



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of Mark Newman

Luke 23: 50-56

Spring 2026

"Christ Buried"

TRANSCRIPT

There are people at the office where I work that know about this class, and they know that I teach it every other Sunday. And every now and then, one or two of them will go, "So, what are you teaching?" And I'll say, "Well, the Gospel of Luke."

And they're like, "Still? You're still ...!" (*Laughter*).

But we're going to finish up the 23rd chapter today—and then of course, from there we go to the marvelous 24th chapter and Luke's account of the resurrection of our Lord—and then His post-resurrection appearances. But today, we come to Christ's burial.

Isaiah's prophetic 'Suffering Servant song' in Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 detailed many of the indignities and sufferings Jesus endured when He was illegally convicted and died on the cross, (and we've gone back to that passage of Scripture several times in our study). But one portion of it remains for us to consider. It is Isaiah 53:9, which reads in part,

"His grave was assigned with wicked men,  
Yet He was with a rich man in His death..."

And that prophecy found its fulfillment in the crucifixion of Christ and its aftermath. The first part was in the Lord's position between the two criminals on the

three crosses – they were “wicked men”. (ibid.) And the second is found in our passage today with the introduction of Joseph of Arimathea, “a rich man”, (ibid.), who saw to a proper burial of Jesus in his own tomb.

I'm going to read this Luke passage first, and then I want to also read a portion of John's Gospel that I think you'll enjoy for the benefit of adding some details that Luke omits. So we're at Luke 23, verse 50;

<sup>50</sup> And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man <sup>51</sup> (he had not consented to their plan and action), *a man* from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; <sup>52</sup> this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. <sup>53</sup> And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. <sup>54</sup> It was the preparation day, (*we know that day is Friday*), and the Sabbath was about to begin. <sup>55</sup> Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. <sup>56</sup> Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes.

And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Luke 23: 50-56

And then please turn, if you wish, to John 19, and we're going to read verses 38 through 42. John 19:38;

<sup>38</sup> After these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret *one* for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body. <sup>39</sup> Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing

a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*.<sup>40</sup> So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup> Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

John 19: 38-42

*(Message)* There is a certain finality to burials. They take place every day of course, but we really don't pay a whole lot of attention to that fact unless it happens to be the burial of someone famous, (in which case there tends to be a bit of fanfare), or it is someone who is especially dear to us.

That figure of speech that we use, 'That's the final nail in the coffin', conveys what a burial is in essence. It really is 'the end of the game' for that person in this life, as far as those who are connected to him or her are concerned. After burial, nothing is left in this life but the memories, as touching as they may be...right?, (we love the memories). And that was the case, for all practical purposes and from all appearances, with the burial of Jesus Christ.

Except in His case, as in all that pertained to His life and death, there was much more. His burial must be considered as an important part of all that He accomplished and all that transpired with Him and His incarnation, for in His burial we witnessed the necessary proof of His death paving the way for the miracle of the resurrection.

We see a further submission on His part to the humiliation of His having become man in the first place. "For it was fitting for Him..." the author of Hebrews said in Hebrews chapter 2, verse 10, "...in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings." (And His burial was in a continuum with those sufferings.) "Therefore..." as the Hebrews passage continues, "...He had to be made like

His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of *His* people." (*Heb 2:17*)

"Propitiation", we love that concept; we love that reality. Jesus took upon Himself God's curse upon the sins of men and women.

"Dust to dust" was how the curse was expressed in Genesis chapter 3, (*vs19*). And as the curse promised, the end result of man's sin was to return to the ground, to 'return to dust'. And in his burial, the body God had prepared for him was meant to return to dust.

Likewise, the circumstances of Jesus' burial have deep significance. God intervened in an extraordinary way to cause Him to be buried in the way that He was. There's no other way to explain how the corpse of Jesus would end up in the type of tomb that became His resting place—put there by the surprising people who arranged it. The corpses of victims of crucifixions who had been executed under the conviction of high treason were normally thrown into a common criminal's grave. (That's where they ended up.)

