

2000 Advent Week 2 - Joseph of Arimathea

by John Piper

Joseph of Arimathea and Mary Magdalene are commissioned by Jesus to spread the gospel and save a pagan queen, despite facing challenges and grief.

Duration: 15:44

Scripture: Matthew 27:3, Romans 6:23

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Sacrificial Love"

Description

The sermon transcript discusses the concept that death does not define the measure of a person's life. It emphasizes that the true impact of a life is not determined by its length, breadth, depth, or strength, but rather by its effect in the coming days and in heaven. The speaker claims that they intend to save and convert a pagan queen, and that this act will close the jaws of hell without her soul. The transcript also includes a conversation between Mary Magdalene and the Lord, where she questions the sacrifice of her husband and children for the salvation of a pagan queen. The Lord explains that breath is a gift and death is its measure on earth, and Mary vows to not let her husband's death be in vain.

Transcript

Last week, we left Mary Magdalene watching Joseph of Arimathea who had overcome his fear and his secrecy and boldly come for the body of Jesus. A year ago, we left Mary Magdalene in Britain thirty years later helping Boadicea Queen of Isoni, die. And this morning, I hope that we can bring these two scenes together.

Joseph of Arimathea, part two. When all of Joseph's tears were spent and all the secret love long pent behind the bars of fear was loosed and like a swelling flood reduced this polished nobleman to sobs and left him weakened and with throbs behind his eyes at last he lifted up his hands and passed his fingers up and down the stake where Jesus hung as if to make the gibbet like a lover's face and somehow feel the cost of grace. The women watched behind the sword and spear between them and the Lord and Mary Magdalene was on her knees with all her longings drawn to Jesus and somehow she feared to this strange person who revered the Lord with fearlessness and pain.

Then Joseph stood and raised his plain and heavy ladder high and placed it on the bloody beam and braced it just above the Savior's pale gray arm. He bound with rope the frail limp body of the Lord on beam and post and then against a scream from Jesus' mother stifled in her hand he slowly cut through skin and ligament beside the spikes with heads made flat by many strikes from Roman mallets then he clenched

the knife between his teeth and wrenched each hand of Jesus off its rough and jagged nail through tendons tough but careful not to break a bone. He came then to his feet they'd grown to twice their size with blood and swelling they were caked with mud from walking barefoot to the place of execution Joseph's face was ashen as he put his back between the women and the rack where Jesus' feet were nailed and when he moved the feet hung free again he climbed the ladder tied a rope around the Savior's chest with hope that it would bear the weight cut free the other cords and tenderly began to lower Jesus to the ground.

With all this in view the sword and spear could hold their ground no more and Mary dashed around the soldier to the cross and held her arms up toward the corpse and smelled the stench of death but Joseph paused with muscles taut what if he caused the death of this young girl he saw the soldier lift his spear and draw his sword to threaten John and hold old Nicodemus back from bold and reckless deeds but then it seemed she would be spared and no one deemed her worthy of their vigilance but Joseph stared as if a trance had gripped his mind sir Mary said I just would like to keep his head from lying on the ground you know he said I think you'd better go if not you'll be unclean tonight when Sabbath comes and I've no might to save you from his enemies but Mary waved her hand oh please sir

even if a thousand men with swords should come not now or then would I depart and leave you here with cords already cutting near the bone in your strong hands and see the face of my king Jesus be defiled by lying in the dirt and as for me I would invert your warning sir if I should leave my bloody Jesus here and cleave to law to make me pure then I would be unclean with darkest dye not just tonight but every day sir lower him to me I pray and as the rope slipped through his hands he said to her your heart demands an older frame than what I see you must have known much misery your hardship has not been in vain God does not waste the gift of pain and as she cradled Jesus' head the man picked up the precious dead and at the start of Sabbath day they carried Jesus Christ away by morning

Joseph realized that Caiaphas had prized his death at 20 silver coins and so he girded up his loins and fled Jerusalem before the Sabbath dawn for more than 30 days he hid alone in Galilee when it was known that Jesus had appeared one day near Joseph's secret hideaway he took the risk and found a crowd about 500 strong all bowed in reverence before the prince of life he knelt as once long since a distance far yet good to gaze upon the man that 30 days ago he carried dead down to his grave and prayed it would be true that he should live now suddenly the Lord was silent he could see across the field a man and knew that he must speak with him and through the crowd he walked until he stood by Joseph then he said I would please speak with you alone come let us go apart and there he set his

riven hands on Joseph's head and spoke this blessing I was dead and now I am alive with all authority and there shall fall not one small word of what I say nor any purpose I display in 10 days I will leave the earth and then 10 more and I will birth a mission that can never fail nor is there one with larger scale nor ever will there be and I will make the hearts of kings comply for my renown and pagan queens will yield to me in final scenes of death and as my lifeless frame you carried once so now my name with that same courage to the place that I appoint and with the grace of that same helper Mary do not fear that she is young and you are twice her age or that she was a concubine I know these flaws and I have chosen her she waits for you outside the city gates and has a word from me for

you now go and learn what you should do you will receive the power you need and I will be with you Godspeed in two days Joseph came to her and said your hands still smell of myrrh she smiled so you were wrong that I would be defiled by touching my dead king Joseph marveled at this maiden's youth and

wisdom that she carried in her soul and then he said I know that other men are younger and there must be one whom you desire she said no none what I desire is Christ and all that he appoints for me before what may I would be his above all others Joseph said and love could you then fall in love I could she said if Jesus calls it good the silence was as full and deep and rich as any words might reap and you she asked I longed to see you every day in Galilee he said and I was saying your face she

said here in this frightening place then Joseph asked did Jesus make it plain to you the path we take and where we are to bear his name the way we bore his lifeless frame together to the grave he told me you would have a word be bold now Mary tell me where we are to go she said it will be far nor will we ever come again to Israel he said and when one of us dies the other will remain and do the mission till we lie together in the grave he said that we should both be brave and travel to the island of Britannia and there to love the tribe of Isoni and show and teach them everything we know of Christ and so the two were wed they packed what they could use and shed the rest among the poor and sailed with Christ into a future veiled three thousand miles away ten fruitful years went by and they

were given two sons and a girl two jagged diamonds and a pearl they used until one day in winter time God took it all away they couldn't keep the children warm and all three died during the storm and now her husband trembling lay and Mary cradled him the way she had the Christ and saw the face of death and when the final trace of life was gone before she said goodbye she bowed her head and said Lord why and this time Jesus answered breath death dear Mary is a gift and death its measure on the earth not so it is with life death does not show the measure of a life nor length nor breadth nor depth nor height nor strength nor its effect in 20 years or centuries all that appears in coming days and finally in heaven where no more you see through smoke and glass but this much i will say i mean

to save and by your word convert a pagan queen and she will ask you if you've seen or tasted loss and when you tell her of these days the jaws of hell will shut without her soul because you still believe a long long pause then Mary Magdalene replied you mean oh lord my husband died and all my children too to free a pagan queen from hell i see she wrapped her husband in a shroud and then she knelt kissed him and vowed i promise since she can't remain i will not let you die in vain nor now as we light candle too dare we to waste our grief in view of this the loss is what we see but seldom what the good may be a man can know the fruit of breath but only God the fruit of death

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