

# The Chosen

## Season 4 - “God’s Goodness for the Chosen”

### Sources:

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## Episodes 1 and 2

### Opening Prayer

A “dispersion” is the action of distributing things or people over a wide area. When Peter wrote his first letter, he wrote to the “Dispersion”, the chosen ones scattered about. We, as Christians, are this dispersion. We are not in one place. We, the chosen by God, are scattered about the earth. So Peter is speaking to us...to you. To open our Bible study on *The Chosen*, let us read what Simon Peter, 2000 years ago, has to say to you:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you." (1 Peter 1:1-2)

### Season 4

In Season 1, we focused on Isaiah 43: what it means to be chosen.

In Season 2, we focused on Matthew 5: what it means to be blessed.

In Season 3, we focused on the good news: what it means to get back to the Garden of Eden.

In Season 4, we focus on the First Letter of Peter: what it means to be a disciple. That is, what is the cost of discipleship?

Peter's first letter is a testament that the hard things we experience in life are always eclipsed by the bigger things God is doing, in and through these hard things. Instead of lamenting our trials, we should be rejoicing in them. Our response to suffering is determined by how well we understand its purpose in our lives, the blessing it holds, and how radically good God is. But this does not mean we cannot question God about it. As we'll see in Season 4, God wants us to ask questions. But also to have faith, trusting that the Lord knows what we need, what goodness He has for us.

Today we are covering episodes 1 and 2: *Death is eclipsed by life* and *Grief is eclipsed by praise*.

### Episode 1 - Death is eclipsed by life (Isaiah 62; Luke 1; Mark 6)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, Zachariah, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Joanna, Zebedee, and the Disciples

Synopsis. The episode begins in 4 BC with Mother Mary traveling to see Elizabeth after the annunciation. Her guides wonder if she is pregnant and about the shame it will bring to her if she were pregnant. Mary meets Elizabeth, who has been in shame for being old but having no children. Elizabeth's unborn baby leaps for joy. Then, we shift back to the present where a woman practices a dance for King Harrod. Simon Z teaches Judas to wash clothes while Judas expresses concerns that the mission is not

going as he expected. Joanna tries to warn John the Baptist that he is in danger, but John says the way of the Lord is prepared. Thomas and Rema discuss getting married. John the Baptist is killed. The episode ends with a flashback to Zachariah declaring the purpose of John's life.

### **Notable quotes:**

"It's like he can't wait to get started." (Elizabeth)

"I've never been to a wedding banquet, but I'm on my way to one." (John the Baptist)

- *What wedding banquet is John attending?*

### **Episode Talking Points**

In this episode, we learn more about death being eclipsed by life.

In the ancient world, death was seen as the end. And in a way, the birth of John the Baptist can be seen as the end of the Old Testament. God's relationship with His chosen people in the Old Testament really begins with a story of an elderly, childless couple conceiving a child, and the Old Testament ends with an elderly, childless couple conceiving a child. God started the Old Testament by using Abraham and Sarah to show nothing is impossible with God, and God closes the Old Testament by using Zachariah and Elizabeth to show nothing is impossible with God. With the entrance of John the Baptist, God is preparing his Chosen people for a New Testament...a new relationship with Him, their God.

Elizabeth and Mary show an interesting contrast of societal shame:

- *Why was Elizabeth experience societal shame?*

- *Why was Mary experiencing societal shame?*

- *What societal shames do we place on people today that we should not as Christians?*

Before we choose to become a member of a group, we usually think about all the benefits of being a member. We seldom look at the fine print. It's the same with discipleship. There is good news...and bad news. Jesus requires us to turn away from sin, surrender our future plans, and trust Him to take care of us. That's some real fine print. What if sinning brings you a lot pleasure: fame, honor, riches, sex? What if you really like doing what you want? You only live once, right? What if relying on an invisible being who doesn't even say good morning seems to be the wrong way to plan one's life? Humans are hardwired to self-protect. As Fr Mike Schmitz says, the human heart is an idol making factory, and we are very good at putting ourselves first. To deny ourself, to die to oneself, is counter intuitive, and goes against all marketing in our commercially driven world.

- *Do you think the apostles and the saints got it all wrong?*

- *What is God promising us in return for living the Beatitudes? That is, what is the good news, the membership benefits?*

- *What does Mary tell us in her apparitions?*

- *What do we need to help us in our self-denial?*

We Christians often portray Judas as the villain, forgetting that perhaps, we might be more like Judas than we are like Peter, James, or John, or any of the other apostles. In the scene with Simon the Zealot, Judas is...

- expressing expectations of Jesus that have not been met.
  - expressing opportunities to grow the ministry that are not being taken
  - trying to fit the mission and discipleship into what he wants
  - leading to the time when the business will become more important than the ministry
- How is Judas' skimping on laundry a metaphor to how Judas skimps on the ministry?*
- Have you skimmed on what needs to be done, particularly regarding your faith?*
- In what ways have you been just like Judas, trying to fit Christianity into what you want?*

Zachariah's song is a prayer to remind us that John's life, although having a tragic end, had a purpose. And Zachariah reminds us that God always fulfills his promises. It is fitting that the Writer's interwove Luke 1:67-79 in the end of this episode.

