

# THE SECRET DISCIPLE

## MARK 15:42-47

Text:

Introduction:

Illustration:

I read the story of a man who lived in the fourth-century named Telemachus. He lived in a remote village, tending his garden and spending much of his time in prayer. One day he thought he heard the voice of God telling him to go to Rome, so he obeyed, setting out on foot.

Weary weeks later, he arrived in the city at the time of a great festival. The little man followed the crowd down the streets into the Coliseum. He saw the gladiators stand before the emperor and say, "We who are about to die salute you."

Then he realized these men were going to fight to the death for the entertainment of the crowd. He cried out, "In the name of Christ, stop!"

As the games began, he pushed his way through the crowd, climbed over the wall, and dropped to the floor of the arena. When the crowd saw this tiny figure

rushing to the gladiators and saying, “In the name of Christ, stop!” they thought it was part of the show and began laughing.

When they realized it wasn’t, the laughter turned to anger. As he was pleading with the gladiators to stop, one of them plunged a sword into his body. He fell to the sand. As he was dying, his last words were, “In the name of Christ, stop!”

Then a strange thing happened. The gladiators stood looking at the tiny figure lying there. A hush fell over the Coliseum. Way up in the upper rows, a man stood and made his way to the exit. Others began to follow. In dead silence, everyone left the Coliseum.

The year was 391 BC, and that was the last battle to the death between gladiators in the Roman Coliseum. Never again in the great stadium did men kill each other for the entertainment of the crowd, all because of one tiny voice that could hardly be heard above the tumult.

In these verses, Jesus Christ has given His life on the cross. His broken, bloody body hangs lifeless and dead. The crowds depart. His mother Mary and John leave the scene of His death. The soldiers are preparing to leave Calvary. It is a sad scene of death, pain and sorrow.

But out of the darkness of that dreadful day one brave man stepped forward.

Out of all the people there just one man was willing to identify himself with the Lord. One man was willing to claim the body of the Lord.

Notice:

## 1. JOSEPH'S CHARACTER

All four of the Gospel writers tell us about this man named Joseph. Their descriptions reveal a man of character and integrity.

- He was a wealthy man.

### **Matthew 27:57**

<sup>57</sup> When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:

- He is called a "good" and "just" man

### **Luke 23:50**

<sup>50</sup> And, behold, *there was* a man named Joseph, a counsellor; *and he was* a good man, and a just:

The word "good" means "to be ready". Joseph was man who could be counted on. He was a man of integrity. The word "just" means that he was "upright". He was a man who honored the Word of God to the

best of his ability. Joseph possessed a good moral character and set an excellent religious example.

- He is called an “honorable counselor”

**Mark 15:43**

<sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

The word counselor means that Joseph was a distinguished man, who probably held a high office among the Jews, as one of their great council, or a Jewish senator. The word “honorable,” here, is not a mere title of “office,” but is given in reference to his personal character, as being a man of integrity and blameless life.

Joseph of Arimathaea possessed many qualities that cause him to stand out.

He’s the kind of person who would have made a great church member and a great friend.

He possessed some characteristics that should be true of every person in this room today.

## 2. JOSEPH'S CONCEALMENT

Joseph of Arimathaea was a Jewish leader, but he was also a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

While Joseph was a believer, he kept his faith a secret.

### **John 19:38**

<sup>38</sup> And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave *him* leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

We don't know how long that Joseph had been a believer and a follower of the Lord but we do know that he opposed the efforts of the Sanhedrin to condemn Jesus to death.

### **Luke 23:50-51**

<sup>50</sup> And, behold, *there was* a man named Joseph, a counsellor; *and he was* a good man, and a just: <sup>51</sup> (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) *he was* of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

Joseph had many commendable qualities, but his failure to publically declare his faith in Jesus is not one of them.

Sadly, there are many believers who fit the same profile of Joseph of Arimathaea. Their neighbors do not know they are saved. Their coworkers do not know they are saved. Their classmates do not know they are

saved. If you watched them day in and day out, there would be little evidence that they are saved.

- Their lives are not all that different from the world around them.
- They do not attend church faithfully.
- They never stand up, even in church, and give a clear testimony of salvation.
- They use some of the same language and do the same things as the lost around them.
- They intentionally hide their faith because they are afraid of what people will say about them.

Fear of others is the trap Satan sets to ensnare the timid saint of God. When Satan can silence your testimony, he can hinder the cause of Christ.

When he can prevent you from standing up boldly and declaring your faith, he can prevent others from hearing the Gospel.

Fear is a trap we must avoid at all costs!

**Proverbs 29:25**

<sup>25</sup> The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

### 3. JOSEPH'S COURAGE

Joseph had purchased a tomb near the city of Jerusalem that he planned to be buried in one day. Tombs that were carved out of the rocks were very expensive. Only the very rich could afford one.

When Joseph of Arimathaea saw Jesus dying on the cross, his priorities changed. What the life of Jesus had not been able to do, the death of Jesus on the cross did. As Joseph watched Jesus die that day, he made a decision. He would be silent no more. He would hide his faith no longer.

Notice:

#### **Mark 15:43-46**

<sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. <sup>44</sup> And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling *unto him* the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. <sup>45</sup> And when he knew *it* of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

- Note his boldness “went in boldly”
- Note his desire “craved the body of Jesus
- Note his sacrifice “fine linen”

Joseph bought fine linen to wrap the body in, though in such a case old linen that had been worn might have been thought sufficient. In paying respects to Christ it becomes us to be generous, and to serve him with the best that can be got, not with that which can be got at the best hand.

- Note his compassion “wrapped him in the linen”  
“laid him in the sepulcher”

He took down the body, mangled and macerated as it was, and wrapped it in the linen as a treasure of great worth.



Close:

Our passage closes with Jesus being laid in the tomb. The stone is rolled against the door. Everyone thinks the story is over, and that the dream has ended. Jesus is dead and their hopes and dreams have died with Him.

When we leave this text “Its Friday, (Black Friday), but Sunday’s coming.

As I close let me asked you to consider:

What kind of disciple are you? Are you a bold disciple or a secret disciple?

Have you trusted Him as your Savior, and if so have you told anyone about it?