

## Saturday April 3

## An in-between day

John 19:38–42

**38** 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.

**39** 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.

**40** Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.

**41** 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.

**42** Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Between Good Friday evening and the first Easter Sunday morning service, nothing much happens in most churches even in 'normal' years, apart from arranging new floral decorations. Following a tradition that goes back many centuries, some churches have an Easter Vigil service on the Saturday evening. It includes a series of readings from the Old and New Testaments, retelling God's work in creation and in the salvation of men and women. The Old Testament readings include verses from Exodus chapter 14. The Israelites, on the edge of the Red Sea and with freedom on the other side beckoning them, look back. They panic as they see the Egyptian army bearing down on them. When they turn on Moses, he answers them:

*"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."*

Stillness is a spiritual discipline, one that many of us learn only with difficulty. The bible reminds us repeatedly how much we need it. Recall, for example, Psalm 46, which envisions a world in turmoil: what are God's people to do?

*"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."*

Being still is, in a sense, what we are to do on this day. After Jesus' death, the tumult stirred up in Jerusalem by the events of the previous days, might have subsided, replaced by a strange kind of stillness. All that remained was a dead body to be dealt with. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea ask Pilate's permission to take it away and lay it in a new tomb in a garden, another quiet place. While this stillness descended over the city, and some undoubtedly breathed sighs of relief, God was at work, behind the scenes in a sense, in the hours between the death and resurrection of His Son. So on this day, there is nothing for us to do. When Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Rome he said this: *"... at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."*

Meanwhile, think on this: if your day today is filled with a myriad of problems to be solved, take a moment to ask the Father to give you the stillness of heart with which to hear Him more clearly. And allow Him to gently tell you what you must do *with* Him, and what you must *leave* to Him - what He will handle without you.