[Watch - [Announcing the death of John the Baptist 49:00 - 52:40](#)]

- *In what ways did John the Baptist prepare the way thus fulfilling his life's purpose?*

## Reading

Let's continue to read from First Letter of Peter:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:3-5)

**Episode 1 prayer:** Dear Lord, I cannot fathom why you, the Almighty, might need me, a humble servant, in your magnificent world. I know our lives have a purpose no matter how brief or tragic they might be. Thank you. Thank you for having a purpose, and thank you for making me to fulfill that purpose. As your humble servant, I pray that I have found my purpose, and that my actions are pleasing to the Lord. Where they are not, I humbly ask for your great mercy, for you know that I can be a lost sheep. Send the Good Shepherd to seek me out, to set me back again upon the straight path, the path that leads to goodness and eternal life. Amen

## Episode 2 - Grief is eclipsed by praise (Matthew 16, Matthew 18)

Biblical Characters - Jesus and the Disciples

Synopsis. The episode begins with a dream sequence from Jesus about meeting John the Baptist again. Jesus and the Disciples are doing shiva, the Jewish mourning of John's death. Atticus tells Quintus to do something about Jesus because he fears an uprising. Jesus takes his disciples on a journey to Caesarea Philippi. Thomas and

Rema ask Jesus for his consent to marry them. Jesus tells his disciples there will be a great cost to follow him. The San Hedrin decides to make the Romans interested in Jesus' mission. Shmuel is having second thoughts about Jesus. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus changes Simon's name to Peter and says upon this rock he will build his church. Matthew asks Jesus for advice about his less than friendly relationship with Peter. Afterwards, Matthew privately asks Peter for forgiveness for being a tax collector, but Peter refuses. Yusef decides to leave Capernaum and join the San Hedrin in Jerusalem. Peter reflects on whether he is worthy to be this new "rock", then asks Jesus for advice about his less than friendly relationship with Matthew. Afterwards, Peter publicly forgives Matthew.

**Notable quote:** "Are you ready to follow in my footsteps even if it leads you to a place like this?" (Jesus)

In this episode, we learn more about how question is eclipsed by resolve.

### Episode Talking Points

The dream sequence that opens this episode shows Jesus and John the Baptist. The dream signifies that a loss is also a call to go forward.

- *What was the significance of John's shackles in this scene?*
- *What was the significance of John pointing?*

In this episode, both Matthew and Peter question Jesus whether they need to forgive their enemy? They ask what's in it for them?

- *Did Matthew and Peter like Jesus' answer?*
- *After asking Jesus questions, what were Matthew and Peter resolved to do?*
- *What value does forgiveness give to the one forgiving?*

Let's talk about the scene at Caesarea Philippi. Did you know that Jews used to refer to Caesarea Philippi as "the gates of hell"? Jewish tradition held that Caesarea Philippi was the same place in Genesis where improper sexual relations created the Nephilim. It was a place of demonic worship, full of idolatry, human sacrifice, and sexual perversion. It was a place exemplifying the worst of humanity. Yet, at the gates of hell is where Jesus founds His church, the place where God reveals His plan to save humankind.

[Watch [The gates of hell 33:55 - 40:30](#)]

- *Could the Disciples have achieved what they did after Pentecost by being afraid to confront evil even at the gates of hell?*
- *Why are we, as a disciple of Christ, afraid to confront evil to save a lost sheep?*

In Peter's first letter, Peter says we would be "grieved by various trials". Humanity's problems run the gamut such that there are so many reasons to grieve:

- From not having enough money to what to do with too much money
- From being burned by the pain of a loved one to feeling loved by no one

- From experiencing the consequences of our own sin to becoming the victim of someone else's sin.
- From unexpected tragedy to the chronic illnesses that seem to steal our years away.

Trials lead to questions, even questioning whether a good God exists. Peter tells us that having faith in Jesus means believing in one we do not see, surrendering our circumstances even when they are far from ideal, trusting Jesus to provide, and remaining confident that God's words are true even when the world says they're not. Jesus will never fail us, never leave us, never forget us. And we should praise God for being forever faithful.

- *What did Peter experience with Jesus that would move him to tell us this?*

### **Reading**

Let's continue reading from the First Letter of Peter:

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:6-9)

### **Episode 2 prayer**

Dear Lord, I praise Your name. Your refining fire removes my impurities and strengthens my faith in You the Living God. Thank you for loving me so much that you send your Holy Spirit to dwell in me so that I might be more like Jesus. Thank you for your patience and forgiveness. Help me to navigate my trials and to have greater awareness of your ever presence in my life. Through the suffering I may endure, may I never forget your unconditional love for me. Amen.

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## Episodes 3 and 4

### Opening Prayer

Let's continue hearing what Simon Peter wants to tell us, that the prophets were serving you, so that you could recognize Jesus as God incarnate:

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look." (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Today we are covering episodes 3 and 4: *Question is eclipsed by resolve* and *Confusion is eclipsed by grace*.

### Episode 3 - Question is eclipsed by resolve (John 9)

Biblical Characters - King David, Bathsheba, Jesus, Disciples, Mother of James and John, Zebedee, man blind from birth.

Synopsis. The episode opens with King David in repentance, praying that his son would get well, but his son dies. Quintus is anxious because tax revenues are down, and he blames the pilgrims that come to see Jesus. Gaius is not happy with Quintus' actions and orders. The mother of James and John tells her sons to ask Jesus for them to sit at his right and his left when he comes in glory. Thomas and Rema get engaged. Jesus heals a man who's been blind since birth on the Sabbath which infuriates the Pharisees. A large crowd gathers while Jesus confronts the Pharisees. Gaius, listening to Jesus, refuses to disperse the crowd. Quintus comes to disperse the crowd and draws his sword in anger. In the chaos that follows, Quintus mortally wounds Rema. Thomas is left wondering why Jesus did not save her.

