

Jesus' Tomb

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Bible Text: Luke 23:50-24:12
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Look to Luke 23. We've been calling this little miniseries, "Journeying with Jesus to the Cross and to the Tomb." We talked, first of all, about the unrivaled greatness of Jesus Christ and then heaven on earth, the Transfiguration. Last time, Jesus, Lord of the cross, and this morning Jesus' tomb. Interesting to me that Luke takes up 18 verses concerning the events surrounding Jesus' tomb or his burial, so God wanted us to look at this and learn some things from it.

Luke, 23, beginning in verse 50, we'll go down through chapter 24, verse 12. Verse 50,

50 And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man 51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; 52 this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. 54 It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; 5 and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? 6 "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, 7 saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." 8 And they remembered His words, 9 and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other

women with them were telling these things to the apostles. 11 But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

A word, a very significant word in yet a very dark word appears in the Bible for the first time in Genesis 5:5. 111 verses have already passed since Genesis 1:1 and then this word, this significant word, this dark word appears. 930 years at least after creation this word, this significant word, this dark word appears. And what is that word? Died. Genesis 5:5 says, "So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died." Sin has entered the human race. Romans 6:23 tells us for the wages of sin is death, so it was just a matter of time. All of Adam's descendants must die too. It's just a matter of time. Men have always died all the way up to today's obituary column, and even Jesus, the Son of God and God's Son died.

Look, if you will, at chapter 23 up at verse 46, 23:46, "And Jesus," hanging on the cross, "crying out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.' Having said this, He breathed His last." But unlike all others, Jesus took his life back up again and he lives forever. You see, Jesus took hold on death and knocked the darkness right out of it. He has transformed death. Death may now roar, but death is a toothless lion. Death has tormented mankind as a terminator, but Jesus has turned death into an escalator. He takes us up to a much better home. Death because of Jesus is now a passageway to a new, glorious homeland for those who know Christ.

Again, it's interesting when we look at the burial, the tomb of Jesus, that there are 18 verses devoted to this and I asked myself why and I came up with three quick ideas. First of all, the point is it's a historical fact. Remind yourselves, church that Jesus' death, his burial, his resurrection is not an allegory to pull some sort of truths applicable to us today that we might have a better life or something. It's not mythology, it's fact. He died and he rose again.

Secondly, it's that the doctrine of death is important. Why do men die? What is death? Can death be reversed? The doctrine of death is important. But also we see these various figures involved in Jesus' tomb of the laying of his body there, the anointing of his body. So certainly the Lord spent some time through Dr. Luke to write this out so that we might learn from these individuals something of their passion, something of their devotion, but also how they all in one form or another fell short. In one way or another, all of them failed Jesus.

So let's look at these in our texts. I. Let's first of all, look at Joseph of Arimathea, the secret disciple that laid him there. The verse tells us in verse 50 he's Joseph of Arimathea, probably a town northwest of Jerusalem. Now he lives in Jerusalem. And out of fear for his countrymen, John's gospel tells us he was just a secret disciple. He lacked the spiritual fortitude and the moral courage to publicly profess his faith in Jesus Christ. I mean, after all, he resided in high places and it could be very detrimental to your popularity, to your

livelihood, to your well-being, to profess that you're a devoted follower of this Jesus of Nazareth, the one who claims to be the Messiah. Verse 50, says he was a member of the council, that means he was a member of the 70 member Sanhedrin, the great Supreme Court of Israel. The Bible tells us in verse 50 he's a good and righteous man, that he was waiting for the kingdom of God. In verse 51, that he did not consent to this action by the Sanhedrin to have Jesus crucified.

So there's some real marks of conversion here. We find that he's weak in his own strength. He's been a secret disciple, ashamed and too weak to come forth with his public profession of faith in Jesus Christ, but also the Bible says he was a righteous man. Now Jesus had righteousness by nature. Joseph, like all of us, have righteousness by grace. Indeed, we're given as a gift Christ's very righteousness, and that's the only kind Joseph of Arimathea could have had.

