

6.10.24 Communion Sunday Evening

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Date: 06 October 2024

Preacher: Reverend David Strain

[0 : 0 0] good evening everyone a warm welcome to the service this evening it's good to see all of you and it's good to see a number from other congregations as well and we welcome you and thank you for coming it's good to be able to enjoy fellowship together in the name of jesus after the service tonight as usual we're having a time of fellowship there's tea there's coffee there's tray breaks and all kinds of goodies and there'll be a time of fellowship and david will share testimony during that time so please if you're able to stay behind do so i just want to take this chance as well to on behalf of the whole congregation to say thank you to david strain for coming over here this weekend he's had a busy week he's preached twice on tuesday twice on wednesday twice on thursday and friday saturday twice today so he's worked hard over the course of this last week and we have been immensely grateful for for the ministry for god's work through him over these days and especially in harris over this weekend as he's opened god's word up for us and led us in worship so on behalf of everyone here david thank you for coming over and we pray god's blessing on you as you lead us in worship this evening also i'm going to sit down now and scott our minister in training is going to lead the first part of the service and then scott will hand over to david just in due course so i'll sit down and ask scott to come up please well good evening and a warm welcome to everyone that has joined with us from visiting congregations we pray the lord's blessing on us and again we are thankful for david for his ministry over the last few days so let us join our hearts together in worshipping god and we'll do so by singing in gaelic and psalm 121 gaelic psalm 121 from the beginning of that psalm the words in english are i to the hills will lift mine eyes from whence doth come mine aid my safety cometh from the lord who heaven and earth hath made thy foot heal not let slide nor will he slumber that he keeps behold he that keeps israel he slumber not nor sleeps wonderful words for the psalmist looks to the lord for his strength and his safety and we'll sing these words in gaelic and we'll remain seated as we sing as we sing .

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[5 : 3 4] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Let us join together in prayer.

Let us pray. Let us pray.

Let us pray.

[7 : 5 8] Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray.

Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray.

Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. We pray that we would see Jesus.

We pray that you would open our eyes and unblock our ears as we sit at the cross this evening, that you would draw us to sit there and behold wonders that have been done for us.

a love that is inexplicable in many ways a love that is greater than we can know in this world a love that surpasses all knowledge may each and every one of us sit at that cross and look around and see what is happening there give us understanding as we consider those who looked upon Jesus give us understanding as we see those who mocked Jesus those who loved him and stood by not knowing what was happening but in your time you have revealed that Jesus died for those who are sinners Jesus died for those who reviled him and rebuked him Jesus died for those who sought to kill him who took his name in vain

[9 : 50] Jesus died for the thief on the cross as we heard this morning Jesus has died for each and every one of us may we see that great redeeming love as we sit at the cross let us pray for those who are sinners help us to cry out to Jesus knowing our need of him let us draw near to him and let us hold fast to him and let us stir up and encourage one another not neglecting to meet together for your scripture tells us that where your people are gathered is where you pour down your blessing and so may we know the power of your blessing your spirit over us convicting us drawing us near to you that we may have a deeper love instilled within our hearts a longing to crave and cling to you in every moment of our lives not knowing what is your providence for us but in it may we wherever we are and whatever our providence is give glory to you our father we pray for each and every one here we pray for each and every one online and listening we pray that you would speak to them we pray for our nation we pray for those who have no word of you we pray that the gospel message would be preached faithfully this evening we pray that it would go with your power into lives that are lost and to people who are filling bags with holes to people who are chasing after the wind and find no satisfaction in life we pray that you would meet them at their need we pray for the preachers of the gospel we pray that you would encourage them and give them strength as they do so in their weakness may the beauty of Christ be shown acknowledging that we must cry out and rely upon you in every moment in every word

Lord we pray we pray for our nation we pray for our leaders we pray for our preachers of the gospel we pray for each and every believer in the land that they would know your strength and guiding hand in their lives that they may be not ashamed to declare and announce Jesus Christ as their saviour Lord we pray and give you thanks for this weekend that we have had we can remember the Lord Jesus that has died on the cross for us we thank you for David being with us from Mississippi Jackson Jackson, Mississippi we give thanks for his words we give thanks for his faithfulness in following your will in his life we pray that you'd be with him in his congregation we pray that you would bless him his family and the work that they do and the duties that lie at his feet give him strength we pray we pray for David

