

To Seek and to Save the Lost

Jesus Is Buried

Luke 23:50-56

Rev. Freddy Fritz

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Scripture

On Friday, Nisan 14, 30 AD, Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion. He was brutally scourged, mocked, and spat upon. He walked the Via Dolorosa (which is Latin for “The Sorrowful Road”) from the Antonia Fortress, just inside the city of Jerusalem, to The Skull, just outside the city of Jerusalem, where he was crucified between two thieves. And there, on that Friday, he hung for several excruciating hours before he finally breathed his last and died. Before the sun set on that Friday, the blackest of Fridays in all of history, he was taken down from the cross and buried.

Let’s read about the burial of Jesus in Luke 23:50-56:

⁵⁰ Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, ⁵¹ who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. ⁵² This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. ⁵⁴ It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. ⁵⁵ The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.

On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.
(Luke 23:50-56)

Introduction

Burial practices vary from place to place, and even from country to country. Some burial practices are unusual. For example, Mary Ellis was born in New Brunswick, NJ in 1750. She died alone, in 1828, and was buried in the woods, but it is now a parking lot. Legend has it she

was seduced by a sea captain who promised to return someday and marry her. This location was said to be the very spot she would stand and wait for his ship to return down the Raritan River. That never happened, but there she remains, now in a grave seven feet above the parking lot that was recently regraded.

Or consider the burial of Ruphus E. Case who wanted to be buried in his rocking chair facing his home state of Louisiana. His grave has three tiers, because one of his children died before him. When he finally died, they entombed him sitting next to his child's coffin, in his rocking chair, facing his home.

There are many other unusual burial practices, such as being buried in a car, or having a glass window at the head of the tomb so that people could look in on the deceased person, and so on.¹

Interestingly, we actually know quite a bit about the burial of Jesus Christ. Each of the four Gospels describes the burial of Jesus on that late Friday afternoon on Nisan 14, 30 AD.

Lesson

The burial of Jesus in Luke 23:50-56 shows us the actions of some of Jesus' disciples.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Burial of Jesus Shows Us the Boldness of Joseph of Arimathea (23:50-54)
2. The Burial of Jesus Shows Us the Obedience of the Women from Galilee (23:55-56)

I. **The Burial of Jesus Shows Us the Boldness of Joseph of Arimathea (23:50-54)**

First, the burial of Jesus shows us the boldness of Joseph of Arimathea.

Luke said in verse 50a that **there was a man named Joseph,**

¹ See <http://io9.gizmodo.com/5950719/the-strangest-real-life-graves-in-the-world>.

from the Jewish town of Arimathea. Scholars don't know the exact location of **Arimathea**. However, the reason Luke said that **Joseph** was **from the Jewish town of Arimathea** was to make sure that he was not confused with any other Joseph in the New Testament.

Luke mentioned a number of characteristics that were true of Joseph of Arimathea, **“He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God”** (23:50b-51). Joseph did not consent to the Jewish Sanhedrin's decision to have Jesus sent to Pilate in order to be sentenced to death by crucifixion. We don't know why he did not consent to their decision and action. Perhaps he was away on business; or perhaps he simply disagreed with their decision and action. Whatever the reason, he was not party to their decision and action.

Matthew mentioned in his Gospel that Joseph was rich, and that he **“also was a disciple of Jesus”** (Matthew 27:57), although John said in his Gospel that Joseph **“was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews”** (John 19:38).

Ordinarily, the Romans left the victims of crucifixion on the crosses to rot, or to be eaten by dogs and vultures. After some time, they would eventually throw their remains into a common grave.

But, Joseph of Arimathea **went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus** (23:52). I want to note that all four Gospels mention **“the body of Jesus.”** **“The significance of this fact,”** says Philip Ryken, **“is that it confirms the reality of the death of Jesus Christ. There is no question here of him simply swooning on the cross and then recovering in the tomb, as some have tried to argue, however desperately. No, Jesus was actually dead, and therefore needed to be buried.”**²

Jesus' death was confirmed in a number of ways. First, in order to hasten their deaths, the soldiers broke the legs of the criminals who were crucified with Jesus. But, when they came to Jesus they discovered that he was already dead, and so they did not break his legs (John

² Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, *Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 621.