And then we note that he hoped not in this world but then in verse 52, this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Finally, he could not live with the concealment of his faith any longer. He cast his fear, his fortune, his reputation to the side, even risking his own life, and publicly identified with Jesus Christ. And by taking the body of Jesus, carrying him to his own tomb, that no one had ever been laid in, he removes from Jesus the last indignity. There was a trough, a ditch, where they would throw the bodies of criminals after execution and that would have been our Lord's fate except Joseph of Arimathea breaks through and asks for the body of Jesus.

Isaiah 53:9 prophesied this when it said his grave was assigned with wicked men, but yet he was with a rich man in his death. Joseph was a rich man. There's a significant truth here for us. Brothers and sisters, listen, God will always have his remnant. God always has his children in this world. No matter how dark, how weird, how insane, how perverse and ungodly, God will have faithful followers.

Psalms 83:3 is an interesting verse. It speaks of true disciples of God as treasured ones, and you can translate it just as easily hidden ones. God has in the earth his special hidden treasures, his children. We know the Apostle Paul was secretly hidden in a basket and lowered over the city wall on one occasion, and God has a lot of his hidden ones out there. The world doesn't value them. The world doesn't honor them. The world doesn't identify them. The world's blind to them. But God has his hidden treasured ones out there.

Joseph of Arimathea was one of those. Remember, Elijah, when Elijah was hiding out from from what was going on with Jezebel and and her, uh, uh, troops and armies, and they were against the things of God and and God looks at at Elijah and says, "Why are you hiding? Why are you hiding?" You see, there's time when faith must shine forth. I believe brothers and sisters, we're living in that time in our world today. Oh, Elijah answered back in 1 Kings 19:10, he said, "I alone am left and they seek to take my life away too." Then God said, "I have 7,000 in Israel who haven't bowed the knee to Baal. I have 7,000 of My hidden treasured ones that have not committed to Baal." God has hidden sheep planted in many places, low places and in high places and at the right

moment he can infuse them with strong grace that they might come forth unafraid and stand for Christ and with his saints.

I remember reading on my study break some time ago about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German, who was a godly man. Matter of fact, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, it's hard to put your finger on it, but it looks like while he was touring America, he visited churches in the state of Alabama and that's where he came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Hitler takes the reins of Germany and Nazism rules the land and most of the churches – are you listening – most of the churches identified with Hitler's movement and supported him. But Dietrich Bonhoeffer did not. He worked fearlessly and faithfully to support the true underground church. One of God's hidden, treasured ones came forth and shone forth at a crisis moment in history. He was found out and he, with his associates, were assassinated by the Nazis.

This man Joseph of Arimathea, asked for the body of Jesus unashamed, feeling that he must have a righteous and decent burial. What happened? Love overcame fear. Love. You see, that's the thing, twisting your arm or browbeating you to confess Christ never works, never works, but if I can get you to know him and love him, you will profess him before men. In 1 John 4:18 reminds us, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."

Look, if you will, at verse 53. "He, Joseph of Arimathea, "took it down," that's the body of Jesus, "and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain." The other gospel writers tell us that Nicodemus helped him, and they brought 100 pounds of spices, a great wealth of spices to anoint the body of Jesus Christ. Rome's plan was that Jesus would die and the two thieves would die with him and they'd be thrown together in a trough, if you will, a ditch. But God had different plans because God had prophesied.

Isaiah 53:9 again, "His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death." Scripture gives the evidence of his death. The centurion was told by Pilate to go out and make sure those criminals are dead on the crosses, Jesus and the two criminals on each side of him, because the Passover started at sunset and you couldn't have the desecration of men hanging on the cross during the Jewish Passover. Now, the day before the Passover, they can murder you and execute you as an innocent person, but oh, you couldn't hang on the cross on the Passover. What hypocrisy? But nevertheless, Pilate obliges them. The centurion goes out, breaks the legs of the others and comes back and reports, "I didn't have to break the legs of Christ. He's already dead." The centurion was not a Christian. He had no reason to support the doctrine that Christ really died and rose again but he just reported the truth Christ died. Actually, we know that he gave his life up in death and he will take it back up again.

