

Scripture Reading:

Luke 23:50 “Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. **51** He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. **52** This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. **53** Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. **54** That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. **55** And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. **56** Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.”

'Jesus Was Buried'

We have been considering three simple words we confess about Jesus Christ in the Apostle's Creed:

- We confess that Jesus was crucified, dead, & buried.

We considered how the cross is the power of God where Jesus is the one great sacrifice for sin.

We saw last week that all of the Gospel writers make it plain that Jesus was dead...

Confirming that the judgment God had declared against sin, “in the day you eat thereof you shall surely die” had truly been carried out

- Jesus as the Son of Man and Son of God had fully propitiated the wrath of God.

We ended last week with Jesus crying out “It is finished” as He lay down His life for His sheep

Now again we will see all four Gospel accounts clearly presenting the fact that the body of Jesus was buried. All of the parallel accounts are in the order of worship and this week we will see how the Holy Spirit has given us a fuller and richer picture of what happened by giving us four witnesses

- It will be a good warm-up for next week when we will consider the various accounts of the resurrection of Jesus

We will spend several weeks studying the resurrection, but we must remember that when Paul proclaims the Gospel, the Good News, it is not just the resurrection: Paul says He preached “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.”

- We celebrate and live in the glory of the resurrection, but Paul reminds us that the penalty for sin had to be paid and that this brought the death of Jesus
- The death of Jesus is now confirmed by His burial.

We also considered the glorious picture of worship in heaven given in Revelation chapter 5, worship in which we participate in each week with our Covenant Renewal Worship

We saw a new song sung to the Lamb that was slain proclaiming in part:

- “You have redeemed us to God by Your blood, Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”

It is easy to read or hear those words and think to ourselves that surely it is referring to someone else or another time...

Calvin and Luther could be considered great priests for Jesus... Just look at what they did.

Men like Wilberforce or Cromwell worked many great works in the civil realm and surely they were the kind of Kings this new song refers to.

- **Perhaps a few of us will reach such heights, but for most of us life is pretty dull.**

The young mothers among us have their entire lives it seems tied up with those dirty diapers and the next meal. Then there is the taunting task of education and that mountain of housework. We certainly acknowledge that are marriages and families are a blessing from God, but they are just average things that are done, and they keep us much too busy to think about being priests or kings.

- **In the Kingdom of God, nothing could be further from the truth!**
- **What we see in the Scripture is how over and over God uses very common people and very common means to accomplish the work of His Kingdom!**

This morning's account is no exception and I trust it will be an encouragement to us all. We have seen Jesus come to Jerusalem at His appointed time to be the sacrifice for sin. We have seen His anguish in the Garden, His trials and persecutions, His beatings and crucifixion, His cry of My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me as the Father's wrath was poured out against out sin and finally we have seen Jesus lay down His life, dying on that cross. Before He committed His spirit to the Father He cried "It is finished."

From that point forward we begin to move toward the morning of resurrection power and the ascension to the Father's right hand of power. The account of the burial of Jesus is given to confirm that He was in fact dead, but it also begins to show us that the work of the Son is completed and the return of the Father's care. Both are foretold in the Scriptures: The fifth Gospel, the 53rd chapter of Isaiah tells of the suffering and death of Jesus as the Lamb that was slain...

Isaiah 53 also tells of His burial saying, "For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. 9 And they made His grave with the wicked-- But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth."

And we are told of the Father's care in the oft quoted passage from Psalm 16:8 "I have set Jehovah always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. 10 For You will not leave my soul in Hell, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption."

Jesus had finished His appointed work and fully paid the penalty for our sin...

