

Resurrection of the Crucified

by Mariano Di Gangi

The sermon explores the profound implications of the resurrection of Jesus through the testimonies of key figures in the narrative.

Duration: 26:58

Scripture: John 19:38

Topics: "Resurrection", "Faith in Action"

Description

Mariano Di Gangi delivers a powerful sermon on the 'Resurrection of the Crucified,' recounting the events surrounding Jesus' burial and resurrection through the perspectives of key figures like Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Simon Peter, and John. Each character shares their journey from secret discipleship to bold proclamation of faith, emphasizing the transformative power of recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. The sermon highlights the significance of the empty tomb and the folded grave clothes as evidence of Christ's resurrection, encouraging believers to embrace their faith openly. Di Gangi concludes with a call to allow the risen Christ to dwell in our hearts, celebrating the hope and new life found in Him.

Transcript

As it is recorded for us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to John, and beginning at verse 38, continuing into the opening section of the 20th chapter. Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, because he feared the Jews.

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 75 pounds.

Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it with 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. Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him. So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there, but didn't go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head.

The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally, the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went inside. He saw and believed.

They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. That week, it was my privilege to be a special guest on a telecast that reaches hundreds of thousands of people across Canada and into the United States. You get used to the way that things are done day by day.

Some of that has remained with me, and as we deal with the message for today, I almost feel like saying, as a matter of fact, I will say, would you welcome, please, four special guests just back from the garden tomb in Jerusalem. They are here and will share with you something of their experience, and indeed they will. The first of these is Joseph of Arimathea, and we'll let him tell his own story in his own words.

After my time, I will become a legend, and they will tell you that in the year 63 A.D., Philip sent me to Britain to found the first Christian settlement in that island and to do so in what today is called Glastonbury. You'll even hear that I brought the Holy Grail to Britain. But enough of legend.

Let me give you the facts. I'm a respected member of the Jewish council known as the Sanhedrin. I'm a man of means.

The Lord has blessed me with earthly riches. I try, in keeping with my high position in Jewish society, to be good and to live a life that is upright and beyond reproach. I'm one of those people in Israel who is waiting for the coming of the kingdom of God.

I am looking for the appearing of the Messiah and the reign of justice and peace that he will bring to his people. When the Sanhedrin began to be worked up over Jesus and wanted to condemn him, I refused to vote for that proposition. You see, I've been a secret disciple of Jesus for quite a while.

I've been amazed at the works of wonder that he has performed. I've been stupefied by the matchless wisdom of the words with which he speaks. But I don't want to endanger my high position.

May it not be that I can do more as a secret disciple of Jesus on the ruling council of the Jews than if I were to associate openly with Jesus, lose my position, lose my prestige, and not be in a position to do anything for him. That's the way I thought it would be. But now I understand that that is not the way to go.

And knowing that Jesus, having been killed by his enemies, would now be consigned to a common grave with cutthroat criminals, that was something I could not tolerate. That was something I could not let happen. And so I went to Pontius Pilate.

I came out of the shadows, no longer a secret disciple, and openly declared myself to be a friend of Jesus. And when no next of kin came to claim the body of the crucified, I did it. No matter what it would cost me,

from here on in, I had been a secret admirer of his too long.

And so it was that I went through the whole process that they have pictured in great paintings as the descent of the cross. But it was not pleasant to unfasten the nails, to look upon that lacerated body with its clotted wounds, to see the wound prints in hands and feet and side, to take him down limp and livid and lifeless. But it was the most that I could do for one who during his life I had not adequately honored.

And I gave to him my own garden sepulcher, hewn out of rock, never before used for anyone, to express my devotion and to do it openly to him and for him. I realize now that what I did in the marvelous providence of God was to fulfill a prophecy that had been uttered by Isaiah more than 700 years earlier. For Isaiah had said that he would be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

Isaiah had said that he would be numbered with the transgressors. And Isaiah had also said that he would be with the rich in his death. It's as though God had taken him from the very depth, from the very abyss of deep humiliation and degradation when he was crucified among thieves and now begins the upward process of his glorification by giving him a place of burial with the rich.

And I, Joseph of Arimathea, who did so little for him when he lived, am willing to do all that I can for him now that he has been crucified. We welcome the second guest. And as he comes to the microphone, he doesn't need to spend a great deal of time to introduce himself except to say that, My name is Nicodemus.

