

Recap of 7/7/24 message by Pastor Chris (Mark 15:40-47)

- The scene of Jesus' burial is very interesting. The King of the Jews, the King of Kings has just died, but the pageantry one would expect at a funeral for such a king is missing. Even His own appointed disciples are missing, the men who were chosen to be His heralds, His sent messengers! Mark uses key words and structure to carefully weave into this scene a sense of irony and expectation. He bookends this passage with the women "standing at a distance." This is the same wording used for Peter before he goes on to deny Jesus when Mark records that Peter "followed Him at a distance" (Mark 14:54). Are these women who "used to follow and minister to" Jesus going to minister to Him now and care for His body, or are they going to scatter as the rest of the disciples already have?
- But then a stranger steps onto the scene. Joseph of Arimathea gathers courage to ask Pilate for Jesus' body. Joseph is a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, and John tells us he is a "secret" disciple of Jesus (John 19:38). He needed courage to ask for Jesus' body because his secret was a secret no more. While Peter denied Jesus and the women are on the fringes possibly teetering, this stranger who was secretly following Jesus makes his identity in Christ known by this courageous act. John tells us that Nicodemus was also there bringing a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes to care for Jesus' body, an amount befitting a king (John 19:39). Jesus is not buried in dishonor; He is buried with honor and even in His burial He fulfills more prophesy (Isaiah 53:9).
- The women close this passage still watching, and we must continue to read on to see what will happen, but the question that Mark drives at is what type of disciple are we going to be? Will we be disciples who scatter and deny in an attempt to save our own lives or reputations? Or will we be disciples who risk life and reputation to openly be identified with the King of Kings, Jesus? This makes me think of Jesus' teaching just after Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus then gathers the disciples and teaches them "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:34-35). This paradox shows the crux of this passage. One who tries to maintain a self-centered life, denying Jesus' teaching and His gift of eternal life ends up losing his or her life to eternal ruin. But those who deny themselves by giving over their lives in loyalty to Jesus and the gospel, by accepting His teaching and following Him end up actually preserving their lives forever. The question remains, what type of disciple will we be?