

Good Friday to
Easter Saturday



A tremendous hymn

- Acc to votes on S of P in 2019 its Britain's favourite hymn
- Princes Di and WI opening hymn
- And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
- And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark satanic mills?

May not know: poem by William Blake, was inspired by

? teenage Jesus walking in England with his supposed uncle, a man called...

**And did those feet in ancient times,
walk upon England's mountain green?**



Mercifully, William Blake includes a question mark at the end of each line

- in every case is “No” Or at least there is no evidence
- a song to rouse spirits and engender a feeling of patriotism
- British culture not literally true
- Great story though!
- but what’s it all about? Is it based on anything at all?
- Lets take a look

The Outer Circle of Jesus' Followers

- Most stories / films have their major characters but behind them we find the minor characters
- L of t Rings – Frodo, Gandalf, Merry and Pippin but ... Borodin, Galadriel, Thorin ... elves and dwarves who make the story what it is
- Spiderman, Mary Jane, Green Goblin, Doc Oc but adding colour and interest are his aunt May, Gwen ...
- And in case you watch Bridgerton – I don't – XXXXXXXX
- Similarly in the accounts of Easter we know the big names .. JC, Pilate who condemns J, Judas, Peter
- dig beneath the surface of the Easter accounts we find several other little-known but intriguing characters.

not given much space in our Bible, even less in our Easter sermons

- Truth be told, we can easily get by without thinking about them.
- But if you do that, you miss some great characters and stories
- In this outer orbit of followers we see women including
 - Mary of Magdala
 - Simon of Cyrene, the barely mentioned character
 - intriguing character, Joseph of Arimathea - Joseph of A – don't confuse with any other Joseph in the Bible
- Place where you were from was often used in your name
- minor characters” kept their distance from Jesus
- brief mentions

Outer circle of characters is fascinating

- least because that's where we might place ourselves
- may not be bold enough to have been actual disciples
- would have felt compelled to shadow this
- Jesus of Nazareth from a distance
- This fellow is interesting, fascinating – lets just follow from a distance
- an excellent example of a distant yet fascinated follower.
- All 4 Gospel writers saw fit to include
- What do we know about this man in the shadows – and yet appears in all 4 Gospels – what can we learn?

What did this Joseph of A actually do?

- clear about what he did not do
- J, is a wonderful rousing piece – based on the legend that J of A was somehow related to Jesus ...
- England and they travelled around Penzance, Falmouth, Cornwall, as well as Glastonbury in Somerset ...artefacts
- a lovely story and I wish it were true,
- What did he do – let's take a look
- Lets go back to the first Easter weekend
- As Christians Our faith is founded on the events of a single weekend in history and it begins on Good Friday

We've already read what happens

- –The sentence passed – J nailed to a cross
- One good man dies for all
- God's own Son dies an appalling death – taking on everything that is wrong in the world
- Everything we call wrong everything we call sin - - REF Romans 5.8
- J has given his own body and blood and we've remembered it today
- Usually we end our thoughts of GF there
- And we FF to Easter Sunday – that's what we want to get to – the Good News!

But important events took place in the remainder of GF and Easter Saturday

- ... for Jesus and certainly also for those who looked after his body
- So lets press PAUSE and look at just some of these
- Events occurring before Easter Sunday ...
- SO we have the cross of GF – what happened next

What happened next - Luke 23

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, 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. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. 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. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.



- Luke tells us J was on the ruling Council that passed the death sentence – but he had not agreed with the decision.
- one of the bad guys? or is seems a god guy in a bad place. He took the body of J
- John tells us a little more

What happened next – John 19

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.

He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.

Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.



- John emphasizes that Joseph had been a secret disciple “out of fear of the Jews”, and that he did not work alone ...
- Nic - Jesus by night most likely because of his fear to his reputation.
- Interestingly, Nicodemus was ALSO a member of the ruling Council
- Together they wrapped the body in the traditional spices prepping it for burial
- Together these 2 men, men of great influence both on the ruling council, both “secret disciples
- coming out of the darkness, stepping out of the safety of the shade and id with this J.

What can we learn from these 2 men?

