There is a rather odd term that has entered the lexicon in recent years and that term is closure. Closure is the moment, after a tragedy, where every errant emotion gets neatly squared away and life resumes as if nothing happened. Popular culture has really run with this idea, and you see it such places as that awful movie *Titanic* where the old lady chucks $20 million worth of jewelry into the ocean in order to get closure. Thanks granny that could have sent the kids to college and paid off your gambling debts, but as long as you got closure, we are happy for you. Of course, life is not that neat and clean. There are people I miss who died long ago. Certainly, with time the feelings of anguish and longing have mellowed but they have not disappeared. I still wish they had not died. I never got anything like closure. And I bring up this rant not because its late in Holy Week and I am running out of ideas but rather to guard against today’s actions being interpreted through this modern lens of closure. Here is what I am talking about.

Today is the day after the crucifixion and Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus come and bring “a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds.” From there, “They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews.” It is certainly an action that expresses some finality. But I do not see it as something clean and neat. Today’s actions were not putting a bow on the life of Jesus but rather they were simply some well-intended people doing the best they can in the face of horror and tragedy. There is something very human about it and in that regard; it is wholly consistent with the way we go through life. My guess is that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus did what they did not because they thought it would make everything better but rather because it seemed like something they could do. They wanted to honor Jesus. They wanted to show that his life mattered. It was not going to turn the corner on the horrific events that had just occurred, rather it was just a very well-intentioned action. If you have ever had a loved one die one of the most common things people say is “let me know if I can do anything.” This statement comes from a good place. It may not accomplish anything, but it represents a longing to try and impose some order on a very disordered situation. The events of the previous twenty-four were out of control. Jesus was tried and executed on a cross. Evil won the day and now people were setting out trying to quietly rebuild. They could not bring Jesus back, but they could do something to honor him. To declare that he was important. It certainly was not going to fix everything, but it was what they could do. Holy Saturday may be the day where we celebrate or at least remember the task of muddling through. And that is not a bad thing to honor because that is how much of life works.

We would like to think that we are like some omnipotent version of the Carpenters and sit on top of the world lookin’ down on creation but for the most part our gaze is not so vast. We often don’t know what to do with the things that happen in the world and so offer whatever minor things we might have. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus knew they could not fix everything or reverse the events of the previous hours, but they knew they could do something. And there is something very decent in what they did. Jesus needed to be buried and they took care of it. Had this not been recorded in John’s Gospel it probably would have been forgotten, but that is the nature of so many daily acts of decency. And just because they are forgotten it does not make them insignificant. The world is made a better place by people like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and thousands like them who quietly make things a little better. These actions will not restore the world but they will make their small corner of it a little more livable. As you know we are created in God’s image and so the small acts of preparing the body for burial are in a way an imitation of what God does on a much grander scale. Today Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus do what humans can do about death and tomorrow God will do what he can do about death. Our actions will not create closure but God’s actually will. He will turn the evil into good. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. We are not God and therefore cannot fix the brokenness of the world. But like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus we can do our small part in imitation of God’s perfect part. We muddle through in pale imitation of God and in doing so we become God’s own this day and forevermore.