You all know about me because if you've read the third chapter of John's Gospel, you know that I came to Jesus by night. And I'm intrigued by all sorts of speculations in which people have engaged. That I came at night because my duties involve me being elsewhere during the day.

Or I came by night because the temperature had cooled down and we could have a longer discussion about ultimate issues. Or I didn't want to be seen openly in the full light of day going to Jesus. It might damage my standing because I too am a member of the ruling council.

I'm part of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Well, you can speculate. The fact of the matter is that I did go to Jesus and I did have an interview with him and I've been turning over in my mind some of the tremendous statements that he uttered on that day.

I told him that I admired him. I was intrigued with his personality. I realized that he performed miracles, that nobody could do this sort of thing unless God were standing at his side infusing power and wisdom into him.

And I was about to ask him, can you give us a new teaching that will qualify us for the kingdom of God? And he read my thoughts and cut me off before I could say it. And he said, no, Nicodemus, you don't need new teaching. What you need is new people.

We've got all the laws we need already on the books. What we need are the kind of men and women whose hearts and minds are inclined toward God. We've got all the teaching we need.

What we need is a new heart so that we can obey and put into practice the teaching that God has given. And he told me that unless I would be born again, born from above, reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit, I could never enter the kingdom of God. I could never even understand what the kingdom of God was all about.

This was enigmatic. It didn't make sense to me. I said, how can a man, when he is old, how can a man, when his habits are formed, how can a man, when the course of his life is already set, enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again? You can't teach an old Sanhedrinist new tricks.

But he came right back at me and he insisted again that unless I had a change of heart and mind and direction in life which comes from God, I would be disqualified for the kingdom no matter how high my prestigious position in Jewish society might be and no matter how punctiliously I would perform all the rituals of my religion. He also told me something else. And it mystified me at the time that as Moses lifted up the serpent of brass in the wilderness so that people plagued with fiery, burning, deadly serpents looking at the brazen serpent would be spared from that curse, he also mentioned that he, the son of man, would be lifted up.

And I didn't realize then what that meant. But he has indeed been lifted up on a cross to die. And I who am plagued with sin and I who will be slain by sin can, if I look at him uplifted on his cross, look at him with faith in my eyes, I will experience salvation from sin's deadly plague.

Now I see it. Then I didn't. When the enemies of Jesus ganged up on him, I was one of those few who insisted, but you don't condemn a man unless he has had a chance to defend himself.

And now I come with spices. You wonder why I come with 75 pounds worth of expensive spices and ointments. I do that because this crucified one is no ordinary individual.

He is worthy of a royal tribute. He is my king. He is my Lord.

Too late have I acknowledged it. Too late and too long have I been a secret disciple of his. But it was the example of Joseph of Arimathea going to Pilate and asking for the body that encouraged me to take that step.

You may be wondering about some good and noble thing that you would like to do. Do it because you'll be a tremendous encouragement for somebody else to rise up and follow in your steps. And now we come to a third guest.

And he says, My name is Simon Peter. Mary Magdalene, had she been able to be with us in the studio today, would have given you her story. But since she's occupied somewhere else, let me tell you her story because it involved me in what happened later on.

You do this woman Mary of Magdalene a great injustice when you go along with the tradition that she was a notorious sinner, that she was a woman of the streets. Not at all. You're mixing her up with somebody else whose story is in Luke chapter 7. No, she was not a prostitute.

She was a woman who was possessed by evil spirits and when Jesus drew near, he served an order of eviction on them and they departed and he left her clear-minded, open-hearted, ready to lead a new life. And so grateful was she to Jesus for delivering her from the power of the demonic that she along with another group of women followed Jesus and the apostles and ministered to them out of her material goods. She helped to support the preachers of the gospel.

And when all of us men had departed, she stayed there in the gathering darkness at the cross and when all of us were comfortably dealing with our fears behind closed doors, she in the predawn darkness of what must have been a very short night came to anoint the body of Jesus and finished the work that

Joseph and Nicodemus had begun. And she got there and she found that the stone that had been rolled into place to cover the mouth of the sepulcher had been rolled away. She looked inside and found that the body of Jesus was gone.

You can imagine the high state of excitement and you can imagine the depth of her sorrow when she cried out, they have taken away the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they've put him. And so you can see why she ran back as fast as she could and told us about the fact that the body of Jesus was missing. I'd like you to notice that I was meeting with the disciples.