- **But His pierced & naked body still hung in shame on that cross**

But now some of those He came to save, some of those Kings & priests that are to reign on the earth are used by God for the important work of His Kingdom. The body of Jesus was not to be broken, it would not be thrown aside with the other criminals and it would not see corruption. At this point a man who had been a quiet disciple, a quiet witness, what some might consider a fearful witness came forward to boldly act... Joseph of Arimathea

Here is where we see the richness of the four accounts as they present Joseph:

- **Matthew tells us Joseph was a rich man who had become a disciple of Jesus**
- **Mark tells us that Joseph was a prominent council member, referring to the Sanhedrin which likely had seventy members.**
- **John says Joseph was a disciple secretly for fear of the Jews**

- **And it is Luke who tells us that Joseph was a good and just man.**
- **Luke also tells us that Joseph had not consented to their decision and deed.**

We are not told if it was an open objection or quiet decent.

However, I hope this helps us to relate: Perhaps not to his riches, but certainly to the struggles of his life.

- **Surely Joseph struggled with being a quiet disciple**
- **He may have wanted to go and follow Jesus at one time, but was held back by his various business duties and the work of the council.**
- **As the trials, beatings and crucifixion of Jesus proceeded I am sure that Joseph beat himself for not doing more to speak out or stop what was happening**

As always, it is much easier for us to see the big picture: How God was going to care for the body of His Son by using Joseph & Nicodemus!

- **At the same time this should serve as a grave warning against our often judgmental spirit**

Had we been on the scene a few weeks earlier we would have had high praise for the Disciples: They left all to follow Jesus... even Judas!

How would we have viewed Joseph? As a coward? Or we may even have questioned his salvation since he would not follow Jesus... Jesus said ‘take up your cross and follow me!’

- **There is NO such thing as a quiet disciple, right?**

The same would be true with the other man who John tells us came to assist Joseph at this critical time: Nicodemus!

That teacher of Israel who could not understand the simple teachings of Jesus! We again would have called him a coward at best and perhaps a heretic or a white-washed gravestone!

- **Oh how wrong our judgments can often be, because we forget that it is God who is control**

God chose to use wicked men like Judas, Caiaphas and Pilate to carry out the foreordained task of killing the Son of God. Those disciples who we thought to be faithful are scattered in fear: Peter denied the Lord three times. Judas betrayed His Lord and is now in Hell after taking his own life.

- **God would now use two men, who were weak in the eyes of men, to care for the body of His Son**

God was going to use a rich man who would have access to Pilate, who would have to give his permission. He was going to use a rich man who had a new tomb which the corruption of death had not touched.

- **He was going to use a man who had been a quiet witness to be bold in all of his actions that evening!**

Mark tells us the Joseph was himself waiting for the Kingdom of God, he had been a faithful man who believed God, like Rahab of old. But as the years went by putting many hours into his education, and then many long hours into building whatever business had made Joseph a rich man, I am sure he had many of those times where he wondered what use he was to God.

- **Such is often the case with us!**

Some might object by saying, sure Joseph was one of those like Gideon or Isaiah or Calvin or Eric Little who God chose to use in some great way, but what about all the rest of us?

The rest of us... Perhaps we are only like Joseph's parents? Like his mom who changed all those diapers, in the days before pampers! She wiped his nose, fed him three meals a day, gave Him a love for their God so He would be a disciple of Jesus looking for the Kingdom!

How about his father and the long hours he worked to support the family... perhaps also thinking, what use am I to the Lord!

- **Then we could include Joseph's teachers, friends, & other relatives who had an impact on his life**

Now think about their parents, teachers, and friends and then the ones who came before them...

- **You will begin to see how we, as Kings & Priests always have an impact for the Kingdom.**

Do we have even more responsibility in the New Covenant? I would say yes.

- **Paul says Saints in the Old Covenant were like servants in a master's house, but now with the completed work of Jesus we are Sons & Daughters of the King.**

As the Church we are called the Body of Christ, called to carry His Kingdom to all the corners of the earth, discipling all the nations BUT the way that we function is basically the same:

- **We are still to Love the Lord our God with all of our heart soul mind and strength and to love our neighbor as our self!**
- **VERY practical living!**

So a whole bunch of faithful Saints had prepared this faithful Saint Joseph to be in the right place at the right time:

- **To serve God with the proper care of His Son's body.**

Joseph was assisted by another Saint who had also been prepared for this time: John tells us that Nicodemus, who came to Jesus at night, came with about a hundred pounds of spices

- **I suspect that Joseph and Nicodemus did some planning because Joseph brings the linen and Nicodemus the spices!**

Joseph goes boldly to Pilate asking for the body of Jesus. His death is confirmed by the Centurion who had witnessed Jesus giving up His spirit and the spear thrust into His side. Joseph takes down the body of Jesus and is met by Nicodemus. Together they wrap Jesus in the linen cloths and spices and place His body in the new tomb.

