

Hanging Out with Jesus

Stories about Jesus from the Gospels

The Man Who Could No Longer Remain Silent

Unedited Transcript

John 19:31-42, Matthew 27:57-60, Mark 15:42-46, Luke 23:50-54

Well, good morning, men! It's going to be a great day. We're going to give a shout out at the beginning here to the New Beginnings Recovery Program of Faith Mission in Wichita Falls, Texas led by Greg McKenzie. Fifteen men who've been meeting for the last four years on Tuesdays at 9:00 am. I wonder if you'd join me in giving these guys at New Beginnings Recovery Program a very warm and rousing Man in the Mirror welcome? One, two, three, hoorah! Glad to have you men with us, welcome!

The Burial of Jesus

All right. The title of today's message is: The Man Who Could No Longer Remain Silent. We'll begin by looking at the burial of Jesus. Yesterday I had to have some work done on my car. It's a good place to actually go because they have this fantastic waiting area where they have desks. You can actually plug in your power cord for your computer. They have some snacks. They have coffee. They have some couches if you want to do that. Actually, it's a nice place to work on my talk and multi-task and let them work on my car.

Anyway, I was all laid out on one of the desks, and I got up and went to get a cup of coffee. I looked back. I guess I looked back to make sure nobody was stealing my iPad. Anyway, I looked back and there was a guy trying to go behind my chair. He was eavesdropping. He was looking at the work that I had laid out on the desk. Every place he would've looked he would've seen the words the burial of Jesus, the burial of Jesus. I couldn't help but try to project myself into his mind. Here he is in the middle of his business there in the middle of his business day getting his car worked on and I projected onto him that he might have been asking, probably was asking, might have been asking the question, "What in the world does the burial of Jesus have to do with me?"

When we do these bible studies, actually every week I project you asking the same question about the text of the day that you're wondering, "What in the world does this have to do with me? So what?" Now what? What is the relevance? What is the practicality? What is the applicability of the message? Let's begin by looking at the story here of the burial of Jesus and then I want to address this idea of what in the world does this have to do with us? We're going to begin at John chapter 19 verse 31. If you would turn there, John chapter 19 verse 31.

Gresham Machen a hundred years ago was a brilliant theologian, who was addressing liberalism that was beginning to, well was creeping into the church, and periodically I draw your attention to about two paragraphs from his book because it is such a powerful idea. It's such a transformative idea. It's such an integral idea to you having a robust faith and you having a powerful impact with your life that I think it's

important to mention. Basically, it boils down to a simple idea. You will go to many men's meetings and Christian meetings of various types where you will hear an inspiring message, a strong exhortation that you need to step up; you need to be committed; you need to dedicate; you need to rededicate; you need to get it done and often accompanied by powerful illustrations of people doing interesting things and great things.

The problem, however, is that such exhortation really doesn't have the power to transform your life. Listen to these words. From the beginning Christianity was certainly a way of life. The salvation that it offered was a salvation from sin. Salvation from sin appeared not merely in a blessing but also in an immediate moral change. Salvation is the big mega idea of Christianity, but it also is meant to result in an immediate moral change, a change in behavior, but not something that you are screwing up in your human will or by human desire but rather ... Reading on, the early Christians to the astonishment of the neighbors lived a strange new life, a life of honesty, purity, unselfishness. For the Christian community other types of life were excluded in the strictest way, in other words, sexual immorality, contentiousness and so forth.

From the beginning Christianity was certainly a way of life. Yes, it's a way of life, but how? How was this life produced? Now listen carefully. It might conceivably have been produced by exhortation just like I just said, right? Inspiring you to be the best you can be, that method had often been tried in the ancient world. In the Hellenic Age, there were many wondering preachers who told them how they ought to live but such exhortation always proved powerless. Although the ideals of the cynic and stoic preachers were high, these preachers never succeeded in transforming society.

This is what I have highlighted in the book. The strange thing about Christianity was that it adopted an entirely different method. It transformed the lives of men not by appealing to human will but by telling a story, not by exhortation but by the narration of an event, an event we're going to talk about more this morning. It is no wonder that such a method seemed strange. Could anything be more impractical? Think about the guy scooting behind my desk, "What in the world does this have to do with me?" Could anything be more impractical than the attempt to influence conduct by rehearsing the events concerning the death of a religious leader?

