

Day 46

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. 15.42-47

All four Gospels record that it is Joseph of Arimathea who goes to Pilate and asks to take down the body of Jesus in order to bury it.



Joseph is requesting a favour of Pilate, as under Roman law a criminal crucified for treason was denied burial. His body was left to perish on the cross as a grisly warning of the fate awaiting any who would challenge the power of Rome.

Pilate, however, makes an exception of Jesus. Perhaps he does so because he knows he was innocent, or perhaps it is because he too respects Joseph, who is variously described in the Gospels as rich, good and righteous. The fact that Joseph was a respected member of the Council which had brought the charges against Jesus, and did not (according to Luke) consent to its actions, enhances both possibilities. (One may infer that Mark's twofold reference to the whole Council condemning Jesus refers only to those in attendance at the hastily called, illegal gathering.)

What Mark wants us to note is that Joseph took *courage* before going to Pilate. In a Gospel punctuated by fear, and disciples who are fearful to the last (16.8), Joseph's act of courage marks him out. John records that he was a secret disciple. Not anymore. His secret is out. Not only has he publicly taken Jesus' body down, saving the land from ritual defilement (Deut 21.23), but he buried Jesus in his own tomb, an enduring witness to his discipleship. His brave act may also be interpreted in line with that of the woman who anointed him for burial: he did what he could, it was a beautiful thing - an act of unashamed devotion.

? What act of devotion could you perform for Jesus today?



Lord Jesus, as I ponder your death for my sake and look forward to celebrating your glorious resurrection, give me the courage to do such beautiful things for you as I am able. In your name I pray. Amen.