- **The Father had poured out His wrath upon His Son who was willing to give His life to save His people from their sins.**
- **Jesus had gone from anguish to mocking and beatings, to the shame and torture of the crucifixion and finally death.**
- **Now we see the Father providing the needed care for His Son's body so that it would not see corruption, preparing Him for the victory of the resurrection!**

Luke and the other Gospel writers tell us that the women who had come with Jesus, those who had followed and served Him, observed all that took place.

They saw the tomb and how His body was laid.

I am sure they were heartbroken and very confused by the events of that day and yet, in faith, they continued to serve their Lord:

- **Serving as another example of what it means to be Kings & Priests in the Kingdom**

Luke tells us that they ‘returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils’ to complete the dressing of His body. They would faithfully and obediently rest on the Sabbath

- **Then their desire to serve Jesus even in death would bring them to His tomb on the morning of His resurrection so they could be His faithful witnesses.**

A grand lesson about the mundane tasks we are called to be faithful in.

- **Mundane tasks you men do well at work each day, even if they are tedious, tiring or seemingly pretty worthless when it comes to conquering the world for Jesus**

- **Or that housework that must be done day in and day out...**

-- Cleaning those clothes that will be dirty again tomorrow

-- Washing those dishes that will be dirty again in hours, if not minutes!

- **Children: You learn this kind of discipline with tasks like making your beds instead of just leaving them messy because you are only going to sleep in it again that night!**

As these faithful women went home to make what they thought were final preparations, I am sure they thought to themselves at times, what is the use: We are tired, let’s go to bed. The body is in the tomb and some spices were used... It is enough. Mark even tells us that they bought more spices before going to the tomb, and again they must have thought at some point, perhaps we should use this money for something else more important now.

They could not imagine what Sunday morning would bring...

- **But they did know, by faith, that the care of the body of Jesus was important and they were going to continue their faithful service even when all of their hopes had seemingly been dashed**

I trust the example of Joseph and Nicodemus and these faithful women will be an encouragement to you all, not only with the mundane tasks of life but even with how we worship.

It is easy to begin thinking, what is the use...

We hear the commissioning each week and can begin to think:

‘Yea, but what role do I play in the advance of the Kingdom?’

- **What if Luther’s mother, or grandmother or even great grandmother had thought such things and given up on the faithful instruction of their covenant children?**

Where would we be without the great reformation of the church?

We must come each week believing the promises that God has given:

- **That Jesus has paid the price for our sins**
- **That Jesus has given us access to the very throne room of God: The veil of the earthly temple was rent and now we can boldly enter the real Holy of Holies!**
- **That Jesus hears our prayers and accepts our gifts**
- **That Jesus feeds and nourishes us at His Table where we proclaim His death until He comes, where we confess that Jesus was crucified, dead and buried**

- **And finally, that Jesus as the risen and reigning Savior then commissions us to go forth and serve as Kings and Priests to our God, reigning on the earth!**

We close our worship each week by singing the prayer of another faithful servant of Jesus that we saw at the beginning of His life: Simeon.

- **At each end of the life of Jesus we have men demonstrating what it means to be faithful: To believe!**

-- We are told that Simeon was a “just and devout man”

-- Our text this morning says that Joseph was “a good and just man”

-- We are told that Simeon waited for “the consolation of Israel”

-- Mark tells us Joseph ‘was himself waiting for the Kingdom of God’

- **Both men are given the opportunity to be a faithful witness for Jesus and they are!**

The writer of the Hebrews tells us that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen...” Not a blind leap of faith in the dark that the world accuses us of, but solid demonstrations of our faith as we see not only in the examples given in Hebrews, but also by these two men at the beginning and end of the earthly life of Jesus.

