

# Powerful Courage

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Date: 16 July 2023

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] My name's Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one's so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We're continuing our series on the Gospel of Mark, although what I'm about to say has nothing to do with the Gospel of Mark. One of my favorite things over the last couple years, I think maybe it was two or three years ago, we started saying the Lord's Prayer together as a congregation every Sunday.

And one of my favorite things is when we do that, hearing small little voices join in. And I say that just as a reminder to us of what a great privilege it is to be in a church where we have squirming kids.

And some of you have been in churches that don't have young children. That's a very sad thing. You may remember earlier in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus rebukes His disciples because they find children to be an inconvenience.

[ 1 : 2 0 ] So I say all that to say, you know, when we have young children who are screaming with us, our response is, you know, praise God. Praise God that He's blessed our congregation with the next generation.

And praise God that we have the privilege of having them with us in worship. So that's just one of my favorite things about this church. Of many, right? Of many. We're grateful that God's allowed us to be part of raising up the next generation.

We are continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark, which will be our series for not so long. So we're coming to the very end. And as we're coming to the end, as we're wrapping things up, you may remember earlier in the Gospel, I told you, you know, as we come near the end, we're going to see things close in.

At the beginning, we're going to see three different types of people. We're going to see people who love Jesus, people who hate Jesus, and people who don't care. And as we get near the end of the Gospel, that middle category is going to disappear.

We're going to see people who either embrace Jesus or they reject Him. And of course, that's what we're seeing here at the very end. And so this passage here with Joseph of Arimathea asks us this question, really, of what are you going to do with the Gospel of Mark?

[ 2 : 3 8 ] We've been in the Gospel of Mark for two years now. And I think maybe one of the saddest things would be if we moved on and we just sort of forgot about it. That was a series, you know, that we did at some point and glad to move on to another series, but it didn't make a difference for us.

I told you at the very beginning, Mark doesn't mean for his Gospel to be an intellectual exercise. Mark doesn't want his readers to get away with just hearing about Jesus and then to walk off and do something else.

Mark means for his Gospel to change us. He means for it to make us different. He means for us to see Jesus and be transformed.

And so as we are at really the very end of the Gospel, the question is this, what are you going to do now? What are you going to do with everything that we've looked at the past two years?

What are you going to do with the vision of Jesus that we've had over and over again? That's the question this passage asks. That's what Joseph of Arimathea challenges us with.

[ 3 : 52 ] And so I'm going to invite you to turn with me in your Bible. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your Bible itself. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word.

And God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold. And it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. And so that's why we read now.

Mark chapter 15, starting at verse 42. And when evening had come, since it was the day of preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. Verse 45. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

And Joseph bought a linen shroud and, taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.

[ 5 : 06 ] Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joseph, saw where he was laid. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we praise you again for your mercy to us, that you have caused these stories, these true stories, to be written down, that we could hear them, that we could meditate on them, that we could know them 2,000 years later.

We ask that they wouldn't be merely an intellectual exercise for us, but that you would show us Jesus. And as we see Jesus, that we would be transformed, that we would change to look more and more like him.

We ask that you would do that this morning by your word, by the power of your spirit, that you would make us people who are transformed in our hearts, in our minds, in our lives.

And we would grow in our love and our affection for Christ. We'd grow in our reverence and our awe for him. And we'd grow in our obedience to him. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

[ 6 : 13 ] Amen. Many of you know, if you've been in the world for any length of time, that if you make the wrong move or say the wrong thing or make an alliance with the wrong person, you might face the end of your career.

You might face the end of a social circle if you support the wrong person or voice the wrong opinion. Of course, it's easy to think of times in history this has happened. We might think of the 1940s and 50s when Hollywood stars were blacklisted for their potential ties with the Communist Party.

But Hollywood's not the only industry where someone might get blacklisted. Today, you face the risk of being what's called canceled if you say the wrong thing or support the wrong person.

Of course, the opposite can also be true. Courage has its own attractiveness to it. Sometimes people have become famous over the last few years for their willingness to say unpopular things. But today, as we look at the end of this chapter, Mark 15, we're going to see a man, Joseph, who is willing to risk it all.

