

Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13

It was the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus said to me, and to John, "Go; prepare the Passover for us, so we may eat it together." I asked, "Master, where shall we go?" He answered, "Listen, when you enter the city a man will meet you carrying a jar of water; follow him into the house he enters, and say to the owner of the house, "The teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'" He will show you a large, furnished upper room; go there and make preparations." So, we went, and found everything as he said, and we prepared the Passover.

Matthew 26:20-25; Mark 14:17-21; Luke 22:14, 21-23; John 13:4-32

When it was evening, Jesus reclined at the table, and we joined him. During supper he got up, laid aside his outer garment, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Jesus poured water into a basin and began to wash our feet. *Yes, our feet!* Then he dried them with the towel. When he came to me, I said, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand later." I exclaimed, "Never shall you wash my feet!" He said, "Simon, if I do not wash you, you have no part with me." I answered, "*No part with you?* Well, then, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Jesus continued, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, and is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For he knew the one who was betraying him, and so for this reason Jesus said, "Not all of you are clean."

So, when he had washed our feet and taken his garment and reclined at the table again, he said to us, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for I am. If I then, the Lord and Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet; for I gave you an example that you also should do as I have done for you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things you are blessed if you do them, but I do not speak of all of you, for I know the ones I have chosen. It is that Scripture may be fulfilled, as written in the Psalm, 'He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me.' I am telling you this before it comes to pass, so when it comes to pass, you may believe I am."

After saying this Jesus became troubled in spirit and testified saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." We began looking at one another, at a loss to know who he was talking about. We were upset and were saying to him, "Lord, surely it is not I?" John was reclining next to Jesus; so, I gestured to John and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he is speaking." John turned to Jesus and said, "Who is it, Lord?" Jesus answered, "It is the one with whom I shall dip bread and give it to him." After dipping the bread in the common dish Jesus gave it to Judas Iscariot, and said, "The Son of Man goes, just as it is written of him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had never been born." Judas asked, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "You have said it yourself." After that, Satan entered into Judas. Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." None of us who were

reclining there knew exactly why Jesus said this to him; but since Judas kept the money box, we thought Jesus wanted him to buy something for the feast, or else that he should give something to the poor. After receiving the morsel Judas went out *into the darkness*. Jesus turned to the rest of us and said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and will do so immediately."

Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20

*Turning His attention to the supper*, Jesus said, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; but I tell you the truth, I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it and gave it to us, saying, "This is my body, given for you; take and eat. Do this in remembrance of me." Then he took the cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to us, saying, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Take and drink, all of you. Do this in remembrance of me. For I tell you the truth, I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:24-30

*After this most solemn time* we began arguing with one another as to who was the greatest. *Jesus knew what we were discussing and reprimanded us*, saying, "In this world the kings of the Gentiles lord over their subjects, and in this world those who are in authority profit from the people, but this is not to be so among you! No, but let him who is greatest become as the youngest and let the one who leads become as the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? In this world it is the one who reclines at the table, but I have come among you as one who serves. For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. And yet you have stood by me in My trials; and as my Father has given me a kingdom, I grant that you may eat and drink with me at my table. And you shall sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Luke 22:31-34; John 13:33-38

"Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' But a new commandment I give you, that you love one another even as I have loved you. By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." I asked, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go you cannot follow now, but you shall follow later." Then I asked, "Lord, why can I not follow you right now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus responded, "Will you lay down your life for me? Simon, Simon, listen, Satan has demanded permission to have you that he may sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and when you have returned again, strengthen your brothers." I exclaimed, "Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to

death!" Jesus responded, "Simon, I tell you the truth, the cock will not crow until you have denied three times that you even know me."

Luke 22:35-38

Then he said to all of us, "When I sent you out without money in your belts, without a bag for provisions, without sandals for your feet, you did not lack anything, did you?" We answered, "No, Lord, we lacked nothing." *Jesus went on, "Well, the times have changed.* Now let him who has no money take some, likewise also a bag, and let the one who has a coat sell it and buy a sword. For that which is written of me in the prophecy of Isaiah must be fulfilled, 'He was numbered with the sinners.'" We answered, "Master, look, here are two swords." Jesus responded, "It is enough."