- **One holds the tiny six week old baby Jesus in His arms**
- **The other is caring for the dead body of Jesus**

Not much could be expected from either from a human standpoint:

- **And yet Simeon declares that He has “seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people”**
- **And Joseph is serving Jesus in the only way He knows how because he is waiting for the Kingdom of God**

Could Simeon have explained how this was all going to work out? Not exactly but by faith he knew it included the suffering of this child which would be a sword piecing through Mary’s heart!

- **He truly had the faith of Hebrews and his story is given to us as an example**

Could Joseph have explained what was about to happen? Certainly not and yet he too believed that God would establish His Kingdom and we also have his faithful example.

So what does it mean for us?

Well we come each week to this Table where Jesus offers His body and blood.

- **Following the examples of Simeon and Joseph we are to believe the promises of God**

We are to believe that we can boldly enter the presence of God where He instructs us and feeds us and then we are to believe that he sends us forth to serve in His Kingdom

AND we are to believe that what we do does make a difference just like Simeon’s coming to the Temple that day or Joseph’s going to Pilate.

- **So does this mean that one of you men or boys will be the next Luther or Wilberforce in the history of the Church?**

I don’t know...

- Does it mean that one of you ladies or girls will give birth to and raise the next Augustine or Calvin?

Again, I do not know

- It is possible, but that is in God's hands.
 - The more important question is whether we are serving where God has placed us
- Perhaps one of you will wire the home where a prominent man of God is to be born?
 - Perhaps one of you will provide the fuel to warm that home.
 - Perhaps one of you arranged for the appliances to be repaired
 - Perhaps one of you provided the medical care that he needs.
 - Perhaps one of you will teach his parents the language they need know to raise him here in our nation
 - Perhaps one of you sold the books his parents needed to raise him faithfully
 - Perhaps one of you taught him in the school he attended
 - Perhaps one of you wielded the beams or constructed the walls in the office where he will write a great book that begins a new reformation in God's Church
 - Perhaps some of you provided the communications or computer support and equipment that his ministry needed
 - Perhaps one of you trucked some of the materials for all of this to take place!
 - Perhaps one of you flies the next Luther to a critical church council
 - Perhaps one of you provided the security at the airport that prevented an attack on that very day
 - Perhaps one of you will arrange a ride for him from the airport to that meeting?
 - Perhaps one of you painted the safety lines on the roads to make the journey safe
 - Perhaps one of your will provide the radios for the security detail that saves his life.
 - And perhaps one of you provided the coffee that got them through the many hours of work!

I think you get the picture, but here is the sort of bottom-line question that should be asked:

- IF you knew that you were doing any of these tasks for a great man Like Luther or Wilberforce, would you do it any differently than you normally perform your duties day after day for everyone else?

We have illustrated the importance of men in their vocations, but I do not want to leave out the ladies...

- Could one of your children be the next Augustine or Calvin?

Perhaps, but again the question to ask is whether you would raise that child differently than you would raise other covenant children God may bless you with.

- And the great leader may not be your own child...
- What if he is one of your children's children or your great grandchildren?
- They could be someone born to or served by your children or grandchildren

➤ **And on it can go...**

As with all the examples I gave with men's vocations, consider the long list of activities discussed in Proverbs 31 and think of all the impacts you or your children could have!

We have now seen clearly from Luke's orderly account that Jesus was indeed crucified, dead and buried.

- **We have learned that the cross is the power of God to confound all the wisdom of the world**
- **We have learned that the suffering and death of Jesus paid the price for our sins**
- **Today we have learned that God used faithful Saints to minister to His Son in His burial.**

May we be the faithful Saints who likewise serve our risen Savior in the joy and power of His Resurrection

And let us remember that the faithful service called for tomorrow may well be washing those dishes or making sure those papers at the office are filed properly...

Let us do it all to the glory of God!

Communion Meditation:

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."