

Parks



Rosa Parks (Feb 4 1913-Oct 24 2005) was an activist most well known for her role in the 'Montgomery Bus Boycott'. She is nicknamed 'the mother of the freedom movement'.

The story most people are familiar with is that which took place on December 1st 1955, when Parks was sitting on a bus in the 'colored section' but refused to give it up to a white male when ordered to do so. This was not a one-off spur of the moment decision; Parks was a well-known activist and had been campaigning for equal rights for a long time previously. Her parents were former slaves in Alabama.

Parks was a seamstress by profession, but she was also the secretary for the Montgomery group of the NAACP, a civil rights organisation. She was an advocate for non-violent protest and had attended meetings on the subject. In 1955, when refusing to give up her seat, Parks replied that she wasn't physically tired, but 'tired of giving in'. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, which was triggered after her refusal to move, was a year-long protest of public transport segregation, and was part of a wider movement of protest. During these protests, the leaders of the local African-American community required greater organisation and strong leadership, and elected Dr Martin Luther King to lead the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association. This group believed that Parks' actions could be part of a larger change. Parks became a symbol of the civil rights movement.

Parks was a Christian whose actions were always led by her faith. In one of her books, she talks about how it was her faith which gave her the strength that day on the bus, describing it like this:

I instantly felt God give me the strength to endure whatever would happen next. God's peace flooded my soul, and my fear melted away. All people were equal in the eyes of God, and I was going to live like the free person God created me to be. I refused to move.

Why Parks?

Everyone can be inspired by the story of Rosa Parks. We can look to Parks as someone who gave her life to a cause but did so with humility. Parks reminds us that leaders are often quietly getting on in the background. Everything that Parks did was driven by her faith and confidence in God, and it was partly her reputation and peaceful attitude that enabled the protest to gain momentum. We are inspired by Parks to stand up against segregation and oppression everywhere, whether that is along ethnic, religious, gender or other lines. Parks, like Jesus, reminds us that Christians are called to action driven by love and peace.