



At Home Worship for Faith and Hope

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 21, 2021

"Joseph of Arimathea took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. (Joseph was an honored member of the high council, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come.)"

Mark 15:43 (NLT)

*** Call to Worship**

We have some measure of faith, and we would like to have more.

What happens here in this space, matters out there in the world.

Our lives are not in vain, and today is not yesterday lived over again.

God's love is real, and is always moving us toward grace.

With confidence and joy, with courage and hope, let us worship God.

***Song of Praise**

"I Am Thine, O Lord"

UMH 419

Either Sing/Read the Song Below or Listen to a Worship Song

Opening Prayer

Lord, may our worship today be an incubator for courage. May we take heart in the bold courage You displayed on the Cross and in Joseph's courage to stand up for You against the grain of public sentiment. Empower us with Your Holy Spirit who fills us with patience, strength, and courage. May we meet You in this space today. Amen.

NO Children's Moments This Week

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of gratitude with grit! Lift up with thanksgiving to God for the ways He has helped you through these difficult days.

Sing the Doxology Together

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Lenten Prayer of Confession and Petition

~ written by William Barclay

God of love, we remember today all that our blessed Lord endured for us. Let us remember how Jesus was betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men. Lord Jesus, we remember today that it was one of Your own familiar friends who betrayed You, and we know that there is nothing that so breaks the heart as the disloyalty of one whom we call friend. Grant that we may not betray You. Save us:

- ◆ *From the cowardice that would disown You when it is hard to be true to You;*
- ◆ *From the disloyalty that betrays You in the hour when You need someone to stand by You;*
- ◆ *From the fickleness that blows hot and cold in its devotion;*
- ◆ *From the fair-weather friendship that, when things are difficult or dangerous, makes us ashamed to show whose we are and whom we serve.*

Let us remember how Jesus suffered death upon the Cross ...Lord Jesus, help us to remember the lengths to which Your love was ready to go; that having loved Your own You loved them to the very end; the love than which none can be greater, the love that lays down its life for its friends; that it was while people were yet enemies that You died for them. Let us remember how Jesus now lives and reigns ...Help us to remember, that the crucified Lord is the Risen Lord; that the cross has become the Crown. So grant unto us, to trust in His love and to live in His presence; that we may share in His glory. This we ask for Your love's sake. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

God's Word

Mark 15:42-47 (NLT)

The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!

Drama in Life

"Jesus Died: Joseph of Arimathea"

Skitguys

Message

"The Courageous Word"

Pastor Clark

...see below or go to website to listen online

*Hymn of Faith

"A Charge to Keep Have I"

UMH 411

Blessing

Psalms 31:23-24

"Love the Lord, all you godly ones! For the Lord protects those who are loyal to him. So be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the Lord!" Amen.



The Courageous Word

Mark 15:42-47 (NLT)

Introduction

On February 27, 2012, 17-year-old T. J. Lane from Chardon, Ohio, burst into his school's cafeteria and started gunning down classmates. Lane shot and killed three students, but if it wasn't for the courage of ***Coach Frank Hall***, many more students could have died that day.

The funny thing is that Hall doesn't consider himself to be a courageous hero. The 6'1", 350-pound football coach admits that he has plenty of fears. He hates confrontations; he's afraid of heights, roller coasters, and scary movies; and he jumps through the ceiling when his kids sneak up on him. On one level, Coach Hall is more of a teddy bear than a fighter. Hall summarizes his coaching code in two sentences: "Every kid is someone's pride and joy, or wants to be someone's pride and joy I keep thinking, *How would I want my kid to be treated?*—and then I treat them that way."

But Frank Hall believes that there's one word that defines his life calling—***protector***. So as the shots rang out on that February morning in the Chardon High School cafeteria Frank Hall knew what he had to do. ***Hall, a follower of Christ who felt the hand of God through the ordeal, responded with courage in the face of danger.*** As students cringed under desks, ***Hall charged at the gunman, his voice booming, "Stop! Stop!"*** T.J. Lane, the 17-year-old shooter, was thrown off-guard by Hall's charge. Lane shot and missed as Hall dove behind a soda machine.