McLeod here as well we pray that you would be with him and his family give them strength and though different contexts we pray that they would lift up the name of Jesus Christ give all glory to the Father in heaven and preach and announce that wonderful gospel message that though we are full of sin oh we feel like we have lived our lives running in the opposite way Jesus calls us to come and trust in him believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved what a promise what a hope may we turn to Christ now may we turn to the cross may he be our strength and our song and may we each declare in our hearts he is my salvation be with us we pray as we turn to your word and sing your praises all as we ask in Jesus name

Amen we continue in praise by singing in mission praise number 1217 1217 this is the power of the cross oh to see the dawn of the darkest day Christ on the road to Calvary tried by sinful men torn and beaten then nailed to the cross of our wood we'll sing this praise to God and we'll have after it's an introduction for yeah after the introduction we'll stand and sing to the cross oh to see the dawn of the darkest day

Christ on the road to Calvary take by sinful man torn and beaten then nailed to a cross of wood place the power of the cross Christ became sin for us took the blame o'er the ramp we stand forgiven at the cross O to see the pain written on your face bearing the awesome weight of sin every bridge of thought every evil deed growing your blessing proud this the power of the cross

[17 : 14] Christ became sin for us took the blame o'er the ramp we stand forgiven at the cross now the daylight flees now the ground beneath breaks us in speaker bowed his head curtain torn in two dead are raised to life finish the victory cry this the power of the cross Christ became sin for us took the blame o'er the ramp we stand forgiven at the cross oh to see my name written in the wounds for through your suffering

I am free death is crushed again Life is mine to live, but through your selfless love.

This the power of the cross, Son of God, sing for us.

What a love, what a cause, we stand forgiven at the cross.

We'll turn to read a passage now in scripture. We'll turn to Prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 53. Isaiah, chapter 53, and we'll read from verse 7 to verse 11.

[19 : 49] Isaiah 53, from verse 7. Let us hear God's word. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted.

Yet he opened not his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that is before its shearers is silent.

So he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And as for his generation who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death. Although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring.

[20 : 53] He shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied.

By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous. And he shall bear their iniquities.

Amen. May the reading of God's word be blessed to those who have heard it. We'll continue in our praise by singing in Mission Praise 975.

Before the throne of God above. After singing this praise, David Estrain will come up and lead us in worship.

Before the throne of God above. I have a strong and perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love. Whoever lives and pleads for me.

[21 : 53] We'll stand together and sing these words to God's praise. For the throne of God above.

I have a strong and perfect plea. I praise thy priest whose name is God.

Whoever lives and pleads for me. My name is written on his hands. My name is written on his heart.

I know that while in heaven he stands. No tongue can bid me dance depart. No tongue can bid me dance depart.

As he contends me to despair. And tells me of the guilt within. A word I look and see him there.

[23 : 10] Who made an end to all my sin. Because the sinless Savior died. My sinful soul is counted free.

For God the just is satisfied. To look on him and pardon me.

Hold him there, the risen Lamb. I've heard this spotless righteousness. The great unchangeable I am.

The King of glory and of grace. Walk with himself I cannot die. My soul is purchased with his blood.

My life is filled with Christ on mine. With Christ my Savior and my God. With Christ my Savior and my God.

[24 : 16] Well, let me briefly say what a delight it's been for me to be here with you all.

It's been an enormous privilege to open God's word. I do want to bring the greetings of the First Presbyterian Church and your brothers and sisters. On the other side of the pond, we've had a number of elders who have been faithfully praying for our time together in Jackson, Mississippi.

And I've had pastor friends around the United States who have been praying for you as we've sat under God's word and gathered at the Lord's table. I'm also proudly wearing, you'll notice, my Harris Tweed tie, which helps me to fondly remember you all hereafter.

Well, this communion weekend we have been considering the various groups that the gospel writers tell us gathered under the shadow of the cross. We looked at the soldiers and their dreadful brutality, the scoffers and their cynicism as they hurled their insults at our Savior.

