

Love On Purpose, Lent 2024

Podcast/Lecture dates: 2/12/2024 – 3/18/2024

Questions for discussion & reflection:

Love Follows – Mark 1:9-15

1. Compare this account of Jesus' baptism and wilderness experience with the stories found in Matthew and Luke. What differences do you notice? Why might each writer have included different details, especially the different audiences for God's declaration to Jesus at his baptism?
2. How might the rest of the gospel have been less effective without the inclusion of Jesus' wilderness experience? What did that wilderness experience offer him? What does it offer us?
3. What lessons about discipleship do you hear most clearly in this passage? What about it helps you follow Jesus this Lent?

Love Speaks – Mark 8:31-38

1. What are your feelings toward Peter after reading today's passage? Frustration? Anger? Empathy? Encouragement? Why?
2. How is reading today's text different by itself vs. reading it in the context of the whole of chapter 8?
3. What's your "wondering" about why the writer of Mark included the "Messianic Secret" as a key element in this gospel?
4. If you had to answer who Jesus is, how do you think he would respond to you, and why?

Love Rumbles – John 2:13-22

1. What are your initial feelings or thoughts about the story (or stories) of Jesus "cleansing" the temple? How does this image fit into the rest of your pictures of Jesus?
2. What implications come to mind for why John chooses to put this story so early in Jesus' ministry? Take a look at the story's location in the Synoptic gospels and compare and contrast its location-related to other events.
3. Put yourself in the disciples' shoes. The text clearly says this is something they remembered and retold the story. What do you think they were thinking and feeling during this time?
4. Can you think of other times when Jesus chooses to "rumble" in conversations in any of the gospels? How do those conversations compare to this one with the temple authorities?

Love Gives – John 3:14-21

1. Read the story of Moses raising the serpent (Numbers 21:4-9). What details here stand out in relation to why Jesus' would have chosen this story to reference in his response to Nicodemus?
2. After thinking about the context of what comes before and after John 3:16, is there a way you would rewrite it for yourself that embodies the rest of the story?
3. How does it change how you read the passage to think of judgment as being personal judgment rather than God's judgment? What are the implications for a life of discipleship?

Love Surrenders – John 12:20-33

1. Often we don't think about Jesus' mission extending to Gentile audiences until Paul's mission. Why do you think it was so important for John's writer to include this detail about the Greeks coming to see Jesus at this point in their telling of the story? How does that detail enhance your understanding of Jesus' journey to the cross?
2. What do you notice about Jesus' tone and what he says, knowing that these are messages he is sharing now that "the time has come" for him to be crucified?
3. Spend some time with the idea that Jesus found himself "deeply troubled." What impact does that sentiment have on the picture of Jesus that you most often imagine? What does that tell you about how John was choosing to tell this part of Jesus' story?
4. How do you feel about the differing orders of the events in each of the gospels? What benefit do you gain from having these different accounts? How might it be something that helps you grow in your own faith?

Love Humbles – Mark 11:1-11

1. What picture do you have of the Palm Sunday triumphal entry into Jerusalem? How much of it is from Mark's gospel? Which parts match up?
2. Put yourself in the role of one of the pilgrims cheering Jesus on during this processional. Read the passage again in that role. What do you notice? What do you feel? What does this perspective offer you in understanding Jesus' mission? What other information would you want as an observer?
3. The abrupt ending and Jesus' departure in this passage are jarring. What role might this halt in momentum play in Mark's telling of the story of Holy Week's events? Why might this plot point help us better understand Jesus' purpose?