

Joseph of Arimathea

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[0 : 00] Mark 15, verse 42 and 43, we read, Now when the evening was come, because it was the preparation, that is the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor which also waited for the kingdom of God, came and went in boldly unto Pilate and prayed the body of Jesus.

And when he knew of the centurion that Jesus was dead, he gave the body to Joseph. So we're all familiar with the story of Joseph of Arimathea, who appears only here at the end of the crucifixion time.

Nicodemus, who is mentioned with them in John's account of the Gospel, that we read in John 19, there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pound weight.

You know, that's the weight of one of the old sacks of coal, the big sacks that used to be, that's a huge amount of spices that they have brought with them. Nicodemus is with them.

And Nicodemus is mentioned previously, of course, as the one who came to Jesus by night. In chapter 3 of John's account of the Gospel, he also speaks up briefly for Jesus in chapter 7 of John's account of the Gospel, where we read that he says to the chief priests when they are busy cursing Jesus and saying, the people who don't know anything, they are taken in by him.

[1 : 28] And Nicodemus said unto them, He that came to Jesus by night, being one of them, doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto them, Art thou also of Galilee?

Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went to his own house. So we have a little bit of mention of Nicodemus chapter 3, chapter 7, and again at chapter 19 of John.

But of Joseph of Arimathea, we have only this account that we have in each of the Gospel narratives, but it's only here. And this is his only mention at this stage when Jesus is already dead.

And when he it is who provides the tomb in which Jesus is laid, and of course from which he rises on the first day of the week.

This is Joseph's only, we might say, claim to fame. We don't need to put it in that sort of secular terms, because this is a beautiful thing that he does for Jesus.

[2 : 28] But we might be inclined, perhaps, to be cynical and say, well, you know, it's a bit late now. If he had spoken up, perhaps, in the council, if he had used his vote, well, maybe he did speak up in the council, for all we know, but his voice was drowned out by the others.

Maybe he absented himself because he didn't want anything to do with it. Maybe he knew that their meeting by night was illegal under Jewish law, or the Old Testament law.

It was meant to be, the Sanhedrin was always meant to meet, and the full length of day, nothing be hidden. And he knew they were bending and breaking the rules, and maybe he wanted nothing to do with that.

Whatever the reasons, this is the first time, and only time, Joseph appears. He comes to Pilate after Jesus is dead.

An honourable councillor, we are told. Now, we know that might mean that he was simply well thought of amongst his fellow Jewish leaders, amongst the chief priests, and the Pharisees amongst the Sanhedrin.

[3 : 33] It means, at the very least, the fact that he belongs to the council, which had 72 members, which you might think, well, James, that's an awful lot of people. But, compared to the population of Judea, compared to the fact that these people are drawn from the length and breadth of the country, they are reckoned to be the most devout, the most honourable, the most godly, and faithful to the law amongst all the councillors.

We don't know whether he was a pharisee, or whether he was amongst a priestly caste, or whatever. It's most likely that he was a pharisee. Most likely that he was a layman rather than a priest, but we don't know that for sure.

But the very fact that he is numbered amongst the council means or points to his status in the Jewish community. Comparatively elite number.

And he does not consent to what they do with Jesus. We are told that he didn't approve of what they did. We are told that he was, in John 19, it says that he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews.

Well, we read in Matthew's account, or rather in Luke's account, we're told about how he takes the body and how he requests it.

[4 : 54] There was a man named Joseph, a councillor. He was a good man and a just. The same had not consented to the councillor in deed of them. He was of Anamathia, a city of the Jews, who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

This man went unto Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. Now, Mark tells us here, he went in boldly unto Pilate. And this points us to the fact that despite his standing in his own community, he would have no standing in the eyes of the Romans.

You know, the Romans regarded pretty much all the Jews as, you know, scum to be ruled over. Yes, the high priest would get an audience with Pilate if he wanted it.

It is almost certainly by arrangement with the high priest that there is this very early morning trial of Jesus that Pilate consents to.

And, you know, to go to the governor's residence, even if you are a councillor high up in the Jewish community, you know, you could imagine him coming up, speaking to the sentry at the door.

[6 : 00] I'd like to see the governor. Will you have an appointment? No. And who are you? Well, Joseph, I'm from Anamathia. And is the governor expecting it? No. And what's your business with the guy? Well, I'd like to speak to him about Jesus of Nazareth.

