

Mark 14:12-26

July 21, 2019

Do you know what a protagonist is? A Protagonist is the main character of a story. I don't often consult Wikipedia, but when I do I look up definitions.

It had a good one,

"A protagonist is a main character of a story. The protagonist is at the center of the story, makes the key decisions, and experiences the consequences of those decisions. The protagonist is the primary agent propelling the story forward, and is often the character who faces the most significant obstacles."

In other words, you will be able to grasp any story if you pay very close attention to the protagonist. The main character's actions holds the key to understanding the point of the story.

Who is the protagonist of Mark?

Jesus.

Jesus propels the story of Mark forward. We want to focus our undivided attention on Jesus. We want to see what he does, hear what he says, watch where he goes.

Mark consciously puts Jesus as the central character, the protagonist in his book. Each week we have been—

Watching Jesus

Listening to Jesus

Following Jesus

Focusing on Jesus

To get to know him better. It is hard to improve on JC Ryle's encouragement to pay close attention to Jesus in the gospels,

“I want professing Christians to know more about Christ. It is well to be acquainted with all the doctrines and principles of Christianity.

It is better to be acquainted with Christ Himself. It is well to be familiar with faith, and grace, and justification, and sanctification. They are all matters ‘pertaining to the King.’

But it is far better to be familiar with Jesus Himself, to see the King's own face, and to behold His beauty. This is one secret of eminent holiness.

He that would be conformed to Christ's image, and become a Christ-like man, must be constantly studying Christ Himself.

Now the Gospels were written to make us acquainted with Christ.”

Surely we cannot know this Christ too well! Surely there is not a word, nor a deed, nor a day, nor a step, nor a thought in the record of His life, which ought not to be precious to us.

We should labor to be familiar with every line that is written about Jesus.” J.C. Ryle

Let’s join Jesus again and pay close attention, because ‘surely we cannot know this Christ too well!’

Today as we follow Jesus we see the beginning of something new.

PROP: Salvation by substitution.

Again this week Jesus propels this story forward. He takes the action again. We will notice the newness as we focus our attention on Jesus—

Jesus sends

Jesus says

Jesus shows

1. Jesus sends disciples to make Passover preparation (Mark 14:12-16)

“And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat

the Passover?" ¹³ And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." ¹⁶ And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover."

We join Jesus again on Thursday morning. This was not just any Thursday, it was Passover Day. Passover was the biggest day in nation of Israel. Passover was an ancient Jewish celebration.

The Passover celebration was already ancient by the Thursday we join Jesus on. It dated some 1500 years back to the time of Moses. The nation of Israel lived as a nation of slaves to the nation of Egypt. The Egyptians were harsh and demanding taskmasters.

After more than 400 years of slavery, God sent Moses from desert obscurity on a mission to lead the people away to freedom from Egypt. It would be no easy task. The Pharaoh did not want to release the Israelites and miss out on all that free labor.

So, through Moses, God visited 9 plagues ranging from darkness to frogs to boils to try and force the

Pharaoh's hand. Nothing worked. The tenth plague was different.

The 10th plague forced the Pharaoh to expel the nation of Israel. That plague was the famous visitation of the angel of death. Here is how Exodus says it,

[1] The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, [2] "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. [3] Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household...Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, [6] and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

Then they had something specific to do with the blood from the lamb.

[7] "Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. [8] They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it."

Roasted Lamb
Unleavened Bread
Bitter Herbs

That was what was on the menu. They would not only use the lamb to apply the blood to the doorposts but also eat that lamb. The bread was to be unleavened because they were going to have to get away with such haste that they wouldn't have time to let the bread rise. Lastly, the bitter herbs were to remind them of the bitterness of slavery.

And then the Lord said,

[12] For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. [13] The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

[14] "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast." Exodus 12:1–8; 12—14

God had Passed over the people of Israel. What was the means of their salvation? The blood of an innocent little lamb.

Lamb's blood is an unexpected and odd protection for the people. How could the blood of a lamb without blemish do any good in warding off the death of the firstborn of Israel?

It was a salvation for the people by means of the death of a lamb. Salvation for the unworthy by the death of an innocent lamb.

And for 1500 years this idea of salvation for the people by the death of a lamb was pressed into the Jewish mindset. All the Jews knew they were saved by the death of another AND rescued from slavery in Egypt by the judgment of God on the nation.

The blood protected them from God and was the means of rescue from enslavement to Egypt.

Generation after generation rehearsed and remembered and recalled God's saving work. And over time, the strangeness wore off. Salvation by the death of another was rehearsed each year at Passover.

1500 years after the first Passover, Jesus and his 12 disciples celebrated the Passover. It would be Jesus' last meal with his followers before his death.

Mark reports all these details about the Passover preparation for at least two reasons.

