

St Martins C3 – April 20, 2025

Gather Your Courage – It is Finished

Sermon Notes:

We are completing our Easter series, “It is Finished”. We have looked at love and freedom brought by the cross. Today, we see how it also gives us courage. To do that, we are going to read the story of Joseph of Arimathea.

Read Mark 15:42-47

Joseph was a rich, secretive follower of Jesus, a member of the Jewish council, who boldly went to Pilate to ask for Jesus’ body to be buried. Luke tells us that Joseph had not consented to the decision to condemn Jesus. That likely means he was there when Jesus was tried in front of the Jewish council.

Read Mark 14:53-65

Joseph had a chance to speak up but didn’t. Now, though, he cannot stay silent about his allegiance to Jesus. It was a tremendously courageous act to go to Pilate. It could have cost him a lot, financially, reputationally, and relationally. He could have been thrown out of the council for aligning himself with the man they had just condemned to death.

Why would he do it?

Because of what had been. He had seen Jesus heal, heard him teach, experienced the Kingdom of God breaking through.

Joseph saw who Jesus really was, so he gave him extravagant worship.

Because of what could be. Joseph was a friend of Nicodemus, who Jesus explained eternal life to. Joseph may also have heard Jesus tell His followers He would be raised from death. Whether he knew it or not, Joseph prepared a place for resurrection to happen.

Courage is a common response to the resurrection. God wants to bring it in our lives, too.

Courage to Declare Jesus in Your Life

Read Matthew 10:32-33

We are encouraged to declare Jesus with our words and with the consistent actions of our life. This might mean doing something that makes us seem strange to those around us. Yet, as we read the New Testament we discover that God often meets people in the place of their courage.

Courage to Do What He Asks

Because Christ is the victor over all forces of evil, we have the power to do what he asks. It still takes a force of decision. We do what he has asked us to do, because if he has asked us to do it he will give us the strength to make it happen.

Because of what has been, because of what could be we have courage. Because of the cross, because of the resurrection.

The resurrection brings us courage. Step forward with that courage as you live for Him today.

Questions for Connect Groups:

Key Point

Because of the Cross and Resurrection we live with courage.

Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

Who is your favourite side character from the story of the cross and resurrection? What do they teach you?

What is the most courageous thing you have ever done? Why did you do it?

Imagine you were Joseph; how would it have felt to ask Pilate for Jesus' body?

What is it about the resurrection that has filled God's people with confidence in history?

Who are the hardest people to declare your faith in Jesus to and why?

What does it mean to have your life declare your faith in Christ? How can you live more consistently with your faith?

What are some courageous decisions that God has asked you to do?

Where do you need "20 seconds of insane courage" right now?

Monday Devotion: Hope Fulfilled

Read: John 20:1-18; 1 Corinthians 15

This week, we explore some more stories around the cross, particularly of those who encountered Jesus after his resurrection. The first, is a very confused Mary when she encountered the empty tomb. She believed someone had taken his body (vs 2) and she stood outside his tomb crying (verse 11). Jesus followers didn't understand what was happening. They didn't realise he had risen.

These early followers hoped Christ would be the Messiah. Their hope said, "Maybe he is telling the truth." Death had once again proved to be greater, even than the one who seemed to embody life. Their "maybe" had turned into a "no".

But Jesus showed that he is greater than death and is the revealed King of all the Universe. The hope he wanted them to have is one that says, "I anticipate the fulfilment." This kind of hope is a "yes".

We too need to turn our hope from a "maybe" to an "anticipation" that because Christ was raised we too will be raised with him after our death. This certainty leads us to live our life in anticipation of his coming.

Prayer Focus for Today:

- Pray for those you know who need the hope of life after death.

Tuesday Devotion: The Joy of Doubt

Read: John 20:24-29

Thomas was the disciple that doubted. He had heard that Jesus was alive and well, yet he needed to see it for himself. He has been sharply criticised for not having enough faith. Yet we probably relate to Thomas more easily than any of the other disciples. All the other disciples saw the risen Jesus, Thomas did not. If we were in his place would we have responded any differently?

There are many times we too may be tempted to doubt the veracity of the gospel. There are objections from friends and family, from atheists. Some of these people are smarter than us and at times may seem nicer than us. Who are we to say there is something real in our faith.

Here Thomas is the best example we have. Thomas had an experience where he not only heard of Christ, but he saw his reality for himself. This led him to give one of the strongest and clearest declarations of Jesus we have. "My Lord and my God!" The joy of doubt is when it is answered. May we too let His undeniable reality sweep away our unexplainable questions.

Prayer Focus for Today:

- Pray that our eyes would be opened to God's reality
- Pray that other doubters would experience a revelation of God

Wednesday Devotion: Walking the Road

Read: Luke 24:13-34

Some days God seems so distant. We face many difficulties and challenges and we question where he is amongst those difficulties. Part of the promise of the resurrection is that God would be with us always (Matthew 28:18-20). This story is a physical example of that.

Jesus took the time to walk alongside his followers as they struggled and wrestled. It would have been easy for him to reveal himself to them earlier and ease all their concerns. Yet he chose to let them wrestle with their difficulties and help them work them through. The result for these disciples is an understanding of God and his plan that is greater than it would have otherwise been.

God wants to bring his power into our lives and his power is at its greatest when we are in our greatest times of need. Its real proving ground is not our peaceful, sunny days, but the times when the clouds gather. He walks with us most closely not when the going is easy, but when it is tough. That is when you need his resurrection power and presence most.

Prayer Focus for Today:

- Pray for those in our church who are experiencing difficulty that they will know his power more.

Thursday Devotion: Heaven Begins

Read: Luke 24:35-49

When Jesus appeared he dispelled doubts, he comforted people and he revealed God's power over the grave. His resurrection did so much more. It gave us the assurance that we will have a future bodily resurrection.

In this passage and the one before it we get some idea of what this will look like. Jesus exhibits some continuity with his previous body, but also some discontinuity. There was something that was definitely "Jesus" about him, yet the disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't fully recognise him. He appeared among them, yet he also had hunger and ate food.

There is a new life waiting for us at the end of this life, but note that Jesus did not whisk his followers straight up to enjoy it. Instead he left them behind to proclaim the message, by the Spirit of God, that the King has conquered and the Kingdom has come. This is what we are called to do.

While we anticipate that future will be fully realised in heaven, we work in hope and anticipation. The kind of anticipation that steps towards something in order to make it a reality.

Prayer Focus for Today:

- Ask God how his future life can start in you now.
- Pray for God's Kingdom to come around you as it is in Heaven.

Friday Devotion: Living the Resurrection

Read: Acts 9:1-20; Romans 6:1-15

Paul counts himself as one of the least important to see the resurrected Christ, yet his experience of seeing Christ is one of the most important. It was Paul who was able to put into words the full effect of the death and resurrection of Christ.

He explains in Romans 6 that in following Jesus we too must die, to our old way of life and the power of sin that once mastered us. Every day we are encouraged to live the resurrection by laying down this old pattern and picking up the new way of doing life (Romans 12:1-2).

We must take time to consider all the things in our life that represent that old life and lay them down. Laying off our selfishness, anger and unforgiveness - our sinful habits have no more place in our life.

Then take the time to consider the riches he has given and walk as one who has been liberated. We are free - under new management - and it is good. Let's embrace all that this new life means.

Prayer Focus for Today:

- Thank God for saving you from the power of sin. Pray for revelation of what you need to lay down today.

- Ask God to bring his life in you in a greater way.