And, you know, this instantly will get ears pricking up. They'll probably report it back because apart from anything else, that has been the big business of the day. Yes, crucifying a couple of thieves, that's no big business.

But the one that has been all this fuss about Jesus of Nazareth, this is news. The governor's probably going to want to hear this one. So he comes in. Now, you can imagine for a devout Jew walking through the echoing hallways of the corridors of pagan imperial power, Roman eagles and statues of gods and goddesses everywhere, a place steeped in idolatry, steeped in the power imagery of the oppressor and the occupying power.

This is not an easy thing to do. This is something which, even if he didn't feel defiled by it, it would certainly make a stomach turn to see the paganism and the Gentiles sort of trappings of imperial Rome in the center of his country, there in the heart of Jerusalem.

These people are the enemies of his blood. These people are the enemies of his nation who are oppressing, occupying his nation. And here he has to go and ask a favor of the governor who has just crucified Jesus of Nazareth.

[7 : 34] So he comes in. It says he comes in boldly. Now, this would take courage. Pilate, to his credit, gives him an audience.

Perhaps it's just his curiosity. Perhaps he just wonders, what on earth do they want now? And when he sees Joseph, when he speaks to him, he will know. Again, we mentioned this morning how Pilate wasn't an idiot.

He would be able to look at somebody and know whether this is one of the criminal class, whether this is a rebel, whether this is somebody who stirs up sedition, whether this is a killer. He would have seen in Jesus none of these things.

He would recognize this is not your average rebel or traitor or agitator. There's something different about this man. There's something innocent about this man.

I don't want to put this man to death. He would have looked at Joseph and seen this is someone who's different. From the arrogant, hectoring chief priests and leaders of the law who were badgering Pilate only that morning.

[8 : 34] This is different. This is a different atmosphere. This is a different kind of man. And all he wants is the body, the dead body of this convicted, I'm going to say criminal, if I can say that reverently.

As far as Pilate and the Romans are concerned, it's just another crucifixion. It's a political crucifixion. That's how they justified it. King of the Jews. A potential threat to order and stability and Roman rule.

That's how they justified it. So it's the body of this convicted rebel, as they would say, that Joseph wants.

Pilate knows everything about that day's work has just not been right. He marvelled if we were already dead. Now we've got a wee bit of a timeline, sort of, shall we say, concertina here.

A bit of the folding over of the timeline. Because John tells us that because it was a high day and a holy day, the chief priests wanted the bodies removed, so they wanted the legs broken of those on the cross.

[9 : 40] They shouldn't remain on the cross on the Sabbath day, for that Sabbath day was a high day. And they besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers and break the legs of the first and of the other, which was crucified with them.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they break not his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bear record.

And his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that he might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled. A bone of him shall not be broken. And again, another scripture saith, he shall look at him whom they pierced.

And then it says, And after that Joseph ran him a fear, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, they sought Pilate, that he might take away the body of Jesus.

Now there's going to be a bit of a folding of the timeline here. Because in real terms, by the time they have pierced Jesus and broken the legs of the other two, it's only because they are about to take them down off the cross.

[10 : 42] It's too late then to go hurrying off back into Jerusalem, get an audience with the governor, which would have taken some time. You know, it's not just a case of, like, see the governor, no problem, through you come.

I imagine he was kept waiting quite a while, being a Jew without an appointment, and somebody the governor didn't know, it would have taken some time to go through all the channels, get past all the civil servants, finally get an audience with the governor, finally persuade him of what you wanted.

By that time, the bodies will have been thrown in a common grave. So, the arrangement about making sure they didn't hang on the cross too long must have been already in place.

They must have been already going to remove the bodies before too long, by arrangement with Pilate before Joseph goes into Pilate. But he, perhaps knowing that they were all going to be cast in a common pauper's grave or whatever, goes to Pilate after these things.

By the time they get around to piercing Jesus' side and breaking the legs of the other two, Joseph must be virtually on hand, ready to take the body down.

[11 : 50] Otherwise, if they'd already pierced him and they'd already broken the legs of the others, Pilate wouldn't be saying, well, is he already dead? He'd say, yeah, yeah, of course he's dead. He'd pierced his side, he'd broke the legs of the other two, and so on.

No, Pilate marvels that he is already dead, which means that Joseph went to him quite soon after Jesus died. Jesus died at three o'clock in the afternoon, the time of the evening sacrifice.

Joseph is probably at Pilate by four, or sometime towards the evening there. He wants him, and he wants him quickly, but Pilate is amazed that he's already dead.