- Taking this from a book I was asked to review last year
- Joseph, this secret disciple, “outs himself”, comes clean
- argues against the ruling Council’s (LUKE) decision to condemn Jesus.
- breaks rank with peers and friends, takes courage and speaks in defence of Jesus
- ... the Council overrule him, they sentence J to death anyway
- But Joseph then teams up with his colleague Nicodemus to do the one last thing they can do: . only thing they can do ...
.... ensure a fitting burial for Christ
- And they arrange this in Joseph’s own tomb – he was clearly wealthy

You might say well that's not much

- Wouldn't it have been better if they had stood up for J when he was still alive?
- Maybe but we mustn't underestimate the great cost these 2 men now pay – choose to pay
- stepping forward
- saying we too believed in J.
- Against their colleagues, against the people they have worked with, against their friends, against their peers ...
- A risk they choose to take – a price they choose to pay

Nobody made them, and a cost that they choose to pay together.

- Perhaps they were driven by the shame they both carried from their lack of open witness to Jesus ???
- what we do know is that here is an emboldened Joseph openly approaches Pilate without regard to his standing or reputation and requests the body.
- : “How extraordinary that (Joseph) would do this publicly after Jesus was dead. He had nothing to gain and so much to lose”.

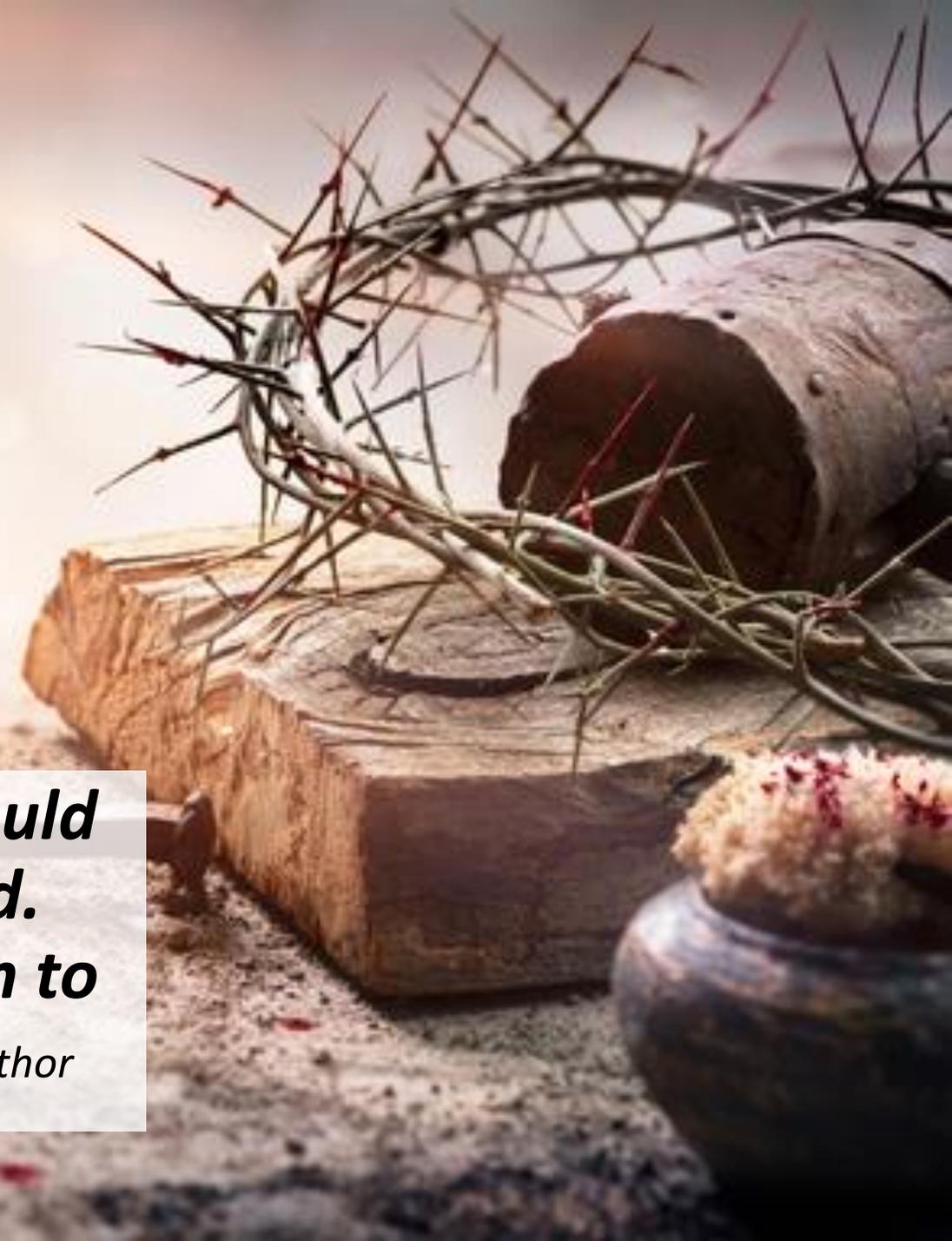
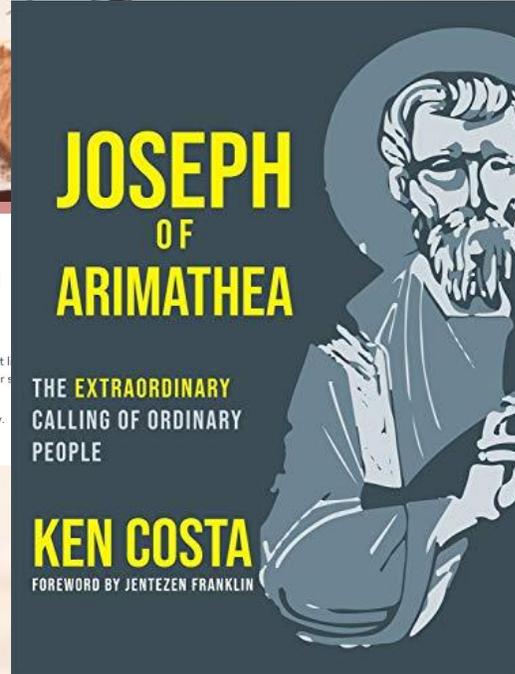