That is what Paul called the foolishness of the message. It seemed foolish to the ancient world. It seems foolish to liberal preachers today. The strange thing is it works. The effects of it appear even in this world, a hundred years ago and today as well, where the most eloquent exhortation fails. Think about all the political rhetoric, all the promises made, none of which seemed to be kept. Where those eloquent exhortations failed, the simple story of an event succeeds. The lives of men are transformed by a piece of news. Let's look at this piece of news.

John chapter 19 verse 31, "That was the day of preparation and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken in the bodies taken down. The soldiers, therefore, came and broke the legs to the first man", the first of the three, "who had been crucified with Jesus and then those of the other. Then when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break this legs instead one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it ..."

John, reading John's gospel, "The man who saw it has given testimony. His testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth. He testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the

scripture would be fulfilled as it says in Psalm 34:20, 'Not one of his bones will be broken.'" As in other scriptures, Zechariah 12 verse 10 says, "They will look on the one they have pierced." Paul wrote he said, "I did not come to you with wise and persuasive speech but rather in a demonstration of the spirit's power so that your faith might not rest on man's wisdom", the eloquent exhortation, the liberal preacher, "so that your faith might not rest on man's wisdom but on the power of God as found in this gospel."

You see, I can try to inspire you to go and do good deeds, but if I actually bring you into contact with the presence of the living Christ, if I can help bring you, usher you into for a mere few moments each week into the presence of the holiness of God as revealed in his word, then this begins to work on your soul. This begins to work on your inner man and from the inside something begins to well up, a desire to go and do the deeds, live the way that the exhorter would hope that you could live and can actually get you to live like that for a while, get you all jacked up, juiced up, amped up, ramped up, go out do it, make it happen and you do until Tuesday.

This is a quiet sanctification that takes place in the inner man the reading of this story, the ready of the word of God and not just this gospel story, but the whole bible is the gospel story. These are the actual events, but the whole bible is the gospel story. That's how transformation takes place. I read something interesting in a commentary this week. I'll pass it along to you. This is interesting about Jesus it said, "Everything connected with true greatness is interesting." Everything connected with true greatness is interesting. You think about People magazine and celebrity rags and how people are interested in the minutest details of these famous people. Here we have true greatness. The details here are transformational not just appealing to that gossipy inner self but are transformational. That's why we look at them.

Now let's continue reading in verse 38. Later Joseph of Arimathea ... We don't know where Arimathea was. There's no record of it anywhere today. Probably close to Jerusalem since Joseph had made a tomb in Jerusalem, which we'll read about directly. Later Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Can you imagine actually touching the dead corpse of the Lord Jesus Christ? What an astonishing, honorable, and holy moment that must have been. Now reading on, "Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission", which would indicate that he had access to high levels of power, "he came and took the body, picked it up, and then he was accompanied", it says by, "Nicodemus." In the other three synoptics gospels it doesn't mention Nicodemus.

Nicodemus, you remember John 3, is the one to whom Jesus said you must be born again. He was the Pharisee who had come to question Jesus at night. He had become a secret believer as well. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus body, the two of them wrapped it with spices and strips of linen. Think about it seventy-five pounds of material and a body that, who knows a hundred ... It was somewhere between, what, a hundred-forty, a hundred-eighty pounds probably something like that maybe more maybe less but, anyway, a couple hundred pounds of weight and you have these two old men. They probably very likely, this is just speculation on my part, but very likely they had some servants helping them because there was a lot of work that was being done here.

They picked up the body of our Savior, the limp, dead body of our Savior. They wanted to spare our Savior a potter's funeral. They wanted to give him an honorable ... It wasn't a state funeral. They weren't trying to do a state funeral. In a state funeral there's such honor that is given. They wanted to give some

level of honor. They did this in accordance with Jewish custom verse 41, "At the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden and in the garden a new tomb that belonged to Joseph in which no one had ever laid because it was the Jewish day of preparation. Since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there."

We actually know quite a bit about Nicodemus from the other gospels. He was rich, a rich man from Arimathea. He was a prominent member of the council, the Sanhedrin, from Mark. In Luke it says he was a good and righteous man. It says he had not consented to the plan and the actions of the council, the crucifixion. It says he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Then we just read that he was a secret disciple. Probably a few other things too you can look at later on your own. What we have in Joseph was a man who is timid, a disciple. He was a disciple of Jesus but secretly or in a hidden way.

