your life around. If there ever was a Sunday when you needed

to lower your eyes from the screen and humble yourself before the Lord it is today. If there ever was a time for you to respond to Jesus invitation it is now.