He's only been on the cross a mere six hours. Now, you and I can only imagine what it would be like to hang on a cross for six hours, pierced through your hands and your feet, having been scourged beforehand, and all the rest of it, with the heat of a Palestinian day, even with the darkness, for the three hours, dehydrated, suffering acute agony.

Six hours was incredibly quick. It was so quick that Pilate was amazed. He suspected some kind of trick, perhaps, thinking, oh, wait a minute, they want to take him down before he's dead.

[13 : 03] Pilate marveled if he were already dead, and calling on to him the centurion, this is the same word says, truly this man was the son of God. He asked him whether he had been any while dead, and when he knew of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

He's not a fool, he's not an idiot, he's not going to risk something happening, going wrong, but he gives the body to Joseph. Now, we might think, yeah, okay, that's great, Joseph's really brave now.

Yeah, he could have been brave before, it wouldn't have made any difference. The Jewish council before was, if we can use the phrase, hell-bent, literally intent on doing hell's will, in putting Jesus to death, and crucifying the son of righteousness, they were determined to get that done, even to the point of playing all their aces, and blackmailing the governor himself, saying, you don't do this.

We will go to Caesar, we will travel all the way to Rome, and complain about you, when there was a threat to public order, that you did nothing, your job won't be worth keeping, you're already in trouble, we'll make it worse for you, and they would have done it.

That's how determined they were. Joseph might have spoken for all it was worth, they wouldn't have been hurt. But I would suggest to you something further here. I would suggest to you that even if he kept silent, even if he had been given no courage at the time, even if it was secretly, as John tells us, for fear of the Jews, that hour had now passed.

[14 : 41] Jesus, remember, says in Luke 22, I think it is, he says, you know, this is your hour, and the power of darkness. This is the power that the evil one has, but then, that hour passes, the sky is clear, the world will never be as dark again, and just as in due course, remember, the disciples who were terrified, meeting behind locked doors for fear of the Jews, they received new strength, new power, new courage, when Jesus breathed on them, gave them the Holy Ghost, gave them strength to wait for him, to be empowered by his spirit, to proclaim the gospel.

So the devil, having thought that he had put this well and truly, not only to bed, but to death, then is faced with new courage, new spirit, new threats, springing up all over the place, and the first one in whom it springs up is Joseph of Arimathea.

Why doesn't he have this courage before? Well I would suggest to you if we can just go back to what Jesus himself says. Jesus himself says in John 10, at verse 18, he says, he shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake.

Well Joseph isn't being brought before the governor, he's voluntarily seeking out the governor for a testimony against them and the Gentiles, but when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your father which speaketh in you.

This is Joseph's hour. This is the hour in which the Lord knows what he wants Joseph to do. The Lord, knowing that Joseph has through the spirit been encouraged to be a secret disciple of Jesus, now gives him courage.

[16 : 35] Courage he didn't have when Jesus was being condemned. He didn't have when Jesus was crucified. But now we might think, oh and it's too late. It's not too late. It's all part of God's perfect plan.

Now he's been given the strength. Now he's been given the courage. He marches right in to Pilate's own residence and boldly asks for the body of Jesus.

Now as I said, we can't begin to imagine how threatening that must have felt to a Jewish man on his own, surrounded by the very power and strength and trappings of pagan Rome.

However, he's asking a favor. He's doing it boldly to those who despise his people and whom he himself has no cause to love. But the Lord has given him in that same hour what he shall speak.

Because it's not just Joseph having the courage. It is the Lord, the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. Contrast that with Luke 22 at verse 53.

[17 : 40] This is your hour and the power of darkness. Yes, that was the hour but that hour was past. Now Jesus has died. Things will never be as dark again because now there's only life to come.

Now he's got to lie in the tomb but for that tomb to be provided the Lord brings in Joseph. How's he going to get the body? Only one person can release the body.

That's Pilate. That means he has to ask. So the Lord gives him the courage, gives him the strength, gives him the presence of mind to act and to act quickly. So quickly that Pilate marvels that Jesus is already dead.

But the Lord has given him the courage, given him the words to say, given him the will, given him the ability. and given him also the means.

We are taught in Matthew's account when we hear about Joseph. We read that as he went to Pilate, begged the body of Jesus, Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

[18 : 43] When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in clean linen cloth. He laid it, it says, in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock.

And he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher and departed. This tomb he had prepared for himself. Now, only men of considerable means could afford to cut out or have cut out a tomb out of rock.