We looked at the two robbers this morning, crucified, one on each side with Jesus. And now tonight, I want to turn to consider two unusual mourners who came in the wake of our Savior's death.

[25 : 49] It's the moment in John chapter 19 when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus come to make plans for Jesus' funeral.

So if you would take a Bible in hand and turn to John 19 with me, please. John 19 at verse 38. We'll read through verse 42.

John 19 at verse 38. As we read, I want you to think with me about two things. There is an almost tragedy in this story.

An almost tragedy. It's there in the account of Joseph of Arimathea, who until this moment had only been a secret follower of Jesus.

It's the story of Nicodemus, who never was a real follower of Jesus. There's an almost tragedy in their story. A tragedy narrowly averted.

[26 : 49] So an almost tragedy. And secondly, an amazing transformation. These two men are changed. From who they were. In the wake of the death of Jesus.

There is an amazing transformation. An almost tragedy and an amazing transformation. Before we consider each of those two themes, we need to read God's word. Before we do that, let's bow our heads together and cry to him for the help of his spirit.

Let us pray. Lord, your word is open in our hands. Our hearts, our lives are laid bare before your gaze.

We ask that you would, in the power of the Holy Spirit, take your mighty word. And speak it to our hearts.

Grant that we may hear the voice of the Son of Man. And live. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[27 : 55] John 19. John 19. At the 38th verse. This is the word of God. After these things.

Referring, of course, to the dreadful crucifixion and death of our Savior. After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.

And Pilate gave him permission. So he came. And took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight.

So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

Now, in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden. And in the garden, a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid.

[29 : 17] So, because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. Amen.

We praise God that he has spoken in his holy and inerrant word. Let's think about the almost tragedy of these two men, first of all.

Jesus' body still hangs on the cross as the scene opens. His heart no longer beats with life. Verse 31 reports the hypocritical concern of the Jewish leaders.

Remember, they've conspired to have Christ murdered. And now they're worried about desecrating the Passover Sabbath by leaving Jesus' body on the cross.

It is the epitome of spiritual hypocrisy and blindness that sends soldiers to break the legs of the Lord of Glory so that these chief priests and Pharisees can go to worship with what they consider a clean conscience.

[30 : 36] But in the end, when the soldiers arrive, we know there was no need to break the legs of the Lord Jesus. They discover that he is already dead, although a soldier pierced our Lord's heart with a spear just to make doubly certain.

Now, normally, victims of Roman crucifixion were, they were typically left on their cross to decay or to be food for carrion.

They were left there as a warning to others. But the Jews, unlike the Romans, they typically preferred to bury even these, even these victims, although they would not desecrate an existing grave by burying what they believed to be such shameful people among them.

They usually disposed of the bodies of the crucified at a site outside the city without any ceremony or care, an ignominious end for people they believed worthy only of contempt.

But that was not to be Jesus' fate. As Isaiah prophesied, as we read just a moment ago, they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death.

[32 : 06] One wealthy member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, Joseph of Arimathea, came to Pilate to ask for the body that he might bury him himself.

Now, we know almost nothing about Joseph except for what we're told here. in verse 38, John says he was a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews.

The other gospels give us a little bit of information. They say, Matthew says, that Joseph was a rich man. Mark adds that Joseph was a respected member of the council who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God.

Luke further adds that Joseph was a good and righteous man who had not consented to the decision of the Sanhedrin to kill Jesus.

So, Joseph, here are the facts. This is what we know. Joseph is a wealthy, prominent man. he's among the Jewish ruling elite, the religious elite.

[33 : 17] He's a leader. He sits as a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council and he believes in Jesus. But his was a hidden faith.

He believes but secretly. It is an undisclosed faith. Back in chapter 12, John tells us there actually was quite a group of these secret disciples.

Listen to how John describes them. Many, even of the authorities, people like Joseph, many, even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees, they did not confess it so that they would not be put out of the synagogue.

For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. And this was Joseph's story.

He knew Jesus was the Messiah, but he was afraid of the opinion of his peer group and he hid his convictions Christians.

