

Year A, Week 15 (March 9, 2008)

Pharisees Decide to Arrest Jesus; Jesus returns to Jerusalem

Matthew 20: 17-19; John 15: 12-13

Hymn Suggestion: *Open The Eyes of Our Heart, Lord*

Figures Needed:

- 2-3 Pharisee figures
- Jesus figure (man with arms outstretched)
- Figures are almost unnecessary with this story

Story:

The religious leaders watched Jesus, but they did not understand him.

They didn't understand where he came from. Wasn't he just a country kid from Nazareth?

They didn't understand how he knew so much. He had never studied with a rabbi, and yet he spoke with such authority!

They didn't understand why he spent time with sinners. He was friends with all sorts of people, and he even picked people like tax collectors to be his own disciples!

They didn't understand how he could heal people or even raise people from the dead. Only God can do such things!

They didn't understand why he would heal people even on the Sabbath, the day of rest. Didn't he want to follow God's laws?

Most of all, they didn't understand why so many people thought he was the son of God. Didn't Jesus know how wrong it was to pretend that an ordinary man was the holy God of Israel?

So they watched Jesus. They questioned Jesus. Some of them tried to understand Jesus. Some of them came to believe in Jesus. But others decided that it would be better to arrest Jesus.

Jesus knew all this, but he told his disciples, "It is time for us to go to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. While we are there, the Son of Man will be handed over to the Jewish religious leaders. They will sentence him to death. They will hand him over to the Romans to be beaten and crucified. On the third day he will rise from the dead."

Jesus also told his disciples, "This is my commandment – that you love one another. There is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends."

Questions without Response:

I wonder ... whether Jesus is harder to understand than we think he is?

I wonder ... if we would have been one to believe in Jesus or to want to arrest him?

I wonder ... how Jesus could go to Jerusalem knowing that he was going to be killed?

I wonder ... if there's anybody we love enough that we would lay down our lives for them?