One, Judas had already decided to betray Jesus to the Jewish authorities. Jesus needed this one last night with his followers, so Judas couldn't know the place before that night. Jesus was a marked man with a bounty on his head. He needed one more night in hiding.

Second, we see that Jesus is taking charge even of the details of his last meal. He is not merely a victim of circumstance he is on complete control moving inextricably to his own death on that cross.

Yes, he needed a place to celebrate the Passover but more than that he needed one last meal with his disciples. He needed to prepare them for his departure.

Jesus needed this time with them. He was about to turn 1500 years of national history on its head. He sent the disciples to prepare for the Passover so he could prepare them for a new Passover Celebration. But before that,

2. Jesus says something unexpected at the Passover Meal (Mark 14:17-21)

¹⁷ And when it was evening, he came with the twelve.
¹⁸ And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." ¹⁹ They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?"
²⁰ He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

Typically the leader of the meal would ask of the youngest child, "What makes this night different from all other nights?"

And then they would rehearse the Exodus rescue story. Mark doesn't say anything about that exchange. Instead Jesus says something no one expected,

"Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who his eating with me."

Shocker.

The conversation that Mark records for us in verse 18, was out of the ordinary and completely unexpected. Passover was the a night to remember God's goodness to the nation, but how could they celebrate when there was a treacherous rogue among them?

No one saw this coming. Nobody said, "I've always thought Judas was a little iffy." OR "I knew it!"

No. No one even hazards a guess at the identity of the scoundrel.

We need to understand that Jesus and the 12 were more than just a team they were like a tight-knit family. They had a months and years of common experiences that united them together.

They had lived, worked and walked with Jesus for three years. They relied on each other. They loved each other. The last thing they expected was that one of their number would chose to betray Jesus.

Look at how the disciples responded, "Is it I?"

As usual, their focus is all wrong. Instead of focusing on Jesus they focused on themselves. Instead of feeling for Jesus and saying something like, "That is terrible. I'm so sorry." OR "Wow, that is hard to hear. How are you?"

Instead, they focus on themselves and say essentially,

“Surely not me.”

One of Jesus’ closest friends was about to sell him out. No one saw it coming. Everyone was taken by surprise.

Notice how Jesus responded to their questioning,

Vs. 20,

“It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me.”

In that culture, the people you shared a meal with were safe. They were the ones you knew you could count on. That upper room that was supposed to be a safe place but it was transformed into a room of infamy.

Mark has already told us in Mark 14:10-11 that Judas had already made contact with the Jewish authorities and he was looking for a chance to hand Jesus over.

And yet.

Jesus does not name Judas, did you notice that? He doesn't say, "Judas is the one." You see his love even in that moment. If he had called out Judas in front of the rest of them, Judas might have felt boxed in and forced.

He might have felt that he had no choice. That he was cornered. But Jesus shows even this villainous traitor love.

But Jesus did not name him. There was still time for Judas to turn and repent. But he would not. Judas had real responsibility for his actions. He chose to betray Jesus, he could not say, I was predestined to do this, I had no choice. He chose.

Judas still had time. He could have reconsidered. But his mind was made up. He had decided to leverage his relationship with Jesus to turn a profit. He wanted to cash in.

There was still time to turn and change and ask for forgiveness and repent. But Judas was steadfast in his plan.

And Jesus says,

"It would have been better for that man if he had never been born."

All Judas would have had to say was, "Help me." And the savior would have. But he was busy counting his money.

Not only was there a traitor in his midst but also cowards too. These disciples who hear the news about the betrayal and ask, "is it I?" When Jesus is arrested run away to save themselves.

Jesus surrounded himself with a traitor and a bunch of cowards. Jesus was about to face the hour of greatest agony and he was going to have to do it alone.

Jesus did not come for the honorable and the obedient, he came to save traitors and the cowardly alike.

And Jesus continues to propel the story forward.

Jesus sends disciples to prepare a place
Jesus says something unexpected to his disciples

3. Jesus shows the disciples what he is about to do. (Mark 14:22-26)

And what he shows is the most important part of our passage today. Look at verse 22,

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

Normally, when it came for the time to break bread the host would say,

"This is the bread affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let everyone who hungers come and eat the Passover meal."

And then he would pronounce a blessing.

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth."

He would break the bread and pass it out. But Jesus went off script here. Look at the end of verse 22,

"Take; this is my body."

No one there thought that Jesus was saying that the bread they were eating was LITERALLY the body of Jesus. All understood that imagery and symbolism. Just as the bread symbolized the hardship for the nation, now Jesus is saying it would symbolize something else.

But what?

His death. He takes the bread and breaks it showing the disciples that he would be broken and die. He explains unleavened bread NOT in terms of the exodus from Egypt for Israel but in terms of his death.