[34 : 35] When they held their vote and purposed to murder Jesus Christ, Joseph somehow managed to avoid registering his opinion.

Perhaps he was conveniently elsewhere that night. Maybe he simply lurked in the shadows, thankful that no one called him out. the issue you see for Joseph wasn't that he was unsure about Jesus.

It wasn't that he needed more data, more information to make up his mind about Jesus. That's not his problem. No, Joseph believed the message that Jesus preached.

He knew Jesus is the Christ. He's just too scared to come out and say so publicly. After all, there was a good chance that a consequence of owning the Lord Jesus before others would come at a cost for him.

Perhaps he'd lose his position in the community. His reputation would be in tatters. Maybe he'd be expelled from the synagogue. He loved the glory that comes from man rather than the glory that comes from God.

[35 : 54] And let's be clear, there continues to be a cost for following Jesus even today, doesn't there?

One commentator puts it like this, in one way or another, every believer in Christ must face the fear of reprisals from the world. In many places, believers daily face the fear of arrest and bodily harm.

We saw a video last night of the suffering church in Africa, persecuted by Islamist rebels, Christians brutalized and murdered because they named the name of Jesus.

True Christians everywhere, this commentator goes on to say, face scorn from the world. Ironically, we live in a day where people are coming out of the closet boldly to proclaim every kind of sexual perversion.

And when virtually every human vice has been set free from scandal, why then are people afraid to come out as believers in Jesus? The answer is the fear of what people will say and do in response.

[37 : 09] you're weird. You're narrow-minded. You used to be so much fun, but now we can't relate to you.

You make us uncomfortable and frankly, we don't really want to be around you anymore. Maybe you know something about that. And maybe the truth is you've actually been just like Joseph for some time.

A secret believer trying to live two lives. A foot in both camps. You're more afraid of your peers than you are committed to Christ. Nobody at work knows that you want to be a Christian.

None of your friends know that you're serious about Jesus. Sure, they know you go to church from time to time. But this is Harris and people still do.

But they've never really seen you put him first. When doing it might cost you something. They've never heard you open your mouth to speak up for him.

[38 : 26] Are you like Joseph, I wonder? You love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. the truth is, you see, this kind of secret disciple is not a real disciple at all.

And that's the tragedy lacing this part of Joseph's story at least. Does it have an echo in your own story? You mustn't try to live in both worlds.

It can't be done. You can't follow Jesus secretly in your heart and hide it from the world at the same time. Let your light so shine before others, Jesus said, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Jesus wants you to be all in. It's the only path of discipleship that's open to us. You know, Matthew 10, 27, what I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered proclaim on the housetops, and do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are numbered.

[39 : 48] Fear not therefore. You are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven.

But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. There's no such thing as a secret disciple.

Not really. And so there's a tragedy to be told. At least in this initial part of Joseph's story, isn't there?

I wonder if we could tell a very similar story about you. Well, so much for Joseph. What about Nicodemus? Unlike Joseph, Nicodemus, so far as we can see, Nicodemus was never, not even a secret disciple.

Although, likely far more than Joseph ever did, Nicodemus had plenty of opportunity to get to know and follow Jesus. We only meet of Joseph of Arimathea here in John 19, but we meet Nicodemus two other times in John's Gospel.

[41 : 03] The first famously, of course, is in John chapter 3, where Nicodemus, do you remember, he comes to Jesus by night, and Jesus told him, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, and poor Nicodemus, Nicodemus didn't get it at all.

How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb? How can these things be? Nicodemus is perplexed.

Jesus calls him the teacher of Israel, and yet he does not understand Jesus' message. John also calls him a Pharisee, the strictest of the sects of Judaism, a member of the Sanhedrin, just like Joseph of Arimathea.

And that's actually where we meet Nicodemus next. He's in the Sanhedrin, in the council chamber, in John 7, verse 50, as controversy erupts among the Jewish leaders over the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees were all busily denouncing Jesus. They've sent soldiers to arrest him. The soldiers, of course, failed in their mission, and the Sanhedrin was in an uproar.

[42 : 23] But Nicodemus, who is named by John as one of them, Nicodemus tried to speak up for Jesus. Listen to what he said.

does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does? It's hardly a sterling defense of Jesus' innocence.

