

In Nomine Iesu

Good Friday Lent 7, The Path of our Lord's Exodus: Jesus is buried in Joseph's tomb – Luke 23:50-56

“Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid.” It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the second Adam. Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

It is surprising who Luke reveals as coming to faith in connection with the death of Jesus. The first surprise was the thief on Jesus' right; the second was the centurion, who commanded the execution detail, and the third Joseph of Arimathea, one of the seventy members of the high council of Israel, the Sanhedrin, that sentenced Jesus to death. But Luke tells us that Joseph did not consent to that decision. Even more importantly Luke says, “he was looking for the kingdom of God.” A more accurate translation would be “he was **waiting** for the kingdom of God.” Luke used the same verb to describe the faith of Simeon, who held the child Jesus in his arms. He “was **waiting** for the consolation of Israel.” (Luke 2:25) Again Luke used the same verb to describe the faith Anna the prophetess began proclaiming that day when Jesus was presented to God in the temple at 40 days old as “she began to give thanks to God and to speak of [the Child] to all who were **waiting** for the redemption of Jerusalem.” (Luke 2:38)

What is striking is that the language Luke used in connection with Simeon, Anna, and Joseph of Arimathea, was so similar to that used by the thief on the cross. You remember, he asked, “Jesus, remember me when you **come into your kingdom**.” As soon as he spoke those words, the thief became yet another who waited for the same thing as Simeon, Anna, and Joseph. The thief must have heard such talk from others in the crowd in the short time between receiving his own death sentence and when he hung on his cross beside Jesus. But unlike Simeon, Anna, and Joseph, the thief did not have long to **wait**. He would see it that very day. But how many others were there in the crowd in those hours and days who heard the things the thief had heard and believed as he did? To whom else did the kingdom of God come, to whom else did the Gospel in all its power and sweetness come, **and was believed!** Judging by what happened in Jerusalem just fifty days later at Pentecost, when 3000 were baptized in one day, the number who came to believe in those days that Jesus was indeed the Christ must have been great.

Joseph being one of those many went to Pilate to claim Jesus' body. In doing so he ended his relationship with Caiaphas and high priests, all the scribes and elders, all the Pharisees and Sadducees. For the next day, Passover, he would not be seen in

the temple with all the others, for he had touched - along with Nicodemus - a dead body, and thus could not enter the temple according to the law given by Moses. It would not take long before Caiaphas learned **which dead body** he and Nicodemus had touched. What is more, Joseph buried Jesus in his own family tomb. He would be a marked man in Jerusalem for the rest of his life. No one would forget. But, you see, that is a good thing. He would be remembered, just as Simeon and Anna, just as the thief on Jesus' right and the centurion. He would be remembered by the crucified, and soon to be risen, Savior, who had come into His kingdom, who had taken up fully His divine power to save when He spoke His last words, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." The Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep this day so long ago would remember them, each of them. Dear friends, you too have this assurance, you to whom Christ's kingdom has come, even as Martin Luther explained – you know the words, "The kingdom of God comes of itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also." *How does God's kingdom come?* The kingdom of God comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity." Your names are known to Him who laid down His life for you.

The kingdom of God has come, just as the thief on Jesus' right hand believed. For Jesus accomplished His exodus at Jerusalem – thanks be to God!

We have come to the end of the exodus Jesus spoke of with Moses and Elijah on the mount of His transfiguration. We have followed His steps in those last few days and hours. And we are ready tonight for the end of His exodus, **and what it means for us**. To understand, let us consider the end of Moses' exodus, Moses, the prophet like Him who was to come. "And the LORD said to [Moses] 'This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, I will give it to your offspring. I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.' So, Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD, and he buried him in the valley of the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day." (Deut. 34:4-6)

How long did Moses wait for the end of his own exodus? He waited from the day his mother placed him in a basket and pushed him out into the river to be found by Pharaoh's daughter. He waited in faith, looking for the coming in the flesh of the One who spoke to him from the burning bush, from the smoke and fire atop Mt. Sinai, from the column of smoke and fire that led Israel out of slavery in Egypt to the promised land. The faithful God who led Him all those years allowed him to see the promised land from a distance, just as we see in the distance of time the heavenly country that God promised to us; and hear of it every time we lay to rest another of us who, like Moses, waited for the fulfillment of the promise.

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Just as God buried Moses within sight of the promised land, now, a man, Joseph, buried the Son of God and Son of Man, and in doing so sanctified the grave for us all, teaching us that just as death could not hold Him, so it will not hold us. He who bore our sins will lead us out of death to life everlasting. Oh, how Moses must have beamed on the Mount of Transfiguration, as the Son of God and Son of Man spoke of the exodus He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem for us all. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria