

**Matthew 27: 57 – 28: 10; “The Place where the Lord Lay”,**  
**An Easter Sunday Sermon delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall**  
**in the Morning Worship Service.**

When we think about Christ’s resurrection from the dead we always ought to think about it in relation to the facts of what happened. The dead body of our Lord was looked after by Joseph of Arimathea, first of all, and then watched over and cared for by those dear women who were closest to Him. They were eyewitnesses to the facts of the case and their witness ought not to be rejected or turned aside. There is every reason, humanly speaking, to believe in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. And there are many people who do not believe because they do not consider the facts. Sometimes it is because the original records of the Gospels are not read; that people do not come to consider and to believe. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. If only people would read the accounts of Jesus; if only they would come to hear Him preached and proclaimed from the Scriptures. They might then be touched by the Living, Risen Christ Himself and come to have eternal and everlasting life. This is what you and I should pray for, and this is what we ought to work toward as a church. It is that people would hear about Jesus and read for themselves the sacred accounts, and believe. Let us also remember, however, that there were also other eye-witnesses to what took place at the tomb of Jesus that Easter morning. They were the guards who were assigned by the chief priests and Pharisees to guard the tomb by the order of Pilate the governor. They saw many things that morning which caused them to fear and to tremble; things which were done by God, and yet it did not change their hearts. They were eye witnesses to the earthquake. They were eye witnesses to the angels and the rolling away of the great stone which blocked the door. But all they did after they saw these amazing things was to go back into the city and they reported to the chief priests all the things that happened. And when the chief priests and the elders consulted together they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers saying, “Tell them His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.”

No, let it be understood this morning that the human heart is treacherous; by nature it is unbelieving and fickle. Even if they have the evidence that demands a verdict, that Jesus did rise from the dead; they still will not believe without God’s Electing love and redeeming mercy coming to their souls in connection with the facts. It takes more than just a knowledge of the facts for a soul to be saved from its sins. It takes the resurrection power of Jesus to raise a soul spiritually from the dead. Let no one say or think in their heart this morning that there was any deception on the part of Jesus or by His disciples in His rising from the dead. He died and His disciples saw Him die. The accounts plainly indicate that they did not expect Him to rise from the dead. They didn’t understand these things it says in Luke 18: 34. They could not bring Him to life again. What good would it do to declare a risen Christ who they knew in their heart of hearts was dead? Would they be willing to lay down their lives for a dead Master and Savior who had said that He

would rise when He did not? No, it could hardly be the case. Jesus let His enemies do their worst to Him at the cross. They all saw Him dead there. They all saw His dead body taken down from the cross and given to Pilate. They knew that His dead body was given to Pilate and placed there in Joseph's new tomb, and those who were His enemies were the ones who went to Pilate and asked Him to make the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting the guard. When Jesus was raised from the dead these guards shook for fear and became like dead men themselves. When they recovered from their fear, they did not say, "Now I believe in Jesus." "Now I want to know everything I can about Him." "Now I want Him to be my Savior and Lord." No, they came back to those who had called our Lord Jesus, "that deceiver", and they joined in with their scheme to make it appear that the body of our Lord Jesus was stolen. Who was really deceived? It was the ones who received the money to deny the truth. But the body, as anyone knows who believes the Bible narrative, was not stolen. Jesus was, and He is alive! He is raised from the dead! He is the first fruits of them that sleep in death! He is seated at the right hand of God on high! He will raise all of His dear people from the dead on the Last Day. And we cannot deny it, because we have come to know the power of His resurrection in our hearts!

So what is it that you and I who believe in Jesus should do today, in the here and now, in response to this truth, to show forth the glory of Christ's resurrection to a watching and oft-times unbelieving world? How can we show forth the power and glory of the resurrection of Christ? I think that we can see from these verses 3 things which will help us do exactly that. The first is that we do the things which Joseph did; but do them in our hearts. The second is that we will do the things that Mary did with our actions. The third is that we should hear the voice of Jesus to us, to "Rejoice". Let's open this up and may the Lord open our hearts as we listen.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all- In order to show forth Christ's resurrection life, let us do what Joseph did, in our hearts.** (Verses 57-60)