### Notable quotes:

"[I worship] through sorrow and joy, and sorrow again. This is the meaning of faith."  
(King David)

"Stay with him. That's all I want." (Rema)

### Episode Talking Points

In this episode, we learn more about how grief is eclipsed by praise.

Let's first talk about the man blind from birth. This story comes from the Gospel of John. Have you ever wondered why Jesus just didn't touch the man to heal him? Instead, Jesus spat on the ground, made mud, and placed it on the blind man's eyes.

- *How did God make Adam?*

- *What point is John consistently trying to make in his gospel? [Jesus is God]*

Life is full of unanswered questions even for the disciples who walked with Jesus. Trusting in Jesus and following God's will doesn't grant us knowledge. Following is not leading which is the reason we don't know why things are happening. We don't have the map. We didn't write the story. And the prophets of the Old Testament questioned God about how the Lord would bring salvation. Read Job, Wisdom, and Ecclesiastes to learn how deep those who lived 3000 years ago questioned the ways of God.

[Watch - [David and Bathsheba 4:00 - 6:25](#)]

- *God always answers our prayers. What was God's answer to David's prayer? [No]*
- *What does David mean when he says the separation could be a long time or tomorrow?*

No one in the Bible questioned God more than David. A person known for having "God's own heart," David shows there is nothing wrong with asking God. Many of the Psalms reflect David questioning God, but they also reflect David's deep faith, trust, in God.

Suffering exposes the things we instinctively hope in: financial security, physical comfort, other people, our own strength, plans, health, and accomplishments. When any of those things are threatened, we realize how fragile these actually are, and we tend to panic. But we also tend to pray. We turn to God in anger. We turn to God in tears. We turn to God in pure desperation, asking "Why would you? How could you?" Suffering seems to automatically bring a lot of confusion, hurt, fear, second-guessing... and judgement of God's character and the things He allows.

- *What events caused the disciples to judge Jesus' character?*
- *What has caused you to judge God's character and the things He allows?*
- *What would cause God to judge your character and the things you allow?*

The truth is God sees beyond the moment we live in. God knows the "butterfly effect", the effect that an apparent insignificant, mundane act can have a history changing impact. The Old Testament has many such examples of the mustard seeds God is sowing through us. God knows the ways our faith is deficient, how our unbelief endangers our journey, the character qualities we need more of. God allows us to be challenged so that when His words prove true, our confidence in Him grows.

- *What trials in your life have turned out to be blessings, preparing you for your life's purpose?*
- *Have you found yourself praising God with increased faith after such trials?*

Grief is a process. Remember David's response when he learns his son has died. Remember the wisdom he gives to Bathsheba: grieve and move on. As Job said, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." God is Lord. God is sovereign. God is God, and we are not. In the coming episodes, the writers will draw a comparison between David's response to grief and Thomas' response to grief.



The Gospels say that Jesus performed “signs”. To be a “sign” means to point to something else. The signs of Jesus pointed to Jesus being the Christ. Reflect back on Jesus’ words with Little James. Not all actions of Jesus could be signs.

- *Is it possible Jesus did not save Rema because, in God’s wisdom, it would not be a sign?*
- *Is it possible the miracle we request does not happen because, in God’s wisdom, they would not be a sign?*

## Reading

Let’s read Psalm 13 on how question is eclipsed by resolve:

“How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,” lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.” (Psalm 13)

## Episode 3 prayer

Dear God, Praise to you, King of the universe. Mighty is your steadfast love. You have the power to create the universe and sustain it, yet just as a good father, you encourage me to ask you questions. You desire that I be honest, vulnerable, and expectant with You who knows all that I need. I pray that my heart not be harden by my trials, but may the Holy Spirit that dwells in me through my baptism stir in me strength and faith to trust You even more as I await answers. For I acknowledge that Your wisdom, Your thoughts, and Your ways are far above my own. May I always be your humble, faithful servant. Amen.

## Episode 4 - Confusion is eclipsed by grace (Matthew 8:5-13; Mark 10:35-45)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, the Disciples, beggar, man possessed, and the Centurion asking to heal his son/slave.

Synopsis. The episode begins with Gaius replacing Quintus as the praetor of Galilee. While Jesus and the Disciples escort Rema’s body to her hometown, there are flashbacks to the previous days. Each flashback centering on confusion as to how and why these events happened. Jesus and the Disciples meet Rema’s father who chastises and curses Jesus as a fraud and the devil. On their way back to Galilee, crowds of followers join them. Jesus heals a man possessed and a beggar. All this time, Thomas continues to grieve and question God, while Gaius receives reports on Jesus which he reads then burns. Jesus informs Little James and Thaddeus that they will be going to Jerusalem. Gaius meets Jesus, falls to the floor in worship, and asks Jesus to heal his slave-son. Jesus rejoices in Gaius’ faith and heals his slave-son. Jesus rebukes James and John for asking to sit on his right and his left, and Jesus tells

them what will happen in Jerusalem. The Disciples do not understand and are in disbelief. The episode ends with Jesus feeling anxiety about his future, but he is interrupted by a strong hug from Gaius.

**Notable quote:** “We are his students, not his equals....Time will reveal the wisdom hidden in these mysteries.” (Peter)

In this episode, we learn more about how confusion is eclipsed by grace.

### **Episode Talking Points**

Peter’s growing faith, trust, in Jesus shows in this episode. There are many ways people grieve, and everyone grieves differently. Grief is a process. On the contrary to what people think, providing Bible verses often does not get people out of grief. Often, just being with the person, providing compassion and comfort helps one through the process.

