

## **Week 5 – Actions speak**

Jesus knew what he was letting himself in for when he went to Jerusalem. He knew that many religious people would reject him. Some wanted him dead. He had the power to stop them, but he chose not to. His motive was love for people like us. He didn't just talk about being loving, he showed his love through his actions.

### **READ: MARK CHAPTERS 12:41-14:52**

Key verses

*‘While they were eating, Jesus took bread. He gave thanks and broke it. He handed it to his disciples and said, “Take it. This is my body.”*

*Then he took a cup. He gave thanks and handed it to them. All of them drank from it.*

*“This is my blood of the covenant,” he said to them. “It is poured out for many. What I’m about to tell you is true. I won’t drink wine with you again until the day I drink it in God’s kingdom.”*

**Mark 14:22-25**

### **THINK**

1. Jesus saw the heart of the widow who gave everything she had (Mark 12:41-44). He also knew the motives of Judas when he complained about money being spent on an expensive jar of perfume (Mark 14:3-8). God does

not look at outward appearances. He looks at our heart attitudes. How are people judged in today's world? How should Jesus' followers act differently?

2. As well as looking forward to his own death and resurrection, Jesus looked forward to the end of time (Mark 13). Jesus has promised to return (John 14:1-3). How can we live in the light of that promise?

3. Jesus used a meal to explain how he would die. His body would be broken, and his blood spilt. He knew that his followers would go on breaking bread and pouring wine at meals, so they would be able to remember what he had done. Have you shared this special meal? It can be called Communion, Mass, the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. What does this meal mean to you?

4. Jesus' closest friends deserted him when he needed them most. He knows what it is like to be abandoned. How does this make you feel?

## LIFE LESSONS

1. 'God, if you're out there... help me.' That was one prisoner (from the book) Ashley's prayer. God hears our prayers, even when we aren't sure who we are praying to. God answered Ashley's prayer and has turned his life around. How has your life changed since you got to know about Jesus?

2. In Steve's story (also from the book), he was amazed by the kindness of strangers; people from a local church who he might never meet. Those people received no reward. But God saw their hearts. What motivates you? Do you live to please yourself or to please God?

3. Brian (another prisoner mentioned in the book) was in Dartmoor Prison when he asked God to change him. He now works with people who are in prison, just like he was. 'A lot of my work is with people who have failed,' he says. Jesus said, 'I have not come to get those who think they are right with God to follow me. I have come to get sinners to follow me' (Mark 2:17). How does that make you feel?

4. God promises that when we search for him we will find him (Matthew 7:7-8). That can happen in a prison cell or a palace. Getting to know God through his Son Jesus is the journey of a lifetime. Where are you on the journey?

### **LOOK AHEAD**

Jesus didn't just say kind words or talk about loving people. He showed his love by dying on a cross to make it possible for us to experience God's love for ourselves. This is the mystery at the heart of our Christian faith. God does not demand that we reach up to him. He doesn't expect us to pay our way into his presence. Instead, he became a human being and lived among ordinary people, people like us who let him down. If we ask him, he forgives all our shortcomings and gives us his power to make a fresh start in life. He promises to be with us always, guiding us and supporting us, whatever life throws at us.

Next week, we will reach the end of the first part of the Jesus story. The second part continues in lives changed through history and today. Is your story part of the worldwide Jesus story?

## 5

## Giving everything to God

---

Still in a somewhat dazed state, the clunk of the cell door behind me brought me to my senses and I realised that life as I had known it had changed forever. Gone was the respect of my family and friends, my affluent middle-class lifestyle and, of course, my freedom.

As I took in my new accommodation, the last moments of sunlight filtered into the small room, highlighting the plumes of cigarette smoke emanating from the lower bunk. As a non-smoker, I found this very unpleasant, but figured my objections would not be a good way to introduce myself to my cellmate. So we just exchanged the usual pleasantries and I made up my bunk before settling in for the night.

### *Doom and despair*

The first few days on induction were really tedious. I felt a growing sense of doom and despair welling up inside me. I was eventually moved to a main residential wing where, naively, I had expected better accommodation – but the only change was that the smell of cigarettes had been replaced by the smell of urine.

For the first time in my life I felt totally helpless and alone, and my frustrations were beginning to turn into unfamiliar feelings of anger within me; a literal ticking time bomb. I was scared. These feelings were alien to me

and I had no one to turn to. Although I considered myself to be an atheist, I found myself praying to God for help, but of course I figured my sorry mumblings were in vain and thought nothing more of it.

### *Chatty chaplain*

A couple of days later I was sitting alone in my cell, aware of a dark presence in the shadows of my mind, when the cell door opened and a smiling face looked in. He enquired after my cellmate. My tone must have conveyed a sense of despair as he introduced himself as a prison chaplain, and asked if I would like to have a chat. I figured, 'Why not?'

He sat and chatted with me for half an hour, and for the first time since coming into prison, I felt a sense of calm. I thanked him for his time and, before he left, he gave me a book to read. It was the story of a lady who had a very serious illness, but as a practising Christian had unwavering faith in God's willingness to help her deal with her troubles. I couldn't believe how someone could have such faith in God while suffering such adversity. I realised that God was with me too. He listens to and answers my prayers. Since then, he has taken me on an amazing spiritual journey to a place of peace, joy and contentment, which I could never have imagined. He has shown me the way to a new sense of hope for a bright and prosperous future.

---

Contributed by a prisoner.

---



### **MARK 12:41-44**

*‘Jesus sat down across from the place where people put their temple offerings. He watched the crowd putting their money into the offering boxes. Many rich people threw large amounts into them. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins. They were worth only a few pennies.*

*Jesus asked his disciples to come to him. He said, “What I’m about to tell you is true. That poor widow has put more into the offering box than all the others. They all gave a lot because they are rich. But she gave even though she is poor. She put in everything she had. That was all she had to live on.”*



### **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

Jesus often talked to his followers about money. This story shows he notices the poor and the weak. He is not impressed by wealth and status. He looks for followers who are whole-hearted in loving God and generous-hearted with their possessions. God is more concerned about the attitude of our hearts than the amount of money in our pockets. Whatever our background or position in life, Jesus wants to show us how much God loves us.



## Prayer

***Father in heaven, you see my heart's attitude.  
Please help me to put you first in my life.  
I want to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. Amen.***



'Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.'

**FRANCIS OF ASSISI (1181-1226)**



'True Christians consider themselves  
not as satisfying some rigorous creditor,  
but as discharging a debt of gratitude.'

**WILLIAM WILBERFORCE (1759-1833)**



'LORD, have mercy on us.  
We long for you to help us.  
Make us strong every morning.  
Save us when we're in trouble.'

**ISAIAH 33:2**

Scripture references are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version® NlRV®. Copyright©1995, 1996, 1998, 2013 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Biblica, Inc.® All rights reserved worldwide.