

## “**Association**” Sermon for Good Friday, 3/30/2018

Luke 23:50-53 New International Version (NIV)

Joshua 6:17

The city and all that is in it are to be sacrificed to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent.

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What do we mean by association? We mean a connection or cooperative link between people or organizations. The association of Joseph of Arimathea with Jesus is a miracle story of association.

We read in Luke 23:50-53

50 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.

Joseph did not have a close relationship with Jesus, but there was a relationship nevertheless. He lived in anticipation of the kingdom of God. Jesus came proclaiming the kingdom of God, a new world that was neither ethnic nor tribal, **Joseph was living in association with the goals of Jesus' ministry.**

Joseph was associated by a natural bond with Jesus as well. He was a member of the tribe of Judah. This tribe was a remnant of the larger Hebrew community that had separate after the death of Solomon, with Judah and Benjamin remaining faithful to the Torah of Moses, and the other Ten tribes going the route of assimilation with the world around them.

But Joseph was also associated by an attachment. As a rich man, he offered a newly cut stone grave for Jesus. He risked his safety by going to Governor Pilate to request the body for burial. He as a member of the Sanhedrin Council, **used his**

**association with the extant structures and power brokers to assist his new association with Jesus.**

Joseph, like Nicodemus, had not agreed with their judgment and decision concerning Jesus. He dissented against their evil plot. Because he was a good and upright man, he by nature of his character was associated with Jesus who knew no sin. John tells us that Joseph of Arimathea, like Nicodemus was actually a follower of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. They had protested effectively to stop the council from arresting Jesus in John 7, arguing that no one should be arrested without credible charges being brought.

In coming for the body of Jesus, they demonstrated courage by **letting their association with him be known by their actions.** In order for Jesus to be resurrected as he predicted, He had to be buried in a grave. Normally those who were crucified were left

to rot on the crosses where they were executed, and as condemned men were not to be buried. God used Joseph of Arimathea affection for and association with Jesus to overcome the Roman roadblocks to the burial of the crucified.

Rahab the Harlot, though a citizen of Jericho, became convinced that a new association was in order, so she hid the Hebrew spies. She risked her life and position in Jericho, her familial and community ties, in favor of a better option, a new community of love, justice and peace in her new association with the Hebrew spies.

This Good Friday, we are called to identify with the crucified God, with the scandal of the cross. We are called to surrender our old loyalties and identify with the outcast, the oppressed and the victims of our empire and its affluence and greed. Like Joseph and Rahab, we are called to abandon old loyalties and tribes, old agendas and foci, and to join a new

association with Christ and God's goals. We are called to be covert operatives of Christ's objectives for a new heaven and new earth. May we commit to live what we pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven." Amen.