Good Friday B 2021

When Jesus received the sour wine, he said “It is finished” and then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. For all those gathered at the foot of the cross, the women, the soldiers, the chief priests and even the disciples, it appeared that all was over and all was lost.

There may have been some in the crowd who wanted to beat the rush and get home before everyone else. But there is more we hear of the death of Jesus. After he died, there comes a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, a city of Judah NW of Jerusalem, who was a respected member of the council, a good an upright man. Joseph likely sat in on the trial of Jesus without consenting to the council’s decision and action.

Joseph is described in Mark’s gospel as one who was looking for the kingdom of God. That is not very popular today. Yet Jesus told us that his kingdom is the very first thing we should seek for in finding it, we will be given everything else.

Joseph does not stop after the death of Jesus. He went **boldly** to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Now something had happened to Joseph that he would go boldly on behalf of Jesus. The Spirit of God breathed life into him and gave him courage; since Joseph did not begin this way.

Joseph is described at first as a secret disciple of Jesus. So he believed but he did not anyone to know it. Why didn’t he want anyone to know it? He was afraid. Of what? The Jews. The religious leaders of Israel, fellow members of the council, his friends and relatives in high places.

Joseph believed the truth, but the truth was no more popular then it is now. Believing in Jesus was risky. He had a lot to lose for he was a rich man and he held a high position in society being a member of council, which was like the Jewish supreme court where law-making was made. Wrong politics or religion could get you thrown out. Believing was both: representing political suicide and was a fast track to excommunication from council and society.

So he tried to work within the system quietly, secretly to keep things fair for Jesus. He wouldn’t come out and tell anyone that he believed in Jesus as Messiah, only in his heart while keeping his position and his riches. Joseph lived in two worlds. He kept his faith to himself while towing the company line.

Joseph kept going until he bumped into something life-changing that brought him into the light, into the public light, so that he was no longer afraid. The Death of Jesus. To see His Lord die proved to Joseph to be more important that preserving and protecting his own life-style.

Joseph could not watch the trial, the crucifixion and the death of Jesus and keep quiet. He could not remain a secret believer. Either secrecy destroys faith or faith destroys secrecy. The words spoken by Jesus brought Joseph of Arimathea out of hiding. Jesus said: Whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.” His words will never pass away even though he died.

We too are secret believers if we are honest about it. We want to keep our religion to ourselves. We could lose our place of honour and respect if they knew we follow Jesus. It is risky business even now. You will lose friends, relatives, and possibly your job. Being practical about it means you want to keep it all, while still secretly believing in Jesus.

That’s how Joseph looked at it until the truth overwhelmed him. He bumped into something greater than himself. He now stood on the truth and spoke for the truth. He spoke out without fearing whom it will offend. He found courage, or better yet, courage found him that destroyed the secrecy. What was this truth?

It is the same truth spoken by the Roman centurion at the foot of the cross after Jesus breathed his last: Truly this man was the Son of God! Jesus is God!

The fact that Joseph couldn’t hide his faith is evidence that we cannot either. Jesus died an innocent man, yet He is God over life and death. Convinced of that, Joseph went to Pilate and publicly asked for the body of a criminal, convicted by the all the courts.

If we were put on trial today, would there be enough evidence to convict you of being Christian? Would you rely on your kind words, good deeds, and honesty? Joseph was overcome by something greater. The death of God! Truly Jesus still is the Son of God. He died for us! His father put on him the sins of us all. On that you can take your stand, and nothing in this world is more certain or sure.

When God looks at you and sees his Son, all fear of what would others think, how much money will I lose, I don’t have the right words to say, fade away. God’s perfect love drives out all fear. The Spirit of God has breathed new life in you by the gift of forgiveness, life with God and salvation. Truly Jesus is the Son of God, your Saviour! Be bold and courageous since your Lord died for you and lives again! Fearing God above all things, like Joseph, means you too can be afraid of nothing. Your secret is out! Jesus died and lives nevermore to die!