When it comes to following Jesus then experiencing the trials that can follow, we can easily find ourselves in a whirlwind of confusion. This confusion isn’t the mere lack of information or the conflict between expectations and reality. This confusion has the potential to turn into profound disappointment. It knocks us off balance. It steals our joy. It weakens our confidence. It threatens our faith. We could even retreat from God, avoiding our prayers and worship, and even show less love to our neighbor.

- *Can you think of times in your life where you or someone you knew fell into this state of confusion?*
- *What can you do for friends experiencing this state of confusion?*

We are part of a bigger thing God is doing. Just like the believers before us, we can resolve to fix our eyes on God’s character and His promises. God says He is a “compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.” God always keeps His promises. We can choose to praise Him based on who He is instead of how we feel. We set our hope on grace. Remember, God became human to teach us the Beatitudes and wound up on a cross. Believe me, He knows the confusion you may be feeling.

God is gracious. It’s fundamental to who He is. God is not sparing you good things. He may not alleviate your suffering when you want for reasons only known to Him. He may not answer your questions or remove your confusion right away. But He’s providing you with every good thing you need, in every moment of need, so you can do the good work that He planned for you. Thus, focusing on grace leads to sober-minded, obedient living. It makes you ready for action, ready to be utilized by God who is working to grow His heavenly kingdom until Christ returns. It enables you to experience confusion without being derailed, for our confusion becomes much smaller in the shadow of God’s overwhelming grace.

- *What examples from the Bible or from the Saints show setting one’s hope on God’s grace?*

- *Does setting your hope on God's grace or on things of the Spirit help change the way you feel about your circumstances?*

[Watch Gaius' embrace of Jesus 57:25-1:02:17]

- *When Gaius returned home, why did he blow out the candles in the shrine?*
- *Why was Jesus in tears watching Zebedee press olives?*
- *What did you think about the ending where Gaius gives comfort to Jesus?*

In the scene before this, we see Jesus in tears due to his Disciples' continued blindness toward his mission, his future, and God's plan to redeem the world. How could the Disciples be so blind? Anyone who has raised children can empathize with Jesus. No matter how many times you tell your child what will happen, your child hears but does not understand until they experience it themselves.

- *When Jesus sheds tears for you, is he crying out of joy for your actions, out of sorrow for your suffering, or out of anguish that you still don't get it?*

### **Reading**

Let's continue reading what Peter wants to tell us:

"Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:13-16)

**Episode 4 prayer:** Dear God, I praise You for your perfect character. Through your heavenly grace, You accomplish salvation for all the world by having your Spirit constantly and unconditionally flow through your followers. There have been times and will be times when I get so confused that I lose my way. I fall off the straight path and follow a bad shepherd. Have patience with me, and don't ever let me go. In times of confusion, I pray the You send the Good Shepherd to find me. Send me your grace so that I may see the truth, your glory again. Amen.

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## Episodes 5 and 6

### Opening Prayer

Let's continue hearing what Peter wants to tell us: that this world is temporary, but heaven is everlasting:

"And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." (1 Peter 1:17-21)

Today we cover episodes 5 and 6: *Temporary things are eclipsed by eternal things*, and *Heartbreak is eclipsed by love*.

With *The Chosen* slated for seven seasons of eight episodes, Episode 5 of Season 4 officially transitions us into the second half of the show. The transition is pronounced. In the first half of the season, Jesus' ministry was centered around Capernaum. In Episode 5, Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem and steps onto the long, difficult road that ultimately leads to the cross. Up until this point in the show, Jesus faced sporadic persecution and an ominous edict, but Episode 5 marks the beginning of the premeditated plot that will actually result in his crucifixion. The episode also sets Judas on the trajectory that will culminate in him betraying Jesus for silver.

### Episode 5 - Temporary things are eclipsed by eternal things (Luke 10:38-42, Mt 20:1-16)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, Disciples, Lazarus, Mary and Martha, Mother Mary

Synopsis. The episode opens with Jesus and the Disciples receiving a gift from Joanna that will help pay for their ministry. It also shows Judas' talent for knowing what something is worth. The scene switches to Jerusalem to a debate in the Sanhedrin about whether there is an afterlife. Shmuel introduces Yussif to others in the Sanhedrin. Jesus and the Disciples are pressed into carrying the gear of Roman soldiers for a mile, but they walk two miles instead. The Sanhedrin schemes to use the help of the Romans to get rid of Jesus. At Lazarus' house, Martha tells Jesus to order her sister, Mary, to help her with the serving. Jesus notices that Lazarus is not feeling well. Jesus confides in his mother about his anxiety that his Disciples are not understanding his message. Judas gets advice that he should get paid for his services to Jesus' ministry. The episode ends with Judas taking money from the money bag.

### Notable quotes:

"The human desire to avoid difficult news sometimes makes one deaf." (Jesus)

"Whenever you are troubled, think back on [the sermon on the mount]." (Jesus)

### Episode Talking Points

In this episode, we learn more about how temporary things are eclipsed by eternal things.

Let's begin with Sadducees vs Pharisees. The Sadducees only believed in the Books of Moses, the Torah, the first 5 books of the Bible. Thus, they did not believe in the prophets nor in the resurrection. The Pharisees believed in the Old Testament books, the prophets, and the resurrection. Both believed in Moses' messiah, but the Sadducees did not believe in line of

David. Sadducees were the Jewish priests, hence they were the mediators with the Greeks and Romans. They were in essence the “bad shepherds” as prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. God fulfilled his promise to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and the Sadducees, the bad shepherds, no longer exist in Judaism today.