It was at least an attempt, albeit ultimately an ineffectual one, to make sure that Jesus got a fair shake when his day in court finally arrived.

But that's all Nicodemus was really willing to do. And then the last line we hear about Nicodemus is here in our passage. He's here in the company of Joseph as together they make preparations for Jesus' burial.

But even here, did you notice when John mentions him, he is Nicodemus who earlier had come to Jesus by night. John wants us to remember that fact.

[43 : 29] Nicodemus, he's saying, Nicodemus was the furtive, unsure Pharisee, who used the cloak of darkness to avoid being seen, even talking to Jesus.

There is a sense you get as you read what we can of Nicodemus' story that he's not entirely unfriendly to Christ. He has some interest in Jesus' ministry.

He's intrigued by the message. He found something compelling in Jesus' person and words and works, but there really is no suggestion in the scriptures that Nicodemus was ever a believer, not even a secret believer like Joseph.

Maybe you know the type. There are many people who find themselves drawn to spiritual things like Nicodemus, who hear the word of Christ.

Christ. They are intrigued by the person of Christ. They toy with the gospel message. They flirt with Christianity.

[44 : 39] There are lots of people like that, and yet they remain utterly lost in their sin. Think about his story. If we assume that Nicodemus' first encounter with Jesus in John chapter three comes not long after the beginning of Jesus' ministry, by the time we meet him here in John 19, we know that Nicodemus has nursed an interest in Christ for about three years.

And in three years, the closest he's ever come to a settled decision for Jesus has been a very timid reminder that Jesus deserves even-handed treatment should the Pharisees ever manage to get their act together and finally arrest him.

I think there's a warning in this part of Nicodemus' story. I do hope you can see it. There's a warning. Do not be content with a mere flirtation with Christian things.

Don't try to appease your conscience with an occasional expression of sympathy for the claims of Christ. Being around the Lord among his people isn't the same thing you know as belonging to the Lord or being one of his people.

Maybe it's time you stopped playing with Christianity,! Toying with the claims of Christ, skirting around the message of Jesus.

[46 : 19] It's time, it's time that you came and bent your knee to the one who gave his life for sinners.

Of course there would come a time for Nicodemus when he would at long last finally stop skulking around in the shadows, toying with but never committing himself to Christ.

That time is right here in John 19. Suddenly now his timidity has been swallowed up in an open display of devotion to the crucified Christ but don't miss the fact that it has taken him this long slow process to get him to this point.

And there's a lesson there too I think. Sometimes people become Christians in an instant all of a sudden. They were hostile. Opposed. And then one day the Lord erupts into their life and opens their eyes like Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and they're gloriously converted.

That sometimes happens. But other times, maybe most of the time, people are more like Nicodemus. They hear the message about Jesus again and again and again and they're challenged by it over time but only eventually do they reach a point of final submission to the Lordship of Christ.

[47 : 57] The key thing is not to look for the same pattern of experience in everyone who comes to faith. The key thing is to look for the same reality of faith whenever or however someone comes to it.

It's not what kind of experience have you had. That's not the question. The question is today, right now, here, are you trusting in Christ?

This moment, whether you had a Damascus road conversion or not, could not matter less. What matters is whether you've at last come to the point where you will step from the shadows, and own Jesus Christ as your savior.

So do you see the tragedy in this first part of Joseph's story? A man who feared other people more than he loved Jesus and so would not step out of the shadows to follow him?

Or the tragedy in Nicodemus' story around Christ, hearing about Christ, intrigued by Christ, but not yet surrendered to Christ?

[49 : 13] Friends, we need to search our hearts and ensure that neither tragedy replays itself in our own stories. There's an almost tragedy here.

That's the first thing I want you to see. And I call it an almost tragedy because these two men, they move, don't they, from almost tragedy, missing Christ, to amazing transformation.

Something has changed for Joseph and Nicodemus, or better, something changes Joseph and Nicodemus. They are now willing, when they have not been till now, they're now willing to step out of the shadows by using his position as a member of the Sanhedrin to gain an audience with Pilate and request Jesus' body, Joseph risks everything.

