



Episode 2: Shabbat

Last time, we met Mary Magdalene, Simon & Andrew, Matthew and Nicodemus – and began to see something of their characters, their situations, and their needs. Mary Magdalene has been healed of her possession and tries to adapt to normal life; Nicodemus ponders how this can have happened after he failed to exorcise her; Matthew sees the Roman praetor to investigate his deal with Simon and Andrew.

All the characters prepare to keep Shabbat (the Sabbath)

We begin with a scene nearly a thousand years before Christ, setting the scene of why Shabbat mattered so much for the Jews – which gives us some sense of why Sunday ought to be important for us...

Questions for Prayer and Discussion

Some of these questions are very personal. There's no need to say anything aloud unless you're comfortable sharing it. But it is worth sharing with God in prayer...

Did you understand the events shown in the episode, and did you recognise the characters from Scripture? Was there anything that seemed strange or didn't make sense to you?

Which character most appealed to you? Which character did you most identify with? Why?

Would you have acted the same way that s/he did in the situations s/he faced?

The characters' preparation for keeping Shabbat is extensive and impressive. Do I treat Sunday with the same significance?

Both Nicodemus and Mary host Shabbat dinners. Which would you rather be at? Why?

What is the true meaning of keeping the Sabbath holy for us?

Mary can't explain how she was healed. Does that matter? Do we always understand what God is doing in our lives? Does that matter?

Some of the characters can appear quite comfortable, well off, or respected: Matthew is wealthy, and manages to get a hearing with the Roman magistrate. Yussif (one of the Pharisees) inspires respect and fear when he walks into the market. Does this wealth and/ or respect make them happy and fulfilled? What would make them truly happy?

Here are some scriptural passages that you might find useful to pray with as you reflect on what we have seen today:

Deuteronomy 5:1, 12-15. Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them... Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God.

On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do.

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Matthew 17:24-27. When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the half-shekel tax went up to Peter and said, "Does not your teacher pay the tax?" He said, "Yes." And when he came home, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons or from others?" And when he said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel; take that and give it to them for me and for yourself."