The Gospel writers...all are at pains to emphasize that Jesus truly died—none more than John, who in John 19, verses 31 through 37, (the verses right before the ones that we just read), gives the background preceding the arrival of Joseph of Arimatha, the central character of our passage today in Luke. [I'll correct myself there: the central character is Jesus, but Joseph is the main human; a normal, sinful, human.] It's a strange fact that Joseph acted in parallel but contrary fashion to the Jewish leadership. In the Law in Deuteronomy 21:22, there was a command that, "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day, (for he who is hanged is accursed of God)..." (Deut 12: 22-23)

Well here it was, 'the day of preparation', a Friday...and a High Holy Day at that. And the Jews, according to John, (and this is pitiful), 'out of concern that that command not be transgressed', (and with little time to spare for it was past 3:00 in the afternoon), they went to Pilate and asked, '...that the legs of those who were crucified be broken and their bodies taken off their crosses'... "taken away". (*Jhn 19:31*). [Breaking their legs would prevent them from using their legs to hoist themselves up so that they could breathe, and the result would be that they couldn't breathe and that would hasten their death].

Well, Pilate gave them permission and you know what happened next. The soldiers went and they broke the legs of the two criminals on either side of Jesus who were still alive, they were still suffering. But when they came to Jesus, they discovered Him already dead and did not break His legs...But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear. And John tells us, "...immediately blood and water came out." (*vs34*). John notes that in doing so, they fulfilled two Scriptures, saying, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." (*vs36*). And, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." (*vs37*). [We don't have time to go into great detail of John's passage there.]

It would have been normal for the mother of Jesus to have made the request of Pilate, but she was probably too distraught to deal with that at the moment and in the rush. In any event, the Jewish leaders were there promptly to make the request. Mark says in *Mark 15:42* that, "evening had already come". (The sense of that is that the evening was almost upon them; and there would be little time to prepare for a burial.) And here Luke introduces this new character in his Gospel...Joseph of Arimathea.

A reader of the Gospel, (you're all readers of this Gospel)...but a random reader of the Gospel would be familiar by now with the main characters – Jesus, of course – but also there were the 12 disciples, the women, including His mother, Mary, the Jewish leaders, like Caiaphas, (they would know Caiaphas by now), and the Roman rulers, Pilate and Herod. These, the reader, would be familiar with.

But suddenly, in all four Gospels, there is a new actor who enters the scene. Pilate and Herod have 'washed their hands' of the affair. Caiaphas and the members of the Sanhedrin are beyond relief, to say the least, and soon able to return to a normal state of affairs.

But the women are in deep grief, as are the disciples, who have all, (with the exception of John), fled. Those closest to the Lord who we can say, 'loved Him and had placed so much hope in Him', were devastated. Their beloved Master was dead, and their hopes were ingloriously dashed. Their highest aspirations had vanished into thin air—and they had to have been infected with such despair they were overcome with 'paralysis of spirit'. It was God's perfect time, truly.

As one reads the Bible carefully and deeply, one of the common themes that emerges is how God moves in such mysterious ways, 'to raise up triumph...out of the jaws of seeming defeat.'

The Prophet Elijah provides just the perfect illustration for this in 1 Kings 18&19. You know the account; we find Elijah experiencing first, the greatest *high*—and then the lowest *low* of his life in a very short period of time. On Mount Carmel he had witnessed God reveal His glory in this magnificent way, (and vindicating Elijah at the same time), when He brought fire down from heaven to consume this altar. (It's a great thing that happened.) And then He brought rain from heaven, according to the prophecy He had given through the prophet. It was a great victory for the LORD, and a heady day for Elijah. God, and truth, and faithfulness, and all things good and beautiful had prevailed.

But then immediately afterwards, the wicked Jezebel put out a death sentence for Elijah and he fled into the wilderness, despairing of his life. And when God approached to ask him what he was doing out there alone in the wilderness, he answered Him, 'I have been zealous for You, LORD, because the Sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets...and I alone am left; and they are seeking my life to take it away.' (1Ki 19:10).

Nothing had turned out as Elijah had hoped. Despite his own zeal for God, everyone else had failed and he was alone with nothing worth living for.

But God corrected him, (you know the story), telling him, essentially, 'You don't see everything like I do. I still have 7,000 followers who have not bowed the knee to Baal, every mouth that has not kissed him.' (1Ki 19:18). In God's Provenance, Elijah was not alone, his cause was not doomed, the LORD 'had another card up His sleeve'.

