



FOLLOWING COURAGEOUSLY

April 2019

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”

Matthew 23:27-28

These are Jesus’ words as he spoke out against the sin and pride of the religious leaders of his day. He spoke forthrightly, boldly. His words left no doubt about what he was saying. No doubt about how wrong they were in the way they taught and lived out God’s Word. He left no doubt about the importance of his message.

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As followers of Christ, are we expected to speak out as boldly as this against what's wrong and unjust in our world? Aren't words like this a bit too strong?

It didn't make Jesus very popular. In fact, he was nailed to a cross and left to die a slow, excruciating death. We too could end up dying in some way—losing friends or reputation. I'd rather have friends.

But don't you think we're sometimes guilty of speaking a bit too softly when real change is needed—when injustice exists? I believe we need to look to Jesus as our guide. He was someone who brought many changes into the world. The world hasn't been the same since he walked the earth.

Martin Luther King Jr said something that touches me deeply: "A man dies when he refuses to stand up for that which is right. A man dies when he refuses to stand up for justice. A man dies when he refuses to take a stand for that which is true."

Do you feel strongly enough about something to consider giving up your life for it? In Luke 9:23 Jesus called his disciples to do so when he said, "*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*"

How will you follow Jesus? Are you willing to let go of the self-centered life you might be living? Are you willing to surrender to Jesus and what he calls you to?

Would you have the courage:

- to live like Jesus and be like Jesus, even if you're in danger of being ostracised?
- to stand up for Christ's way, in a world that does not believe in him?
- to speak out against what is wrong, even if it means persecution?

As you follow Jesus and become more committed, you might be surprised at what God will call you to and what he will help you do. Jesus can fill us with the courage we need to right the wrongs in our world.

Are you ready to follow him? To *really* follow him?

marja