The text says, "Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus." We need to take note of the fact that this man was not an open disciple of Jesus' before this point in time. We can learn something more about him by looking at the other parallel passages. Turn with me to Mark 15: 42. "Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus." "Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time." "So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph." "Then he brought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen." "And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb." You can see from these verses that Joseph was a member of the council. He was one of the priests of the council of the high priest. We find out here that he was a man waiting for the kingdom of God; that is he was waiting for the Messiah of his people to be

made manifest and His kingdom set up. He may have felt some amount of apprehension at taking this step that he did, but he summoned up his courage and went to Pilate and asked him for the body of Jesus. This he was granted, after Pilate obtained the testimony of the now believing Centurion who saw Jesus die, and the way that he died; and who now thought of him as the Son of God. So Joseph, having brought fine linen with him, went to Calvary and to the cross where Jesus hung, and took the body down, wrapped him in the linen and laid him in a tomb.

Now turn over to Luke chapter 24, verse 50. "Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man." "He had not consented to their decision and deed." "He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God." Here we are told not only that he was a council member, but that he was a good and just man." He knew the difference between right and wrong and he knew that the council had not done the right thing in condemning Jesus. He did not go along with the majority of them in voting for his crucifixion. He did not consent to their decision and their deed. He was entirely opposed to it. Now turn over to John 19, verse 38. "After this, (after the crucifixion and Jesus' death) Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission." "So he came and took the body of Jesus." "And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds." "Then they took the body of Jesus and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury." "Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid." "So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby." This is the most interesting information yet on Joseph. We find that he was a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one. We should learn from this that God has his people in every place that He wants them, and sometimes they are not known to us; at least until God decides that He wants to use them for His service. You would think that since he had been in the past a secret disciple that He would not want, now, to do this bold and public thing that would forever identify him with the Lord Jesus. But he knew that now was his time, and this what God would want him to do. He had been a secret disciple before, but a power was at work in his heart that would not let him hide his faith any longer; or his love for the Lord Jesus. I think that we little realize how difficult a thing this was for Joseph and Nicodemus to come to a public identification with Christ. Nicodemus was also a ruler of the Jews and he had to face the same kind of fears and overcome them that day. He had come to Jesus by night to hear about the New Birth and he had found life, in trusting in Jesus. But he had also been a secret disciple. Joseph must have come to believe by hearing Jesus preach in the temple.

Turn over to John 7 and you may be able to see the conflict of mind that Joseph faced. Verse 37 says, "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.'" He who believe in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." "But

this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” “Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying said, ‘Truly this is the Prophet.’” “Others said, ‘This is the Christ.’” “But some said, ‘Will the Christ come out of Galilee?’” “Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?” “So there was division among the people because of Him.” “Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.” “Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why have you not brought Him?’” “The officers answered, ‘No man ever spoke like this Man!’” “Then the Pharisees answered them, ‘Are you also deceived?’” “Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?” “But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.” “Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, ‘Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?’” “They answered and said to him, ‘Are you also from Galilee?’” “Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.” “And everyone went to his own house.” You see, this is the kind of oppression which the Pharisees created in the minds of their own countrymen. And even a ruler of the Jews like Nicodemus, if he questioned them, was also thought to be crazy and accursed.

But what did Joseph do that you and I should do today? He rescued the body of the Lord Jesus from the indignities which his enemies would have further poured upon it. He was very courageous in light of the consequences which could have come to himself. And he bore the body of Jesus to his own newly hewn tomb. And further, he and Nicodemus wrapped Jesus body in fine linen and put myrrh and aloes in with the linen strips as they prepared his body for the burial. We certainly can not, and do not do that in any physical sense today. But there is a very definite spiritual sense in which we can do it today. Turn with me over 2 Corinthians 4 and I will show you this beautiful parallel. Verse 5 says, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake.” “For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.” “For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” “So then death is working in us, but life in you.” “And since we have the same spirit of faith according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’ we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.”