And that's what we see here. Jesus is dead, His corpse is the proof of it, His mother is wrought with grief, His closest friends have vanished in fear, and suddenly Luke introduces, (and not just Luke but all the Gospel writers introduce), this man named Joseph from an insignificant town named Arimathea.

Luke intends us to be struck by it...he actually inserts at the beginning of verse 52 this little Greek word that we translate, **behold**. You see it all the time in the Bible, this little Greek word, "behold"—and for some reason the translators of the New American Standard Version chose not to include it...but I interpret it as his intentional means of emphasizing it, as if to say, 'And look! A man named Joseph from Arimathea!'

This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. He had come out of nowhere, essentially. We're at the end of our Gospel, and reading the other Gospels, (all of whom mention Joseph as well), and they also introduce him in this way at 'the eleventh hour'.

Who is he? Well, piecing together the Gospel narratives, he was a member of the Jewish clerical leadership council, 'the Sanhedrin', and, "a prominent" one at that, according to Mark 15:43...so he had much to lose by his actions this day.

The Sanhedrin was based in Jerusalem, and the fact that Joseph had obtained a tomb for himself nearby indicates either that he lived there or that he was frequently in the city.

He hailed from Arimathea originally, and both Mark, (15:43), and John, (19:38), identify him with that formula...he is "Joseph of Arimathea". There is uncertainty about the location of that place, Arimathea, though many scholars believe it is to be identified with Ramathaim-zophim, also known as Ramah...and from 1 Samuel 1, (the likely birthplace of the prophet Samuel). If Arimathea was indeed that city, then it's about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem. [Luke (23:15) adds for his Gentile readers that it was "a city of the Jews".]

According to Matthew, (27:57), he was "a rich man", (which would befit someone who had means to purchase his own tomb), and that fact also providentially made it possible to say that the Messiah, "was with a rich man in His death." (Isa 53:9).

Luke describes him as, "a good and righteous man", (vs50), "good" because of what he was about to do, it was a noble and generous thing to do, and "righteous", (or 'just' would be another translation), because of what Luke goes on to say in verse 51, though a member of the Sanhedrin, "...he had not consented to their plan..." in regard to Jesus or their action in unjustly having him killed.

Almost all the commentators make the observation that in Mark's Gospel, (1:1), that the council's ruling against the Lord was made to appear unanimous, (and that there are explanations that are possible for that).

The most likely is that Joseph was not present that day, either because of a conflict or because of his own intent. But Luke's meaning is that his action, intentional or otherwise, revealed his moral character...that was the kind of man Joseph was. Most importantly, according to Luke, he was "waiting for the Kingdom of God", (vs52), Luke's way of saying what Matthew (27:57), and John (19:38), both say explicitly that he had become "a disciple of Jesus", like Nicodemus, (whom we shall take up in a moment). In the midst of the hatred and the vitriol of that Sanhedrin council, God had begun to draw him to a saving knowledge of the Man all his colleagues despised, and hated, and feared.

He had heard Jesus teach and felt the weight of the authority with which He spoke, and was drawn irresistibly to Him, eventually deciding that this man is the promised Messiah who would usher in the Kingdom...the Kingdom of God.

In that way, he was like Simeon and Anna, [I'm taking you back to the very first chapters of Luke, (2:25-38)], two godly saints who greeted the infant Jesus in those early chapters. They were said to have been looking for "the consolation" and "the redemption of Israel". They were looking for "the Lord's Christ". (*ibid.*)

Joseph and Nicodemus also appear as two who had been waiting expectantly for the kingdom. Nicodemus had come to Jesus by night, seeking to flatter Him, (I love that scene, and you do too), 'We know what a great teacher you are...', but Jesus cut him off—interrupted him with 'words of life'. Later, we see him, (*Nicodemus*), in the council chamber in chapter 7, (*vs50-51*), of John, daringly objecting to the members' illegal treatment of Jesus and then receiving their condemnation and contempt in exchange.

We're not told much about these men, but perhaps the most insightful thing is what John wrote about Joseph of Arimathea. He was, "a disciple of Jesus, but a secret *one* for fear of the Jews." (*Jhn 19:38*). What a glorious and encouraging scene this is then to see him step out of the shadows of timid faith, lay his concern for reputation aside, and engage in such a bold act of faith.