19:31-33). Second, Jesus' death was confirmed when the soldier pierced his side with a spear, and "at once there came out blood and water" (John 19:34). As Ryken notes, "In medical terms, this was 'an effusion of blood into the pericardium' – a telltale sign of death."³ And finally, Jesus' death was confirmed when Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate to ask him for the body of Jesus. Mark notes in his Gospel that "Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph" (Mark 15:44–45). So, Jesus was really dead, and therefore he needed to be buried.

Now that Jesus was dead, Joseph had a decision to make. Would he go public with his discipleship? Would he let others know that he was indeed a disciple of Jesus?

Joseph decided that he would do everything in his power to give the body of Jesus a decent burial. So, refusing to remain a secret disciple any longer, Joseph **went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus** (23:52). Mark noted in his Gospel that Joseph "took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus" (Mark 15:43). After Pilate confirmed the death of Jesus, he allowed Joseph to bury the body of Jesus. So, **he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning** (23:53-54). John tells us in his Gospel that Joseph had help because "Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five 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" (John 19:39-40).

Although Joseph of Arimathea had been a secret disciple of Jesus, he finally became bold and went public with his faith. He went to Pilate. Presumably, because he was rich and a member of the council,

³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 621.

he was able to get a quick audience with Pilate. Joseph realized that although his faith was personal, it could not remain private. Philip Ryken put it this way:

It was at the cross where Joseph took his stand, confessing Jesus in his death. He had been looking for the kingdom of God, and now he had found it, in the body of the royal Messiah who died for his sins. So with noble courage and gentle affection, Joseph gave honor to his Lord by wrapping his body in a linen shroud and respectfully laying it to rest, thus fulfilling Isaiah's ancient prophecy that the Savior would be buried in a rich man's tomb (see Isa. 53:9).⁴

The burial of Jesus shows us the boldness of Joseph of Arimathea. He would no longer be a secret disciple of Jesus. He would boldly make it known to everyone that he was a disciple of Jesus.

What about you? Are you a secret disciple of Jesus? Do people in your family know that you are a disciple of Jesus? How about people in the office? Or your neighborhood? How would people who know you answer if they were asked, "What do you know about so-and-so? Is he a Christian? Is she a disciple of Jesus Christ?"

Dr. Ryken exhorts us as follows: "Stop being a secret disciple and stand with Jesus at the cross. Indeed, it is always at the cross where Christians stand with Christ, sharing in the offense of his crucifixion and serving him by proclaiming the message of the cross to a world lost in sin."⁵

II. The Burial of Jesus Shows Us the Obedience of the Women from Galilee (23:55-56)

And second, the burial of Jesus shows us the obedience of the women from Galilee.

Luke said that **the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then**

⁴ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 627.

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 627–628.

they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment (23:55-56).

We don't know the exact identity of the women who had traveled with Jesus all the way from Galilee. Luke 24:10 says that "it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women" who went to the tomb of Jesus. These women had supported Jesus during his public ministry for much of the previous three years (cf. Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:1-3).

Interestingly, the apostles of Jesus were nowhere to be found when Jesus was taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. But the women from Galilee were with Jesus every step of the way to the bitter end. Like Joseph and Nicodemus, they wanted to ensure that Jesus received a proper burial. However, they did not have the connections to receive the body of Jesus. And so they lingered at the cross, no doubt stricken with grief and sorrow, and yet also hoping and praying that somehow God would enable them to take care of Jesus.

