

Joseph of Aramathea

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Preacher: Rev A. Gollan

[0 : 00] Mark chapter 15 at verse 42. It was preparation day, that is the day before the Sabbath. So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body.

Or as we have it in the authorised version, when the evening was come because it was a preparation, that is the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, who also waited for the kingdom of God, came and went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus.

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea alone are singled out for mention in the gospel from what must have been a great company of secret disciples.

And we can learn from this, that our Lord has friends of whom very little is known.

We are not told of how they learned to love the Lord Jesus Christ, and of how they came to honour him.

[1 : 40] Nothing else is recorded in the scriptures of Joseph of Arimathea, except what we are told here. He was a good man.

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there are so few witnesses to the Lord Jesus. Remember how the psalmist said the floods of ungodly men have made me afraid.

But do you remember when Elijah, the great prophet of God was in hiding when he was afraid of the threats of Queen Jezebel when God asked him how he was cast down he said I only am left of all thy servants and they seek my life to take it away.

And God answered him I have 7,000 men in Israel who have never bowed the knee to Baal.

[3 : 57] Now friends as we meditate on our text this evening we would like to think first of all of Joseph of Arimathea. we see Joseph as our example in witness bearing.

It was indeed a dark day for the Church of Christ. Our Lord had warned his disciples and now the Lord Jesus was dead on the cross and his enemies thought that this was the end of him and his friends feared that it was even so.

And there around the cross were a few faithful women but what could they do? How could they obtain the sacred body?

Now the fate which usually awaited those who were crucified was for their bodies to be hurled into the first grave that could shelter them.

It was indeed a perilous moment when Joseph of Arimathea of whom we have never heard before and of whom we never hear again appears in the Gospel record.

[5 : 44] Joseph made his appearance and he was the very man for the occasion. He was a man of influence of the kind of influence that was needed with Pilate an honourable counsellor yes one who was held in high esteem by the people it is not just any man that can go up to the door at 10 Downing Street and have an audience with the Prime Minister but that was the kind of influence that Joseph of Arimathea had with Pilate he was a rich man an honourable counsellor a member of the Jewish Supreme Court a person of weight and character and all told he was a good man he was a just man he was a disciple who waited for the kingdom of God and the world tells us he was a disciple secretly it seems he was of a retiring nature that he was timid but now now he goes boldly into the governor and requests and obtains the body of Jesus

God will never leave himself without witnesses do you remember when our Lord rode into Jerusalem and the little children cried their hosannas and his adversaries sought to silence them he said I tell you if these should hold their peace the very stones would immediately cry out our Lord says one translation rains from the tree he rains from the tree even when he hangs upon the cross in death he still keeps possession of the throne thy throne O God is forever and ever and in days of spiritual darkness the Lord lives he keeps us seed alive upon the earth

Spurgeon said there was a Joseph for Israel in Egypt and a Joseph for Christ on the cross a Joseph acted a father's part at his birth and another Joseph arranged his burial our Lord will never be left without friends now Joseph of Arimathea by natural disposition was of a retiring nature he was a man of a retiring nature some people are too bold too much so self assertive and we say of them that they would rush in where angels fear to tread they are fearless and thoughtless but others are too retiring they need to screw up their courage to say a word a good word for the

Saviour whom they love Joseph was true hearted although he was timid am I a soldier of the cross a follower of the lamb and shall I fear to own his cause or blush to speak his name and then Joseph was a rich man and you remember how our Lord said how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God the fishermen of Galilee readily left their nets and their boats to follow Jesus but Joseph was slow to leave all he was a man of great possession in the past strong swimmers have saved their lives in shipwreck by casting aside every weight while others have drowned because they tied the gold nuggets around their waist and then you see friend there is the pride of life the pride of life by nature men desire possession and the love of money often holds men back from the service of the

Lord for riches puff men up they prevent us from stooping down for the pearl of great price Joseph was in office and he was held in honor by the people and it needs great grace to carry human honor for we are inclined to seek the favor of men rather than the praises of God ah but friend to hear these words well done from the master's lips is worth all the applause of men all the honors of the world ah yes Joseph was a disciple but secretly he did not confess his faith for fear of man

[12 : 50] Joseph would be in the fashion he knew that openly siding with Christ he would receive the cold shoulder he would have a finger of scorn pointed at him he was a disciple but secretly for fear of the Jews a disciple but secretly if all God's people were like this where would be the witness to the truth Joseph lost by his secrecy he did not live continually in the company of the Lord Jesus like others he followed him afar off ah there is our call a call to be out and out on the side of

Christ to be openly on his side to be unashamed to confess him in all companies rise up oh men of God have done with lesser things give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the king of kings but then friends we would see in these words his touching request his touching request he went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus Joseph came out on Christ's side after all he stood out for the master in that day of derision and reproach ah my friend there is the power of the cross the power of the cross for all of the life of

Christ did not bring Joseph forward his miracles his teaching his life of holiness ah yes Joseph had a secret faith but it was that shameful death of Calvary that had more power over Joseph than all the beauty of the life of Christ he was a just man he could not consent to their wicked deeds and he must now openly side with the holy and the just one probably both he and Nicodemus withdrew from the council when they saw how these wicked men plotted against the life of the

Lord Jesus now he is a willing servant of the master oh it was late it was sadly late but it was not too late he was quiet and retiring but he made his stand in that evil day he stood out on the side of Christ amidst his enemies ah yes he was shocked by the evil conduct of wicked men he openly sided with Christ for the Lord's cause is a cause of truth and righteousness of mercy of hope for mankind ah yes Joseph came to realize that Christ is worthy of all honor and he scorned to be any more hidden to be regarded as not one of his ah yes now he is not slow to own his savior and his lord he went in boldly unto

Pilate and craved the body of Jesus ah the power of the cross he had witnessed our lord's patience in death he had heard that pathetic plea on behalf of his enemies father forgive them for they know not what they do he had seen Jesus being led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her sheer as his dung so he opened not his mouth the sun was darkened the sun refused to shine upon that awful deed yes the earth was convulsed as mankind disowned its creator he was a just man unhonorable man and there was another there another who was influenced by the power of the cross the roman centurion the army officer in charge of the crucifixion he said truly this man was the son of god but then friends also in our text we see joseph as our example joseph our example joseph appeared just at the crucial time when action was necessary and he gave the king a royal burial we are told that with

[19 : 41] Nicodemus he brought spices of myrrh and aloes he brought the anointing oil with which the kings were anointed at the time of their coronation or their bodies were buried with at burial ah yes joseph did what no other could have done providence had raised him up at the exact moment of need we are told that he buried our lord in his own new tomb his own new tomb ah surely friend surely there's a word of encouragement of inspiration for us in the action of this secret disciple he went in boldly unto

Pilate and craved the body of Jesus ah we may say but surely there is no such compunction for us for he is no longer on the cross ah but there is another stern necessity remember what our lord said to the disciples when he commanded them to loose the colt and to bring it to him the lord hath need of him the lord hath need of him we are conscious friends that the enemy is coming in like a flood we are well aware of it in the media every day we find atheism bold and noisy we see wicked men using the media to poison the minds of our young people and sometimes there are those who deny the gospel and they are commanded even by so called ministers of the gospel those who would set aside the bible who would blot out the spiritual and how often this is done on the plea of charity the lord's day can be trampled under fruit and the plea is made that whatever money is gained from marathons and other sports activities is donated to charity but the law of god was the friend of man before any political party took up his cause and of course we are expected to bow to the spirit of the age but our god our god is a spirit as our catechism says unchanging in his being power holiness justice goodness and truth

Joseph is our example the secret disciple he heard the call he came out and friend if we have never come out and we love the lord Jesus oh surely if ever there was a time when we should stand boldly on his side that time is now and Joseph made his stand when all others had fled where was brave Peter where was the loving John where were those who made such profession brave he went in boldly unto Pilate and begged the body of Jesus ah yes friend and we too may feel that the spiritual seems to be in decline but then there is a call a call to us to witness and to stand out clearly on the Lord's side Joseph was a man of culture he took up the cross and identified himself openly with his Lord all Jerusalem would know what he was that he was a lover of Christ that he was a servant of the Master and in this action Joseph Joseph was going to endure ceremonial pollution yes and it was at a great cost he had provided this sepulchre for it was the ambition of every Jew to be buried there in Jerusalem so that when Messiah would come they would be of those who were the first to meet the Lord Joseph is our example Joseph gave his all for Christ take take take my life and let it be dedicated Lord to thee oh friend let us take Joseph as our example let us be prepared to throw secrecy to the winds and to come out boldly on the side of Christ and let all men know whose we are and whom we serve and yet friends there is a sad reflection in the story of Joseph that he was for so long a secret disciple that he was of no service to

Christ until he died upon the cross oh let us realize the urgency of the old the call to witness and may we have grace that we would be enabled so to live that there would be no question as to whose we are and whom we serve that it would be evident by our daily walk and conversation that the world may know that we bear the marks of the Lord Jesus that we may be of those who confess that they have been bought with a price even with the precious blood of Christ and oh may it be true friend of each one of us that we are of the sheep who hear his voice and follow in his step as

Matthew Henry quently said the flock of Christ have two marks they have a mark on the ear they hear my voice and they have a mark on the foot they follow me Joseph of Arimathea an honorable counselor went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus oh may his example be our inspiration and may we be unashamed to confess our Lord before men and may he grant us that privilege on the morrow to confess him as our saviour to express our love to him and our fellowship with his people that we are of those that love the

[30 : 00] Lord may he bless our meditation on his word let us pray oh Lord we give thee thanks for thy precious word we bless thee Lord for the witness of Joseph of Arimathea and we pray that we would be given grace to stand out openly on the Lord's side and oh grant Lord that our lives may be such that it may be evident to all that we have been with Jesus help us in sincerity to say with the psalmist I have set the Lord always before me therefore I shall not be moved we pray

Lord that they would prepare us for the morrow that they would come up with us to thy house or draw us nearer thyself may we enter into a deeper communion with our Lord and with one another and grant Lord that it would be evident in our midst that we are thy disciples for thou hast said by this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have loved one to another now Lord cleanse us from all sin or take away the things in us that would grieve the spirit or hinder us from being the means of blessing to others and make us what thou would have us be conforming us to the lovely likeness of our

Lord Jesus Christ in whom thou shalt have the glory evermore Amen