You have perhaps been, perhaps you are now, perhaps you know men who are, perhaps you know women who are timid disciples, but I would draw your attention to the distinction between someone who denies Jesus and someone who is timid in their faith. I would also draw your attention there are different levels of spiritual maturity. People come along at different paces. This for Joseph this was his moment. Something happened in his life at that time even though he was timid ... You may be timid but something happened in his life that stirred him so deeply that he could no longer remain silent, and he came forward. Because of that, the result of that is by his actions, by him outing himself as a disciple ... He outed himself as a disciple. He didn't miss his moment. He became a disciple maker.

Think of the countless people who were stirred by the story of Joseph of Arimathea in conjunction with the burial of Jesus think about the, who knows, possibly millions of people that have been evangelized and grown in the faith or become disciples because of his courage that overcame the timidity! Why? Because of the events not because somebody was exhorting him he needed to do it but because of the events. The message for us is don't miss your moment, don't miss your moment.

The big idea today: **What stirs you so deeply that you can no longer remain silent?** What stirs you so deeply that you can no longer remain silent? Now, you may not have seen it yet. By all means if you are not stirred deeply, then nobody's telling you to overcome your timidity with self-generated courage and go do something. No, instead grow, grow, grow, drink in the gospel, and fill up in your own relationship with Jesus until you are stirred. Don't let some fancy-pants motivational type person get you all revved up and amped up to go out and do something in your own strength. No, you want to be stirred deeply because of the gospel of Jesus Christ to a point where you can no longer remain silent.

To Be a Secret Disciple

Now, let's talk about this idea of being a secret believer just a bit. By the way, better to be a timid disciple than no disciple at all, yes? All right. Why was Joseph so timid? It says right down in verse 38, "But secretly because he feared the Jews ..." He was afraid. He was timid because he was afraid. In the PC anti-Christian environment which we are increasingly living ... That doesn't mean that's everywhere. There are places that are very anti-Christian, very antagonistic right now.

You're not afraid of the Jews, but you are afraid of somebody. The word "fear" here is the word phobos, p-h-o-b-o-s, the Greek word phobos from which we get phobia. There's a, like I say, a big difference between denying and being afraid or being timid. Why was he? Well, possibly many reasons. Number one, he was rich. Bible says he was rich. Maybe he was afraid that it would have some financial impact. Maybe you're rich, maybe you have a lot of money, a lot of resources, and you're afraid. Maybe you are

afraid to speak out. Maybe you remain silent because you're afraid that it will have a financial impact on you. Could be, I don't know.

Maybe you have power, prestige, or position maybe in a corporation or some other kind of an organization and you remain a secret believer because you're afraid of what would happen if you made yourself known. That's what was going on with him a couple of things possibly. We don't know for sure exactly. It could be just your natural disposition. My wife is a quiet person. She's not an extroverted person. Now, that doesn't mean...

There's really not a correlation between being an introvert and being timid. That's not it. That's not it at all because they're plenty of extroverts that are timid too. It might be a matter of your personal disposition. We teach churches that ... Most of our churches are designed to work for extroverts not for introverts. You might be introverted, might be part of your natural disposition. You might be timid. You might be an extrovert and be timid. That might have been the case here with Joseph. Why did it take him so long to speak up to out himself? Well, those are some of the reasons why, it's just a matter of different men maturing at different rates to the spiritual maturity where there ... Here's what we know about timidity. II Timothy chapter 1:7, chapter 1 verse 7, "But God has not given a spirit of timidity but of what ..." Power and love and a sound mind! A sound mind. Timidity is not from God.

Turn with me. I think we're done here at the John passage. Turn to Roman's chapter 8. I just want you to see this yourself Romans chapter 8 verse 15. In Romans chapter 8 verse 15, Paul's writing he says, "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear", to timidity, "but you receive the spirit of sonship and by him we cry Abba, Father." We have the spirit of sonship not the spirit of exhortation that we've been exhorted to do something, but we've rehearsed the duration of this event from Genesis to revelation and we have been transformed by that. What drew him out? Well, what drew him out finally was a circumstance that stirred him so deeply that he could no longer remain silent. Sometimes you just have to speak up even if you're timid and you realize it and that's what happened, but it was coming because of the gospel. The big idea today: What Is It? What is it that stirs you so deeply that you could no longer remain silent? Maybe you know what is, maybe you don't have it yet, but this is a great question to be pondering.