We humans have a strong tendency to focus on the wrong things: things that change, fade, rot, and vanish over time like beauty, fame, respect, reputation, and money. As the Book of Ecclesiastes says, things of this world are not going with us when we die. The only thing that we bring to eternal life is love. Those with love are joined for eternity with love itself, God. Those without love are cast away into the poverty of love which is hell. Eternity is difficult to wrap our heads around. We grasp the concept of eternity no better than a baby grasps the concept of time. Peter reminds us that we don't actually belong here in this world. We're exiles because of the moment, but the moment will not last forever. If you visited a foreign country and knew customs will not let you bring anything back, would you spend your money on souvenirs? God is love, and the currency in heaven is love. What are you spending your love on here in this world?

- *How much love is in your heavenly bank?*
- *Are you selling your love to get material things? Or are you selling your material things to gain more love?*
- *How do you gain more love?*

The definition of sin actually means to miss the mark. Judas is missing the mark on what is Jesus' mission. We read in the Gospels that the Apostles knew Judas was taking from the money bag. Although Judas walked with Jesus and could have been a great saint, ultimately Judas does the wrong thing. We believe that God doesn't judge us on what we will do, he judges us on what we are doing. Judas is the cautionary tale that each day we live is an opportunity to succeed or to fail. We aren't saved because of what we did in the past, and we can definitely put our salvation in jeopardy by our hearts today. Always be on guard for the evil one lurking to steal your soul.

God knows us. He created us. God knows our hearts are idol making factories. We humans are motivated by being rewarded, and God uses that desire to keep us focused on investing in his kingdom, his priorities. We do good things so we can get to heaven, right? Or do we do good things because we are good people? It is a subtle but important difference. We need to open our eyes to the needs of others while no longer trying to please them or ourselves. Our single focus should be pleasing the one who deserves our praise and who we'll soon see face-to-face...and then be judged:

- *Are you a good person?*
- *What motivates the Angels to do good?*
- *What motivated the Saints to do good?*
- *What motivates you to do good?*

Remember, Christianity is not a self-help program. Your Christianity is not for you; it's for the world. You are happiest when you put your values out into the world. That is, you are happiest when you are living the Beatitudes. That is why the priest sends you out into the world at the end of each mass to live the gospel.

In the episode, the writers wanted to show the humanity of Jesus through his conversation with his mother, Mary. Jesus says he's human. Mary says she knows since she changed his diapers. The scene depicts Mary and Jesus having a typical Jewish mother and son relationship.

[Watch - [The humanity of Jesus \[47:18 - 52:05\]](#)]

- *Do you “understand this”? Do you understand why God sent his only son to die on the cross?*

### **Reading**

Let's read from Psalm 49 on how temporary things are eclipsed by eternal things:

“Hear this, all peoples! Give ear, all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together! My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding. I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre. Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of those who cheat me surrounds me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches? Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, that he should live on forever and never see the pit. For he sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others. Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names. Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the path of those who have foolish confidence; yet after them people approve of their boasts. Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd, and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell. But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.” (Psalm 49:1-15)

**Episode 5 prayer:** Dear Lord, I thank you for the universe, for the Earth, and for the gift of my life. I praise your goodness for the beauty and reward that await me in heaven. Thank you for your generosity and abounding love you offer freely. Thank you for sending your son, Jesus, to teach us the way to live, the path to your kingdom. I confess that often I stray from that path, distracted by the temporary pleasures of this world. When I falter, send the Good Shepherd to find me. Help me to always choose love. Help me to always choose God. Amen.

### **Episode 6 - Heartbreak is eclipsed by love (John 10)**

Biblical Characters - Jesus and the Disciples

Synopsis. The episode begins with a chaotic scene of the Disciples carrying in a wounded Big James and of the Disciples wondering how this could these bad things be happening to them and the Messiah? The episode then flashbacks 8 days earlier to show Jesus and the Disciples celebrating the 8 days of Hanukkah. Each night, the Disciples act out the story in the Books of Maccabees regarding the Maccabean revolt against the Greeks and how the victory brought Jewish rule again to the area. During these days, Matthew questions Judas about the money bag having less money than expected. Yussif tells his father he loves God and asks him to not give up on him no matter what happens in the Sanhedrin. Peter tries to help Thomas get through his grief but does not succeed. Jesus learns that Lazarus is sick, but he tells the Disciples he will go preach in the Temple. Jesus causes great commotion in the Temple with his teachings, and the Jewish leaders try to stone him. Returning back, they learn that Lazarus has died. The Disciples wonder how could there possibly be all this heartbreak when the Messiah is with them? Jesus says he is going to wake up Lazarus so he can strengthen their belief in him. Mary Magdalene confides in Jesus that she is greatly troubled by the future. Jesus tells Mary that she should be since she seems to be the only one who is listening.

**Notable quote:** “Sometimes I wish that I didn’t take the path of least resistance.” (Father of Yussif)

“[God] allows trials because they prove the genuineness of our faith and strengthens us.” (Peter)

- *Karl Marx called religion “the opium of the masses”, and fellow atheists point to such a statement by Peter as illogical. What is your rebuttal to these atheists?*

In this episode, we learn more about how heartbreak is eclipsed by love.

### **Episode Talking Points**

For most of us, following Jesus isn't always what it's cracked up to be. We have preconceived notions about what God should do, where God should lead us, and how God should intervene in our lives including where God should bless us with abundance and where God should prevent our suffering. Right? But in reality, it's seldom about “us”, isn't it? Let's change the pronouns in those statements, and let's recite out loud, emphasizing the self:

“I have preconceived notions about what God should do, where God should lead me, and how God should intervene in my life including where God should bless me with abundance and where God should prevent my suffering.”