When Jen Sprinzl, a 51-year-old secretary, rushed out of the office to follow the bangs, Lane pointed his gun in her face. Hall had four adopted sons at home—two African-American, two bi-racial—that he didn't want to leave fatherless, but once again he rose up and bellowed, "NO!" Then he charged at Lane, who wheeled and started running. Police finally found Lane on a wooded road, shivering and wearing a t-shirt with the word KILLER on it. When they asked him why he'd run away, he said, "Because Coach Hall was chasing me."

In a later interview, Hall said, "I know, it sounds crazy, but in all honesty, I really didn't think about anything ... I just reacted As a society, we cannot lose our outrage when these kinds of tragedies happen. We can't just get to the point where we accept these kinds of things as just part of our lives, now. We have to make sure we, as a people, don't accept it ... we can't!"

Though expressed in a different way and different setting, today we encounter a character who demonstrated courage. It may not seem as dramatic as this story, but when you look at the inner dynamics hidden within, it is pure courage on one of life's grandest stages!

⁴² *This all happened on Friday, the day of preparation; the day before the Sabbath. As evening approached,* ⁴³ *Joseph of Arimathea took a risk and went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. (Joseph*

was an honored member of the high council, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come.)⁴⁴ Pilate couldn't believe that Jesus was already dead, so he called for the Roman officer and asked if he had died yet.⁴⁵ The officer confirmed that Jesus was dead, so Pilate told Joseph he could have the body.⁴⁶ Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth. Then he took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it in the cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance.⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus' body was laid.

Let's look at the anatomy of courage in this character...Joseph of Arimathea.

#1 The Incubator of Courage

The incubator of courage resides in our daily lives. How we go about our daily lives reveals our strengths and weaknesses. Daily decisions in the course of lives build or tear down the resolve for great courage on the larger stages of life. As for Joseph, what we know of him, shows us he was a person of character who commanded respect from others in general and in the leaders of the community in particular.

Joseph's profile reveals quite a bit about his character.

- Wealthy, in that he owned his own grave, very few could do this
- A good and righteous man (Luke 23:50)
- Respected member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jewish people, but he had not agreed with the decision and actions of the other religious leaders about Jesus (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51)
- Waiting expectantly for the Kingdom of God (Luke 23:51)
- A secret disciple of Jesus because he had feared the Jewish leaders (John 19:38)

As our video revealed this morning, something about Jesus sparked Joseph's faith. His heart was turning toward Jesus. He was by no means the finished product as indicated by the fact that he became a *secret disciple* of Jesus. But his heart was longing for the Kingdom. The gospels tell us he was waiting expectantly for the Kingdom of God (much like Simeon in Luke 2).

#2 The Crisis of the Cross

The Cross of Jesus compels people to make choices. It's hard to remain on the sidelines when you encountered the Cross. The Cross has the tendency to reveal people's inner heart. J. Ellsworth Kalas mentions that "*people who had appeared on ordinary days to be neither too good nor too bad now showed the full depth and dimension of their character.*" The Cross had that kind of effect on people.

The Cross caused people either to worship or to curse Jesus. That's why some people fall at the foot of the Cross in reverence; others mock Jesus and make excuses as to why Jesus let them down.

This is uniquely shown at the Cross. **Jesus' Cross**, Kalas says, **not only redeems us, it also shows us who we are**. What's been your response to the Cross? Have you given yourself to prayerful reflection about the meaning of the Cross for you? What has Jesus' Cross shown you about yourself?

In 1933, just two days after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer preached on the radio, warning of a leader "who allow(s) himself to succumb to the wishes of those he leads, who will always seek to turn him into their idol, then the image of the leader will gradually become the image of the 'misleader'... . This is the leader who makes an idol of himself and his office, and who thus mocks God."

Bonhoeffer was cut off the air as he spoke, presumably by Hitler sympathizers, and he was forced to publish the talk in print to make sure that his audience heard everything he had to say. But he'd made his stand, and soon there were those who questioned his patriotism.

His preaching and his instruction to student preachers took on an increasingly confrontive tone. "Do not try to make the Bible relevant," he said. "Its relevance is axiomatic... . Do not defend God's Word, but testify to it...Trust to the Word. It is a ship loaded to the very limits of her capacity."

Bonhoeffer's greatest books come out of this era. *The Cost of Discipleship* called for one to pursue the selfless life, or, to use a more modern phrase, Bonhoeffer was trying to say, "It's not about me!" **"The cross is laid on every Christian,"** Bonhoeffer wrote. **"As we embark upon discipleship ... we give over our lives to death."**

In 1939, Dietrich Bonhoeffer visited New York, and friends in the church world passionately tried to keep him there for fear that if he returned to Germany, he would lose his life. But Bonhoeffer chose to sail back to Germany. "I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people," he said.

"Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose; but I cannot make that choice in security."

#3 Taking a Courageous Stand

Once Jesus died, Joseph had a difficult decision to make. While normally the family of the person crucified would come to claim the body, there is no evidence that Jesus' brothers were anywhere near. And Mary was most likely too emotionally exhausted to take up that task. More than that, Jesus' disciples had fled.

From Joseph's vantage point, he knew that when common criminals were taken down from their tortuous crosses, they were not given a burial, but thrown into a pile for scavenger animals or vultures to have at the remains. Hence, Golgotha was called the place of skulls.

Joseph became deeply troubled. It was unthinkable to allow Jesus' body to be thrown to the scavenger's pile. Besides, who among the others had the resources to own a private tomb? There was as well an urgency to the situation: the approach of the Sabbath, which began at sundown, lent urgency to the Joseph's actions as the Jewish law required the burial to be completed before the Sabbath. All this points to the fact that there was no one better suited to fulfill the need than Joseph of Arimathea.

But here is where the drama ratchets up. This secret disciple must now come out into the open. He must declare his faith. He must go publicly to Pilate to request permission to take Jesus' body. Soon all of Jerusalem will know. Yes, this was a costly step for Joseph to take.

Fisherman like Peter, James, and John could cast their lot with Jesus and suffer no great professional loss or ridicule. But, as a member of the Sanhedrin, Joseph was in the public eye. Whatever he did would soon be told abroad—and especially if he went against the flow of public sentiment and against the counsel of the Sanhedrin's leaders. It is in this crucible that Joseph makes his choice.

In time character will reveal itself. ***The Gospels tell us, Joseph took courage!*** He acts with full knowledge of the implications upon his place in the Sanhedrin. He put his career and public reputation on the line in exchange for aligning himself with this Jesus who'd just been crucified. Shame on Joseph, his colleagues on the Sanhedrin likely said.

But in reality, Joseph was choosing life instead of death. He was taking to himself Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life. Joseph counted the cost and took courage and made the right decision.

Let's be honest, we are much more prone to want to hide away in the safety of silence. We have human instincts for self-preservation. We think of the financial implications of steps of courage. We think of our reputations. We think of physical danger. Only courage will move the natural instinct for self-preservation to second place. What will compel us to choose courage? I suggest gazing at the Cross. That's where the true incubator of courage resides!

Will we in our moment of truth? In the crucible of testing, how will we respond? How can we too take courage?

- Remember you are not alone...if you try to go it alone, you will likely conclude your resources are not sufficient to handle the situation leading to a compromised decision.
- Trust what you know about Jesus...what Joseph had experienced in Jesus was enough to compel him to choose courage.

- Dare to believe, like Joseph, that choosing courage will lead to the best outcome even when it doesn't appear to be so. Even in the shadow of death, Joseph was aligning himself with the Lord of Life. So can we.

Application

Some say that the prevailing culture in America is becoming increasingly hostile to Christianity and its values. What have you observed that would support or disprove this view? If the level of hostility is rising, what tests of courage may await us as Christians?

