

John 19.31-42—Bold Faith in a Dangerous World

- I. Introduction
 - a. The importance of Jesus' burial is more significant than we might think. And how all that works out is amazing and surprising because it involves two unlikely men who surely have counted the cost but took action.
 - b. There are many decisions in life that are hard to make. Faith in our hope of the resurrection to eternal life that is still in the future gives us courageous in present to fight through the fears. My faith is strengthened and I long for the courage of Joseph and Nicodemus. More about them at the end.
- II. Main Point
 - a. Jesus died and was buried according to the Scriptures
- III. Outline
 - a. Preparing for the Sabbath
 - b. No Broken Bones and Pierced for our Transgressions—fulfilled
 - c. The burial of Jesus and bold faith in a dangerous world
- IV. Exposition
 - a. The title of the sermon is Bold faith in a dangerous world. What makes that even possible? The sending of God's Son along with his life, death and burial. There's more but that's where we're at for now. The taking down of the body and burial might seem insignificant events in the storyline but they are incredibly important. Let's step into the scene where there seems to be some urgent preparation for the Sabbath.
 - i. We left off last week with Jesus' dying breath—"It is finished." In some ways, his time of death is unusually quick.
 - ii. It's Friday and the Sabbath begins at sunset and there are always preparations to be made. With this Sabbath being within the Passover week it was considered even more important. High days called for urgent preparations.
 - iii. The day of rest finds its beginning in creation. Take note of this account from (Gen. 1:31-2:3) ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.
 1. And as I'm sure you are aware, one of Ten Commandments from (Exod. 20:8-9) ⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work.
 2. You might be wondering, what do dead bodies have to do with making preparation for the Sabbath?
 - a. Well, you have two groups of people in this scene, Romans and Jews, who have different understandings about how we ought to live in this world.
 - i. This is a troublesome statement but the Romans normally left those who were crucified nailed to the tree until the birds of the air had devoured them.
 - ii. But the Jews had a law that said in (Deut. 21:22-23) that a dead body cannot be left overnight. With the Sabbath beginning at sunset, this could not be put off until tomorrow.
 - iii. Add to the fact that if you broke the Sabbath, you could be put to death according to Exodus 31:14.
 - b. To keep the land from being defiled, the Jews (most certainly the leaders) asked that their legs be broken, which would expedite their death, and then be taken

away...meaning, buried which could mean in a very crude way. I'll spare you further details.

i. Isn't strange what can be normal to human beings?

- iv. It seems that Pilate granted permission because in verse 32 the soldiers begin that process.
1. They start with the two on either side of Jesus but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.
 - a. Hindsight looks back at this and sees major importance here. In the Gospel of Mark, Pilate was surprised and then confirms Jesus' death before allowing his body to be taken down.
 2. These Roman soldiers did not need a doctor to come make this official. They know when someone is dead.
 3. For further proof, in verse 34 the soldiers pierce his side, and at once there came out blood and water.
 - a. There was no response from Jesus when the spear is gouged deeply into his side.
 - b. He, the Word, became flesh and bleed and died. As simple as that may seem to us, it is extremely important.
 - c. But is there more to this blood and water? Many seem to think so.
 - d. Verse 35 seems to mark it off as weighty evidence and testimony! And I believe this is John saying this while remaining anonymous: (Jn. 19:35) ³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness-- his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth-- that you also may believe.
 - i. He makes a similar statement at the end of chapter 20 about the purpose for which he wrote this Gospel.
 - ii. John sees this whole scene as clear evidence for Jesus' identity and the means by which he would save lost sinners.
 - iii. When I looked for background in the OT for blood and water, I find numerous places where they come together in sacrifice for payment and cleansing of God's people and other things.
 - iv. I can't help but see the New Covenant promises being fulfilled in the death of Jesus. He is the perfect sacrifice that will never need to be repeated.
 1. And anyone who comes to Jesus...repents and believes will be forgiven and made clean.

- v. If I can borrow the creation language to say that through the blood and water (and the impending resurrection), Jesus will redeem a people—a new creation—who are forgiven and counted righteous by faith to dwell in the eternal Kingdom of God ruled by King Jesus.
1. What was the purpose for John bearing witness to the truth of these events? **THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE!**
 2. If you are here today without a relationship with Jesus Christ, you are guilty before the Holy God of this world. But you can be forgiven and made right with God through the only cure there is.
 3. As the great hymn, Rock of Ages says in the opening line:
 - a. Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee; let the water and the blood, from thy wounded side which flowed, be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure.
 - b. You can be saved from God's wrath through God's Son.
 - c. You can be made pure by faith in sacrifice of Jesus.