He had much to lose. As a man of position and obvious attainment, he would have enjoyed privilege and wealth, and all the comforts and advantages that come with those things...and here he was risking it all to march up to Pilate with his request. Mark states in Mark 15:43 that, "...he gathered up courage...", (it took courage), "...and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus."

By making himself known to Pilate in that way, Joseph was subjecting himself to a great deal of risk on a number of levels. For one, he was willingly showing himself to this Roman ruler, Pilate, to be associated with a man whom he had just sentenced to capital punishment on the grounds of treason and to be crucified between two other treasonous criminals. It would not take a great progression of logic to infer that Joseph, by associating with the King of the Jews, was a traitor as well. By asking permission to bury Jesus' body, he revealed himself to be in a very close relationship with Him.

And then there was his reputation among his own people. A person who would identify with Jesus as 'His disciple' would likely be kicked out of the synagogue and ostracized by the Jewish community. So Joseph, by his act, was facing the certainty of not only being booted out of the Sanhedrin, but of losing the privilege of communal fellowship with his own people as well. For a secret disciple, this was a surprisingly courageous act.

But perhaps we should consider, that by this time Joseph of Arimathea was a secret disciple no longer. What he had witnessed in Jesus' final act of service, (the way He died), had given him a boldness that he had not had before. The Holy Spirit worked in his heart to replace his fear with courage.

He had struggled with fearing man more than he feared God, (and that's a danger that threatens all of us). I don't mean to make you uncomfortable, but when we put too much stock in the things of this world and our place in it...or when we care too little about Christ and have too little gratitude for what He has done for us, we may resort to a, 'secret kind of fellowship with the Lord' and practically 'compartmentalizing' our lives to the point that we have entire groups of friends and acquaintances who have no idea that we're a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But a true disciple of Christ, over time, cannot maintain that secrecy and have a growing relationship with the Lord...He won't let him. According to His own individual design, He will sanctify him in ways that will lead to that timidity vanishing.

Sanctification can be painful, can't it? But that's what happened with Joseph of Arimathea, he gained an increasing boldness for Christ through his increased apprehension of His majesty as he had seen it at the cross.

It happened somehow with Nicodemus as well. He didn't lack knowledge, he didn't lack expertise, he was 'the teacher of Israel'. (*Jhn 3:10*), but Jesus made him to know that his impressive attributes and accomplishments, all that caused him to think so highly of himself, were insufficient to gain him entry into the Kingdom—the very thing that he was most interested in. He needed help from outside his 'works' and

'accomplishments'. He needed the gracious work of God's Holy Spirit to operate internally in his heart. Now, thanks to John's Gospel, (*Jhn 7:50f & 19:39f*), we know that that had happened with him as well as it had with Joseph.

The two members of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, appear in John's account to have been working in tandem. While Joseph was securing from Pilate permission to take Jesus' body down from the cross, Nicodemus was securing the spices, ("a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*", *vs39*), that would be needed for the actual burial.

Time was of the essence. Luke tells us in verse 53 that Joseph, (and what had to have been some of his servants who took the body down), "...and wrapped it in linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain."

It was 'preparation day', and the Sabbath was about to begin, when all arrangements such as needed to be made were required to cease.

Jesus had breathed His last around 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, and Sabbath would have begun around 6:00 o'clock, so there was only a very short time available to them. They would have had the grisly work of removing the nails from His hands and His feet, and then prepare the body for burial, (which would have included the ceremonial washing of the body.)

There was little time to properly anoint the body, but they did what they could, "wrapping it in linen cloth", (*ibid.*), and according to Jewish custom at the same time mixing in the spices. "A hundred pounds" was the amount that would have been used for the body of royalty—or some other distinguished person. None of Jesus' relatives or disciples or close friends, (almost all of them from Galilee), would have had a tomb available. So Joseph did what he knew he needed to do...he put the body in his own tomb. He had had it 'hewn out of bedrock', according to Matthew's account, but it had not been used up to that point. Luke emphasizes that being a wealthy man, Joseph had prepared it for himself.