He's willing to risk being canceled. He's willing to risk losing his status and his wealth. We see him for the first time in verse 43, this new character, and we find out he's a respected member of the council.

[ 7 : 41 ] And that means that Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin. And so you just have to think back to the last chapter. Remember, Jesus had two trials. He had his religious trial, and he also had his civil trial.

And you remember the religious trial. It was the Sanhedrin, which sort of functioned as the supreme court of the Jews that actually tried him. In other words, Joseph was a member of the court that referred Jesus to Herod and ultimately resulted in his death.

Okay, so just let that sit with you for a minute. Joseph was part of the court that condemned Jesus. That in and of itself is a bit of a bombshell.

Now, we're told about Joseph in the other Gospels as well. Mark does not tell us this, but Luke says this, that Joseph had not consented to their decision and action, and he was looking for the kingdom of God.

So apparently, Joseph actually disagreed with what the Sanhedrin did. We're not told whether Joseph was there in person, whether he happened to miss the event. Wherever he was, Joseph was not there to stand up for Jesus.

[ 8 : 52 ] Okay, so we learn something about Joseph here. Joseph is a member of the power elite among the Jews. And that causes it to be even more surprising that he does what he does.

Now, what he does here, we can know that he's in a rush. Verse 42, when evening had come, since it was the day of preparation, that is the day before the Sabbath. In other words, Joseph is on a tight schedule.

The Jewish holy day is coming up. He's not supposed to be doing any work on the Sabbath. He probably should not be touching dead bodies. And so he has just a short amount of time to work with to get Jesus off of the cross.

And so we see him then in verse 43. He goes, he takes courage, went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Now, you might wonder why it is that Joseph has to ask for the body here.

And the reason is that if someone was crucified, the expectation was that they would be dishonored in every way. So there was no guarantee that this person would have a normal burial.

[ 9 : 55 ] Part of how you honor someone is by taking good care of their body after they're gone. If someone's crucified, the worst death the Romans can offer, that's a way of saying this person deserves no honor.

And so for someone's body to be released after they've been crucified, a special request has to be made to the magistrate, and the request has to be granted. Now, this request is supposed to be made by the family of the person that's killed.

Joseph, to state the obvious, is not Jesus' family. Joseph is not a member of Jesus' inner circle.

And so that reminds us of how unusual this request is. It also reminds us again of what we saw when Jesus was abandoned in the Garden of Gethsemane. He dies all alone.

He dies without his family and his closest friends there to support him. And it reminds us of what a courageous act this is by Joseph.

[ 11 : 03 ] Now, you'll notice verse 44, Pilate's surprised that here that she should have already died. Remember, we talked about this last week. Jesus, as a crucified man, should have died sort of like a dimmer switch going out slowly.

And instead, Jesus dies like this on and off switch, which is why he's able to cry out right before he dies. Remember, that's why the Roman soldier said, oh, this must be the Son of God, because Jesus dies in a way that is not supposed to happen on a cross.

Jesus is able to give up his life, still having the strength to cry out, rather than just slowly fading away. And so that's why Pilate here is surprised. Like, wait, it doesn't make any sense that Jesus has already died.

We need to go send some people to certify. Now, as an aside, this is Mark's way of telling us how reliable the gospel accounts are. He is saying, look, if you think that Jesus didn't rise from the dead because he actually didn't die, well, you need to take that up with Pilate, because Pilate certified that he died.

Okay? So Mark's throwing in this aside here just to say, hey, this is a true account, and if you don't believe me, you can go talk to other people about it. By the way, he's doing the same thing in verse 47, when he says, Mary Magdalene and Mary and the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

[ 12 : 20 ] He's saying, hey, there's some witnesses you can go talk to if you don't really think Jesus died and was buried. Same thing, I didn't talk about this last week, but same thing going on in verse 40. Mark is listing these names over and over, and I put this in your worship guide under that doubt sidebar.

He's listing these names over and over to say, hey, I'm not making this stuff up, okay? There's a lot of other people who saw this happen. If you doubt me, you can go talk to them. Regardless, Pilate's surprised, right?