Now let’s see if we understand what is being said here. The treasure in earthen vessels is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ which more and

more is a reality in our experience as Christians. But this treasure of the greatness, the power, the glory, and the excellence of Christ is something that we have in the earthen vessels of our earthly mortal bodies and our sometimes frail emotional and mental frames. The person who is trusting in Christ and wanting to be a good witness of Christ is going to face opposition which will sometimes threaten to crush his life. But since we are bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus in our body, so that we might die to self and to sin, we also find that we also come to experience the resurrection life of Jesus which is manifested in our mortal body being sustained and upheld and strengthened until God's purpose is fully accomplished in us. Death was working when Paul and those who were with him, preached the gospel and they were persecuted for it. They were becoming more Christ-like in the process, but life was also working in those who were learning from them and following their example. In the final analysis Paul was bearing about the body of Jesus spiritually in a way that Joseph of Arimathea bore Jesus' dead body to the tomb. Joseph had come to believe in Jesus and had been a secret disciple. But when he saw how Jesus went to the cross and died; he, too, realized that this same life of Christ was at work in him so that he was not afraid any longer to confess Him freely, publicly, and openly to the world. He was bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus. He now had the inner strength and courage that would bring the dead body of Jesus to his own newly hewn tomb. He had died with Jesus and now; even before the resurrection, he knew something of the life of Jesus. He had seen the righteousness of Jesus and so he could wrap Him in the fine linen. He had known the fragrance of Christ's life and so he could place the myrrh and aloes on His body with Nicodemus. He could say with Paul as it says in 2 Corinthians 2: 14 – "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place." "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." It was the grace of Christ working in Joseph and Nicodemus so that they would no longer be secret disciples but openly avow Him by their actions. This is something that we also can do by faith in Christ. We can bear His body to the tomb of our heart and find grace. We can be buried with Him in our baptism and find newness of life and power to do what is right. We can diffuse the fragrance of His knowledge in every place by holding fast to Him in all of our difficulties, trials, and persecutions. We can face death and triumph with Him over the grave when we trust in Him. This is the lesson of Joseph of Arimathea.

**Now 2ndly – We can show forth the power and glory of the resurrection of Christ by doing what Mary and the other women did, in our actions.**

(Verse 61 of Chapter 27 and verses 1-8 of Chapter 28)

"And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb." "Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary came to see the tomb." "And behold there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it." "His countenance was like lightning and his clothing as white as snow." "And the guards shook for fear of him, and became

like dead men.” “But the angel answered and said to the women, ‘do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.’ “He is not here; for He is risen, as He said.” “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” It is interesting that it was not the 11 Apostles that were there when the body of the Lord Jesus was taken down and brought to Joseph’s tomb, it was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the mother of James and Joses that were right there; sitting opposite the tomb. It was not to the 11 disciples that the Lord first appeared to, after His resurrection. It was to Mary and to the other women with her. I think that He did this because of the great love that they evidenced to Him even before He went to the cross. It is not as though the Apostles did not love Him; but these women persevered in their love for Christ when the faith of most of the Apostles was flagging. They showed forth their love to Him at a number of critical points. They paid attention in their love. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there when some of the other disciples left and went home in discouragement when Christ went to the cross. Verse 55 of Matthew 27 says, “And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar.” Mark’s gospel, Chapter 15, verse 40 says, “There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.” Who says that women cannot follow Jesus and minister to Him; sometimes even in a way that excels the men who follow Jesus? These women were there when many of the other Apostles are not mentioned as being there; at the cross. It does say in Luke 23: 48 that, “...all Jesus’ acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.” Perhaps some of the Apostles were there, but they are not mentioned specifically. John was there; standing by, but where were the others?

What can we learn from this? We learn that much can be accomplished on behalf of the Lord Jesus and on behalf of His kingdom by quiet, persevering, watchful, loving actions. It was when Mary watched to see what the Lord Jesus was doing and where He was going that she was able to do things that were so very helpful to His cause and kingdom at that time. He was going to the cross. She didn’t understand all the reasons that He was going there, but she was going to be near Him if she could. John 19, verse 25 says, “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.” Why is she standing there? It was because He had done so much for her and because His being her Savior and Lord meant so much to her. It was the time of His greatest weakness, and it was the time when she would show herself the strongest on his behalf. As you read the accounts of the time of Jesus’ death and resurrection, it is Mary’s name; it is her actions and presence that are seen everywhere. She who was forgiven much; loved much. Ask yourself this morning; am I a person who is able, desirous, and willing to stand by other Christians in their time of greatest need? This is what Jesus would have you to do to serve Him. Mary was standing by Jesus on the cross, but she was also standing right next to John when Jesus commended his

mother to him. She was standing by to do what Jesus would have her to do. John was standing by, because he knew that Jesus' mother needed him at that time. This was how he could serve his Lord. Mary would have been willing to do the same thing or any other thing that the Lord had asked her to do.

