**Holy Week:  Tuesday Day 3 Teaching in the temple & on the Mount of Olives**

After turning over the tables of the money changers and the merchant traders in the temple precincts the previous day, Jesus returns to the temple the very next day, knowing the atmosphere is going to be tense.  He has obtained their attention and made enemies. The temple authorities challenge him and ask, "By what authority are you doing these things?"  In other words, ‘Just who do you think you are?’  You may have noticed how in the Gospel stories Jesus often answers such questioning with another question.  On this occasion, because their question is obviously a prepared trap, Jesus also puts a question to them which is well thought out, one they refuse to answer. Since they won't answer his question, Jesus won't answer theirs.

Later, others try to trap him with well-prepared questions and scenarios. "Should we pay taxes to Caesar?"  This question is raised by representatives from two groups who see Jesus as a threat to their positions of power. The Pharisees (Jews) who strenuously objected to paying the tax, and the Herodians who supported the Herod family (who ruled as puppets of Rome) have unnaturally joined forces with a political trap. If Jesus sided with the Herodians he would have alienated all those who longed for Israel’s freedom. If Jesus sided with the opponents of the tax, he would have laid himself open to charges of subversion.  They were seeking to discredit him with the people so that he could be destroyed without popular reaction. Then the Sadducees, who didn't believe in eternal life, asked Jesus a question about whether there is a resurrection of the faithful at all. Jesus sees right through their trickery, reads their minds and directly confronts their misconceptions about heaven and the resurrection.

These intellectual sparring matches had come to an end, and as we know, they sought ways to arrest him.

The Gospels tell us there was one of the teachers of the law who witnessed the wisdom of Jesus and heard them debating.  After all the insincere questioning here comes someone searching for real answers. Noticing that Jesus had given the Sadducees a good answer, he asked him “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" Jesus answers, "The most important one is this, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" and "Love your neighbour as yourself." Here Jesus is providing a central doctrine for the emerging young Church about righteousness not being understood as strict obedience to a complex code of laws and customs, but the principle of love. Later in the week he followed this principle to his death.

There was obviously a lot more happening in the temple that day, so read the account yourself in Mark. (listed below)

Reflect on what we've encountered so far...

*Reflection:  "Is Jesus an authority in my life?  Or, like the teachers of the law, do I scoff at his wisdom and power, questioning him?  Do I love God with my whole being?  Or is it something I think is a nice idea in my head but has no effect on my soul?"
Prayer:  "Lord, forgive me for times when I've doubted the wisdom of your ways.  I give you my heart.  I give you my soul.  I love you with my mind and with all my strength."*

After he's finished in the temple for the day, Jesus goes out to the Mount of Olives opposite the temple. While they are leaving, the disciples admired the temple building, even after listening to all that Jesus had been saying earlier about the temples being misused. Jesus reinforces the temple's obsolescence by being more clearly direct: he tells them that the temple will be destroyed one day. The disciples are very curious and ask when is this going to happen?  How will we know when it's going to happen?  So, Jesus tells them.  Today we call this the Olivet Discourse.  It's the time Jesus predicted how all of this would come to an end one day.

All in one day Jesus sparred with those brilliant minds concerning politics, the afterlife, the finer points of the Mosaic law and other puzzles and now he's talking about eschatology: how it's all going to end!
One point is worth noting in what Jesus told his disciples on the Mount of Olives:  Keep watch, because he will return when we least expect him.

*Reflect:  "When might Jesus return?  Could he come back this week?  What would that be like?"
Prayer:  "I long for the day, Lord Jesus, when you will return, and I will see you face to face.  I watch for it with eager anticipation."*

Normally we don't think about these kinds of topics in Holy Week.  Typically, the whole week is about Jesus dying.  It seems strange that we would be thinking on "Day 3” of Jesus' last week, about things like the greatest commandment and Jesus' second coming.  It seems strange until we realize this compelling fact:  Jesus thought about it on his last week of his life, and he thought it would be appropriate to say something about it so that we could think about it 2000 years later.

If it is good enough for Jesus to think about on his last week of life, surely it's good enough for us too.
  **Digging Deeper**
Try reading Mark's gospel account of Day 3 and take time to imagine yourself in the scene:
Mark 11:27-13:37