

EASTER SUNDAY 2021

Step Out of the Shadows

Ice Breaker: Tell your group about your Easter Celebration. Was it quiet and relaxed? Chaotic and full of family noise? Did you forget to turn the oven on to cook the ham? Talk about it.

Read together: John 19:38-42

Two individuals that are not always highlighted on Easter are Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy man, and Influential man and a righteous man. Nicodemus was a man who loved God, a man of influence and a man of wealth. Discuss together why these two men and the above factors matter to the story.

Reflect and Discuss:

Think back to how Pastor Jason described some of the events of Jesus' death and how Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus may have perceived them.

- They had to scramble in the dark to find a light when the skies went dark.
- They felt the earthquake.
- They heard that the veil in the temple was torn in two.
- They heard the whispering around bribes to make sure the body of Jesus wasn't stolen.

Think about how you would have walked around on Friday afternoon and evening.

- How would you have faced Saturday in the shoes of these FAMOUS, WEALTHY and INFLUENTIAL men?

There are several things that you may not have given much thought to before regarding Joseph's request for Jesus' body and burial:

1. Joseph had the tomb chiseled out of a rock in a garden that he owned.
 2. He may have prepared the body for burial by washing the wounds. What was your reaction as Jason described the washing and wrapping of Jesus' body?
 3. They may have experienced some deep reflective time as they were taking care of Jesus' dead and tortured body. They didn't know that He would ultimately rise and conquer death so that would have certainly impacted their perception of the whole situation. Their reflection likely brought up regrets like: "Why did I stay in the shadows for so long?", "Why didn't I speak up and say that I believed Him?" or maybe "Why wasn't I closer to Him like the 12 disciples?"
- What would your regretful thoughts have been if you were in the place of these men?

Once they discovered that declarations of resurrection were being made, it is VERY possible that they went to the grave where they may have wrapped His body. They meticulously cleaned and wrapped and put spices and balm on Jesus. If they were willing to do all of that for a dead Jesus, how much joy must they have felt to THINK that He may have risen?

One poignant moment was Nicodemus seeing that the head wrap had been folded and placed aside. *"The cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings."*

- Describe how you would react to see the cloth folded neatly where Jesus' head should have been!

Following His resurrection, historical documents tell us that he appeared to many people. At one point, we know that, “He was seen by more than 500 of His followers at one time.” 1 Corinthians 15:6 (NLT) Jason mentioned many possibilities. Pick a few and talk about what those individuals must have felt and how they must have wanted to express their emotions and sentiments knowing that now Jesus had risen from the dead!

The Blind man that was healed with muddy spit.

The woman caught in adultery.

Nicodemus

Mary Magdalene (delivered from demons).

The woman with the issue of blood.

Who are some that Jason did not mention?

As Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus left the tomb, they were never the same. Their belief in the risen Messiah could no longer be hidden. Their reputations with people that mattered to them three days earlier could not be as important. They may have had regrets, but I bet they had even more HOPE! I wonder if they were there when Jesus appeared to over 500 believers. I hope they never had a doubt about what they saw. They were willing to step out of the shadows and declare that they believed in Him while He was dead. If they were willing to do that for a dead Jesus, how much more should we be willing to leave the shadows for a LIVING, RISEN Jesus?!!

- In what ways do you want to declare your faith in new ways this week? Make a goal and share it with your group!

Pray together:

Father, so much about Resurrection Day is still a mystery to us. Help us to stand in wonder and awe at the possibilities. Help us to remember that each human that encountered Jesus, in the flesh, experienced Him from their own perspective. Help us to wonder at the amazing depth of what it means to be loved by Him, SEEN by Him and KNOWN by Him.

Let your miracle of resurrection impact us in a deeper way than we have ever let it in the past.

Help us to stand for Jesus in new ways. Help us to share Him with others that we have been scared to share Him with in the past. Help us to come out of the shadows and into the light of Your freedom and grace.

Help us to walk free of bondage and live in the freedom that You give us. You are alive! In the name of Jesus. Amen!