Reading Time: 5 min Posted: Mar 31, 2021

The one Easter character we never think about

Dig beneath the surface of the Easter story and you will find one or two intriguing but little-known characters. They are not given much space in our Bible, even less in our Easter sermons and studies. Truth be told, we can easily get by without thinking about them. But if you do that, you miss a great story. So let's stop and consider them briefly now.

The Outer Circle of Jesus' Followers



“How extraordinary that Joseph would do this publicly after Jesus was dead. He had nothing to gain and so much to lose”.

Ken Costa, author

- That's true, the dead Jesus, as far as they knew, could no longer recognise or thank them, ... He's DEAD - gone
- they didnt know J was going to rise from the dead – they didn't know there would be something called Easter Day! They didn't know they were going to end up on the winning side
- they thought they were on the losing side –
- Thee thought lets just do the best we can for Jesus.
- What they do know is that our colleagues might ostracise us and certainly ridicule them
- J and N did it because it was the right thing to do. They are just trying to do the best thing they could do and it cost them

- interesting that the main disciples have all fled at this point – DIDN'T bury J
- In this moment it s the Outer Circle who step out of the shadows
- outer circle were just emerging, **This was their hour!!**

Lastly ... What about us?

- We too must learn to steward / both our affluence and our influence says Costa
- It is clear what good stewardship of our affluence, our wealth, looks like with generosity in giving, or tithing.
- Actually managing how much money you give to God is pretty easy – you just set up a direct debit ...
- But – in comparison - good stewardship of our influence, our reputation among colleagues and friends our neighbours, is much harder
- laying aside of our reputation, risking ridicule and separation from work colleagues, friends or family is a tough call
- more challenging

If you work in any secular role

- Would you break rank with your colleagues and “speak truth to power” at the risk of damaging your reputation?

If you are a leader in a secular organisation

- Why has God placed you in such a prominent position? Are you willing to use your influence for good?

Or just among your neighbours / friends

- Do you identify as a Christian

- Perhaps it is this willingness to risk our reputation, our status, that differentiates a follower of Jesus from a mere admirer of Jesus?
- Joseph may have been late to the show it, but in the hur of his calling, he took a huge risk with his reputation, his standing, nevertheless
- Last Q on the screen on Sunday (Pter): “Does our praise reflect our practice?”
- We continue the story on Sunday
- Its Friday but Sunday;s comin’ and what a great day but today / tmrw spend a moment in GF / in Easter Saturday and ask if God also has something to **teach us in the in-between events?**

Today as we face the cross in a unique way that GF affords we remember that Christ was not afraid to associate with us We remember that

Good Friday to
Easter Saturday