- *Do these statements usually reflect your true thoughts?*
- *We know children view themselves as the center of their universe, where in your life do you still live with that childish view?*

The same was true for the Disciples. Not only did Jesus require them to do surprisingly hard things, but the opposition to what they were doing continued to grow. And the hardships and heartbreaks for following Jesus did not end at his resurrection since nearly all were eventually martyred. Little of what the Disciples experienced lined up with their preconceived notions. Their circumstances were brutal, and Jesus, God incarnate, didn't prevent, respond, or intervene in ways that would have spared them much heartache. Those of this world believe it is illogical that suffering could be the reward from the “savior” of the world. And the Gospels say the Disciples questioned it, too.

- *How has following Jesus not met your expectations? What are your disappointments?*
- *How would you change the world if you were God?*
- *How does the Book of Job remind us that's a silly question to ask or consider?*

As much as we want to think that humanity is strong, capable, and important, the Bible, and science, reminds us that humanity is actually frail, desperate, and easily forgotten. Peter writes in his first letter that humanity is like flowers that fall, grass that withers, and mist that vanishes. At every Ash Wednesday, we are reminded that “dust we are and to dust we will return” (Genesis 3:19). Peter writes that our temporary achievements cannot accomplish what the eternal word of God can accomplish.

We need to be spiritually reborn, let the Holy Spirit take up residency in our hearts and minds, and let God be our source of strength and love no matter the circumstance. Love is the key to godly, obedient life on this otherwise withering broken planet. Love grounds us in the eternity of our salvation. We as Christians have been born into eternal life with God, thus we must live in sincere brotherly love for one another in an eternal community of faith.

- *What does it mean for you to be part of an eternal community of faith?*
- *How does keeping your eyes fixed on your forever home ease your heartbreaks?*

Let's now turn our attention to the attempted stoning of Jesus in John 10. The common understanding of John 10 is this: Jesus called himself god, the Jewish leaders got mad, so they tried to stone him. The writers wanted to show why the leaders got so mad. Despite popular belief, it was not simply Jesus calling himself god. The Jewish leaders were used to crazy people and rulers calling themselves god. While the Torah does have the punishment of death for such blasphemy, like our capital punishment, sentencing had to wait for a ruling by



the Jewish court. So, Jewish leaders were not quick to stone people. So what egregious action did Jesus perform that provoked the Jewish leaders to bypass the court?

The writers provided the viewer with the history of Hanukkah. It was popular belief at the time that the Messiah would be another Judas Maccabeus. Judas Maccabeus drove out the Greeks who had defiled the Temple,. He purified the land, and he returned self-rule to Israel...until the Romans came 150 years later. As we've been saying in our *Chosen* Bible Study, most Jews believed the Messiah would drive out the Romans, purify the land, and return self-rule to Israel, but this time forever. God's kingdom on Earth, Israel, finally would last forever through an Earthly ruling line of David and the Messiah.

Jews were upset that Jesus was not meeting this expectation. Furthermore, the Feast of Hanukkah was about the Jews defeating a man who claimed to be god incarnate and who had desecrated the Temple. So by Jesus being in the Temple, calling the Jewish leaders "bad shepherds" which refers to the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and calling himself god incarnate during the Feast of Hanukkah, the Jewish leaders were infuriated at Jesus' mockery of Judaism. They could not stand idle and let history repeat itself. This is the reason why they tried to stone Jesus in the Temple.

- *What is the voice of the Good Shepherd?*
- *How do you know whether you are following the Good Shepherd or a bad shepherd?*
- *Does following the Good Shepherd mean the Earthly flock will never encounter danger and heartbreak?*
- *What does the Good Shepherd promise?*

[Watch [Lazarus has died \[55:40-1:00:00\]](#)]

- *We believe in the living God, hence God continues to speak today. Are you listening?*

## **Reading**

Let us continue reading from the First Letter of Peter. Peter is telling you about how our heartbreak is eclipsed by love.

"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for 'All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass.' The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that was preached to you." (1 Peter 1:22-25)

## **Episode 6 prayer:**

Dear Lord, when I think about your eternal love for me, I thank you for sending your loving intervention of Jesus into the world. May Jesus continue to pursue the hearts of his lost sheep. When heartbreak causes me to stray, to seek out idols, to seek out worldly healings that are temporary, don't give up on me, Abba. Send Jesus to find me and bring me home. Please send me the gifts of the Holy Spirit so that I may have the ability to see what is eternal and waiting for me, just around the bend. Amen.



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## Episodes 7 and 8

### Opening Prayer

Let's continue hearing what Peter wants to tell us: that sin is eclipsed by obedience:

"So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation - if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good." (1 Peter 2:1-3)

Today we cover episodes 7 and 8: *Sin is eclipsed by obedience*, and *Pain is eclipsed by receiving*.

### Episode 7 - Sin is eclipsed by obedience (John 11)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, Disciples, Lazarus, Mary and Martha, Mother Mary

Synopsis. The episode opens in the future with Matthew presenting his draft gospel to Mary Magdalene and the news of Little James' death. The episode then switches to Jesus and the Disciples traveling to Lazarus' house in Bethany. The Disciples openly wonder about the ways of Jesus and of God. When meeting Jesus, Mary and Martha also openly wonder about God's ways. Jesus weeps. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. After everyone leaves the tomb, Mary Magdalene has a moment at the empty tomb and burial cloths. Jesus confides in Lazarus that the path is now set for his execution. Thomas falls into further grief and doubt. Judas openly questions the path of the mission. The episode ends with Mary Magdalene reciting to Matthew a poem she wrote about darkness and light.