When Jesus was buried and lay in the tomb, Mary Magdalene thought about what she could do for Him even then. She came to the tomb with some of the other women, while it was still dark, and she saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. She immediately ran to Simon Peter's house and told Peter and John that "they had taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." She didn't understand His resurrection which had already taken place, but she was concerned for His body. She knew that Peter and John needed to know. She told them and then she followed them back, but probably a little slower; and stood outside by the tomb weeping. What more could she do, she thought? She had come there with the other women to anoint His body, and now they had taken even taken that away. But this morning I want you to see that Jesus comes first to those who love Him the most, and who would do anything for Him. He came to Mary first. He knew that her need to know was the greatest. If we were to turn to Mark 16, we would find that Jesus had not yet revealed Himself to anyone that morning. He had not revealed Himself to Peter and John yet. He had not revealed Himself to the other women yet. They had seen the angels and been given the good news, but they had not seen their risen Lord. Here's what it says of the other women who had originally come with Mary Magdalene and went into the tomb while she ran back to tell Peter and John. Verse 5 of Mark 16 says, "And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed." "But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed." "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified." "He is risen!" "He is not here." "See the place where they laid Him." "But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." "So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed." "And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." So the angels told them, but they fled the scene of the tomb. They may have passed Peter and John on the way back into town, or they might have gone by some other way; but they were not going back to investigate further. They were joyful and amazed and frightened all at the same time.

And then we find these amazing words in Mark 16: 9; "Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons." Of all people; it was Mary to whom our Lord Jesus appeared first. She had run back with Peter and John. They had run faster than she did; and had gotten there first. They had looked into the tomb, gone into the tomb. They saw the grave clothes lying neatly there. Peter was marveling and John believed; but Jesus did not appear to them first. They went away again to their own homes it says in John 20, verse 11. "But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb." "And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of

Jesus had lain.” “They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’” “She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’” Here is the truth of the matter. She is still very much concerned with caring for His dead body. She is more concerned than anyone else. “Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.” “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’” “Whom are you seeking?” “She supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, ‘Sir if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’” Here we have another example of a disciple bearing away the body of Jesus. First we had Joseph, and now we have Mary. All this is related to His physical body; but it is really much more spiritual than that, is it not? “They have taken away my Lord...” “Sir, tell me where you have laid Him and I will take Him away...” Mary simply cannot have peace unless she once again can know that her precious Lord, the One who had done so much for her, was well cared for at this hour when He could do nothing for himself. She didn’t understand, but she loved. She who had been forgiven much loved much. So Jesus kept her in suspense this far. But He could do so no longer. “Mary.” He said it just the way that He would have said it to her a hundred times before. But this was the best time. This was the ultimate time. This was the forever time. “Rabboni,” was all that she could respond. It means “Teacher”.

It was every remembrance of Jesus which she held close to her heart in love that made her faith so strong, and her actions so good in His service during that time when the faith of many was cast down. What about you on this Easter Day? Is your faith working by means of love; love to your Lord which issues in real actions in relation to what you know that He would have you to do in accordance with His word and the needs of people around you? Are you more concerned for what happens to His kingdom and cause than anything else in this fallen world of sin? It is this power of grace at work in Mary’s heart that did so many good things in this critical time in the birth of the New Testament church. May you and I have the same love and the same kinds of actions that Mary exhibited during His sufferings, His time in the tomb, and in the time of His glorious resurrection. Let’s pray together.

Teach us to understand the meaning of your resurrection Lord. Teach us that “though Jesus was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God.” Teach us that “we also are weak in You, but we shall live with You by the power of God toward us.” (2 Corinthians 13: 4) Teach us that “You are not weak towards us, but mighty in us.” May we be spiritually what Joseph of Arimathea and Mary were to you in the time before Your resurrection. May we be that way in the time of Your Church’s greatest need.