The made for TV film, ***Bonhoeffer, Agent of Grace***, depicts the life and death of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a leader in the Confessing Church of Germany during the 1940s. Bonhoeffer opposed Hitler's government and was arrested and sentenced to death by the Nazi regime. As Bonhoeffer lies in his darkened prison cell, he hears through the cement wall the weeping of a prisoner in the adjacent cell. Speaking through the wall, Bonhoeffer identifies himself as a pastor, assures the man that he is not alone, and asks if he would like to pray. The muffled reply comes back, "I don't believe in God."

When a German guard looks in and learns that Bonhoeffer is trying to pray with his neighbor, he responds, "Kitchner? It won't do any good. He's going to be shot any day now." Undaunted, Bonhoeffer leans against the stark cell wall and calls out to the prisoner, "*If you can hear me, put your hands on the wall as if we were touching. Mine are here too.*" No hands appear.

As the guard looks on through a peep hole, Bonhoeffer prays, "***Lord, it's dark in me; in you is day. I am alone, but you will stay. I am afraid; you never cease. I am at war; in you is peace.***" Slowly we see a pair of hands reach up and touch the wall opposite of where Bonhoeffer's hands are. As dawn breaks, a single rifle shot shatters the morning calm. The same German guard, now more somber and less cynical, appears at Bonhoeffer's cell. "*I thought you might like to know. The boy from the next cell—he was very calm with a certain courage. It surprised everyone. He was executed this morning.*"

A Charge to Keep I Have

1. A charge to keep I have,
a God to glorify,
a never-dying soul to save,
and fit it for the sky.
2. To serve the present age,
my calling to fulfill;
O may it all my powers engage
to do my Master's will!
3. Arm me with jealous care,
as in thy sight to live,
and oh, thy servant, Lord, prepare
a strict account to give!
4. Help me to watch and pray,
and on thyself rely,
assured, if I my trust betray,
I shall forever die.

I Am Thine, O Lord

1. I am thine, O Lord, I have heard thy voice,
and it told thy love to me;
but I long to rise in the arms of faith
and be closer drawn to thee.

Refrain:

Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
to the cross where thou hast died.
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
to thy precious, bleeding side.

2. Consecrate me now to thy service, Lord,
by the power of grace divine;
let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
and my will be lost in thine.
(Refrain)

3. O the pure delight of a single hour
that before thy throne I spend,
when I kneel in prayer, and with thee, my God,
I commune as friend with friend!
(Refrain)

4. There are depths of love that I cannot know
till I cross the narrow sea;
there are heights of joy that I may not reach
till I rest in peace with thee.
(Refrain)

Did You Know?

Maundy Thursday Service...April 1 at 7:00 PM... This year's service will center on the events in the Garden of Gethsemane as we look at Mark 14:32-42 and Jesus' agonizing prayer in the Garden. This illuminating look into Jesus' heart will show us how to pray when we too face life's ultimate tests. Communion and Stripping of the altar will be part of our service.

Easter at Faith and Hope

We will have Easter Services at both Hope and Faith on Sunday on April 4 to allow us to accommodate the anticipated Easter attendance in a socially distanced way. At each service you can count on a splash of stirring Easter music along with several special Easter themed expressions of worship. An ***Easter Choir*** with folks from both Hope and Faith will be singing at both services.

◆ Hope (9:30 AM)

◆ Faith (11:00 AM)

Post Easter Small Groups

We are looking to form several post-Easter Small Groups...one that meets in person and another that meets solely via Zoom or Facebook Groups. They will mirror our worship themes exploring Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. ***Jesus' Last Words: Encounters with the Risen Christ.*** I would encourage you to consider participating in one of these powerful studies and groups. More information to follow.

Faith Cafe

Faith Café has blossomed into a delightful ministry with the parents and staff at Educare. We have need of folks to provide homemade treats (muffins, cookies, scones, etc. Or if you'd like to make a donation to help with the expenses for a day (\$20), that would be a huge help as well. We serve each Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 7:00-9:00 AM. See Jan Smith or Pastor Clark.