Mark 15, 42 says, Joseph took courage and went to Pilate. That's the one thing he has been lacking all these years, remember.

Courage. He feared men. He lacked courage to stand up and be counted as a disciple of Christ. That's what has eluded him.

[50 : 38] The fear of others was his prevailing characteristic. But now what he lacked, has been given, has been supplied. Now he's bold.

The word Mark uses really means to dare. One lexicon translates it as to be so bold as to challenge or defy possible danger or opposition.

It doesn't sound like Joseph at all. A remarkable change has taken place. Remember, it was the Roman pattern to leave victims of crucifixion on their crosses after they've died.

Leave them to rot. Although a body might occasionally be granted at the discretion of the authorities and only to family.

A body is granted, but only to family. Jesus' mother, Mary, was in no fit state at this point to make such a request.

[51 : 42] Jesus' brothers have all been scattered along with the disciples. And so, isn't this amazing? I think this is amazing. Joseph. Joseph the coward.

Joseph steps in. And this cowardly man, afraid to be identified with Christ, now fills the role of family, and goes and asks for Jesus' body.

It's amazing, the transformation that's taken place. Or think about Nicodemus. When he arrives, he's carrying what the English Standard Version says is 75 pounds of spices to anoint Jesus' body.

When last did you carry 75 pounds of anything? That's a lot. commentators actually think it might have been, the number here is probably more like 65 pounds, but either way, it's a lot, it's heavy.

And it would have been costly. This is extravagant. It's the kind of thing you did for a king, or maybe a revered teacher. 500 servants bearing spices like this participated in the funeral of Herod the Great.

[52 : 58] In the first century, about 80 pounds of spices were used in the funeral of Gamaliel, who taught the Apostle Paul. So Nicodemus' 65 pounds or 75 pounds were fitting.

They were fitting, appropriate, but only for someone you've come now at last to love. Only for someone that you honor like a king and revere like a teacher.

And that's how Nicodemus behaves towards Jesus Christ. It's remarkable. You'll notice the text says that Joseph and Nicodemus prepared Jesus' body, as was the burial custom of the Jews.

Now, highlighting the burial custom of the Jews is significant, because Jewish custom required them to wash the body, and we're not told that they washed the body.

probably because the Sabbath was about to begin, and there was no time for the full ritual.

[54 : 08] Which means, think about this, these two dignified Pharisees, with their beard and their long robes, dignified men, handling the bloody body of the Lord Jesus Christ, wrapping his nail-pierced hands, covering his whip-lacerated back, binding his thorn-pierced brow with linen, and all the thought of the opinion of others, all thought of the opinion of others is absent from their minds.

they don't think about their reputation anymore now. If we take John's account at face value, they willingly render themselves ritually unclean, according to the requirements of the law of Moses.

The law of Moses said, if you touch a dead body, you're unclean. These are Pharisees, the most exacting sect of the Jewish people, who never would break God's law, or Moses' ritual requirements.

They don't want to exclude themselves from the possibility of participating in the great Passover Sabbath. But here they are, disqualifying themselves, handling Jesus' body, uncaring of what anyone else would think.

They were likely expected as members of the Sanhedrin to play a prominent public role in the celebrations. Now they can't do it. Why can't you do it? I prepared Jesus' body for burial.

[55 : 50] Their behavior here could not be hidden. You see what's happened. You see it? Nicodemus and Joseph are stepping into the light at last.

Christ. Where do they suddenly get such heroic courage from? That in the last streets they boldly come out into the open, asks Calvin.

It is certain that this was done by a heavenly impulse, so that those who were afraid to give him due honor while he was alive, now hasten to his dead body as if they were new men.

This shows the truth, Calvin says, of what Christ himself said. Except a grain of wheat die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it beareth much fruit.

Here we have an outstanding proof that Jesus' death was even more quickening, life-giving, than Jesus' life. Jesus' death, Calvin says, Jesus' death gives life.

[56 : 56] death makes these two men live. Perhaps Joseph and Nicodemus had been among those elders and chief priests and leaders of the people that we're told in the gospel accounts gathered around the cross and watched Jesus die.