The friends saw him dead, Nicodemus, Joseph, the ladies. They wrapped him in cloth, that's Nicodemus and Joseph, and and lay him in the tomb and the women follow, and they see his dead corpse laying in the tomb. The priest ordered the tomb sealed, and the

soldiers witnessed his entombment guarding that tomb that no one could get to it. The doctrine of Christ's death is essential because in his death, the sacrifice, the payment for sin was made.

So we see the secret disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, who laid his body in the tomb, secondly, notice the devoted women who saw him there. The devoted women who saw him there. Look at verse 54, "It was the preparation day," now that's the day you prepared for observing the Sabbath and, again, things began on the evening when the sun went down and then went through the next day to the next sundown. So they're in the preparation day, and they're trying to get things together. It was the preparation day verse 54, "and the Sabbath was about to begin. Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid." Matthew's gospel tells us that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus was with this group and notice in verse 55, they saw his body in the tomb. I think that's why God gave us so much detail about the tomb, he wants you to know he was dead. One of the great, uh, arguments of the, uh, skeptic and the unbelievers of the ages is that he was just sort of knocked out and unconscious, and somehow he gets to the tomb and he revives, naturally speaking, and walked out. That's not the case.

Again, these ladies are hurrying before sunset. Their heart of love and devotion and passion for Christ just burning within them. They gather up all the spices and the perfumes which is which was according to Jewish custom, that's how you prepared a body for burial. Not knowing, I guess at this point that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had already done the very same thing. You know, in trials and troubles, true disciples are shown forth, and these women, probably more than any other group, are bold, brave and unashamed to be one of his followers.

Verse 56 tells us, "Then they returned," they had to get back again. You couldn't be doing the preparation when the Sabbath began. That's only for rest. That's the law. So verse 56, "they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment."

Chapter 24, verse one. I love these like these conjunctive words in the Bible, "But." It's not over. But there's something else to say, "on the first day of the week," that's Sunday morning, "at early dawn, they," the ladies, "came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared." And what a first day of the week this is. This is the first day of the new creation. This is the day the resurrection cast a brilliant dawn over the earth and its beams never end, fulfilling timeless eternity with its light. What a first day this was. It's early dawn. In other words, the ladies were saying, "The split second the Sabbath is over we're going to anoint His precious body there in the tomb." Early dawn. They go with loving devotion. They want to pay their last respects to dead Jesus and there just like Joseph who failed as a cowardly secret disciple for so long, now these ladies believe they're going to go to a tomb and find the one who is the resurrection and the life dead in the tomb when he told them he would rise again.

Look at verse 2, "And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb." Matthew tells us an angel rolled the stone away. Look at verse 3, "but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus." Can you imagine their surprise and mix of emotion? I mean, it's just it's just hard to find folks. This really happened. The ladies walk in there expecting to anoint his body and, "He's not here. What does this mean?" The text says in verse 4, look at it there, "While they were perplexed," not filled with joy, they're not there yet, their faith hadn't quite gotten there yet. They were perplexed. Literally it means to be at a loss. They don't know what to say. They saw his body. They saw him in excruciating pain and suffering and bleeding in agony. They saw the spear go into his side. They watched him as he was laid in the tomb, lifeless and dead and he's not here. Verse 4 continuing, "behold, two men," we know they're angels from the other gospel writers, "suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing," verse 5, "and as the women were terrified." Terrified. I hear some of these TV preachers talk about seeing angels and talking to angels and even more than that, one fella said that he every morning when he shaves, Jesus comes in and talks to him. Well, I want what I want to know is do you keep shaving? Angels, terrified because of the brilliant holiness that it's just a small reflect free reflection of the Triune Shekinah glory of God himself. These ladies are terrified. These angels standing here at the tomb. And then they give what's more than a mild rebuke, last part of verse 5, "and bowed their faces," that's the ladies, "to the ground, the men," the angels, "said to them, 'Why do you seek the living One among the dead?'" Ladies, you know better than this. Their love and devotion was commendable, but where's your faith? Ladies, will you listen, men, will you listen, young people, will you listen: you never follow Jesus out of emotion, you follow Jesus out of truth and make your emotions catch up with truth. But that's not easy to do all the time, is it? I might go a little bit long this morning because I may not see some of you again until next Easter so I gotta pour a lot into this.

