

Series: Mark
(Maundy Thursday)

Title: the Person Who carried The Cross!
Text: Mark 15:21

Tonight, I want to look at the person who carried the cross of Jesus. In this whole trail of Jesus – all the horrible things that happened, this little verse really blessed ^{my} heart. And I hope it will bless your heart tonight. The person who carried the cross of Jesus.

Take you Bibles and turn with me to Mark chapter 15. The Gospel of Mark chapter 15 and notice verse 21. It says: “And they pressed into service a passer by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to bear his cross.”

(Prayer)

~~As we begin, let's establish~~ A couple of things *as we start*

First of all, this man, Simon, is a Jew. He is not a Gentile. For some reason, people think that he is a Gentile. Dear Friends, he is not a Gentile. He is a Jew. His name is Simon.

Secondly, according to the Bible he is the father of two boys. ^{Now} The only reason to mention these two boys, because this isn't a common practice, is because they are well known. There is something about Mark saying that Simon is the father of Alexander and Rufus that suggest to us that they were known.

Now, I want to try and put something together for you.

Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 16. When Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome, in chapter 16 as he gave greetings, there is ~~a~~ ^{an} interesting note in ~~the~~ ^{his} personal greetings. Romans chapter 16 verse 13 says: “Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and ...WHAT IS THE NEXT WORD?MINE!!!!

Now, wait a minute. You mean to tell me that Paul is greeting a woman whom he says was “a mother to me?” It seems that way.

Now, I want to put the story together for you. Paul was from Tarsus ^(in Celicia).

According to his own testimony, he went to Jerusalem to be raised as a young boy at the feet of Gam'al'iel. Gamaliel was a great theologian. So, Paul was trained in Jerusalem. He said that his manner of life was well known to all the Jews. We are also told that Paul was a Pharisee.

Now, we also know when Paul died. Paul died around 67-68 A.D. It happened during his last imprisonment.

Paul, also, called himself an old man. He used the phrase "aged". So, I ask you. How old is an aged man? I don't know. But, I have the feeling that he was well passed the age of 40.

Some people would say, WOW!! That is old. Others would say, "That is definitely young." It depends on your perspective. RIGHT?

Even in those days, the days of Jesus, people lived well into there sixties. So, I want to guess that Paul was in his early 60's when he died.

One further fact to establish. How old was Paul when Jesus died? Most Bible scholars feel he was around the age of Jesus. WHY?? Do you remember a guy by the name of Stephen? Stephen was one of the original seven chosen to help in the administration of the church in Jerusalem. Stephen was later martyred. And the people who stoned Stephen laid their coats down at the feet of a man who was watching. And that man's name, of course, was Saul. When Saul found Jesus as Savior, God changed his name to Paul. Also, please remember that in those early days, Saul was a zealous Jewish Pharisee, who persecuted the early Christian Church,

So, it is an obvious conclusion that Saul knew about Jesus Christ. It is, also, obvious that John Mark knew about Jesus Christ before he became a follower.

Simon of Cyrene comes from the district of Cyrene. He is now living in ^{Jerusalem} Palestine. Paul (^{Saul}) comes from Tarsus. And he is now living in ^{Jerusalem} Palestine. The most likely place that a Hellenistic Jew in that land would live would be with some other Hellenistic Jew. Paul calls the mother of Rufus in Romans 16:13 his own mother. And I believe what that means is that Paul grew up in that home. Which means that he knew daddy, Simon of Cyrene, before the cross of Christ.

And it, also, means that ^{Paul} he knew the two sons, Rufus and Alexander. At least we know that he knew Rufus. But, he must have known Alexander because Rufus and Alexander were brothers.

What a fantastic story. Paul knew all about Jesus. Can you imagine Simon of Cyrene coming home after the events of the crucifixion saying: "You are never going to believe what happened to me today!" He bore the cross of Christ. And I believe that that man through that event came to believe in Jesus as Lord and savior.

And that is why Mark mentions his two boys because they would have, also, followed Jesus and believed in him. God not only use Simon to affect his own family but, also, the man who became the Apostle Paul.

You say, "Is that true, or, has the Pastor really flipped out tonight?" Oh, listen, you take those facts and you put them together and see how you come out. I think it makes sense, especially if Paul grew up in the home of Simon the Cyrene.

II The second thing that blessed me is that the same phrase "to bear the cross" is said of us. We are to bear the cross of Christ.

Now, most people when they read that little phrase, "TO BEAR THE CROSS," think it means to bear some sickness or illness or going through some trail or difficult. You know, I have this sickness and I must bear my cross for Jesus.

Oh, No! That is not what it means. When you carry a cross, it means you are going out to die. You are saying "good-by." It is a one-way trip. Take up your cross and follow me, Jesus said. Many of us have not fully understood that as it relates to discipleship.

Simon had a real life experience of that when he literally carried the cross of Jesus up the hill to the place of crucifixion. And he knew what "bearing the cross" meant. It meant going out to that hill to die.

Say: GOOD BY TO THE OLD LIFE, AND WELCOME IN A NEW LIFE with Jesus in command. If anyone ^{was} ~~were~~ in Christ, he is anew creation. The Bible says that our old man was

crucified with Christ. That the body of sin in our lives might be declared inoperative. So that it would no longer control us. And we would be set free from sin.

Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. Say good by to the world system. And welcome Jesus into your heart.

Have we really made that decision to follow Jesus? Jesus told us to count the cost. If we are not willing to bear the cross then we cannot be his disciples. It really is death to the old life and welcoming in the new life. It is saying, "Lord Jesus without you I am lost. I am a sinner. And I cannot save myself. And I know that Jesus died for me. And I commitment my life to you.

That is the decision many of us need to make.

SHALL WE CLOSE IN PRAYER