### Notable quotes:

"Now I am grateful for the light." (Mary Magdalene)

### Episode Talking Points

In this episode, we learn more about how sin is eclipsed by obedience.

Let's begin with the most common question viewers have about this episode: Is Mary Magdalene's poem from the Gospel of Mary Magdalene? The answer is no. The poem is an invention of the writers, drawing from various Biblical passages. The Gospel of Mary Magdalene was written too late to have been written by anyone who knew Mary or Jesus. It also contradicts teachings in the other four gospels and beliefs among the early Church. While elements of the gospel may be true, the gospel is not included among the canonical books that make the Christian Bible. Don't believe what you read online about how the fathers of the church wanted to silence writings by a woman. That is the deceiver's voice, the bad shepherd.

In the second chapter of Peter's first letter, Peter provides a short list of things that contaminate love: malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. Such things derail the love Christians share within the community of faith, making them worse than the actual

physical diseases that people try to avoid. These evils threaten what the new life in Jesus is supposed to be: it's supposed to be good. Jesus came to save us from the contamination of sin. But Jesus also came to offer us a restored relationship with God the Father, and a life within his community of faith, the Church. To accomplish this new life, we need to step out of the darkness of sin and into the light of God's grace and mercy. The Holy Spirit illuminates our sin and through our repentance, our willful desire for forgiveness, God disinfects our contaminated soul. When there is nothing left to hide, we can be transparent, honest, and authentic with others. Do we become perfect? Not at all. But now we can be open about our ongoing struggles because we've been forgiven and accepted by God into his community of faith, the Church.

- *Why is it important to belong to the Church, the community of faith with other believers?*
- *Is there anything that keeps you from entrusting yourself to others in the Church?*
- *How is being obedient to God's word vital to overcoming sin in your life?*

Why does Jesus weep? Yes, Jesus is sad because his friend has died, and he is moved by the mourners who he knows had to suffer in order for the glory of God to shine. But Jesus knows he is going to raise Lazarus. Like with Jairus' daughter, Jesus knows his actions will bring happiness to his friends. So why does Jesus weep? For one thing, God says he is a compassionate god. In his great compassion, Jesus weeps with us even though he knows he will end the suffering. But Jesus could also be sad because he knows that after this miracle, still not everyone will believe. But Jesus must perform this miracle to convince his disciples that he is God. Yet he knows this miracle also seals his fate: death on a cross in the coming weeks. Could the weight of all of this caused Jesus to weep?

- *Have you ever thought of why Jesus wept?*
- *Have you ever directly connected the raising of Lazarus to Jesus' crucifixion?*
- *Why would the raising of Lazarus cause the Jewish leaders to seek the death of both Lazarus and Jesus?*

We see that Thomas continues to not follow the path of King David. Instead, Thomas falls deeper into grief and doubt. God is unfair! The writers wanted to portray in this scene that with every miracle, even today, there are questions on why yes to her? Why yes to him? But why no to me? Peter keeps citing Isaiah: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways." We cannot understand God's ways. But we must trust that God has a plan for us, a plan for good and not for evil. Whatever ill falls on us, God will never forget nor abandon us. We should rejoice that we are part of God's good plan, and reject Satan, the deceiver, who wants us to think that God is merely using us like a pawn.

- *Have you ever thought that you were simply God's pawn?*
- *In what ways can we trust in the Lord even when times are tough?*

[Watch - [Mary Magdalene's song \[1:04:48 - 1:10:04\]](#)]

## Reading

Let's read from the Letter of Paul to the Romans on how we struggle with sin:

"For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:18-25)

**Episode 7 prayer:** Dear Savior Jesus, I praise you for being our permanent spiritual purification. Thank you for giving us the Church, your community of believers. Thank you for the opportunity to love others the way God loves me. I pray that you send the Holy Spirit to give me courage and strength to obey your will more and more, and for opportunities to taste and see that obedience is worth the sacrifice it requires. Amen.

### **Episode 8 - Pain is eclipsed by receiving (John 12)**

Biblical Characters - King David, Jesus and the Disciples, Pontius Pilate, King Herod, Lazarus, Mary of Bethany

Synopsis. The episode begins with King David entering Jerusalem to cheers of "Hosanna". David explains to his son the Passover preparation including selecting the unblemished lamb and anointing its feet. The scene switches to Pilate and Atticus discussing what Pilate should do regarding Jesus. Mary, sister of Lazarus, buys expensive perfume. Shmuel seeks Jesus to confirm whether he is the true Messiah. At Lazarus' house, Jesus and Shmuel talk. After Mary anoints Jesus' feet with perfume, both Judas and Shmuel leave in disgust. Pilate and King Herod plot to deal with Jesus. Jesus sends two of his disciples to obtain a donkey. Mother Mary gives Jesus his bag which contains David's bridle. Word in Jerusalem spreads that Jesus is coming, and the crowds line the streets holding palm branches and cheering "Hosanna". Jesus mounts the donkey and begins his ride into Jerusalem.

**Notable quote:** "This is the most important king the world has ever known." (Mary of Bethany)

"I am sorry I couldn't help you." (Jesus)

- *Wanting to believe and believing are two different things. Do you come to the Eucharist still wanting to believe? Or do you come believing?*

In this episode, we learn more about how pain is eclipsed by receiving.

### **Episode Talking Points**

There is a lot to unpack in this episode.