Well, why is the burial of Jesus important? Why is it important? Well, for one thing, it's an integral part of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul defined the Gospel in those memorable terms in the early verses of 1 Corinthians 15, (vs3-5). He wrote,

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and that He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures..."; and that, 'He appeared to many...'; he goes on to say, '...over 500 at one time.' (vs6).

The *proof* that Jesus died was that He was buried.

And the *proof* that He was resurrected was that He appeared.

Had He not died, He would not have been buried... and had He not been buried, there may have been some reasonable doubt about whether or not He had truly been raised.

The importance of His burial is further confirmed by the Apostles' Creed, (I must mention that, the oldest confession of the Christian church), which confirms that;

...Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried...'

From the beginning, the burial of Jesus was considered *essential* to the truth of the Gospel.

Moreover, the tomb itself lent a confirmation of who He was, since it was 'one in which no one had ever lain'. And it was a 'new tomb', it had not been tainted with decay and decomposition...befitting the sinless Son of God. And that correlates well with the

circumstances observed during the Lord's triumphal entry, if you think about this, when He rode into Jerusalem on a colt on which, "no one had ever sat". (Luk 19:30)

And even with His birth, when He came into the world He came in 'born of a virgin'; and now as He exits the world, He is placed in a new tomb, an unused one, which suggests it was reserved for sacred use.

While His burial was a continuation of His humiliation, (which we mentioned earlier), it was also simultaneously the beginning of His exaltation. In the Eastern World at this time, it was the custom whenever royalty was to be received into the city to prepare vessels for his use—which were newly made and which had never been used. And often the city would even cut a new road into their town, a new road for this very important royal visitor entering the city. It gave testimony to the prestige of the visitor. So this was a royal tomb...God in His provenance arranged, through this amazing turn of events, to have 'the rejected King' given a hint of His true identity even in His burial.

There is also an important theological truth to be found in Christ's burial that presents our own experiences...believers united with Christ as corresponding to Christ's own experience. We're pictured, for example in Romans chapter 6, verses 1 through 6, that it's not just dying with Christ and being raised with Him, but it's actually being buried with Him. Romans 6:4 reads,

"Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

Christ defeated death! Psalm 16:10 prefigures Him as David's greater Son, who rejoices that,

'God will not abandon my soul to Sheol,  
Nor allow His Holy One to undergo decay.'

And in Christ, each of his own will also emerge triumphant over death.

Those who have died before us...(this is a comforting thought)...those who have died before us have found—not defeat...but victory in Him!

For believers, the promise of the grave is not ultimately corruption and eternal death, but righteousness and eternal life. The grave was not the end of the world for the Lord...we know that, and soon many more in Jerusalem and environs would discover it.

Well, if you have a copy of the outline, you can see I have labeled the last two verses of chapter 23 as 'The Women from Galilee.' Mark's Gospel actually names them: "Mary Magdalene and Mary the *mother* of Joses, were looking on *to see* where He was laid", (*Mark 15:47*).

Luke adds that they "...saw the tomb...", (this is leading up now to the resurrection)...Luke says they, "...saw the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment." (*vs55b-56*).

Their intent, as we all remember, was to go as early as possible after Sabbath to the tomb in order to give the body of Jesus the kind of proper anointing that the hurried burial had not allowed.

Combined with the examples and ministrations of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, they give us a snapshot of the mood, and feeling of loss that infected all those who had placed so much hope in the One who had become so dear to them.

There was so much love on display. Love is a wonderful thing, and there was a lot of love this day, this evening—so much affection...and such disappointment.

The one thing missing was any feeling of hope. Yet that ingredient will return in a very short period of time.

We look forward to celebrating that *hope* next Lord's Day...for believers, (for us), every Sunday is the Lord's Day, every Sunday is Resurrection Sunday. Let's give thanks for that.

*(Closing prayer)* LORD, thank You that You sent Your Son to die on the cross.

We thank You, LORD, that He was buried just the way You had laid out.

Thank You for raising up those two men who showed the courage of faith, true faith, to bury Him in a manor that testified to who He was.

And thank You, Lord God, that You raised Jesus, Your Son,  
from the dead in three days.

We thank You that we were buried with Him,  
and we are united with Him,  
and we live with Him.

In His name, we pray.

Amen.

*(End of Audio)*