

Evotional – 14 July 2013 – Mark 15:42-47

Joseph's story

I want to tell you about my day yesterday – Friday that is. It was a very long day. I've been waiting a long time, hoping to see the coming of God's kingdom, and I was really sure that Jesus was the promised one, the Messiah, the one who would save us. But it all went wrong yesterday. The rest of the Council thought he was too dangerous and wanted to kill him. And I wimped out; I didn't speak up as much as I should have done – even though I was a leading member I was afraid of what the others would think and about my future on the Council, and anyway what would have been the point when all the others were so determined to kill him? So early yesterday morning the decision was made and we sent Jesus to Pilate. The next time I saw Jesus he had been flogged and was in a dreadful state. At 9am they crucified Jesus. I watched at a distance. All sorts of people mocked him but then at 12pm the sky went dark for three hours. And then other strange things happened – Jesus gave a loud cry and died; normally they fade away gradually on the cross. But Jesus went with a shout and the Roman centurion suddenly said 'surely this man was the Son of God', and I heard late last night that at that moment the curtain in the Temple – the big thick one that separates the most holy place was torn from top to bottom.

Well, I didn't want Jesus hanging there dead on the cross on the Sabbath. I wanted to do one small thing for Jesus. I took my courage in my hands, and went to see Pilate. He was surprised at my request because he knew how much the other Council members hated Jesus, and he was also surprised that Jesus was already dead so I had to wait while he checked things out, and then at last we were told we could take the body. We didn't have time to do a proper burial with spices and things – that will have to wait to tomorrow when the Sabbath is over. But I found some helpers and we wrapped the body in a sheet and put it in a tomb cut out of the rock. I had spent a lot of money on that tomb and it hasn't been used yet. We just managed to roll the stone in front of the tomb, to keep rats and stuff getting at the body in the meantime.

I keep asking myself why I went to all that effort. The other leaders on the Council won't be impressed – they would have been happy for Jesus' body to be chucked in a mass grave with the two robbers. My family won't be happy that there's a decaying body in our family tomb. Plus, all that handling the body has made me ritually unclean which has properly messed up my Sabbath worship today. Obviously if Jesus weren't dead, I'd feel different. If Jesus had somehow got the better of everyone who wanted to kill him we would know that he really is God's Son like the centurion said. If Jesus were alive it would be well worth all the effort I made yesterday. You see, I had been feeling bad that I wasn't one of his public followers. Some people had given up their jobs and family responsibilities to follow him and I didn't do any of that. But what I saw him do and heard him say made me think that he was someone really special, that he was the promised Messiah. There's lots he said that I didn't understand, but I knew at the time that I should be following him. If he were still alive I would regret not following him, not sticking up for him more in the Council. But he's not alive is he? He's dead. But one day maybe God really will come and rescue his people.

One small step ...

God often calls us to take one little step of trust; we often don't know where it will lead. Joseph did one thing; a little thing in hindsight but a bold thing for him; he'd been waiting but now he took a step of faith; he didn't know all the answers but he knew enough; he wasn't necessarily thinking there would be any more steps; but this was a God moment in his life and he went for it.

Is there a little step you need to take? Have you been waiting or avoiding but now God is saying 'do it'? It might be a first prayer of commitment to God; or the first time you mention to your work colleague or neighbour that you are a Christian; or is it time you got baptised; or time you offered to use some gift or talent for God? If Joseph were here today, he would say to you, 'go ahead; take that little step'.

Next time you are driving and see the cat's eyes in the road; remember that sometimes God just wants us to trust him by walking to the next cat's eye.

One small stone ...

On Easter Saturday there was a stone over the door of the tomb; for Jesus' followers it would have been a day of silence; a day of sadness; a day of regrets. Most of them had let Jesus down pretty badly.

We're not Easter people unless we are Good Friday and Easter Saturday people. There's a place in the Christian walk with God for remorse and regret and sadness; for facing up to our failings, our acts of selfishness and cowardice, our disappointments, the times when we haven't taken even a little step of faith.

At the cross your sins were being forgiven, your punishment was being paid, you were being redeemed, cleansed, reclothed, reconciled, accepted, made new, and *renamed* (Revelation 2:17, Isaiah 62:2). Why not carry a pebble round with you in your pocket this week to remind you that Jesus really died and was buried for you? That your sins are also dead and buried. Why not write your name on it to remind you that you have been renamed as Christ's?

Questions:

1. Do you find the cat's eye analogy helpful?
2. What sort of steps have you taken in the past for God? Was he trustworthy? What step might he be asking you to take now?
3. Imagine it's Easter Saturday. How would you be feeling?
4. The last four passages have all been about Good Friday and Easter Saturday. Is there anything that has stood out for you?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for dying and being dead and buried for me. Help me to trust you by taking the next step you are asking me to take for you.