Joseph is asking for the body, and Pilate grants it. Joseph has just come out of the closet as a Jesus supporter.

It is possible to say here that it is an understatement in verse 43 that he took courage. Yeah, of course he took courage.

In fact, he probably had to take a lot more than courage. Here is someone who is a member of the team that contend Jesus. So he had to take courage in the sense that he's standing against his own social group, his own team.

[ 13 : 38 ] As you know, you can quickly lose your place among the elites of a society by siding with the wrong people. And here, Joseph is an elite.

Joseph is in the inner circle of the inner circles of the Jews. We're told in the other Gospels that Joseph is actually very wealthy. He has quite the place in society.

He has quite the wealth to work with. In fact, this is part of the reason he's got an empty tomb that he can just offer to Jesus. Joseph has done very well in life. In fact, Matthew tells us this in his Gospel.

He says, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph. He doesn't even tell us his name first. He says, look, this guy had a lot of money. So it shouldn't surprise us, right, that he also has a large tomb to go along with it.

Not everyone in the ancient world just had a spare tomb lying around that they could hand off to someone who had been crucified. Joseph, who happened to have a lot of money, did have that. And so that raises the question for us of why did Joseph take the risk?

[ 14 : 50 ] Why did Joseph take courage and go to Pilate and ask for the body of Jesus? In fact, everything would point against him doing that. Upton Sinclair has famously said, it is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it.

Joseph's standing in society depends on him not understanding what's going on with Jesus. And yet, against all odds, he comes out here and publicly expresses his support for Jesus.

It is not a secret anymore. Why? Joseph certainly knows he has a lot to lose.

And Joseph somehow has become convinced he has a lot more to gain. Joseph has a tremendous amount to lose.

And somehow, in his following of Jesus, he has become convinced he has even more to gain. Christian, are you willing to lose your kingdom for the sake of God's kingdom?

[ 16 : 15 ] Joseph gave up one of the spaces in his tomb and he went and he bought new linens to put Jesus in.

Are you willing to sacrifice your resources for the kingdom of God? Joseph was willing to make a bold and unpopular stand.

Joseph was willing to come out of the closet as someone who supports Jesus. Are you willing to stand against your team?

Against your friends? Against your people? By letting them know that you stand with Jesus. Are you willing to lose your reputation?

Are you willing for people to think that you're stupid or even worse, dangerous because you follow Christ? Are you willing to jeopardize your vocation to miss an opportunity to advance because people know that you stand with Jesus?

[ 17 : 50 ] Are you willing to lose relationally? Do you believe that it is better to be single than to be with someone who doesn't share your beliefs about God?

do you know that you have a lot to lose? Do you know that you have even more to gain?

That's what happened to Joseph here. Although, we know it didn't happen right away. Now, the other Gospels tell us, in fact, John 19 says this, Joseph was a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews.

Joseph kept his love of Jesus under wraps. And so, what changed for Joseph? Joseph. How do you become a Joseph of Arimathea type person?

How do you change that you're willing to give up your kingdom for the kingdom of God? Well, you have to believe that there's something in the future that's better than what you have in the present.

[ 19 : 07 ] You have to believe there's something you don't have that's better than what you do have. There's a basic principle in life which is that the greater the vision, the greater the sacrifice.

And so, somehow, somewhere, Joseph had caught a vision for what the kingdom of God actually was. Joseph had seen how beautiful Jesus actually was.

I told you guys before, you don't get over that old crush until you get that new crush. Joseph finally got over wealth and power and status.

Jesus finally became his new crush. Jesus was the one who was worth more than everything else. And so, that's why things are interesting here in this passage with Joseph.

It's not just that he's taking courage like verse 43 tells us. but that he's taking a new courage. Joseph is taking courage he never had before.

[ 20 : 21 ] Joseph is taking risks he wasn't willing to take before. Joseph is putting everything on the line after Jesus' death that he wasn't willing to do before his death.

John 19, I mentioned, tells us that it was a secret that he followed Jesus and now Joseph decides it's not a secret. Joseph has seen the beauty of Christ.

