

The Useless Tomb

John 19: 38-42

John 20: 1-10

Jesus on the Cross! He is suffering; he is lonely. His disciples have left him alone. However, John, the youngest of all, is right there at the cross along with the two women called Mary: Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The whole thing has been a big disappointment for many, including the disciples.

However, two other disciples who followed Jesus in different ways appear in the picture. They are Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Joseph was a wealthy man (Mathew 27:57), and according to Mark 15:43 he was an important politician, a member of the Council. A man with such a rank not only followed Jesus along but was also a secret disciple.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee who came to Jesus one night, was apparently another follower of Jesus.

These two took the risk to offer a decent burial for Jesus. I don't know who would volunteer to do such a courageous act, meaning going to Pilate and asking for permission to take the body of Jesus from the cross.

-Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. **Commentaries say that such an expensive amount of myrrh and aloes was only used for kings and royalties. Nicodemus wanted the best.**

-Joseph owned his own tomb, a new one. Who could own a tomb in those days while they were alive? Apparently, Joseph was very wealthy. He wanted Jesus to be buried in his own new tomb. **Joseph wanted to offer the best tomb.**

I don't think they knew that they are doing what the prophecy said about Jesus, the Messiah.

We read in Isaiah:

**And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth. (Isaiah 53:9 ESV)**

I don't think they knew that they were fulfilling God's plan for His Son's funeral.

Joseph and Nicodemus were sincere. They were not like the people in the burial business who commercialize the burial of a loved one. They were serious, and they wanted to do the best for Jesus. In fact, they risked their reputation by doing such an act.

This reminds me of the way mortuary people run their business. Years ago, I was studying in my dorm room in Kansas, someone called me and wanted to sell to me a piece of land. He was describing how beautiful the place was, and how green it was all over. After a while, I found out he was selling me a grave, my tomb!

Don't you see even now, when the funeral home tries to play with your emotions, wanting to sell you the most expensive casket, and so on.

Here is the Good News. **The tomb, the new tomb, was and is empty.** The **luxurious and expensive tomb was USELESS.** The seventy-five pounds of oil and perfume were useless. Why? **Because the tomb is empty and Jesus is alive.** Yes, it was God's plan to have Jesus be crucified and buried in that expensive tomb. Yet, it also God's plan to remind us that Jesus could not stay in those expensive tombs. **Jesus cannot remain dead.** He cannot be put in a box. He is alive, and the tomb is useless.

Jesus prepared minds of his disciples about this, we read:

From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. (Matt 16:21 ESV)

What can we learn from the EMPTY TOMB?

1. Although the intention of Joseph and Nicodemus was to express their respect for Jesus, **they did not know that their action was part of God's plan for salvation.** They wanted to put Jesus in a "casket", in a grave, but Jesus could not and cannot be put in a "box".

That is the way God is. Our intention could be right, but God has a bigger plan; God can take our life and reverse it, change it and make it right.

Nothing can stop Jesus from resurrection. The expensive tomb was useless.

2. Sin and death are defeated.

During the Battle of Waterloo, a man used to stand on top of a great cathedral in London. His job was giving news updates from the battlefield to the people. Although there was no telephone communication, there were flags that passed on messages from one tower to another.

The city of London was anxious about the result of the war against the French. **Did they defeat Napoleon?** This man was standing on Cathedral watching for signals from the battlefield. When the message reached him, he waved his flags to inform the people of London. To their surprise, people read the following, **“Willington defeated.”** They could not believe it and were very disappointed. However, as you all know, London is famous for its fog. So after a while, when the fog was gone, the man on the tower was able to read and pass on the whole sign: **“Wellington defeated Napoleon.”** London started cheering and celebrating.

On Friday, Jesus was on the cross.

On Friday, the cheering stopped.

On Friday, there was a “heavy fog”.

On Friday, we saw a Son of God crucified.

On Friday, we thought we were defeated.

On Friday, there were tears.

On Friday, there was a funeral, an expensive one.

On Friday, Satan was happy, yet he did not know he was defeated.

All this was on Friday.

Today is Sunday.

Brothers and sisters, the tomb is empty.

Sin is defatted. Death is defeated:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵**“O death, where is your victory?**

O death, where is your sting?”

⁵⁶**The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus**

3. Jesus is ALIVE, and he lives in us!

-Millions of Muslim pilgrims go to Mecca for the pilgrimage. Part of their ritual is to walk around Mohammed's tomb called Al Kaaba. Prophet Mohammad said to have been buried there. **The tomb is not empty.**

-We Christians do not have a tomb for Christ anymore. We don't need shrines. **Jesus Christ is alive, and he lives in us**, all over the world, in God's Kingdom. Whatever **Joseph of Arimathea** offered was a short term and temporary gift for Jesus. In fact all Christian tombs are temporary and eventually useless.

Application:

What does it mean to have an empty tomb? What does it mean the cross is empty to us today?

This testifies that the promise of God was fulfilled.

1. The tomb is empty that means the gospel message is alive and true.

Paul is right. **If there is not resurrection, if the tomb is not empty**, what are we doing here?

"...if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." (1 Cor. 15:14-19 NIV)

Is it true for you this good news?

2. Nothing will stop God from fulfilling His promises.

There are people who crucified him.

There are people who did their best to give a proper burial to our Lord.

There are people who put guards at the door of the tomb so they make sure that the body of Jesus would stay in the tomb.

There are people who were disappointed by his death...

There are ones who were confused.

Did any of those affect God's plan? No, **nothings stops God from implementing His will,** His master plan in the history of humanity.

3. God can turn a tragedy to victory. The cross and the tomb are painful realities, and God through Christ turns those to victory. The disciples witnessed that and their lives were changed. How about in your life? God can change your tragedy to victory through Christ.

I heard a story from Max Lucado. He tells a story about a man who went to his storage room and found his trumpet box under the dust. That instrument had not been played for long time. In fact, it was played many years ago for his son's funeral who was killed in the war. Now his granddaughter was getting married and wanted her grandfather to play it during her wedding. So the man gets his old instrument and finds out it needs repair. He takes it to a shop for repair. The repairman tells him he will do his best and asks him to come back in a few days. The old man goes back after a few days and the trumpet is repaired. He cannot believe his eyes how the old beaten trumpet became shiny like the old days instrument. Now he wants to play a new tune. From the tragedy to a wedding tune.

God can turn the Friday tragedy to victory.

What tune do you play this morning?

The empty tomb is inviting you to worship and believe in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Come to Jesus this morning.

*In my former church in San Francisco, I visited the 92-year-old Sam Yeramian during Passion Week. He was very weak. He could hardly speak. I encouraged him. I gave him the Holy Communion. He was suffering from high fever. As I was leaving and saying goodbye, he looked at me as his eyes were trying to give me a message. When I came closer to him, he said in Armenian, "**Krisdos haryav**" (Christ is risen). He was weak and facing*

physical problems. He did not talk much but he wanted to say the most important words, "Krisdos haryav."

We believe. Christ is risen. I believe. Do you believe?

Christ defeated the death. The tomb is useless, the cross is empty, the tomb is empty. Do you believe?

Amen