So, imagine their surprise – and delight – when they saw Joseph and Nicodemus remove the body of Jesus from the cross. They followed them and noticed exactly where the body of Jesus was buried. But because **the Sabbath** was about to begin, which began at sundown on Friday evening, **they rested according to the commandment.**

Philip Ryken notes the following about the women from Galilee:

Everything these women did commends their godly character. They recognized the dignity of the human body, even at the time of death. They were careful to honor God with a day of worship and rest. If ever there was an exception to the fourth commandment, it would have been on this day (the last Sabbath for the people of God before the coming of the Lord's day with the resurrection) and for this reason (to honor the body of the Son of God). But the closest disciples of Jesus Christ were serious about keeping the Sabbath. In doing so, they were simply following the teaching and example of their Lord, who loved to be in his Father's house every week for worship. This is one of the

ways they honored God: by resting on his holy day.⁶

One of the applications we should take from the women from Galilee is this: how well do we honor God on the Lord's Day? Is it a day of rest and worship? Is it a day reserved for God and the things of God? Or is it a day for ourselves, to do with it as we please?

The women from Galilee had just lost their beloved Jesus. They were stricken with grief and sorrow and disappointment, and yet they took care to honor God. They did not know what the future held, but they were going to honor and obey God.

You and I demonstrate our discipleship to Jesus by obeying his commands. We delight in obeying our Lord, and are horrified when we break one of his commandments.

Let me encourage you to recommit yourself to walking in obedience to every command that God has given us in his Word.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the burial of Jesus in Luke 23:50-56, we should remember that Jesus' death and burial was a necessary prelude to his resurrection.

What is so interesting about Joseph and the women is that they were bold and obedient on Friday. They did not yet know about Jesus' resurrection that coming Sunday. And yet, they were bold and obedient on Friday.

Dr. Tony Campolo is a retired professor of sociology at Eastern University in St. David's, PA. He is also an ordained Baptist minister, serving as an associate pastor in a predominantly black church called Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in West Philadelphia, PA. Dr. Campolo's best-known sermon is titled, "It's Friday, But Sunday's Comin!"

He tells the story about how he was preaching in his home church one Good Friday. In fact, there were seven preachers preaching back to back on that Friday. When it was his turn to preach, he

⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 628–629.

rolled into high gear, and he was good that day. The more he preached, the more the congregation “turned on,” and the more they “turned on,” the better he got. He said that he was so good that he wanted to take notes on himself! When he finished his sermon, the congregation broke loose. He was thrilled to hear the hallelujahs and the cries of joy that broke loose throughout the place. He sat down next to his pastor, and the pastor looked at him with a smile. The pastor reached down with his hand and squeezed Dr. Campolo’s knee. “You did all right!” he said.

Dr. Campolo turned to him and asked, “Pastor, are you going to be able to top that?”

The old pastor smiled at Dr. Campolo and said, “Son, you just sit back, ’cause this old man is going to do you in!”

Dr. Campolo said that he didn’t figure that anybody could have done him in that day. He had been so good. . . . But the old pastor got up, and Dr. Campolo said, “I have to admit, he did me in.”

The amazing thing is that the pastor did with the use of just one line. For over an hour and a half, he preached one line over and over again. For an hour and a half, he stood that crowd on its ear with just one line.

The old pastor started his sermon real softly by saying, “It was Friday; it was Friday, and my Jesus was dead on the tree. But that was Friday, and Sunday’s comin’!”

One of the deacons yelled, “Preach, brother! Preach!” It was all the encouragement that he needed. He came on louder as he said, “It was Friday, and Mary was cryin’ her eyes out. The disciples were runnin’ in every direction, like sheep without a shepherd, but that was Friday, and Sunday’s comin’!”

People in the congregation were beginning to pick up the message. Women were waving their hands in the air and calling softly, “Well, well.” Some of the men were yelling, “Keep going! Keep going!”

The preacher kept going. He picked up the volume still more and shouted, “It was Friday. The cynics were lookin’ at the world and

sayin', 'As things have been so they shall be. You can't change anything in this world; you can't change anything.' But those cynics didn't know that it was only Friday. Sunday's comin'!