I, who in the moment of crisis had denied Jesus, I, who to save my own skin had lost my honor by denying that I ever had any connection with him, that he meant nothing to me whatsoever. With brokenness of heart, I have repented and while Jesus has been in the tomb, I have gone back to the followers of the Lord and they have taken me in and so when Mary comes back with the news, I am numbered with the disciples. They have restored me to their fellowship.

And on hearing the word that she brought, I ran to the sepulcher and reaching it, I had the courage to go in and I saw the grave clothes lying there neatly and the body missing, just as she'd said. And all of that left me in a state of perplexity. And it was only afterward that by a personal encounter with Jesus, I became convinced of the resurrection and if you read the story right, on the day of Pentecost, I declared, the one whom you with wicked hands crucified, God raised from the dead and exalted him powerfully to his own right hand to be a prince and a savior.

And the final one who comes to give his testimony identifies himself as the disciple who was particularly beloved, the apostle John. He says, when Mary Magdalene brought us the news, I and Peter decided to make for the tomb and to run as fast as we could. Peter being impulsive, got a head start on me.

But I being younger and faster and leaner, but not meaner, outran him and I got there first. Reverent reserve kept me from going in, but you know how impulsive Peter is, he went right in. I stood outside and waited.

By the way, you know, I've been associated with Peter on and off and our relationships haven't always been at the best. We were both in the fishing business, we both heard the call of Jesus, we both left our nets and forsook our fleets and followed him. We were with him when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead.

We were with him in the Garden of Gethsemane when he agonized. We had been with him on the Mount of Transfiguration when he was glorified. We were associated with each other in the service of Jesus.

But there were times when we didn't see eye to eye. Like the time my misguided brother and I wanted to have the inside track on positions of prestige in the kingdom that Jesus was going to set up. And Peter was miffed at that.

He wanted us all to be on the same level playing field. But I, for my part, have it against Peter that he denied Jesus when the pressure was on and though I have forgiven him, I find it hard to forget it. We've had our differences, but when we both heard that the body of our blessed Lord was missing, we decided to make for the tomb and to run together.

And I outran him and I waited. He caught up with me and he went in without waiting. And finally, I decided to look for myself.

And what I saw was an empty tomb and the grave clothes neatly folded, including the headband that had been around that sacred head sore wounded. And I believed. I came to the conclusion on the basis of the evidence of the empty tomb that it could not have been his enemies who came and plundered the sepulcher and dragged his body ruthlessly away.

They would not have left everything in neat order, almost as if waiting for a body to be clothed in linen. Nor was it his friends who stole away his body and would have left all the grave clothes behind, neatly folded, and taken away that battered corpse, bleeding from hands and side and feet and crown, and taken away that blessed body in a state of nakedness, exposed to shame, vulnerable to further and cruel indignities. No, he was not taken away by friends.

They wouldn't have left the grave clothes there and taken him away nude. No, he was not taken away by enemies. They would have left everything in a total state of disarray to show their final contempt for him.

I look and I'm persuaded and I believe in the resurrection of the crucified. It was only some time after, as you'll note from the book that I've written, that I realized that the Old Testament had prophesied about this centuries before, but they hadn't come to my mind yet. That passage in Psalm 16, Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.

Thou wilt not let thy Holy One see corruption. I should have known that since Jesus is the Lord's anointed, the Father would not have let him rot in the tomb, be kept forever clenched in the jaws of death, that it would be possible for him to be gripped everlastingly by death, and he had to rise from the dread. Only now do I realize that what happened to Jonah was but the prefiguring, but the prelude to what was to happen to my blessed Lord, the one who is greater than Jonah.

That as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights, even so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights, and on the third day rise again. How often I've read the Psalms. How often I've read the book of Jonah without realizing that all this was but the forecast of what was to happen this very morning.

And so I have looked, and I have believed. The Lord is risen. The Lord is risen indeed.

And so our guests go on their way, and the production is over, and the studio lights are dimmed, but I would ask you this simple question. We know of an empty cross. He's come down from there.

We know of an empty tomb. He has made his majestic exit from thence, and there is now, therefore, no need for any of us to have an empty heart. May Christ who dwells at God's right hand by his Holy Spirit and through a faith that is open to receive him dwell in our hearts today.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, we rejoice in the wonder of your resurrection and ask that you will grant to each of us that new life which is lived in fellowship with the living God, and then at the last, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be raised from the dead as you have been raised. For your own glory do we ask it.

Amen.

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