How else would Joseph have known that Jesus had died so quickly? But the point is, it was the sight of his death. It was the man on the tree that changed everything for these two men.

The cross became the pivot of their whole lives. Seeing Jesus give himself for them meant they could not now withhold anything from him.

They could keep nothing back, certainly not their reputations. things. I imagine these two humbled Pharisees on that first Good Friday, weeping as they wind the bloody body of their Savior in the linen, quietly singing in the cool of the tomb, were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small.

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. They've been religious men all their days.

[58 : 35] They've even toyed a little bit with Jesus and his message. They flirted with the Christian faith some, but they never committed. Not until they came to Calvary, and they saw Jesus die.

And let me say to you, that is the whole point. A philosophical Christianity, a Christianity that's about a code of ethics, a cultural Christianity, none of those will produce the kind of transformation we see in these two men.

They just won't do. They won't do. but the cross. See Jesus dying in your room and stead, bearing your penalty, enduring your curse, securing your pardon, giving himself in love for you.

when you really begin to see what he did, what he bore, what he paid, when you see it, nothing can be the same again.

Nothing can be the same again. One last thing, the symbolism of Jesus laid in the rich man's tomb, Joseph's tomb, should not be lost on us.

[60 : 03] this was Joseph's place, and Jesus filled it. Do you see it? This was Joseph's place, for him to lie dead, lifeless, and Jesus filled it, and Joseph lived.

That's the Christian gospel in a nutshell. he died so that we might live, bearing shame and scoffing rude.

In my place, condemned, he stood, and sealed my pardon with his blood. Hallelujah. What a savior.

Well, I wonder if you've been dabbling in Christianity, unwilling to commit unwilling to surrender to the lordship of Christ.

I wonder if you've been afraid to step out of the shadows, and be known as a follower of Christ. Isn't it time that you joined Joseph and Nicodemus, and came to own Jesus as your only savior and lord?

[61 : 24] it's time. Tonight it's time. Right now it's time. He's calling you. He gave himself for sinners like me and you. You come to him.

Come now. Let's pray together. Lord, Lord, there are perhaps some here who've been just like Joseph.

They love to hear about Jesus, what he's done, and they believe it, and they want to follow him, but they're scared, and so they never have.

They've been living a duck and cover life, hiding. Others are like Nicodemus, they've heard lots and lots, intrigued perhaps.

Their conscience has stung from time to time, but they've never really trusted or believed. Lord, would you bring them, as it were, to Calvary and show them what you have done, how you have loved sinners, and given your son, your only son, the son whom you love, to the hell of the cross, show them, and may the sight be the pivot point of their lives, that they might step at last tonight from the shadows and say, he is mine, and I am his forever.

[63 : 26] We ask it, please, so, Lord, in Jesus' name, amen. We conclude our service by singing once again, Psalm 46, the 46th Psalm, verses 1 through 5, and verses 10, and 11.

God is our refuge and our strength, in straits of present aid. Therefore, although the earth remove, we will not be afraid, though the hills amidst the seas be cast, though waters roaring make, and troubled be, yea, though the hills by swelling seas do shake, a river is whose streams do glad the city of our God, the holy place, wherein the Lord most high hath his abode.

God in the midst of her doth dwell, nothing shall her remove. The Lord to her and help her will, and that right early proof, be still and know that I am God.

Among the heathen I will be exalted, I on earth will be exalted high. Our God, who is the Lord of hosts, is still upon our side, the God of Jacob, our refuge, forever will abide.

Amen. What is the refuge and the strength in strength of blessed day?

[65 : 18] Therefore, although the earth rebirth, we will not be afraid.

! Though hills am! the seas be cast, though waters may and me and travelled me in all the!

The by swelling She's to shame A river is to steam to plant The city of our God the holy place Where in the Lord most high hath is upon But in the midst of her doth dwell Nothing shall her remove

The Lord to her and help her will and not right e'er remove the earth and the people who are still and though that am God among the people and I will be exalted I high earth will be exalted high Our God who is the

Lord of hosts is still upon our side and our side the God of Jacob our refuge will forever will abide and now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ love of God our Father and the fellowship of Holy Spirit you all now and forever Amen