

WARM-UP

- Recall a time when something highly recommended to you (food, movie, book, etc.) failed to meet your expectations. Why did it fall short?
- Share a time you had to change your plans because of unexpected circumstances. How did you handle it?
- Have you experienced peer pressure—having to do something just because everyone else was doing it? What happened?

WORD *¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. ¹²And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³And they cried out again, "Crucify him."*

MARK 15:11-13

The Jews who had welcomed Jesus with glad and open arms at His triumphal entry (Mark 11) were most likely the same crowd that called for His crucifixion just a few days later. Leading up to the crucifixion, Jesus was brought before the Jewish council, and then to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. Pilate's custom was to release one prisoner chosen by the public at the Passover feast. In this case, he asked the crowd if they wanted him to release Jesus, because he knew Jesus was only on trial from the envy of the chief priests (Mark 15:10). However, the chief priests convinced the crowd to choose Barabbas, a murderer. Today, we'll reflect on two questions on following Jesus and how it can apply to us today.

1

Will we still follow Jesus even if He is not what we expected Him to be?

²⁹And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰save yourself, and come down from the cross!"

MARK 15:29-30

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the Jews cheered, believing that He was the warrior king who would save them from the Romans. However, they were bitterly disappointed in Him. They remembered He had said He would *destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days*. Now, He looked helpless, weak, and nothing like the warrior they had hoped for. They gave up when the Christ they envisioned didn't show up as they had expected. What did you imagine life with Jesus would be like? What was your "expectation versus reality" moment of following Jesus?

2 | Will we still follow Jesus when others won't?

*³¹So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³²Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. **MARK 15:31-32***

As Jesus was about to be crucified, many of the people around Him mocked Him openly. The soldiers placed a purple cloak and crown of thorns on Him, calling Him the *King of the Jews* (Mark 15:16–19). The chief priests and scribes also mocked Jesus' words, remembering He'd said He was the King of Israel. The crowd was also easily swayed (Mark 15:11–13). Even the very disciples of Jesus had betrayed, abandoned, and denied Him (Mark 14). How do you think you would respond if no one around you were following Jesus? Is there anything that could keep you from following Jesus? Would you follow Jesus even if it cost you everything?

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APPLICATION

- Reflect on your expectations of following Jesus. What steps can you take to remember His goodness and refocus your faith in spite of challenges?
- Think about a time you felt isolated in your faith. How did you respond? What steps can you take to stand firm in your belief, even when others waver?
- Is there an area in your life where you're tempted to follow the crowd instead of Jesus? Pray for God's guidance and strength to stand firm in faith.

PRAYER

- Thank God for His unwavering presence in our lives, and ask God to know Him more beyond our limitations and expectations. Thank Him for His faithfulness in spite of our faithlessness.
- Ask God for courage to stand firm in faith in spite of pressure and opposition.
- Pray for a heart that is steadfast in following Jesus, no matter the cost. Ask God for an opportunity to speak of His goodness to your friends or family today.

NOTES



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Contributors: Ruth Suson-Gloria, Esther Suson

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