Getting to the Point You Can No Longer Remain Silent

Finally, getting to the point that you can no longer remain silent how do you do that? How do you do that? What can we learn or be reminded of today that can help us to not miss our moment, a few ideas. We see very clearly in the passage today that the past does not have to be prolonged to the future. You don't have to be what you've always been.

Joseph was a secret believer. He was timid, for whatever reason, but there was a circumstance that so stirred him, stirred him so deeply, that it drew him to out himself as a disciple. That can happen to you too. That can happen to you too if it hasn't already. Most of the guys in here I'm guessing it already has happened. Secondly, understand you have to take advantage of your opportunities when they present themselves. I remember Bill Bright. I was forty-years-old. Bill Bright calls me on the phone, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ this huge mega ministry now called Cru.

I'd asked Bill to come and speak at our Thanksgiving leadership prayer breakfast, which he did, biggest moment we ever had. He asked me if I would be willing to consider coming onto his board of directors, the board of directors of Campus Crusade for Christ. Well, I'm not a board person. I don't like

governance. You take care of it. I just want to speak teaching right about what I'm learning in the bible. You take care of governance. How many times does something like that happen in one's life? I told him I said, "Well, I'm not really a board person, but let me talk to Patsy and pray about it."

That's where I came up with this idea originally that you just simply have to take advantage of the opportunities that you are presented when they come because they probably are not ever going to happen again. There are a lot of things that will happen in your life that if you don't speak up, if you remain silent, it's gone. You've had some, maybe it's even a regret for it. I said yes, and I did that for nine years.

That's what Joseph of Arimathea is doing here. He understands this principal that if he doesn't take advantage of this opportunity right now, if he remains silent, he has missed his moment. I ask you to think of opportunities. It's not just big things there's little things. I remember, and I told this story here probably, about one day a young ... I had the ministry of building relationships and Christian literature at my gym. One day there was a young guy there. I had never seen him before. We struck up a conversation. It led to me giving him a copy of a book, a piece of Christian literature. Then he said, "I'm so glad you gave this to me. This is my last day in Orlando. I'm moving tomorrow."

I'd never seen him before, never seen him since don't remember his name, but I didn't miss my moment. I was prompted by the Holy Spirit to speak up. I was not timid. I did it. I didn't do it because somebody told me I ought to do it. I did it because I'm reading the book. I'm reading this story. I'm overwhelmed with gratitude. I'm filling up every day in my relationship with Jesus. I have enough Jesus for myself, you see, and then I have a lot left over to give to you or anybody else that wants it. I want that for you. I want you to so fill up in your relationship with Jesus that you have not only enough for yourself but lots of Jesus left over to spread around all over the place.

I'll tell you why because the thing that stirs me so deeply is the problem: Disciples not making disciples. That stirs me deeply: Disciples not making disciples. The solution is disciples making disciples. By the way, it's an oxymoron. Disciples not making disciples that's an oxymoron. It's internally incongruent. It can't be possible. It's like airline food. It's like a little pregnant. It just can't be. Disciples not making disciples is as oxymoron, and, yet, it's happening.

It's the biggest reason that you are seeing the breakdown of the morals in your country. It's not that we don't have the right government, the right tax structure, the right tax reform, the right economy, the right approach to racism, the right way of dealing with poverty all of those things are important, immensely important, but the reason that we're seeing the moral breakdown of our country is disciples not making disciples. That stirs me deeply.

I watched the movie Selma over the weekend. Great movie about the Voting Rights Act passage in 1965 and the march that led to it. Martin Luther King Jr. he saw a circumstance and an injustice, and it stirred him so deeply that he could no longer remain silent. What is it for you? What is it that stirs you so deeply that you could no longer remain silent? That's what you want to find. That's what you want to find. The big idea today to this: What stirs you so deeply that you can no longer remain silent? Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Our dearest, Father, we come to you this morning, and we humble ourselves. Lord, we know from our past experiences that we can get juiced up and amped up to go and do something for you, but it's not enough. It's not enough. It's not enough. We need your gospel. We need your Holy Spirit within us. Lord, help us as Joseph of Arimathea was able to overcome his timidity and to out himself as a secret disciple to become an out in the open disciple and to let the circumstance that stirred him so deeply lead him to no longer remain silent and not miss his moment. Lord, help us, each of us, to do that same thing. We ask this in your name Jesus, in your loving name, and for your glory, amen.