Think about it in those days. When you're facing a rock face and you want to cut out a tomb out of it it'll be big enough for men to go in and carry in a body space to lay it down head to foot with a sort of platform there that was usually two rooms, an entry room, a second room where you lay the body a particular way and then you have to come out even if they're doubling down a bit it's going to be quite a height, it's going to be quite a depth and quite a width too.

So there's a lot of cutting out to do. Now, they don't have pneumatic drills and JCBs they've got a chisel and they've got a hammer and they're bashing away at the rock. One stop a little chip comes up.

Now that's not bang, another little chip comes up. This is the work of years. In order to pay the men who will chip away and hew out this tomb out of solid rock it will take years of preparation and all these workmen have got to be paid to do it.

[20 : 17] However many or few you pay it's years of work that is costly it is expensive and the only people who could do that for themselves will be rich men.

Rich and honourable men. Joseph is a rich man. We know he's a rich man because he couldn't have a tomb otherwise that he had prepared for himself. We're also told nobody had ever been laid in that tomb before.

He brought fine linen took him down wrapped him in linen laid him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of the rock specially cut by hand.

When he does this he is seeking to honour the Lord himself. In Luke's account of the gospel we're told he laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone wherein never man before was laid.

It is in a sense a virgin or tomb. Nobody has defiled it with a dead body before. There's going to be no uncleanness when they take in the body of Jesus.

[21 : 24] It is pure. It is cut fresh. It is intended for Joseph when his time comes. But he puts it to a higher and nobler use.

He has this resource. He has it nearby. And he has the ability to do something now. Perhaps we may say when it's too late.

But it's not too late. Because it is God's perfect time. We read in the place where he was crucified there was a garden. Now we've talked before about what that means.

It doesn't mean little rose beds and cut lawns like we have. It means a particularly enclosed cultivated area with plants that have been specially watered and nurtured and so on.

In a garden a new sepulcher wherein was never man yet laid. There laid day Jesus therefore because of the Jews preparation day for the sepulcher was nigh at hand.

[22 : 26] It was perfect. It was perfectly placed. But still it couldn't have been used. Joseph couldn't just say to the execution party give me the body and say no please give me the body no not a chance.

But if he can go with the government authority and say Pilate says you forgive me this body you take it and he buries it with all due reverence and honour with Nicodemus with a hundred pound weight of spices.

Why has he got the courage now? Because the Lord has given it to him. Because this is his hour. This is the words God puts in his mouth. This is the strength the spirit gives him.

In other words it is not too late because it is God's perfect time. Joseph is doing that which he can do. Now remember how Jesus said of the woman who anointed him with the perfume she has done what she could.

She's anointed me beforehand for my better. She did what she could. Joseph's doing what he can. He wasn't there to anoint Jesus to bow at his feet like these women in such humility.

[23 : 33] He perhaps his dignity wouldn't have allowed him but he didn't do it. But now he's doing his part and it's not too late.

It's not too late because although Jesus is dead Jesus will rise again. Maybe Joseph doesn't know that but it doesn't alter the fact he's acting in faith and in love with or without that knowledge.

Whether or not he knows Jesus is going to rise again is in one sense neither here nor there. he is acting with love. Perhaps with a measure of guilt but he is acting with love now with the strength the Lord gives him.

He came and went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus. And we cannot stress enough the courage that that would have taken. Pilate as we have seen that very day was not above putting to death innocent men.

Joseph takes his life in his hand and takes his courage in his hand and God causes Pilate to give him the body and to fulfil thus his own scriptures.

[24 : 42] Isaiah 53 verse 9 he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death because he had done no violence and there was any deceit in his mouth.

Joseph was not rich. He could not have had or afforded a tomb. The huge amount of work to chip out a tomb from the solid rock by hand would have taken many men, many workmen, many years.

Very expensive Joseph did and now he puts it at Jesus' disposal. He brought fine linen and took him down, wrapped him in the linen and laid him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock and rolled a stone onto the door of the sepulcher.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph beheld where he was laid. Now what isn't clear is whether this sepulcher was intended initially just as a holding place and maybe Joseph intended to release the body afterwards to the disciples for a more appropriate burial somewhere else maybe in Galilee or elsewhere.

That's less likely in the heat and the conditions of first century Palestine bodies would decompose pretty quick. Remember what they said about Lazarus.