“Take; this is my body.” Means that he is making a gift of himself to his traitorous, cowardly followers. He is offering all of himself without reserve. He would be broken FOR them.

He would be broken as a gift for them.

Similarly, with the cup he said,

Vs. 24,

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”

Right before that he would have pronounced a blessing that said, "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who created the fruit of the vine."

Then he said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

He is again drawing attention to his death. It would not be a quiet, bloodless death. His manner of death would be gruesome and bloody.

Did you notice that the pronouncement with the cup is more explicit than the bread? He mentions a covenant.

A covenant is an agreement entered into by two parties—similar to a contract. But instead of signing on the dotted line, ancient covenants were sealed with or formalized by blood. Jesus is signaling that his death would inaugurate a new beginning for his disciples.

You might even say a new exodus.

No more lambs need be slaughtered for the people—the Lamb of God would be slaughtered once and for all for his people.

“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his
days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.
[11] Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see
and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my
servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.
[12] Therefore I will divide him a portion with the
many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the
transgressors.” Isaiah 53:10–12

Jesus is showing his disciples that he had to die so that they might live. He acted out his death before their eyes. He had predicted his death three times, but here he gives them more of a glimpse of how he would die.

But also that he would die for them.

You see, he gave them the bread to eat and the wine to drink. Jesus is showing them that somehow they would internalize his death and take it into themselves.

That was not yet clear to them, but they would understand later. Jesus was dying for the many and for his sacrifice to do any good people had to take it in themselves.

Jesus was starting a new exodus. It was seen by the prophets of old including Jeremiah,

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, [32] not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. [33] For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [34] And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their

iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Jeremiah 31:31–34

The day of the new covenant was nearly upon them. Soon, they would not look back to the rescue from Egypt by means of the blood of lambs but they would look back to the rescue from sin and death by the lamb of God.

Salvation by a bloody substitute.

We need not paint the blood of Christ on our foreheads—but we must recognize that his body broken and blood flowing was for his unworthy, cowardly followers.

Consider his words for a moment. On his last night alone with his disciples on a night the disciples would never forget, he wanted them to remember his death.

“Take, this is my body.”

“This is MY blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”

Political and Military leaders want to be remembered for their great accomplishments after they are gone. They often get streets, bridges, freeways and elementary schools named after them as a way to remember.

Do you see what Jesus wants them—and us to remember?

His death.

Not so much HOW he died, but THAT he died for traitors and cowards and sinners. He wants us to remember why he died.

Body broken; blood spilled.

- There was no passing over for him—he faced the full wrath of God.

Body broken; blood spilled.

- There were no lambs to take his place—rather he was the one who took the place of the lamb.

Body broken; blood spilled.

- He died in the place of traitors and cowards.

Body broken; blood spilled.

- Jesus the Son of God was killed by God the Father—so that we might live.

Body broken; blood spilled.

- Jesus died to lead his followers on a new exodus away from enslavement to sin and death.

Body broken; blood spilled.

- Jesus died not as a witless animal but willingly.

Body broken; blood spilled.

- Him instead of his cowardly disciples.

Body broken; blood spilled.

- Him instead of me.

Body broken; blood spilled.

- Him instead of you.

Body broken; blood spilled.

- His death means that his cowardly people will have the wrath of God Passover them because he has spent ALL his wrath on Jesus.

What can we say?

As we remember his death we understand together—

1. Remember his death NOT your past sins.

As followers of Jesus we all know that we continue to struggle with and against sin. And sometimes in the midst of that struggle we can feel so nasty. So dirty. So unworthy.

We can carry the weight of sin and feel the burden. We can feel so compromised.

We are better at remembering our sins than the fact that Jesus was killed instead of us.

You see those feelings are so very real and loud to us that you might be tempted to think that you deserve to be punished.

And when bad things happen you think, "I deserved that."

False.

This is where we must remember what Jesus has done for us. I'm talking to those who follow Jesus here.

"Your heart is not the compass that God steers by."
Samuel Rutherford

How you feel about yourself does not determine God's opinion of you. No. Jesus died so that we might live.

We are better at remembering our sins than the fact that Jesus was killed instead of us.

2. He covers over any who come.

Body broken and blood spilled is a strange way to save. But it is effective.

There is no sin that you have committed that cannot be cleansed by the death of Jesus Christ. Surely, you noticed when we joined Jesus and the 12 in the upper room that they all ate the bread and drank the wine.

They were unworthy.

And yet, they ate. That signifies a participation with Jesus. A benefit by his death.

Your sin is real. His death is too.

You can have hope and life everlasting.

Focus on Jesus.

PRAY

SONG

“For great is his steadfast love toward us and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.” Ps. 117:2

