

The CHOSEN with Hosanna!



SEASON 4: EPISODE 7 The Last Sign

SCHEDULE

November 27-December 9 - Watch Episodes 7-8

December 10, 6:00-7:15 - Discuss Episodes 7-8

Hosanna's Study Website: www.hosannatogether.org/chosen

BACKGROUND NOTES

- The episode opens decades into the future.
- At the home of Lazarus is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Martha is the taller sister who does most of talking. Mary is the one sitting down, and who goes to Jesus second.
- Much of this episode comes from the Gospel John, chapter 11. Consider reading it before or after watching the episode.
- The episode ends (a little over an hour in) back in the future with Mary reading her poetry to Matthew as the video moves back and forth between the future and the disciples with Jesus in the "present." See the section at the end for more on this poem.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- While talking on the road, John says to Thomas, "In our faith, it is frowned upon to look forward to our own death. God says that if it is between 'life and death, blessing and curse, we should choose life.'" However, we often look with admiration at people near the end of their life who are at peace and ready to "go be with their Lord." Should we ever look forward to death? Welcome it?
- Maybe this is more about misery. When have you preferred misery over joy?
- Thomas tells John, "No, John, this isn't an unusual circumstance. We have been forced to accept that death is a part of life." Why do you think God made death a part of life? Does it have to be a bad thing? If not, why does it often *feel* like a bad thing?
- Judas tells Nathaniel, "He's the Messiah. Shouldn't we be winning? Not losing constantly? Stumbling around in sackcloth and ashes all the time?" Is the fact that less people go to church today a sign that we are losing? Or that we still suffer? Is faith even about winning?

- While speaking to Mary on the road, Little James quotes from Psalm 13. Consider reading it. What is unspoken that moves us from questioning God to acceptance and praise?
- Little James also says that Jesus beautifully explained why he hadn't healed him, but that doesn't mean he's not still in pain. What is the difference between healing and wholeness? Can we be whole, even when we are still sick or hurting?
- Little James asks Mary, "Is all of this what you expected?" Has being a Christian been all you expected it to be? What has been different? Has it been good or bad (or both)?
- The disciples are clearly struggling with deep things. After being with Jesus and seeing everything he's done, shouldn't they get it by now?
 - What do you struggle with? Do you think there will ever be a time that you don't struggle? *Should* there be a time it all makes sense to you? Why or why not?
- Jesus says Martha is "confused," but she says she believes. Can we have faith (and trust) in God, even when we don't understand everything (and even doubt)?
- Jesus cries. Why? Didn't he know he was going to raise Lazarus? What grieved him?
 - What emotions did Jesus' weeping stir for you?
 - What emotions do you think it stirs in God when you cry?
- Thomas clearly struggles with Lazarus being raised from the dead. Have you ever been jealous of someone else's healing? That they still have a loved one you lost long ago? That they don't struggle with the same things you do? Is life "fair"? If not, how can God be loving?
- After Lazarus' resurrection, Thomas falls to the ground and Jesus talks to him. Ramah was not in the Bible, so this exchange was made up. Nonetheless, how well do you think the writers of *The Chosen* imagined this exchange? If it had really happened, what do you imagine Jesus would have said and done? How would you have written it differently?
- Jesus later says about Thomas: "As for the heartbroken, he cannot accept my love or words tonight. His brothers will carry him."
 - Is it okay if there are times that we cannot accept God's love and words?
 - What does Jesus mean by, "His brothers will carry him"? Who has carried you? How?
- When people start to focus on Little James' disability, he says, "This is between me and God. As should be everything else we've been talking about tonight." Do you agree with him?
 - Is what we face (pain, loss, doubt, joy, hope, etc.) always just between us and God?
- Jesus tells Lazarus: "I'm sorry it had to be this way, but also not, because there is a higher plan in all of it." Do you buy this explanation? Why or why not?
- The word "miracle" is never used in the Gospel of John. John always calls Jesus' deeds of power "signs." Every one points to something else. What does this choice of words tell us about why Jesus did miraculous things? Does that change our feelings of the unfairness?
- Judas thinks Lazarus' resurrection will bring everyone together and no one will deny Jesus. Lazarus also thinks that Jesus' divine identity is now undeniable. How naïve is that? Why won't everyone believe and trust?
- Martha asks, "What do you give to someone who raises the dead . . . What could he possibly need?" Mary responds, "Well, surely he doesn't *need* anything . . . Maybe that's the whole point." What does Mary mean by that? What's the whole point?

- Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is thought to be about the coming Messiah. Consider reading it.
 - How do these words hit you after having seen this episode? Is the suffering of Jesus (of God) only physical? Only when he's human on earth?
 - Why does it use the term "servant"?
- When Jesus quotes Isaiah, Lazarus says, "They were just words on a scroll. Now that they are about you, flesh and blood, it's another story."
 - How does seeing Jesus as human change our perspective on him and what he does?
- Jesus tells Lazarus he is frustrated his followers keep missing the point and forgetting what he has done. He is angry at how the religious leaders twist the faith. And he dreads all that is to come for himself. What does it feel like to see Jesus (and God) express these emotions?
 - Is it possible for Jesus to have these emotions and still love them all? You included?
- The disciples discuss why Jesus didn't just say a word and heal Lazarus from a distance. One says, "He wanted us to see." Another says, "He also wants us to participate." What do you think was the purpose of them all being there? What is the purpose of us reading it?
- Twice in the episode, people say, "This side of..." and then don't complete that sentence. What are they talking about? Why didn't the writers of *The Chosen* just have them say that?

MARY MAGDELINE'S POEM

"Darkness is not the absence of light. That would be too simple. It is more uncontrollable and sinister. Not a place, but a void. I was there once. More than once. And although I could not see or hear you, you were there. Waiting. Because the darkness is not dark to you. At least not always. You wept, not because your friend was dead, but because soon you would be. And because we couldn't understand it. Or didn't want to. Or both. The coming darkness too deep for us to grasp. But, then, so is the light. One had to come before the other. It was always that way with you. It still is. Tears fell from your eyes, and then ours before every light in the world went out. And time itself wanted to die with you. I go back to that place sometimes. Or rather it comes back to me uninvited. The night that was eternal... until it wasn't. Bitter, then sweet, but somehow the bitter remained in the sweet and has never gone away. You told us it would be like that. Not with your words, but with how you lived. The man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. That grief wasn't what we wanted to see... so we tried to look away, and in so doing fulfilled your very essence: 'One from whom people hide their faces.' But soon we couldn't hide from it any more than we could stop the sun from setting. Or rising. I remember you wishing there could be another way. And looking back, I do, too. I still don't know why it has to be this way. The bitter often mingled with the sweet. Maybe I never will. At least, not this side of..."

- Although Mary's poem echoes parts of scripture (especially Psalm 139 and Isaiah 53), it is *not* in the Bible. Nor does it come from the gospel book attributed to Mary Magdalene that was left out of the Bible because it was written by someone else presenting their ideas in her name in the early 100s C.E. The show writers have confirmed that it was created to portray what could be her personal reflections.
- This also shouldn't be confused with the Magnificat, which was the song of Mary, the *mother* of Jesus, when she was pregnant and met her cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:46-55).