

## All for Love – Part 2



I have lived on tenterhooks these past months. I have walked beside Jesus, my Rabbi, my teacher, my Rabboni, my master. I have sat at his feet and listened, and I feel that I have grown in understanding. I understand that Yahweh has had a plan for Rabbi Jesus from the moment of his birth. I have spoken with his mother and she has told stories about his birth and about his childhood. These pictures of his life before I knew him just enchant me. He must have been such a cute little boy. Now he is a strong and good

man, and I love him. Loving someone is not just about the cute stories, it is about standing by them through good and bad. The walking, the talking, the travelling and the teaching have been the good things.

This last week has been the bad bit. Arriving in Jerusalem from our home in Bethany, riding on a donkey, to be feted by the crowds shouting ‘Hosannah to the son of David’ and having palm branches strewn in our path, that was on the surface a good thing. But it didn’t take much observation to note the sour faces of the Pharisees watching the crowd and scowling at Rabbi Jesus. It cast a shadow over things.

I could see that Judas was getting all excited. He has always wanted to get Rabbi Jesus to declare himself a king, and to call the people out to fight. It appeared that he really hoped now was the time, now he would be called to arms, and he, Judas could show himself to be a great military commander and hero. But after his rapturous welcome Rabbi Jesus went to the Temple, sat down in the Court of the Gentiles and began to teach. I could just feel Judas’ frustration. When one day he slipped away, I followed him across the Court of the Women, and up the Beautiful Steps into the Court of the Israelites. From the gateway I watched him as he skirted the Priests and headed towards the door in the wall which led into the house of the High Priest. My heart felt a chill go over it. There could only be one reason for a nobody like Judas to see the High Priest, and that would be to betray his Rabbi to the authorities, but telling them what I had no idea.

I tried to tell Rabbi Jesus later, as we walked back across the Kidron Valley to our home, where he and a few of his closest friends were staying, the rest being with friends of ours in the village. The Rabbi listened carefully to me and just asked me to leave Judas alone as he was doing what he had to do. I tried later to talk to Judas, but he just looked at me and told me to mind my own business.

The passover meal was beautiful. All of his friends were there. The food was beautifully cooked. One of the women followers brought her young son along, and he asked the traditional questions as to why we were gathering and eating the special food. Traditionally it is the oldest person present who answers the questions, but we all looked to Rabbi Jesus, and he told us the story of the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt, in his own way, with his own emphasis.

After the meal, I was helping to clear up the room with the other women. I smiled at the Rabbi as he left, and he gave me an abstracted smile. I didn't think too much about it, although I knew that he had sent Judas off to do something, and I had no doubt that it was nothing good, but still surely in Jerusalem with all these people who loved the Rabbi and had welcomed him so rapturously, surely we were, he was safe?

The next time I saw Rabbi Jesus was early the next morning. I was tired after I had cleared up, and then walked back to Bethany. Rabbi Jesus often took groups of his followers off to pray, and for long periods of time. I woke up with the first rays of light coming through the window. I looked around but neither Rabbi Jesus nor any of the men who had gone with him were there. I hadn't really started to worry, when I heard running feet outside and Peter burst through the door, tears streaming down his face.

'They have taken the master. They questioned him for hours then took him before the governor Pontius Pilate. Then they took him to Herod. Pilate has condemned him to death, and I have betrayed him.'

I couldn't quite believe what I was hearing.

'What are you going to do now?' I asked as he gathered his cloak from the corner.

'I am going to get as far away as possible from here. I am going back to Galilee.'

And he rushed out of the door. Martha had woken at all this noise and Lazarus too. I quickly got dressed and headed for the door. Lazarus tried to stop me.

'If they have arrested Rabbi Jesus, it will be dangerous for any of his followers to be in Jerusalem today.'

'Do you think I care about that?' I shouted at him

And I rushed out of the door, down the village street, and to the path that led down the side of the valley to the bottom, and then up the other side into Jerusalem.

How can love lead you into danger as if it did not exist? I stopped various people in the city and they told me that Rabbi Jesus was being led out to Golgotha. They told me the route, and I ran as best as I could. I eventually found Mary, Rabbi Jesus' mother, with Mary the wife of Cleophas and Salome. Mary turned to me and hugged me. Then she said,

'They are going to crucify him. They are going to crucify my son, and I do not know why.

Back in the Temple, when Jesus was presented, a man called Simeon said that a sword would pierce my own heart one day. This has to be the day. This has to be the sword.'

Just then the sound of soldiers marching came to our ears, along with the curses of men under pressure. A man carrying a cross beam came into view stumbling along. It was not Jesus. Then another behind him. It was not Jesus either. Then round the corner came a third man wearing a ridiculous old purple robe and a crown of thorns jammed on his head, so that the blood was trickling down his face and into his eyes. The bits of his chest that I could see had weals on it, which showed that he had been beaten with a whip that ripped across the back, which now carried the cross, and wound itself around the chest before being ripped back for another stroke.

How can love feel like this? How can love feel as if your heart has been punched and stopped? How can this love and this wounded heart carry you forward towards the one you love, when they are beaten and broken? It carried Mary forwards, and it carried me holding her arm. The soldiers would have beaten us back, but Jesus just said,

'It is my mother.'

The soldier in charge looked for a long time, and then said,

'Don't get in the way'.

So we followed on behind and I felt every blow and every stumble and every fall. I felt grateful when the beam was laid on a member of the crowd, Simon of Cyrene he said he was called, and I felt grateful when a woman follower, Veronica, stepped out, and wiped the blood and sweat from his face. Jesus only stopped once more, and that was when a group of women followers standing and watching, started weeping and wailing. Jesus gathered himself and told them to weep for themselves and for their children and not for him.

How can love bear to watch when pain is inflicted on the one you love, when great nails are driven through hands and feet, and then the cross lifted up so that all his weight is on those nails? How could I have borne to stand there through the hours of the morning and the hours of the afternoon and watched him die in the most cruel way possible? I guess because I love him. And I felt his words when at last he offered himself to Yahweh,

‘Father into your hands I commend my spirit’.

I felt the spear that was thrust into his side to check that he was dead. Then Mary collapsed to the ground weeping, and I with her, and a cry went across Jerusalem, the curtain of the Temple is torn in two from top to bottom. We looked up as the sky turned as black as night. The light of the world was gone, the light of my life was gone, the light of a mother’s world was gone. And we did not know what to do.