

Koinonia Gathering Guide: The Misunderstood Miracle King

Based on John 12:1-19

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by asking God to help you see Jesus clearly and to align your understanding with His Word rather than your circumstances.

Icebreaker Question

When have you completely misunderstood someone's intentions or actions, only to realize later what they really meant? How did that change your relationship with them?

Key Scripture

"A faith that leans on our own understanding will be a faith that misunderstands Jesus, distorting our vision, his mission, and the reason why we come to him."

Discussion Questions

1. Seeing Jesus Clearly (John 12:1-8)

- **Mary saw Jesus as Savior and surrendered everything.** What does complete surrender to Jesus look like in your daily life? What "expensive ointment" (most valuable thing) might God be asking you to surrender?
- **Judas saw Jesus as an opportunity for personal gain.** In what ways might we subtly approach Jesus primarily for what He can do for us rather than who He is?
- **The religious leaders saw Jesus as a problem.** Have you ever experienced resistance when your faith in Jesus challenged someone else's lifestyle or beliefs? How did you respond?

2. Understanding Jesus' Mission (John 12:12-15)

- The crowd expected Jesus to be a conquering king on a stallion, but He came on a donkey for peace and sacrifice. What expectations have you had about what Jesus should do in your life that didn't align with His actual mission?
- The sermon stated: "*They celebrated his power and what he could do... They wasn't trying to understand Jesus from his perspective of who he is.*" How can we shift from celebrating what Jesus does to celebrating who Jesus is?
- Jesus' mission was salvation, not political revolution. How does this challenge the way modern Christians sometimes expect Jesus to "fix" our circumstances?

3. Why We Come to Jesus (John 12:17-19)

- The crowd came to see a spectacle (Lazarus raised from the dead). What draws you to Jesus—His miracles and blessings, or His character and lordship?
- The sermon mentioned: "*You can come to Jesus for what he does and never receive him for who he is.*" Reflect honestly: What percentage of your prayers are about your needs versus worship and relationship?
- Jesus brought Lazarus back to show that we are all spiritually dead and need resurrection. How does viewing yourself as spiritually dead apart from Christ change your approach to Him?

4. Interpreting Jesus Through Scripture (Matthew 11:2-6)

- When John the Baptist questioned Jesus from prison, Jesus pointed him back to Scripture. Why is it dangerous to interpret Jesus through our circumstances rather than through God's Word?
- The pastor said: "*Tell me one time you prayed and it went the way that you prayed.*" Share a time when God answered differently than you expected. How did that grow your faith?
- How can we practically train ourselves to see Jesus through Scripture when we're in the middle of difficult circumstances?

Key Takeaways

1. **Our vision of Jesus matters.** How we see Jesus determines how we approach Him, what we expect from Him, and whether we truly worship Him.
2. **Jesus' mission is salvation, not comfort.** He came to rescue us from sin and death, not necessarily from our problems or oppression.
3. **Scripture must shape our understanding.** We cannot allow our circumstances, culture, or desires to reshape who Jesus is or what He came to do.
4. **Surrender is the proper response.** Like Mary, we should offer our most valuable possessions and priorities to Jesus as an act of worship.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one of the following to put into practice this week:

Option 1: Audit Your Prayers

- Keep a prayer journal for the week. At the end of each day, categorize your prayers: How many were requests vs. worship? How many focused on circumstances vs. character of God?

Option 2: Scripture Before Circumstance

- When facing a problem this week, before you pray about the situation, first read a passage about who Jesus is (John 1, Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 1). Let Scripture shape your perspective before you bring your request.

Option 3: Surrender Inventory

- Identify one thing you've been holding back from God (a relationship, career ambition, financial decision, hurt, unforgiveness). Like Mary with her expensive ointment, take steps to surrender it completely to Jesus this week.

Option 4: Study Palm Sunday

- Read all four Gospel accounts of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, John 12:12-19). Journal about what you learn about Jesus' mission and how the people misunderstood Him.

Reflection Questions for Personal Prayer

- Jesus, how do I currently see You? Am I seeing You clearly through Scripture, or am I viewing You through the lens of my problems?
- What have I been asking You to do that doesn't align with Your mission of salvation and transformation?
- Where am I celebrating Your power but resisting Your lordship?
- What do I need to surrender to You today?

