



## **Sunday Teaching Discussion Guide: Unconditional Week 4: March 31, 2019**

### Recap:

- The Israelites in the Old Testament were in need of hope. God's chosen people went from slavery to the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land. Then they were exiled from that land. Even when they were allowed to return to Israel, they were ruled by foreign powers. They Israelites brought some of their suffering upon themselves because they couldn't break the cycles they were stuck in.
- God wants his people to know that there is hope -- during the wilderness, during exile, and under foreign rule. Israelites thought hope for their nation would mean war and vengeance against their enemies. Many Israelites saw leaders such as Judah Maccabeus, who was known as the Hammer of God, who defeated Israel's oppressors just about 150 years before the birth of Jesus as a potential Messiah. The Maccabean kingdom, however, was conquered and Israelites looked for another Messiah -- another hammer.
- Jesus, however, wasn't the Hammer of God -- he was the Lamb of God. Jesus did not teach hatred, violence, and vengeance -- he taught forgiveness, peace, and love. Jesus's vision of the future isn't easy. We are called to love those who harm us, do good to them, pray for them, and offer forgiveness because this is what it means to reflect the image of the God we serve.

### Discuss:

1. READ Ecclesiastes 1:1-11
2. In what ways do the various cycles of life seem meaningless and hopeless? What are some cycles in life that seem meaningless and hopeless? How does this make you feel?
3. READ Isaiah 40:1-5
4. Isaiah is speaking metaphorically in these verses. What do you think he is saying literally? How can someone raise valleys, make mountains low, etc.?
5. The Gospels say that John the Baptist is the one who cries out in the wilderness, speaking Isaiah 40:3-5. What does preparation for the coming of the Lord look like? How does one prepare?
6. READ Luke 6:32-36
7. What type of reward do you think Jesus is referring to in verse 35?
8. Have you ever done something for someone else and expected something in return, but got nothing in return? What did that feel like?
9. In our world, expecting not to get anything back when giving seems backwards, but in what ways can expecting to get nothing in return for an act make doing that act easier?

Pray: Invite members of your group to share prayer requests. Give a short prayer thanking God for your group discussion and asking God to be with the requests that have been shared.

Read at Home: Additional Readings about Doing Good to Enemies

Psalms 37

Romans 12:14-21

1 Peter 3:8-22