- b. Now, in the middle of our verses this morning, stands more evidence that Jesus is who he says he is. What has unfolded in these events, even while Jesus is dead, fulfilled the Scriptures. We must believe in the insurmountable facts that Jesus is the One. There are two more fulfillments: Not one of his bones will be broken and they will look on him whom they have pierced.
- i. I've mentioned this but take note how important these fulfillments are to Paul: (1 Cor. 15:3-4) ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.
 1. There are three places that speak of no broken bones. Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12, and Psalm 34:20.
 - a. The first two are instructions about the Passover lamb while Psalm 34 is about the preservation of the righteous.
 - i. The preservation of the righteous need not mean that he will not die but rather even in death there is hope in the resurrection. The keeping of the bones hoped in what was to come.
 - b. In the providence of God, Jesus' bones are not broken. Had he still been alive when the Jewish leaders asked for their legs to be broken then they would have broken Jesus' legs too.
 - c. And because the soldiers saw that he was already dead, they took a spear and pierced his side.
 - i. Indeed, Jesus is our Passover Lamb
 - ii. Indeed, Jesus was pierced for our transgressions.
 - iii. Not only did this fulfill Isaiah 53 again but more precisely Zechariah 12:10.
 1. The outpouring of God's grace will cause the people to look on him whom they have pierced.
 2. What's amazing about this is what the pierced One accomplished for those who believe.
 3. Because if you move on down to (Zech. 13:1) "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.
 - a. I can't help but think this fountain is what we saw in the flow of blood and water from the side of Jesus.
 - b. Does this not remind of you of the great hymn: There is a fountain filled with blood Drawn from Immanuel's veins; And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains
 - c. If you will but repent and believe in the Lord Jesus, you will lose your guilty stains.
 - ii. Brothers and sisters, faith in Christ isn't blind faith. Faith shouldn't be based on feelings. That's not to say we understand everything completely and there are no feelings involved. Yet, our faith is rooted the promises made and fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us stand on the sure foundation of Christ that all of it happened precisely according to Scripture. We need not be tossed around when our faith is sure in the clear evidence in God's Word.
- c. Now finally, we have come to the burial of Jesus. "After these things" we get to see what bold faith in a dangerous world looks like.

- i. We must not forget that the Jews asked for the bodies to be taken down. They could not be left overnight and the Sabbath was the next day.
 1. I assume the Jews expected the Roman Soldiers to take care of this. If the Jewish leaders would not enter Pilate's headquarters for fear of being defiled, they are not going to touch dead bodies and be unclean.
 2. There's a bigger problem here than we might not expect. If the Roman Soldiers take the bodies down and particularly Jesus' body, what will they do with it? It was very likely to be put in a mass grave for criminals.
 - a. And I suppose it wouldn't matter so much if there were not more to the story. The type of burial the Romans did for criminals would have opened up the many possibilities to be very suspicious of the resurrection.
 - b. There is no salvation without the actual death of Jesus. Death is the penalty for sin. If Jesus doesn't die, no payment—redemption—can be made.
 - c. All of these things are meant to prove that Jesus really died...was really buried...and was really raised. The salvation of the souls of men is riding on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
 - i. Even though what happens, many stories will be created to discredit the resurrection by saying Jesus wasn't really dead.
- ii. So, how will we have an empty tomb come Sunday? How will we know that Jesus hadn't simply lost consciousness? Well, two men finish a massively important part that we might know with certainty that Jesus actually died and will be raised.
 1. The first man is Joseph of Arimathea. We know very little about him.
 - a. Mark tells us that Joseph was a member of the council—the Sanhedrin. Was he present at the Jesus' trial? That we do not know.
 - b. John tells us in verse 38 that Joseph was a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews.
 - c. Yet he goes to Pilate and asks permission to take the body of Jesus away for burial. He is given permission so he takes his body down.
 - i. This high-ranking official is taking a great risk to do this. In other words, he is going public. There is no way you can read that he was a follower of Jesus secretly and then this public act of seeking to bury Jesus' body as any other thing than bold faith in a dangerous world.
 1. If Peter denied Jesus to preserve his own life, then a member of the council publicly identifying with Jesus was certainly in danger.
 2. Here's what John said earlier about people like Joseph. (Jn. 12:42-43) 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; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.
 - d. Can one be a secret Christian? Can your faith be merely private?
 - i. It seems the explanation Jesus gives of the parable of the soils might answer these questions.
 - ii. Jesus said this in (Lk. 8:12-16) ¹² The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing

fall away. ¹⁴ And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵ As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. ¹⁶ "No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light.

iii. (Mk. 4:23) ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

2. If the answer isn't clear to you, maybe you will see it in Nicodemus.
 - a. Obviously, Joseph needed some help with the task of taking the body away for burial. Sunset was fast approaching.
 - b. A man John has already introduced to us joins in to help. I'm certain John wants us to recall the former meeting Nicodemus who was a Pharisee had with Jesus.
 - i. In particular, notice how John describes him in verse (Jn. 19:39) ³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night.
 1. Nicodemus coming "by night" or Joseph being a disciple "secretly for fear of the Jews" seems like they have something to hide. But no one lights a lamp and puts it under the bed.
 - ii. It seems something has changed with both of them for this wasn't done in the dark nor secretly.
 - c. He steps out into the light and Nicodemus also bought an extravagant amount of myrrh and aloes for the honorable burial of a King!
 3. I conclude that both of them are demonstrating bold faith in a dangerous world. And they do this together.
 - a. (Jn. 19:40) ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.
 - b. It's strange. The text I mentioned earlier about not breaking the bones of the Passover Lamb in Numbers 9 also describes certain men who could not participate because they had touched a dead body and were unclean.
 - i. Moses tells them they can observe the Passover next month.
 - c. Well, these two may be unclean according to the law and miss the rest of Passover but I can't help but think these men have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.
 - i. (Rev. 7:14) They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
 - d. Jesus came to save sinners. He is worth going public for.
 - iii. They take Jesus' body to a place nearby. The new and unused tomb is in a garden. There they lay Jesus to rest.
 1. It is fitting that after Jesus' labor for a new creation that he rests!

V. Response

- a. If you want what Joseph and Nicodemus have, you can come to Jesus, today, and opening stand by faith with the redeemed.
- b. Are you the soil that bears fruit? Did you light a lamp and put it under the bed? Come to Jesus and let the world know that he is enough!
- c. If you know what it's like to have bold faith in Jesus Christ in the work place or at home, may the faith and courage of these two men encourage you to press on in hope of the resurrection to eternal life with him. Come taste and see that Lord is good.