[26 : 03] He's been in the tomb four days. Only four days. He'll be stinking by now. He'll be decomposing. By the time of the third day when Jesus rises from the dead normally nobody would be going near that tomb under normal circumstances.

And they had to wait that long because it was the Sabbath the next day. And the women were still prepared to take that risk and touch the dead body and bring what spices they had.

Not that they would have needed any extras with the amount that Joseph and Nicodemus had used. But we come back again to the point everybody would think well it's too late now.

It's not too late because Jesus is going to rise again. The Lord has plans for his son. The Lord has a plan for his future.

Christ is going to rise precisely from that tomb where Joseph has laid him. What is meant to be respect in death becomes the birthing place of a new life?

[27 : 07] Now this is why we say it is never too late. Joseph himself might have thought it was too late. Everybody else seeing the honour that he did to the corpse of Jesus would have thought well who do you like?

You're too late now. No you're not too late. Now today we have remembered the Lord's death at his table in his supper.

For some it was something that is observed from a business. and the opportunity to sit at his table for this time has passed. But it is not too late because Christ lives.

We remember his death, yes. Joseph remembers his death. Joseph acts upon his death. He does what he could. He could because Jesus is dead.

But Jesus is no longer dead. Christ is alive and having risen and ascended into glory. He awaits the day when he comes back to judge the living and the dead.

[28 : 10] There is yet time. There is yet opportunity for the fearful to receive courage. For the unbelieving to receive faith and hope.

For those who are as yet without. remember that fearful passage in Revelation in chapter 22 where it talks about the holy city and then it says, for without our dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

This is verse 15 of Revelation 22. The unbelieving as well. The unbelieving are those who wouldn't believe and wouldn't enter in.

And those who wouldn't receive they will likewise be shut out. But there is yet time. Verse 8 of Revelation 21. But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second dead.

All liars. James, that mean me too. Well the only reason it doesn't mean me is because my sins are washed away through the blood of Christ. I've told lies in my time, in my years.

[29 : 30] Therefore, would I be there too? Well under normal circumstances, yes I would. I may not be one who profits through the morality as a whoremonger but I know in my time, in my years, my thoughts haven't always been as clean as they should be.

I may not be a sorcerer but I'm plenty of other things. I may not be a murderer but I've been angry with my brother plenty of times in the past. I may not be abominable in my own eyes but I'm quite sure I'm abominable in other people's eyes.

The unbelieving, there was a time I was an unbeliever or a doubter. There was a time when I was fearful. There's a time when we are all these things.

But it is not too late for the fearful to receive courage. as Joseph received courage to go in boldly to Pilate and ask the body of Jesus.

It is not too late for the unbelieving to receive the gift of faith for we are saved by grace. And we, that faith is the instrument of grace, you know, is the instrument by which we are saved because faith we have not in ourselves.

[30 : 43] It is the gift of God. That the Lord gives and that enables us to be unbelievers no more. Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8, of course, famous, famous verse.

You'll be familiar with it as well. Just find it. Ephesians 2 verse 8, there we have, whereby grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

And it's not too late. An opportunity, one opportunity has passed. For Joseph of Animathea, it may have seemed like it was the only opportunity, but it wasn't.

His part was unique and it is remembered in scripture in all the different gospel accounts, all four gospel accounts, that are very unusual accounts.

But he is named and he is remembered in all four gospel accounts. This is the only thing he does. Now, the only thing you may ever do in your life that marks you out in the eyes of God may be to believe in his son, Jesus Christ.

[31 : 52] You may do many things that may impress men. You may have accomplished different things in your work life or in your home life. You may be in the world to your loved ones or extended family or friends.

But the only thing that will stand any test in the eyes of God is whether or not your sins are washed away by the blood of his son, Jesus Christ.

All liars, all the abominable, all the fearful, all the unbelieving, those who feared other things more than they feared God. That's what the Bible, not me, that's what the Bible says is the faith that awaits them.

And we are all guilty of most of these things at some point. And the only reason we won't be in that lake of fire is because our sins are washed away by the blood of Christ.

If we lay hold upon him, it is not too late tonight. It was not too late for Joseph to do his part that evening, that night.

[33 : 00] Even though Jesus was dead, even though everybody would have thought the time had passed, he took what the Lord had given him. The Lord had given him wealth.

The Lord had enabled him to have the foresight to make a new tomb for himself so that when he died, he'd be laid in it. We don't know if Joseph ended up being laid in that tomb.

I don't hear anything about that tomb after Jesus rises from it. But it becomes the most famous tomb in the mystery of the world because of what Joseph does for love of Christ.