The beginning scene with David serves the purpose to inform the viewer of the similarities of David and Jesus. At the time, many thought David was the messiah that Moses foretold, and now many think Jesus is this messiah. Hence, both entered the city to palm branches and cheers of “Hosanna!” which means “savior” or “save us”. The Messiah is the savior of the world. He will save us from darkness and evil. The opening scene also informs the viewer of the significance of the Passover lamb, that it must be without blemish, have its feet anointed, and be brought into the house to live with them 5 days before the sacrifice. The episode combines the two Gospel stories about a woman washing Jesus’ feet and anointing his body with perfume. The writers wanted to link the preparation of the Passover lamb with the preparation of the Lamb of God. The washing and anointing of Jesus’ feet also symbolizes preparing Jesus for the Serpent, Satan, to soon strike at his heel. On Palm Sunday, Jerusalem welcomed Jesus, the anointed Lamb of God, into their “home” 5 days before sacrificing him.

[Watch [David and Passover \[0:20-3:45\]](#)]

- *Does this scene change the way you view Palm Sunday?*
- *Were you aware of the preparations of the Passover lamb?*
- *Does the Church’s teachings on Jesus make more sense after learning more about Jewish tradition and history?*

We Christians know that following Jesus doesn’t lead to earthly comfort and happiness. On the contrary, our leader voluntarily walked to the cross, giving up his own life to save ours. Jesus entrusted himself to the Father and willingly received all that came with his submission. Jesus embraced pain because he knew what was coming on the other side: our redemption, our freedom, our forever with the Father in heaven. Yet, so often we assume God’s favor will result in the lessening of pain. We think being chosen ensures our earthly lives will turn out well. We think being part of the kingdom of God will allow us to sidestep injustice, brokenness, sadness, sickness, and loneliness. We think suffering is unfair, and we blame God for abandoning us. How can we possibly think this way when God, the King himself, experienced these while on Earth?

- *Why do we think we are immune to the trials and tribulations of life because we are Christians?*
- *What does our impatience and questioning of God reveal about us?*

In the Gospel stories of the woman washing and anointing Jesus, some of those present were outraged by Jesus allowing this action and not chastising the woman. Both Matthew and Mark gospels state this event drives Judas to betray Jesus. So, why were people so appalled by Jesus’ response that even one of the apostles thought Jesus was a false prophet? Back then, Jewish custom was a man would not let a woman touch him who was not his wife. A woman would not show her hair to a man who was not her husband. One would not touch another person’s feet because they were filthy. After all, they wore sandals and Israel is very dusty. So the action of the woman broke Jewish cultural norms...but it did not break a single Torah law.

Remember, Jesus came to fulfill the Law, not Jewish custom. Throughout the Gospels, we repeatedly see Jesus breaking the laws of man, but not the laws of God.

- *When people point out acts being sacrilegious today, are the acts breaking laws of man or laws of God?*

How could Mary waste money that could have bolstered the ministry or be given to the poor? It is common in Church ministry to be challenged on the way the ministry uses its money. Everyone has an opinion on how money could be used for something more worthwhile. But the Law talks about giving the first fruits to God. We are to praise God through sacrificing something that could have been used for something else, even the poor. It may not make sense to humans, but it makes sense to God. We need to praise God first. Worship is costly: it should cost us something. For example, King David rejected the free offering of land for the Temple saying, "I will not offer to God what I have gotten free."

- *Why did Mary use perfume as her gift to Jesus?*

- *What gifts does the Church give to God to show our love and devotion?*

- *What gifts do you give to God to show your love and devotion?*

In writing the scene where the two disciples obtain the donkey, the writers wanted a plausible reason why the person would simply give the donkey to them. By reciting Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey," the writers also inform viewers who might not be aware of that messiah prophecy. For humans, this prophecy does not make sense. Kings ride on horses while peasants ride on donkeys. Yet, the King of the Universe, the Creator, comes riding on a donkey. This is the symbol of a non-military king. Also, does Jesus need to ride on a horse? Similar to when King Solomon rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, the symbol is that Jesus is already king. He does not need a horse to show it.

- *In what ways has Pope Francis tried to reconcile the Church with this way of thinking about the papacy?*

If you follow Jesus, you are like a living stone being built into a dwelling place of worship. If you follow Jesus, you are heaven bound where pain and suffering will be no more. If you follow Jesus, your faith in him will soon become sight. If you obey Jesus, your faithfulness will be rewarded. If you surrender to Jesus, you will forevermore be part of his kingdom which will not fail, nor fall, nor end. And someday soon, this broken world will be fully and completely eclipsed by the new one Jesus promises to bring with him when he returns. Which means you will not be put to shame for having followed him. When we experience pain, do not writhe in frustration. Do not fixate on what we do not have. Do not grieve without hope. Do not pull away from the One who wants to comfort you, to help you, to heal you, to change you. Always remember God loves you. God sees you. God is there for you. Surrender to God's will and rest in his wisdom.

## Reading

Let us finish Season 4 by reading from the First Letter of Peter. Peter is telling you how pain is eclipsed by receiving the fullness of God's plan.

“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.” (1 Peter 2:4-8)

**Episode 8 prayer:**

Blessed be God, king of the universe, praise be to Jesus for entrusting himself to the Father and willingly receiving the Father's plan for him on earth. Thank you, Lord, for your promise that I will not be put to shame for following you. My faith is well founded on the revelations and promises you made known to Abraham, Moses, David, the Prophets, and the Apostles. I pray for your peace that surpasses understanding and for greater faith to receive all your plans that you have for me on earth and to receive them with joy. Amen.