

Faithfulness

Matthew 27:57-60

Preface

This week, someone asked me a question about the burial of Jesus. In looking into the answer, I read several accounts of His burial. I was struck by the faithfulness of Joseph of Arimathea.

Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned in all four gospels for his action taken in the burial of our Lord. He is not mentioned elsewhere in the scriptures. But, that doesn't matter. What is important is that when his moment came, he was faithful.

Today, we read about his action and can learn from his faithfulness.

Scripture - Read

⁵⁷ *As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus.* ⁵⁸ *Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him.* ⁵⁹ *Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,* ⁶⁰ *and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.* " Matthew 27:57-60 NIV

Introduction

Illus: Several years ago, a supermarket tabloid had the headline that read, "**And they said it wouldn't last!**" The paper was celebrating the one year wedding anniversary of a well-known couple who's marriage many had predicted would not last. The tabloid was gleefully proclaiming that the predictions were wrong and the marriage was healthy and strong. The well-known couple was Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley. As we all know, the wedding ended soon after.

Not only was the tabloid absolutely wrong about their marriage. It also reveals the weakness of modern society in understanding the concept of faithfulness.

Illus: Hallmark has a card that fits the mood of our time as it relates to faithfulness. It reads, "**I can't promise you forever, but I can promise you today.**" Now that's a deep commitment isn't it?

God gives us faith. We don't have to find or discover it. When we accept Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in us and faith becomes ours to have. The problem isn't that we don't have faith. The problem is that we are not faithful. In other words, we do not follow Him and make Christ Lord of our lives.

Joseph of Arimathea was faithful in a dark hour. He was faithful when he had a right to be discouraged. The Bible says he was a disciple of Christ. In other words, he was a believer. When it appeared to be the darkest hour for Jesus Christ and all believers, Joseph exemplified faithfulness.

Content

1. Faithfulness With Material Wealth

Joseph was faithful with his material wealth. God's Word tells us he was a rich man. He owned the tomb and probably the property where the tomb was located. He had cut the tomb out of the rock himself.

Clearly Joseph had time and money invested into this tomb. However, he eagerly donated his tomb for the burial of Christ.

We can learn from this faithfulness. God wants us to be generous with our wealth and possessions.

"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" 1 John 3:17

God's Word says the love of God must not be in us if we are not generous. When we see others in need or when we see an opportunity to further the gospel, we should be eager to give of our possessions.

Let me put it another way. People who love God are eager to give generously. Do you give generously? Do you tithe faithfully? Or, do you hoard your money and possessions, clinging to them as if they were really yours?

I believe most Christians are reluctant to give because they foolishly think that what they have is theirs. They reason that they earned it and it is theirs to hoard or dispense as they please.

Nothing could be further from the truth. It is God who provides all we have and He provides us with opportunity, health and ability to prosper.

Faithfulness to Christ includes faithfulness with your material wealth.

2. Faithfulness With Time

Joseph of Arimathea was faithful with his time. As a rich man, he was surely a busy man. I am sure he had people to see, property and livestock that needed tending and other things pressing. However, he took the time not only to get permission to bury the body but also to prepare it for burial.

The dictionary defines faithfulness as "To follow with a commitment regardless of difficulty." Perhaps a simple definition would be "Faithfulness is love hanging on." It is love and devotion that says, "I will not quit!"

If a man says he loves his wife but has an affair we say he was unfaithful. No matter what argument he gives, the bottom line is his actions do not reconcile with his words.

Illus: Likewise, many people say they love the Lord but they are not faithful with their time. They do not attend worship or serve in any capacity to further the gospel of Christ. The reality is that they are unfaithful. No matter what excuses they give, the bottom line is that their actions do not reconcile with their words.

We need to be faithful first to God. Our faithfulness to church and ministry will flow as a natural result of faithfulness to our Lord.

We live in a day when most people spend far more time watching movies than they give to worship, Bible study and prayer combined. Clearly, this says something about our faithfulness to God.

Faithfulness to Christ includes faithfulness with your Time.

3. Faithfulness With The Heart

Joseph was also faithful with his heart. In my mind, it took great courage for Joseph of Arimathea to go Pilate and ask for the body of Christ. We already know Joseph was a believer himself. Pilate or the other leaders could have taken action against him.

Surely Joseph knew that taking the body and giving up his own tomb for Christ would cause some talk. What was to keep Joseph from being attacked for his favoritism toward Christ even after His death? For all we know, he could have been ridiculed for it.

Joseph was faithful with his heart. The fact that Christ had been crucified was not the end to Joseph. He still believed and loved Christ. His heart was committed and he obeyed the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 challenges us to be faithful in stewardship.

Ephesians 6:21 talks about being faithful in service.

1 Timothy 5:0 speaks of faithful marriages.

Romans 12:2 says we are to be faithful in prayer.

Revelation 2:15 tells us to be faithful in witnessing.

God desires faithfulness. God honors faithfulness

The first place we need to be faithful is with our heart. We must commit to follow Christ and make him Lord of our life.

We must take our mustard seed of faith that God has given us and allow it to work by being faithful in our service to our Lord.

Illus: An apple tree doesn't stand in the middle of an orchard saying, "Now how do I develop apples?" An apple tree produces apples because that's what an apple tree does. Likewise, Spirit led Christians must understand that we are a branch of the vine who is Jesus Christ. We don't have to sit around and analyze what we are to do as Christians. If we are faithful to our Lord with our heart, we will be fruitful.

Faithfulness to Christ begins with faithfulness with our your heart.

➤ **Conclusion**

God's word says in Psalm 100:5, *"The Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations."* Psalm 100:5

At death, we all cling to God's faithfulness as we read the verse that says, *"In my Father's house are many rooms if it were not so I would have told you. But, I go to prepare a place for you."*

We love to sing the old hymn,

"Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father..

Morning by morning new mercies I see.

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,

Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me."

We count on God to be faithful and He is faithful.

But are you faithful to God?