

Week 4
Bible Story
4-5-2020

This year we've been making our way through God's Big Story together.

If you were reading with us last week, we talked about how the religious leaders had been plotting to silence Jesus. Jesus had been teaching in a way that challenged what the leaders had always believed. He had been living in a way that challenged how the leaders lived their lives, and they didn't like it.

One of Jesus' closest friends was named Judas. Judas knew that the religious leaders were after Jesus, and he decided to help them in exchange for some money. He told the religious leaders where Jesus would be praying after the Passover meal.

While Jesus was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, the leaders sent soldiers to arrest Him. Jesus allowed the mob to take Him, but His closest friends scattered. Many of them took off running and went into hiding.

Peter and John, however, followed Jesus at a distance. The mob took Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. While Peter waited there, a servant woman noticed him and asked Peter if he was one of Jesus' disciples. Peter didn't want to get arrested, too, so he said that he didn't know Jesus.

Inside, the high priest questioned Jesus. He asked Jesus about His teachings, and about the men who followed Him. Listen to Jesus' response.

Open the Bible to John 18:20-21 (NIrV) and read.

"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I didn't say anything in secret. Why question me? Ask the people who heard me. They certainly know what I said."

Out in the courtyard, Peter stood with some others around a fire to keep warm. As they huddled around the flames, someone else asked Peter whether he was one of Jesus' followers, and once again, Peter denied it.

Then yet another man recognized Peter and asked if he had seen Peter in the garden with Jesus. Once again, Peter said no.

Just then, a rooster crowed. Suddenly Peter remembered what Jesus had said. Sure enough, he had denied Jesus three times—just as Jesus said would happen

The high priest decided to send Jesus to the Roman governor for more questioning, so the soldiers took Jesus away to the governor, named Pilate.

Pilate questioned the religious leaders to find out what charges they were making against Jesus. The leaders insisted that Jesus had committed crimes; why else would they have brought Jesus before him? Pilate and the leaders argued back and forth, but eventually Pilate took Jesus inside for questioning. Then he had Jesus taken back outside to the crowd. Pilate told the crowd he saw no reason why Jesus should be arrested. He offered to set Jesus free as part of the Passover tradition. But the crowd insisted that Jesus shouldn't be freed.

So, Pilate took Jesus and had Him whipped. The soldiers put a crown of thorns on His head, and they put a purple robe on Him. Pilate brought Jesus out before the crowd again, where he again told the angry mob that he saw no reason to keep Jesus.

The crowd disagreed, though. The chief priests and officials shouted:
Crucify him!

(John 19:6, NIRV)

Eventually, Pilate gave up. He turned Jesus over to the soldiers, who forced Jesus to drag His own cross to Golgotha—a hill outside the city. I've got a tiny cross here for each of you to hold as you imagine what that might have been like.

The soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross and raised it up high, with a sign that said 'King of the Jews.'

Jesus' mother Mary, her sister, and Mary Magdalene were there. When Jesus saw them, He called down from the cross and asked John to take care of His mother.

Jesus hung on the cross, and eventually, He knew His time had come. He said His final words:

“It is finished” (John 19:30, NIRV), and then He bowed His head and died.

After Jesus died, two men took His body to be buried. Their names were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Mary Magdalene followed the men as they took His body to the tomb to be buried. They rolled a heavy stone in front of the tomb. I

Early on Sunday, Mary went to the tomb. Jesus had been buried in a hurry, and she wanted to make sure He received a proper burial. But . . . wait! The heavy stone that had been blocking the tomb had been rolled away.

The tomb was EMPTY! Mary ran to the home where the disciples were staying. She told Peter and John that someone must have come and taken Jesus' body. The two men ran to the tomb. Inside, they found the strips of linen and cloth that Jesus had been buried in. But Jesus wasn't there.

Peter and John headed back home, trying to make sense of what they had seen. But Mary stayed behind. As she stood outside the tomb crying, she leaned in and saw two angels sitting there where Jesus' body had been. They asked her why she was crying, and she told them:

Open the Bible to John 20:13 (NIrV) and read.

They have taken my Lord away . . . I don't know where they have put him. Then, Mary turned around and saw someone. She thought it was the gardener. The man asked her why she was crying and who she was looking for. Mary pleaded with the man to tell her where Jesus' body had gone.

Then the man said her name: 'Mary.' That was all it took. Mary realized that it was JESUS! He was alive! Mary turned toward Jesus and cried out, 'Teacher!'

But before she could reach out to Him, Jesus spoke again. He said:

Open the Bible to John 20:17 (NIrV) and read.

"Do not hold on to me. I have not yet ascended to the Father. Instead, go to those who believe in me. Tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Mary ran to tell the disciples the best news ever: she had seen Jesus. He was alive!

Jesus chose to enter death for those He loved, and He defeated it. He is alive! It's the best news ever— for everyone!

Jesus put us first.

That's why we celebrate Easter—because Jesus is alive! He proved once and for all that He is God's Son. And when we put our trust in Jesus, we can have a relationship with God that will last forever.

Prayer

Dear God,

thank You so much for the amazing, true story of Easter. It's the best news ever! We know that we can trust You no matter what because You sent Jesus to rescue us. Jesus died on the cross so that we can have a relationship with You WITHOUT our sin being in the way. And because Jesus is alive, we can be alive forever too! We are so thankful. Please help us to trust You every day as we remember how Jesus put us first.

We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name,
Amen.

It cost Jesus EVERYTHING to put us first. He was willing to die so that we could be forgiven and have a relationship with God that will last forever.

You see, God is perfect . . . and we're not. We mess up. We sin. And our sin separates us from Him.

Ever since sin entered the world, that has always been our biggest problem. But God had a plan. He has ALWAYS had a plan to bring His people back to Him. Jesus, who never sinned, took on OUR sin. He paid the price for it on the cross. When we put our trust in Jesus, we can live forever. Because HE died, we can live! Talk about turning things upside down—in the best possible way!

But Jesus didn't stay dead. He came back to life and proved that He really is the Son of God AND our Savior.

Jesus put us first. Say that with me.