

The Ministry of Love

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate, that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate, gave him leave. He came; therefore, and took the body of Jesus (John 19:38).

This is a touching scene of Joseph of Arimathaea, and Nicodemus, who unite together in a ministry of love. They did not demonstrate much faith openly when Jesus lived, but demonstrated their true love when He was dead.

When Christ walked the earth, the disciples were ready for His Kingdom. They were ready to die for Christ, and receive their ruling positions. All the disciples were worried about, was their own hide.

They were hiding in fear of the Jews. When their hopes were gone and Christ was dead, they fled in fear. I like to call them; cowards of the cross.

- Where was the bold, Peter?
- Where was James?
- Where was John?
- They were nowhere to be found.
- They manifested the fear of man.

Joseph and Nicodemus were not among the inner circle of Jesus. They never stood on transfiguration mountain. They never saw the many miracles Christ performed. They never received power to cast out devils. When the chips were down, they were there in a ministry of love.

- I don't need love so much, when everything is going well.
- I don't need love so much, when I am prospering.
- I need love, when I am down.

Let a good man fall, and he will find out his true friends. He will really find out who loves him.

- When a man is stripped naked, who wants to love him then?
- When a man is beaten, who wants to love him then?
- When a man is ridiculed, who wants to love him then?
- When a man is mocked in shame, who wants to love him then?
- When a man is heartbroken, who wants to love him then?

Joseph does. Nicodemus does.

Jesus needed the disciples in His death, just as much as He needed them when He was alive.

- It's not too popular to help a man when he is down.
- It's not too popular to help a dead man.
- Joseph did.
- Nicodemus did.

Joseph sought the body of Christ. It was important to him that Jesus had a decent burial.

Since Christ claimed to rise again in three days, it was proper to see that His body was not destroyed in any way. Joseph was handling the Word of God made flesh. Without the ministry of love by Joseph and Nicodemus, what might the events of history be?

Their ministry of love, brought about the assurance of the resurrection of Christ. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes: spices to prepare the body of Christ.

If it were not for Joseph and Nicodemus, what might the Jews have done to the body of Christ.

- The disciples were not there to attend to the body of Christ.
- The disciples were not there to assure Christ had a decent burial
- They did not demonstrate the ministry of love.

Some are quick to give their life for Jesus, but cannot demonstrate the ministry of love. Love is the most cherished of all the gifts of God (I Corinthians 13).

We can say we love God, but do we demonstrate the ministry of love to our neighbor? Some love with their tongue, but their actions are far from it. God doesn't want love from the tongue, but He wants love from the heart.

Jesus used the parable of the good Samaritan, to demonstrate the ministry of love. Here was a man who was robbed and beaten, and left for dead. Along came a priest, and passed by on the other side.

The priest didn't even want to look at him. Of all people, the priest should have been the one to demonstrate the ministry of love.

Pastor, when you see a neighbor down and you neglect him, how dwelleth the love of God in you?

- I don't care how many you have in Sunday School.
- I don't care how big your Temple is.
- I don't care how many cars you drive.
- I don't care how big your name is.

If you won't demonstrate the ministry of love; you are sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal. You are not fit to be called a man of God.

That neighbor lying in the gutter, is the same as Christ lying in the gutter. Would you pass Him by?

- Stand in your pulpit and sing, "I love God."
- The only way you can love God, is through your neighbor.
- Shame on you priest, for passing by and not helping your brother.
- I'm sure God will bless you for it.

Along came a Levite and passed by on the other side. He wanted no part of the man laying beside the road. He didn't care if he was half dead, that was his problem. He didn't want to get involved.

We have a world full of heartless people, who don't want to get involved in helping their neighbor, yet they say they love God. They are blind fools leading the blind.

Along came a Samaritan, an outcast of society. Here was a race of people the Jews looked down upon. This was the last person that should help the wounded man.

The dirty old Samaritan was the only one who demonstrated the ministry of love to the wounded man. No wonder, the Bible says, the first shall be last, and the last shall be first.

The dirty old sinners of this world may enter Heaven before some holier than thou saint of God.

- It was the Samaritan who showed mercy.
- It was the Samaritan who showed compassion.
- It was the Samaritan who showed kindness to his neighbor.
- It was the Samaritan who demonstrated the ministry of love.

His ministry of love, was more acceptable to Jesus, than all the holy garments of the priests.

His ministry of love, was more acceptable to Jesus, than all the "Hallelujahs" and "Amen's."

God help us today, as followers of Jesus Christ, to demonstrate the ministry of love to our fellowman.

It is the ministry of love, that brings about a new resurrection in the hearts and lives of mankind.

Lord, give me this ministry of love.