Closing Prayer Focus

Pray for each group member to:

- See Jesus clearly as He truly is
- Surrender completely like Mary
- Trust Jesus' mission even when it doesn't match expectations
- Interpret life through Scripture rather than circumstances

Next Steps

- Share with the group one specific way you'll apply this week's lesson
- Find an accountability partner to check in with mid-week
- Memorize this week's key verse: *"Jesus said, 'Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.'"* (John 12:7-8)

For Group Leaders

Facilitation Tips:

- Create a safe space for honest answers—many people approach Jesus primarily for what He can do
- Be vulnerable about your own journey of misunderstanding Jesus
- Don't rush through questions; let silence work
- If someone shares about current suffering, validate their pain while pointing to Jesus' presence, not just deliverance
- End with hope: Jesus saves us even when we misunderstand Him

5-Day Devotional: Seeing Jesus Clearly

Day 1: Surrendering All to the Savior

Reading: John 12:1-8

Devotional: Mary's extravagant act of worship reveals a heart that sees Jesus clearly. She poured out her most valuable possession—not because she expected something in return, but because she understood who Jesus truly was. Her sacrifice wasn't wasteful; it was worship. Unlike Judas, who saw Jesus as a means to personal gain, Mary saw her Savior worthy of everything she had.

Today, examine what you're holding back from Jesus. Is it your career ambitions, your financial security, or perhaps unforgiveness toward someone? True faith doesn't calculate the cost—it surrenders completely. When you see Jesus as your Savior rather than your servant, worship becomes extravagant and sacrifice becomes joy. What "expensive ointment" is God calling you to pour out at His feet today?

Day 2: Beyond Miracles to Mission

Reading: Matthew 11:2-6; Isaiah 53:1-6

Devotional: Even John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus, struggled to understand God's plan from his prison cell. He expected deliverance but received silence. Jesus' response redirected John's focus from his circumstances to Scripture's fulfillment. The miracles weren't just displays of power—they pointed to Jesus' true identity and mission.

We often interpret Jesus through our problems rather than through Scripture. We want Him to fix our situations according to our timeline, but His mission is far greater than our temporary comfort. He came to die for our eternal salvation, not merely to make our earthly lives easier. When your prayers seem unanswered, remember: God's mission isn't shaped by your circumstances. His purpose is your transformation, not just your comfort. Trust His mission even when you don't understand His methods.

Day 3: The King Who Came in Peace

Reading: Zechariah 9:9-10; John 12:12-19

Devotional: The crowd expected a conquering king on a stallion but received a humble Savior on a donkey. They shouted "Hosanna"—save us—but misunderstood from what they needed saving. They wanted political liberation; Jesus offered spiritual

resurrection. Their vision was limited to earthly oppression; His mission addressed eternal separation from God.

How often do we reshape Jesus to fit our expectations? We want Him to defeat our enemies, solve our problems, and fulfill our dreams. But Jesus came for something far more profound—to rescue us from sin and death. The same crowd that celebrated Him would crucify Him days later because He didn't meet their expectations. Don't let your circumstances distort your vision of who Jesus is. He rides into your life not to serve your agenda but to accomplish His saving mission.

Day 4: Coming to Jesus for the Right Reasons

Reading: John 7:37-39; John 11:38-44

Devotional: The crowds flocked to see Lazarus, the spectacle of resurrection, but missed the Resurrector standing before them. They came for entertainment, signs, and benefits—not for relationship with the Savior. Jesus brought Lazarus back to reveal a deeper truth: we are all spiritually dead without Him, desperately needing resurrection.

Examine why you come to Jesus. Is it primarily for what He can do for you—solving problems, providing blessings, removing obstacles? Or do you come because of who He is—your Savior, your life, your everything? There's nothing wrong with bringing needs to God, but if that's the only reason you seek Him, you've missed the point. Jesus satisfies spiritual thirst that nothing else can quench. Come to Him not just for solutions but for salvation, not just for miracles but for relationship.

Day 5: Interpreting Jesus Through Scripture

Reading: Psalm 22:1-18; Luke 24:25-27, 44-47

Devotional: Jesus consistently pointed people back to Scripture to understand His identity and mission. When John doubted, when crowds misunderstood, when disciples were confused—Jesus anchored their understanding in God's Word. We cannot interpret Jesus through our bank accounts, relationships, or circumstances. We must see Him through the lens of Scripture.

Your feelings will mislead you. Your circumstances will confuse you. Your expectations will disappoint you. But God's Word reveals Jesus accurately—the suffering Servant who became the risen King, the Lamb slain for your sins, the Savior who loved you enough to die for you even when you misunderstood Him. When life doesn't make sense, return to Scripture. Let God's Word, not your situation, define who Jesus is. He is faithful even when you don't understand. He is Savior even when you wanted a

different solution. Trust the Jesus revealed in Scripture, not the Jesus shaped by your preferences.