

A LESSON FROM JOSEPH

“Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body.” (Mark 15:43)

Joseph, like so many of us, was not always a good example. The Scriptures state: **“Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews” (John 19:38)**. Not good! He did not consent to the death of Jesus (Lk. 23:51), but apparently was not present when the Council voted for they “all” condemned Him (Mk. 14:64). Not good! But Joseph did do something right. When nobody else would do it, he went into action and buried the body of Jesus.

There is a wonderful lesson in this. Joseph couldn’t control the Council, he couldn’t control Pilate, he couldn’t control the soldiers, but he could control himself. He did have a new sepulcher not far away and went “boldly” to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. **“And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand” (John 19:39-42)** Joseph’s good example even helped Nicodemus.

Isn’t this story incredible? The most important man in the history, and his burial seems to have received no advance preparation at all. Jesus sent two of His disciples to get a donkey and make preparation for His triumphal entry (Matt. 21:1- 3). Jesus sent Peter and John to make preparations for the Passover (Lk. 22:8). Jesus asked Peter, James, and John the watch with Him in the Garden (Matt. 26:38). But, apparently He put no one in charge of His burial. The eleven should have volunteered, but they did not. That’s when Joseph of Arimathea stepped into this vacuum and did something. He rose to the occasion and went “boldly” to Pilate. He could not do everything, but he could do something. The same is true of us. We cannot do everything either, but we can do something.

As you probably already know, God did not leave the burial of Jesus to chance. Just like every other detail of His life and ministry, the burial of Jesus was planned centuries before it came to pass. Isaiah wrote: **“He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death . . . ” (Isa 53:9)**. This is significant! Those not buried were often eaten by animals, as was Queen Jezebel (2 Ki. 9:36). God would not allow this to happen to Jesus. So the Sovereign of the Universe “assigned a grave” to Jesus. This security system involved a rich man named Joseph who just happened to have a sepulcher near by, and a heart eager to do something good.

But now we come to a very important part of this lesson that we can learn from Joseph. Apparently he had no Damascus Road vision like Saul, and heard no voice from heaven like young Samuel. As far as the Scriptures are concerned, he simply saw something that needed to be done, and did it! How utterly simple! How utterly profound! What a lesson this is for all of us!

The night before, Jesus had washed the feet of His disciples. Everyone knew their feet were dirty. Everyone saw the basin and the towel. No one, however, but Jesus, did anything about it. After finishing the job, Jesus returned to His place and said: **“Do you understand what I have done for you?” (Jn. 13:12)**. Do we understand? Jesus saw a need and did something. Joseph saw a need and did something. We also need to see a need and do something! It isn’t necessary to have a special revelation in wind, earthquake, or fire. God can speak to us in such a small voice that only we can hear. He can whisper to us in what we see. We can be like Joseph! We can see a need and boldly do something about it. Let’s make this personal. Perhaps you were born for such a time as this. Perhaps the call of God on your life is even now coming sharply into focus. What do you see that needs to be done? All of us need to be like Joseph, and do it!

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.” (Eccl 9:10)