

READ Mark 14:22–24 — Jesus is leading them to something great, but they can't see it

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.”

Have you felt lately that God's plan is a bit beyond your grasp?

I think the Apostles were feeling much the same way that day, as Jesus shared symbology of the bread and wine. With benefit of hindsight we can sometimes wonder how they missed it, with all the signs pointing so clearly to His death. But when God's plan is unclear, every hint you receive, every detail you discover, only adds to the confusion.

Until we know the destination, the complicated and all-encompassing nature of a God sized plan will keep us guessing even while we begin to experience it. But once you know the destination, then you can start to see the significance in each moment as it occurs.

Let's remember Jesus death on the cross as we read it in Mark chapter 15 now, afterward we'll partake in communion together. If you don't have some bread and juice ready, now would be a good time get them from the kitchen.

READ Mark 15:12–39 — Jesus dies, a seeming defeat

Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?”

So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!”

Then Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?”

But they cried out all the more, “Crucify Him!”

So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take.

Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above:

THE KING OF THE JEWS.

With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was numbered with the transgressors.”

And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"

Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe."

Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, "Look, He is calling for Elijah!" Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down."

And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.

Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"

Pray & Take Communion

Jesus' death had the power to convince unbelievers. But without knowing the destination of God's plan, Jesus' own followers were only made more confused, sad, and scared than they were at His arrest. We can learn from this, for if we know that God's plan will succeed, then there is something we can do to participate, even before we are sure of where he's leading.

READ Mark 15:40–47 — The presence of courage is not the absence of fear

There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid.

When I googled courage, I got this. A simple but useful definition: "the ability to do something that frightens one" or "strength in the face of pain or grief". So, I want to remind you that the presence of courage does not indicate the absence of fear. **Rather, it's the swamp of fear where the tree of courage can grow.**

We see that God uses these individuals who are doing things for Him. If it was for anyone else their actions would be ordinary. Commendable actions, but still actions that are ordinary in the course of human existence. But because they've taken courage, and done something for Him, He's able to use their ordinary actions in His mighty plan.

This is always our option in confusing times, take courage, and serve God in those simple ways that never go out of style.

READ Mark 16:1 — Love others, even when you are scared

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.

Do what needs to be done, do for others what they need done, do it as unto the Lord, and do it even when you're scared. Be faithful to keep showing love to others, even in simple ways, in these trying times. You may have to get a little creative to do this without breaking the self-quarantine. You can think of these restrictions as another way to show love to people, by keeping them safe. But don't let that steal all your focus, we need to share the love of Christ in other ways too. We need to show people we care, and staying at home won't do that by itself, there needs to be some communication, some community.

In case you want to do more than call someone on the phone—but the news has frightened you away from trying Zoom—I've setup a link so try out Skype with a guest account. You can go to ccchico.com/skype and click the "Create a free meeting", the temporary link it will give you is all anyone needs to join the conversation. No accounts, no passwords.

By whatever means you have the conversation, don't let it end without prayer, without sharing the hope that is in you, or without finding out what they need. These little things add up.

READ Mark 16:2-5 — Following God's will in the small things leads us into His plan

Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

These small acts of love, that are so clearly within God's will, have been laid out by Him as part of His plan. Acting with kindness and respect towards Jesus led these women right into the center of our savior's great day of triumph.

What might God be leading you into? What greater plan is He unfolding even as we speak? We, like the first century followers of Christ, may not understand until after the fact, but we can learn to trust that God always has a plan.

READ Mark 16:6-7 — It's difficult to focus on God's promises

But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

Right after Jesus gave them the symbols of communion, thereby announcing His death yet again, He told them he would rise again and meet them in Galilee. This was a promise of the future coming from the mouth of the Son of God, but it went unnoticed and unheeded. How many promises has God given us that we've forgotten? Probably more than we have problems. God has probably made us more promises than we have fears, but I know which one is easier to dwell on.

Make a new habit then; when you begin to worry or fear, remind yourself of one of God's promises. Maybe you'll have to look one up, that's okay. Start reading your Bible, and within 20 minutes you'll likely have spotted one or two. But just in case that doesn't work, I have a link for that too: ccchico.com/promises will take you to a Pinterest board with over

1500 beautiful promises of God. Now, don't get lost on Pinterest, find a promise that speaks to your need, and then look it up in your Bible.

READ Mark 16:8 — Fear silences the truth

So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Worry distracts us, but fear can silence us. Don't be ashamed of your fear, but don't let it make your decisions, and don't let it silence you. When you are about to keep silent out of fear, then you know you are about to sin. These women did speak up, eventually. What their fear stole from them was the chance to celebrate in the streets, the chance to tell everyone just as they had been told.

But God is gracious towards us when we fear; and later these women found their courage. They did eventually tell the disciples, though the disciples fear & doubt kept them from believing the women.

READ Mark 16:9–11 — Don't let life's uncertainties distract you from the Joy we have in the Lord

Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

So much is uncertain right now, and so many are suffering, that it is easy to get lost in the mire. Jesus followers were too busy mourning His death to hear the news of His return to life. Do we sometimes forget where our joy comes from? It is in our savior, the one who has already won the victory!

Remind everyone you have the chance to, that Jesus is risen! Tell them what that means: that though this life leads to death, Jesus has beaten death and offers new life, eternal life, to everyone! There is nothing in this life that can change how good the Gospel is.

READ Mark 16:12–13 — Don't believe the rumors, unless they're about God winning

After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.

In this age of instantly proliferated lies, we've become jaded to news we're not ready for. So instead, let's each try to find and spread the good news happening in God's kingdom during this time. Rather than spending that time discerning some truth from the headlines, we could bring people hope and glory to God.

READ Mark 16:14 — God is not above lowering Himself

Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Jesus gave them the opportunity to act on their faith, to go to Galilee, and they did not take it. So, Jesus came to them; not to punish them, but to rebuke them, and to set them on the correct path. And it worked, they did meet Him in Galilee, and they had sweet fellowship with Him there. But eventually He would leave for heaven, 40 days after his resurrection.

READ Mark 16:15–18 — This command won't change, even by presidential decree

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Let everyone know what Jesus has done for you, and then let them know that He loves them, and wants to do the same for them. The Apostles did this, they finally took Jesus at His word. We can too, it's never been easier to "invite someone to church". It's never been easier to think of an excuse to call someone. All it takes is a little courage, to act on your faith instead of your fear.

READ Mark 16:19–20 — Jesus conquered death; we follow Him into victory

So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

We are following the one who has already won. We weren't asked to "make" people believe; our victory is in obedience to His will. No, victory doesn't rely on us, we have but to follow our victorious savior.

We have been charged with spreading the news, gathering more people into God's family. And awesomely, this charge isn't inhibited by being stuck at home. Shout it from the rooftops if you have to but share the Gospel with someone.