"Ladies," the angel says, "this is not the place to find the author, Creator, giver, and word of life." Understand something, church: Jesus may have submitted to death, but he cannot be held by death. He had a purpose in his death. He used his death for his own ends, but do not be confused, death has no power over him and he has no place in death. Hebrews 2:9 reminds us, "But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." Taste is the idea that he had a full and genuine taste of it. He took the whole of it, but because it couldn't hold him, it was just a taste for him. That's why the Bible calls him the firstborn among many brethren. In other words, the way Jesus went into death and came out of death is the same way his children will come into death and come out of death. He tasted it so we walk right through it.

Revelation 1:17 and 18, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.'" Death and the grave are in the hands and the power of Jesus Christ. Christ's absence in this tomb on this day, when these ladies are perplexed and then

terrified, this is the first time and the only time when Christ's absence was ground for unspeakable joy. He's not there. He's not there.

Verse 6, the angel continues, "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember," ladies, remember, "how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." Oh, this is so chock full of good doctrine. He was dead and then on the third day he rises again. Romans 4:25 says, "He was delivered over," that's his crucifixion, "because of our transgressions and was raised because of our justification." God the Father looked at Jesus and said, "You have satisfied all the wrath I could have against the children. Rise, My love." And when he rose, it proved our justification. It's already done, brothers and sisters.

1 Corinthians 15: 24 through 26, "then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death." You see, friend death is conquered. Death is now a defeated foe. Jesus entered death, he defeated death, he walked out of death, and he left death's house in complete ruins. Death is brought into complete submission to Jesus Christ, but while death is in submission, it's not yet abolished but it soon will be. It's just a matter of time.

Revelation 20:14 says, "Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death." I just can't help have a picture in my mind, of all of us glorified in the presence of God, and somehow and in a way we can't grasp, God takes death that always tormented us, and he flings it into an eternal loss. The graphic picture is death will never touch you again all because of Jesus.

They're still perplexed, but now the light is beginning to dawn. Verse 8, if you will, "And they remembered His words." Yes, he did say that. I'm telling you, I believe these ladies have it have an absolute come apart. We see it now. They knew it. They knew it but now they see it. They sense it. They feel it. They embrace it. They joy in it. The feed the seeds of faith and joy were germinating in their hearts and beginning to grow beyond the seeds of weeds of fear and doubt.

So here at Jesus' tomb we have seen Joseph of Arimathea, the secret disciple who laid him there. We've seen the devoted women who saw him there and now don't see him there actually. And then thirdly, we see the skeptical apostles who rejected that he was not there. Skeptical disciples, apostles, who rejected that he's not there. Look at verses 9 and 10, if you will, "and returned," these are the ladies they leave the tomb and return from the tomb, "and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles." But notice what the Bible says, "But," verse 11, "these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them." "These are just hysterical women. They're just all bound up in emotion. This is nonsense! They don't know what... They just wanna believe it so bad, they just make it up somehow. Nonsense," the apostles said. "He's still in that tomb. We cannot believe that

He's not there." Unbelief had settled into their hearts. Now remind yourself, these men saw the miracle of Lazarus. Remember Jesus went to the tomb and said, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus comes floating out of the grave. These men had seen the miracle of the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead. These men had seen in the funeral procession when Jesus walks by and raises a man out of the... he ruined the whole funeral. The man comes back to life. They've seen all of that and they've heard him teach, "I'm going to Jerusalem. I'm going to suffer. I'm going to die. But I'll rise again on the third day." They could not believe that their Lord had risen. Some of you don't really believe that he's coming again. But he is. And when you see him, you'll believe then.

