

# Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 3/24/19

**Monday** – Read Mark 14:53-61a, Matthew 26:57-63a, Isaiah 53:7-8, and Psalm 88:1-5.

**Silent Before His Accusers.** They took Jesus to Caiaphas the high priest. Peter followed at a distance to see how this would end. Jesus was lowered into a pit or dungeon for the remainder of the night before he was brought before the council the next morning to face charges of blasphemy. Jewish law required two or three witnesses to convict someone of a capital offense. Jesus stood in silence as his accusers made false accusations against him. Finally, two witnesses agreed that Jesus had threatened to destroy the Temple. However, they had to misquote what Jesus said in John 2:19, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* He was referring to his own body. What does Jesus’ silence in the face of these accusations tell you about Jesus? As you pray, ask Jesus to give you strength to face adversity the way Jesus did.

**Tuesday** – Read Matthew 26:59-68, Mark 14:55-65, Luke 22:63-71. **Religion Gone Bad.** Caiaphas, the high priest, asked Jesus, *“Are You the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”* When Jesus said, *“I am,”* the high priest understood him to be saying I AM which meant that Jesus was claiming to be God. Then the scribes and elders said, *“He deserves death.”* This group of religious authorities was so full of hate and rage that they spat in Jesus’ face, struck him, slapped him, and said, *“Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?”* This was religion gone bad. When we have mistreated other people to protect our own power or position? In the morning, these religious leaders plotted to kill Jesus, and they handed him over to Pilate. Ask God to give you a heart of compassion for all people.

**Wednesday** – Read Matthew 26:33-35, 57-58; Mark 14:29-31, 53-54; Luke 22:31-34, 54-55. **Following at a Distance.** Much has been made of Peter denying Jesus. Before looking at Peter’s failure of nerve, we should give Peter some credit for his acts of courage before his denial. When Judas arrived with the Temple guard, John tells us that it was Peter who drew his sword to defend Jesus. When all of the disciples deserted Jesus, Peter followed at a distance to avoid being captured. When Jesus was taken into the high priest’s house, Peter actually dared to enter the courtyard where many of those who had seized Jesus were standing. When has your faith required you to have courage? Pray for God to give you courage to stand up for Jesus and live out your faith.

**Thursday** – Read Matthew 26:69-75, Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:54-62. **Peter Denies Jesus.** Have you ever faced a moment when you were afraid to be identified as a follower of Jesus? Three times Peter denied that he knew Jesus. We can speculate that Peter denied Jesus because he was afraid, and many of us can relate to how Peter behaved. We too have sometimes denied Jesus because we were afraid of what our friends would think or how they would treat us. This is a story of fear and denial, but it is also a story of grace and restoration. Can you imagine Peter telling people later, *“I denied knowing Jesus, but after his resurrection he took me back and restored me.”* If the Lord could restore Peter, then he can surely restore us too. Confess your sins to Jesus and receive his grace and forgiveness.

**Friday** – Read John 11:47-53, 13:36-38, 18:12-28. **Annas and Caiaphas.** John alone notes that after they arrested Jesus they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest. It was Caiaphas who told the Council, *“It is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.”* Fear motivated them to plot to kill Jesus. John also tells us that it was John who helped Peter get into the courtyard of the high priest. Like the other Gospels, John mentions the charcoal fire and the fact that Jesus was physically beaten during his trial before the religious authorities. What strikes you the most about this story? Can you find yourself in the story? Pray for Jesus to give you the strength to stand strong in your faith even when you are tempted to stray.

**Saturday** – Read Matthew 27:1-10. **The Death of Judas Iscariot.** When Judas saw that Jesus had been condemned, he repented and tried to give back the blood money he had been paid for betraying Jesus. He found no forgiveness or grace from the religious leaders, so he hanged himself. Suicide is never the answer for us no matter how bad things get. If you experience severe depression or a very dark time in your life, you need to know that things will get better if you just hold on. If you are thinking about harming yourself, reach out to someone in our church, and we will help you. If Judas had just held on for three more days, he would have found grace and forgiveness from our risen Lord, Jesus. As you pray, confess your sins to Jesus and ask for his forgiveness. Ask God to give you strength and hope to carry on through the hardest times in your life.

**Lectionary Readings:** Isaiah 55:1-9; Psalm 63:1-8; I Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9.

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