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Devotion for April 8th, 2022

*"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."
- Mark 15:42-43*

Throughout the history of the church, it is truly remarkable how many myths and legends have grown around any number of Biblical characters. Worse, though, once the legend starts it is far sadder to see how quickly the character turns into an idol. Our full text for today, [Mark 15:33-47](#), contains two such people whose personages have been particularly abused, Mary Magdalene and Joseph of Arimathea. Of the two, Mary gets the worst of it to the point that I won't tackle the things written about her here instead preferring to focus upon Joseph because people rarely do.

What we know about Joseph of Arimathea is that he was from a town in Southern Samaria, a member of the Sanhedrin, wealthy and a follower of Jesus although John tells us that he was doing so in secret. For these reasons approaching Pilate for the Lord's body put him at great risk. It also meant that he would become ritually unclean for celebrating the Passover.

What many of you may not know, though, is that he was throughout history considered by legend to be the one who preserved the so-called "Holy Grail" or cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper. In fact, according to one such legend he was sent to England and brought the Grail with him there. All of that is highly unlikely and at times falls off the cliff into the sinful category as lives were lost searching for and fighting for possession of an item which does not have God's Word attached to it as being significant for salvation.

What does have significance for our salvation, though, is the Lord whom Joseph followed, whose "kingdom" he was looking for according to our text. By coming to Pilate, Joseph proved that he would risk anything and everything for his faith in Christ. Think about that. Beyond an inability to properly celebrate the Passover that year, Joseph was associating himself with a convicted criminal in Rome's eyes, a blasphemer in Israel's, both of which could be considered criminal offenses. The sacrifice that he was making that evening amounted to a fruit of repentance that both John the Baptist and Jesus Himself preached about.

Finally, the fruits of repentance and faith will be found in you this upcoming week as you set aside time to be gathered by God's Word, sing His praises,

bring your offerings, receive the forgiveness that Joseph of Arimathea's Lord and your Lord too, Jesus, earned on the cross, and finally, receive His great gift of life in, with and under the bread and wine of the Holy Communion.

Blessings on your celebration of Holy Week and Easter this year.
Praise be the Holy Name of Jesus forever. Amen.

*God's blessings,
Rev. Kevin Loughran, Senior Pastor
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