Joseph has finally realized how valuable the kingdom of God is. Joseph has come to understand that there is nothing that is worth keeping if it means giving up Jesus.

Before it was a secret now Joseph is willing to take the risk. He knows the kingdom of God is worth it. He knows it is more valuable than money and status and power and comfort and pleasure.

Now, this passage doesn't tell us what the tipping point was for him. Potentially, it was Jesus' religious trial. Maybe he was actually there. Maybe he saw that Jesus' love for his people was so great that he was willing to suffer for them.

[ 21 : 53 ] Maybe the false accusations woke him up finally to the dead religion of his colleagues in the Sanhedrin. Maybe he realized finally that they were not actually interested in God and his ways, but they were interested in power and status.

Maybe Joseph was changed when darkness came over the land for three hours while Jesus hung on the cross, and that caused Joseph to understand that Jesus was the one who was taking the penalty for his sins.

Maybe he finally got home for him that Jesus was forsaken so that he could be accepted. Maybe it was Jesus miracles that got to him.

He finally realized that Jesus was more powerful than all the things that he loved. Maybe it was Jesus casting out demons. Maybe Joseph realized that Jesus could heal things and fix things that money and medicine would never be able to fix.

Maybe it was Jesus teaching. Maybe Joseph heard Jesus say this, for whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it. And maybe Joseph heard that and he realized the future was better than the present.

[ 23 : 18 ] Maybe he heard Jesus say this, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. and maybe he finally decided Jesus healing was worth more than anything else.

Maybe he heard Jesus say this, for even the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Maybe that captured Joseph's loyalty.

We're not told and we don't need to know. because the question for us is not what changed Joseph. The question is, has the gospel of Mark changed you?

As we've looked at Jesus for two years, have you seen how gracious and loving he is? as we've looked at Jesus for two years, have you seen his power and his authority?

He's more powerful than the rulers of this world. As we've looked at Jesus for two years, and especially in the last week of his life, have you seen that Jesus loves you more than anyone else?

[ 24 : 47 ] as we've looked at Jesus, has he melted your heart?

Because if we move on to the book of Judges, which is our next series, and we just think of the gospel of Mark as a book that we looked at for a while, we will have missed out on what Joseph saw.

Hast thou heard him, seen him, known him? Is not thine a captured heart? Mark puts this here at the end for a purpose, which is to remind us that Jesus' death demands a response.

that we're not meant to see Jesus walking towards the cross and dying on it and then to simply walk away and continue with the rest of our lives.

No, we're meant to be like Joseph who sees it and is finally willing to put everything on the line. We're meant to be like Joseph who sees it and is willing to finally be public about the fact that he loves Jesus.

[ 26 : 04 ] We're meant to be like Joseph who sees it and is willing to give up his resources to care for Jesus' body. We're meant to be like Joseph, to be willing to lose it all.

I've been telling you for two years that there are two camps. There are those who are in, all in on Jesus and those who are out. Christian, are you all in?

are you willing to be like Joseph of Arimathea? Is the kingdom of God worth it to you?

Is it worth losing other kingdoms? Joseph believes that the kingdom of God is better than the kingdom of Joseph.

And in case you missed it at the beginning, the kingdom of Joseph is going really well. Joseph's life would be very convenient and comfortable if he just kept his mouth shut.

[ 27 : 17 ] Joseph's life would be very convenient and comfortable if he just let alone and let Jesus' body hang. God will but he doesn't.

Christian, is that true of you? hast thou heard him, seen him, known him?

Is not thine a captured heart? Captivated by his beauty, worthy tribute, haste to bring. Let his peerless worth constrain thee. Crown him now, unrivaled king.

let's pray. Our father in heaven, we praise you and thank you for your son and our savior, our Lord Jesus.

us. We ask that you would not let the gospel of Mark wash over us. You wouldn't let us be numb to it, but you would give us tender hearts, that we would be like Joseph, that it would click for us, that we would finally see that your kingdom is better than our kingdom, that your future is better, than our present, that the vision that you have for us is worth the sacrifice, and so that we would know Jesus and love him, we'd follow him and obey him.

[ 28 : 58 ] We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.