



Faces around the Cross

Study Guide March 22, 2009

TIMID: JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

Luke 23:26-49

INTRODUCTION

Not all the faces around the cross were sinister and unfriendly. There were some that were full of tenderness and kindness. Among the sympathetic faces was that of Joseph of Arimathea. All four Gospel writers take note of this cultured and winsome man. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all deal with him in a very complimentary and gracious manner. In fact, they seem to vie with each other in pointing out his merits and in telling how highly respected he was by all who knew him. They seem genuinely proud of Joseph.

"But all those who knew him...stood at a distance, watching these things." Luke 23:49

Faces around the cross... We think Joseph of Arimathea must have been one of those people in the crowd.

1. What did we find out about Joseph of Arimathea?

- Joseph was a man of _____ - Matthew 27:57
- Joseph was also a man of _____ - Mark 15:42-43
- Joseph was a man of fine _____ - Luke 23:50-51
- Finally, and best of all Joseph was a _____ - Matthew 27:57

One day this man of wealth and position, this man of character and high expectation, had come face to face with Jesus and thus he became a follower, an apprentice, a learner, a student, a disciple of Jesus. In spite of all these splendid qualities Joseph had at least one glaring defect. Joseph lacked one important character quality. Joseph was short on courage. He was too timid to confess the Master openly. John 19:38

This is an unflattering statement about an otherwise respectable, honourable man. It's an unattractive, unappealing, unbecoming statement about this good man. He was a secret disciple.

DISCUSSION

Garth commented that "while we are sure that secret discipleship is a possibility, we are equally sure that it's not pleasing to God. There may be some secret disciples here today – men or women who follow Jesus when it's convenient, or when nobody else is watching, or when it suits you... But that's a form of discipleship that satisfies neither God nor you."

He then stated that this is true for the following reasons:

- A. Secret disciples experience more _____.
- B. Secret disciples experience more _____.
- C. Secret disciples experience less _____.

Mark 8:34-38 *"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*

1. Joseph of Arimathea was a secret disciple because he was afraid of the Jews. What fears or anxieties do you think cause believers to be secret disciples?
2. Why do you think people "hide" their Christianity?

Please turn over.....

Read 2Cor. 10:1-6

1. What or who is the enemy?
2. What or who is Paul defending?
3. What weapons are we to use?
4. In what ways could your life be changed by "*taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ?*"
5. How can we do this today?

Read Phil. 3:12-16

1. Paul has some dissatisfaction when he states, "*Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.*" What is Paul trying to explain? (3:12-13)
2. What is Paul seeking to make his own? (his goal v.14)
3. What are your intense desires or goals in life?
4. How does Paul use "*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,*" in his argument?

SERVE TOGETHER

Our past fears and failures can keep us "secret believers." How can we help each other to please the Lord and bring glory to the Kingdom of God?

SHARE TOGETHER

Choose someone in your family or extended family or work or neighbour that you would like to know that you are a Christian. Pray and ask the Lord to provide an opportunity to share your faith with them.

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Share some prayer requests. Close in prayer by praying silently for the person on your right.