"It was Friday! And on Friday, those forces that oppress the poor and make the poor to suffer were in control. But that was Friday! Sunday's comin'!

"It was Friday. Jesus was arrested in the garden where he was praying. That was Friday, but Sunday's comin'!

"It was Friday. The disciples were hiding and Peter was denying that he knew the Lord. That was Friday, but Sunday's comin'!

"It was Friday. Jesus was standing before the high priest of Israel, silent as a lamb before the slaughter. That was Friday, but Sunday's comin'!

"It was Friday, and on Friday Pilate thought he had washed his hands of a lot of trouble. The Pharisees were struttin' around, laughin' and pokin' each other in the ribs. They thought they were back in charge of things, but they didn't know that it was only Friday! Sunday's comin'!

"It was Friday. Jesus was beaten, mocked, and spit upon. That was Friday, but Sunday's comin'!

"It was Friday. Those Roman soldiers were flogging our Lord with a leather scourge that has bits of bones and glass and metal, tearing at his flesh. That was Friday, but Sunday's comin'!

"It was Friday. The Son of man stood firm as they pressed the crown of thorns down into his brow. That was Friday, but Sunday's comin'!

"It was Friday. See him walking to Calvary, the blood dripping from his body. See the cross crashing down on his back as he stumbled beneath the load. It's Friday, but Sunday's a comin'!

"It was Friday. See those Roman soldiers driving the nails into the feet and hands of my Lord. Hear my Jesus cry, 'Father, forgive them.' It's Friday, but Sunday's comin'!

"It was Friday. Jesus was hanging on the cross, bloody and dying. That was Friday, but Sunday's comin'!

“It was Friday. The sky grew dark, the earth began to tremble, and he who knew no sin became sin for us. Holy God who will not abide with sin pours out his wrath on that perfect sacrificial lamb who cried out, ‘My God, My God. Why hast thou forsaken me?’ What a horrible cry. That was Friday, but Sunday’s comin’!

“It was Friday. And at the moment of Jesus’ death, the curtain of the temple that separates sinful man from Holy God was torn from the top to the bottom because it was Friday, but Sunday’s comin’!

“It was Friday. Jesus was hanging on the cross. Heaven was weeping and hell was partying. But that’s because it’s Friday, and they don’t know it, but Sunday’s comin’!”

He kept on working that one phrase for a half-hour, then an hour, then an hour and a quarter, then an hour and a half. Over and over he came at the congregation, “It’s Friday, but Sunday’s comin’!”

By the time he had come to the end of the message, Dr. Campolo says that he was exhausted. The old pastor had him and everybody else so worked up that Dr. Campolo don’t think any of them could have stood it much longer. At the end of his message the pastor just yelled at the top of his lungs, “IT’S FRIDAY!”

And all five hundred people in that church yelled back with one accord, “BUT SUNDAY’S COMIN’!”⁷

Friends, we know about Friday, but we also know about Sunday. We know that on Sunday God raised Jesus back to life again. We know that Jesus was victorious over the grave, and death, and sin. So, let us live in light of the resurrection, and determine to be bold for Jesus and to live in obedience to him. Amen.

⁷ Tony Campolo, *It’s Friday, but Sunday’s Comin’* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008).

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp
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Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org

PRAYER:

Our Father, Jesus died on Friday, but Sunday came! On that blackest of Fridays in all of history, your Son, the sinless Son of God, died an excruciating death on the cross. And he did so to pay for our sins so that we could be reconciled to you by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Joseph of Arimathea determined to be bold and become a public disciple of Jesus, as he requested the body of Jesus from Pilate. And the women from Galilee determined to live in obedience to every commandment of Jesus, and they did so by honoring you on the Sabbath day.

Help each one of us to be bold for Jesus. Help each one of us to live in obedience to every commandment in your Word.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!