

SUNDAY PRAYER LEADERS

MORNING:
EVENING:

LORD'S TABLE

MORNING: (bread) (cup)

EVENING:

SONGLEADERS: a.m. p.m.

SCRIPTURE READING: a.m. p.m.

(Please check the service board for next week's assignments.)

NEWS & NOTES :

GOOD NEWS



MATT.7:7 Ask and it shall be given to you; Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.

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April 23, 2017

Joseph of Arimathea— Emboldened!

Harold Hancock

All four gospel accounts of the life of Jesus mention Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:43-46; Luke 23:50-54; John 19:38-42). Everything we know about Joseph of Arimathea that comes from inspiration is contained in these few verses. Though brief, the information revealed about Joseph is insightful. Most intriguing is how he was emboldened by the death of Jesus and the honor and respect he showed for Jesus on this one day—the day Jesus died and was buried.

Joseph is referred to by John (19:38) and known by most of us today as “Joseph of Arimathea.” “*Of Arimathea*” signifies he was “*from Arimathea*” as stated by Matthew (27:57). Luke adds that Arimathea was a city of the Jews (23:51), and according to the Internal Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Arimathea was “a place the locality of which is doubtful, but lying probably to the Northwest of Jerusalem”

Luke tells us that Joseph was “*a member of the council*” (23:50). Mark (15:43) not only declares Joseph to be a member of the council, but reveals he was a “*prominent,*” or “*honorable,*” member of the council. Barnes in his commentary suggests “the word ‘honorable,’ here, is not a mere title of ‘office,’ but is given in reference to his personal character, as being a man of integrity and blameless life;” to this Matthew Henry agrees; after noting that Joseph is called an “honorable council member,” he describes Joseph as “a person of character and distinction.” Perhaps this is further suggested by Luke who wrote, “*a council*

Services

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 9:50 a.m.
Worship 4:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

Elders

John Adams
Tim Beamon
Mike Penn

Evangelists

Harold Hancock
Reagan McClenny

Deacons

Larry Davis
Jerry Johnson
Barrett Lankford
Ted A. Lankford
Jim Lynn
Leon Manning
Joe Penn
Shawn Penn
Monte Ramsey
Ty Thornton

member, a good and just man” (23:50).

The character of Joseph is substantiated further by other things said of him in the few scriptures that mention him and from the implications that can rightly be drawn from those scriptures. Joseph had *“become a disciple”* of the Lord (Matthew 27:57; John 19:38) and was *“waiting for the kingdom of God”* (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51). He evidently was able to discern the truth about Jesus and overcome the prejudices and intimidations of many of his peers (John 7:45-49). Joseph was a *“rich man”* (Matthew 27:57), but he did not allow his riches to deter him from choosing to be a disciple as other rich men did (Matthew 19:16-22). The gospel narratives show us Joseph’s willingness to surrender his possessions and riches to provide Jesus with a rich man’s burial. But even more, this “council” of which Joseph was a member is spoken of numerous times throughout the gospels and the book of Acts. These passages make it evident that “the council” along with the chief priests and elders were the seat of power in Judea and southern Palestine, subject only to the authority of Rome. This group was the one that continually sought fault with Jesus and eventually condemned Jesus to death (John 11:47; Mark 14:55; 15:1). But Joseph *“had not consented to their decisions and deed”* (Luke 23:51). He would not agree to the condemnation and death of an innocent man— especially the one whom he believed to be the Lord!

I must confess that I am a little baffled, though not doubtful, by what John said about Joseph— *“being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews”* (19:38). Knowing that Joseph was a *“good and just man”* and that he had not consented to the decision and deeds of the council, I am surprised that he ever feared the Jews. I seek not to judge him, but to rejoice that he was emboldened through or at the death of Jesus. All four of the gospel accounts inform us that after Jesus was dead, Joseph went and asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Mark said, *“coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus (15:43)*. Some versions translate the verse, *“he went in boldly to Pilate”* (KJV,ASV). What courage Joseph showed by going and asking for the body of one who was condemned to death only hours before by Jewish leaders and to face Pilate who had demonstrated his willingness to pacify the Jewish rulers by commanding Jesus’ crucifixion. Here, Joseph shows remarkable courage, especially when one remembers that Jesus is not yet risen, He is only dead.

Where does Joseph’s newfound courage come from? There is no passage of scripture that gives us a definitive answer; we can only surmise. But, would it not demand courage for one to stand among his colleagues who hate Jesus and refuse to consent to their decision and deeds? Yet, how could Joseph remain true to Jesus and to himself if he did otherwise? Perhaps that is the moment that Joseph began to realize and demonstrate courage; perhaps that courage continued to fill him until he went boldly into Pilate to ask for Jesus’ body. Did Joseph

witness the love and humility of Jesus while Jesus was hanging on the cross and when Jesus said, *“Father forgive them”* (Luke 23:34)? Was Joseph a witness to God’s testimony of Jesus during the crucifixion: Did Joseph see the darkness midday and feel the earthquake and hear how the temple veil was rent? These happenings caused a centurion to glorify God and say, *“Truly this was the Son of God”* (Matthew 27:54; Luke 23:47). If these things had such a profound effect upon a centurion, could they not reaffirm the faith of this disciple and bolster his courage? Did Joseph know the prophecies of Isaiah 53 and recognize that Jesus was literally fulfilling them before his eyes? Did he take courage from their fulfillment? Did Joseph know that by burying Jesus in his tomb that he was fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would be buried among the rich (Isaiah 53:9)? Did Joseph hear Jesus tell the thief, *“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise”* (Luke 23:43), remember the promise of the resurrection, and believe? Was Joseph courageous because he was now either assured or reassured that Jesus had power over death and that the gates of Hades would not prevail against Him or His cause (Matthew 16:18)? All things considered, maybe we should not be made to wonder why Joseph gained new courage, but wonder how any can contemplate the death of Jesus and not believe and be courageous in faith.

Pilate granted Joseph the body of Jesus; Joseph did not just “take possession” of the body from Pilate or his soldiers. Luke said *“he took it down”* (23:53). Joseph removed Jesus’ body from the cross! And after removing the bloody, limp body from the cross, Joseph prepared the body for burial. He wrapped the body of Jesus in fine, clean linen cloth (Matthew 27:58; Mark 15:46). He then placed the body in *“his new tomb which he had hewn out of rock; and rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb”* (Matthew 27:60). Joseph was not only showing courage, he was expending his time, effort, and riches for Christ; Joseph was doing what he could for His Lord.

May we be a disciple of the Lord and be courageous in our faith and do what we can for the Lord just as Joseph did at the burial of Christ.

The suggested readings for this week, April 23-29.

1Samuel 9-10;	Acts 8;	
1Samuel 11-13;	Psalm 38;	Acts 9
1Samuel 14	Psalm 124;	Acts 10
1Samuel 15-16;	1Chronicles 1;	Psalm 39; Acts 11
1Samuel 17	1Chronicles 2;	Acts 12

Schedules for the entire year are available in the foyer .