It was not too late. And it is not too late because the Lord knows his son will rise again.

And the Lord knows that his son, having risen, will come again. And because he will come again, it is incumbent upon us, remain here to be ready when he comes.

[34 : 04] So that's the question for us this evening. Are we ready if the Lord would come back tonight? Think, ah, come on, well, not serious. The Lord's not going to come back tonight, is he?

Well, there's going to come one day when he's going to come back, but nobody's going to expect him then. Nobody's going to expect him by night or by day or whatever hour of the day he comes. And we're told in the Bible, people will be carrying on doing the ordinary thing, buying and selling, marrying and being given in marriage and carrying on with the ordinary business until suddenly the Lord appears from the way.

And then time is over and opportunity has passed. And then, then it is too late. But tonight it is not too late.

This evening, like that evening for Joseph, it was not too late to do what he could for the love of Christ.

No doubt he felt weak. No doubt he felt guilty. No doubt he felt that he had failed to do all the things he should have done in the years before when he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews.

[35 : 18] Where is that fear now? They're still as much a threat as they were. But he's not afraid of them now compared to the love that he now has to what he sees as this dead Jesus.

And he won't be dead for long. Now we fear men and we fear their thoughts and we fear their words and we fear their opinions. But somewhere along the line if we are going to be saved, the love of Christ constrains us.

and the love of Christ bubbles up like a spring out of the ground and flows out over the top of all our hatred and all our fears and all our anxieties and it flows down in this cleansing stream that enables us no longer to be afraid.

Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God. Waiting for the kingdom of God. well it's waiting for you perhaps.

And went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus. That's what we've partaken of the symbols of today.

[36 : 31] The body of Jesus. The blood of Jesus. Symbols, yes, but infused with a spiritual significance. That as we partake of the symbols, of his body and blood, we renew that commitment to him.

And he renews his commitment to us to dwell in us. Just as the bread and wine physically becomes part of us. It underlines how he physically and spiritually is within his people.

And they spiritually in him. And this gracious offer is freely held open to all. This boldness that we don't have yet, which the Lord will give to all who seek him and ask and love him.

And Joseph came and went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus. He doesn't know if he's going to get what he asks. Pilate marveled if he were already dead.

Called to him the centurion. Asked whether he'd be any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. He bought fine linen, took him down, wrapped him in the linen, laid him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone onto the door of the sepulcher.

[37 : 55] Until the Lord melts our hearts with his love, those hearts are stone. Those hearts are rock. But the Lord hews out a place in the hardness of our hearts.

He hews out a place where he himself will lie. And from whence he himself will burst forth in the power of resurrection and place.

When the Lord is awakened in the heart of his people, nothing will ever be the same again. No stone can keep him contained in the sepulcher.

No heart of stone can stop him from bursting forth in love within. It is not too late. The time has not passed, or not yet, for all who would receive, for all who would believe, for all whose fears would be overcome.

This opportunity is passed. God in his mercy is not left you with an opportunity. If we are spared, there will be other communions.

[39 : 06] But we don't have to have a physical communion in order to be in communion with Christ. The key thing is giving of ourselves to him, giving our hearts to him, inviting him within.

It is not too late. You have not failed completely for lack of courage because the Lord gives the words and the Lord gives the courage and the Lord gives the opportunity and the Lord softens the heart of Pilate and the Lord makes all things possible.

What is it Paul writes to the Philippians? I can do all things through Christ who strengthened me. It is only Christ who strengthens us. It is only him who can bring life out of the midst of death.

but maybe for years now he has been chipping away at the rock of your heart. Maybe he has been hewing out a sepulcher and a room in which to lay what seems like a corpse.

But the first day of the week will come and the Lord's day will dawn spiritually, not just physically, and Christ will awaken and rise in the hearts of all who are predestined to be his.

[40 : 29] You know, well then that's not me. How do you know? Who told you God's eternal plan from the beginning? All that you have before you is the invitation, is the assurance that God who does not lie, says come and receive that which he desires to give.

Joseph went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus. When we partake of the symbols of that thing, that's one sense.

And what they symbolize and who they symbolize is so much more and so much more lasting than any communion season.

We partake of it and we remember his death, not forever and ever and ever and all eternity, but just until he comes. And he is coming.

And he shall come. And we shall see him as he is. And when he does, time will be at an end. But for now, it's not too late.

[41 : 44] Thanks.