Well, at this tomb we see Joseph of Arimathea, the secret disciple who laid him there. We see these devoted women who saw him there when they put him in the grave. We see these skeptical, skeptical apostles who reject that he was not there. And lastly, we see Peter, the backslidden disciple, who ran to see if he was there. Impetuous, Peter. He just couldn't help it. Verse 12, "But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened." Boy, we can just see Peter, who knows what Peter's thinking? Just a heart full of different emotions and he comes around to the very edge and he leans out. That's what this expression of the text says, and he looks in. Sure enough, Christ is not there. Likely Peter is experiencing a mixture of joy and hope, but also fear and dread. Remember just a little while ago, he denied the Lord publicly three times. He failed the Lord so I wonder if Peter's thinking is this a glorious resurrection of grace and love and mercy toward me, or is he risen again to judge me for what I've done and how I failed? Probably a mixture of some hope and some dread.

Jesus' tomb. Let's review real quick those who were there. Joseph of Arimathea. His love for Christ was too weak. He succumbed to the fear of man and he couldn't confess Christ until this last moment. Thank God he did that, but he still fell short. The women commended for their devotion, their passion for Christ, but their lack of faith is seen, and they they couldn't believe that he was not there and they had to be rebuked by the angels. Like Joseph of Arimathea, they fell short. Then the apostles. They heard more of his teaching than anyone else. They saw more of his miracles than anyone else. They saw the miracles of of him bringing folks back to life who were truly dead. And yet, when reported to them that Christ had risen, "Nonsense!" Their faith falls. They too fell short. And Peter denies the Lord three times, now finds himself with mixed emotions about is he alive and what does this mean? While all of these associated with Christ's tomb have commendable traits, they all yet fail in some manner. They all still fall short. And so do you. And so do I. We fall short.

James 2:10 reminds us, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all." You may think, "I did a 100 things right," but God said, "If you violate one thing I am holy and no unholiness, no disobedience, no transgression can come into My presence." You might as well be guilty of it all. It's it's like a, it's like a golden chain. You break any link of the chain, you fall. It's like a grand symphony. If one instrument has a discordant note, it ruins the whole symphony. It's like a drop of dye in water, it may be just one drop, but it permeates the entire gallon. God's standards are

exacting. God demands perfection to be welcomed in his presence. He demands perfect, not partial, obedience in all of us. Just like Joseph, just like the women, just like the apostles and just like Peter, we all fall short.

Romans 3:23 reminds us, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." But Jesus succeeded where we failed. Perhaps the resurrected glorified Jesus enters heaven and Jesus stands before the Father and says, "Father, all of the children, Joseph and the apostles and the women and and Peter and every one of the children, they've all fallen short, Father." And the Father says, "They do indeed, Jesus, all fall short but You did not. You did not. You perfectly obeyed My law. You suffered and bled and died for them, and that was My commission for You, Jesus. And then You rose again for their justification on the third day. Now because of You and You, they now all no longer fall short. They all measure up." And as long as Jesus, as the Bible says, is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven with nail prints in his hand and nail prints in his feet, the Father looks at you – now I'm just speaking anthropomorphically as a figure of speech to get the point across – the Father looks at you and says, "No way. No. That unholy one will never come into My heaven." And then the Father looks at the Son who took your sin and took your punishment on the cross and died to satisfy and extinguish the wrath of God that was against us and then rose to prove that it was fully taken, God the Father looks at God the Son and says, "Yes, they do measure up in You. In You they measure up. In you they are acceptable."

Now, today, because he lives, all who believe in him will never die. Jesus said in John 11:25, "he who believes in Me will live even if he dies." Death is no longer the terminator. It's now the escalator. Death is not the end. It's the glorious new beginning, because he lives and he's alive and he's at the right hand of the Father. All because of Jesus. All because of the cross. All because of the tomb. All because he died. That word appears in Genesis 5:5 because it's true of all men, all have sinned and the wages of sin is death, and Jesus became one of us and entered the door of death in our stead, conquered death and lives forevermore. It's all because he lives.