Matthew 26:30-35; Mark 14:26-31; Luke 22:39; John 18:1

*That evening Jesus shared many things, to comfort us and prepare us for what was about to happen, but we did not understand. Finally, we sang a hymn in closing, and Jesus went out. We followed Him down the Kidron Valley and up the Mount of Olives. The moon was full; the view of Jerusalem was magnificent. From there, Jesus looked across the valley to the city and said, "You will all fall away because of me this very night, for the prophet Zechariah has written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered;' but after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."* I responded, "Even if all fall away from you, I will never fall away!" Jesus answered, "Simon, I tell you the truth, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times!" I responded, "Master, even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!" We all said the same thing.

Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:40-46

*Jesus turned away and walked down the hill to a garden called Gethsemane, which means, "Olive Press." It is the place where the olives are pressed to yield their precious oil, but that night it became the place where the soul of Jesus was pressed to yield his perfect life.*

When we entered the garden Jesus said to us, "Sit here while I pray; Peter, James and John, come with me." As we followed him, we could see that he was very troubled and deeply distressed. He said to us, "My soul grieves, even to the point of death; stay here and keep watch while I pray." Jesus left us and went deeper into the garden. There he began to pour out His heart in prayer saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for you; remove this cup from me; yet not as I will, but as you will." Jesus was in such agony that he was sweating drops of blood. *It was late, and we were very tired; soon he returned to find us asleep.* Jesus said to me, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for just one hour? Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away a second time and prayed again, "Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it, your will be done." He returned to find us sleeping again. We awoke, but could say nothing. A third time he went away; a third time he prayed; and *a third time* he found us asleep.

Jesus said, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going; My betrayer is at hand!"

Matthew 26:47-75; Mark 14:43-72; Luke 22:47-71; John 18:3-27

*I awoke to the sound of voices, and a band of men approaching.* Judas was guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and Pharisees. They carried lanterns and torches and weapons. He said to them, "The one I kiss is the man; seize him. Judas came to Jesus, saying, "Greetings, Rabbi;" then he greeted the Lord with a kiss, *like that of a close friend.* Jesus said, "Friend, why are you here? Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" *It was a sign for the others to close in, but Jesus went forth, calling out, "Whom do you seek?"* They replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." He said, "I am!" Upon saying this they drew back and fell to the ground; *such power in the name of the Lord!* Again, Jesus called out, "Whom do you seek?" Again, they answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." He said, "I told you, 'I am; if you seek me, let these go their way.'" By this Jesus fulfilled His word: "Of those whom you have given me, I lost not one."

When they reached out to arrest Jesus one of us called out, "Master, shall we strike with the sword?" Instantly I drew my sword, striking out and cutting off the right ear of Malchus, slave of the high priest. Jesus cried out, "No more of this!" The Lord touched Malchus, healing him. Then he turned to me and said, "Put the sword away; he who takes up the sword will perish by the sword. The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it? Do you not know that I can call down from my Father in Heaven twelve legions of angels for protection? But then how will the Scriptures be fulfilled?" Then he turned to those who came out against him and said, "Have you come for me as against a thief with swords and clubs? While I was among you in the temple area, teaching and preaching, you did not arrest me; no, not then, but now, for this hour and the power of darkness are yours." And so, the detachment of soldiers, their commander and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus, binding him. And we, *his faithful, loyal followers*, ran off *fearing arrest and leaving Jesus with his enemies.*

They led the Lord away to Annas first; for he is father-in-law of Caiaphas, who is high priest this year. Now Caiaphas is the one who advised the Jews that it was useful for one man to die for the people so that the whole nation might not perish. *He prophesied the death of Jesus without knowing it.* As they led the Lord away John and I followed, but from a distance. *We feared arrest, but had to see where they were taking him.* They led Jesus into the court of the high priest; John entered also, for he is known to the family, but I waited outside. Soon John came out, spoke to the slave-girl on duty at the door, and brought me in. When the girl saw me in the light she said, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" I answered, "I am not!"

Now the slaves and the officers were standing around a charcoal fire warming themselves, for it was cold. I was among them, warming myself *and trying to find out what was happening.* Annas questioned Jesus about us, his disciples, and about his teaching. He answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together; I spoke

nothing in secret. Why do you question me? Question those I have spoken to; listen, these know what I said." After saying this, one of the officers standing nearby struck the Lord saying, "Is that the way you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered, "If I have spoken in the wrong, bear witness, but if I am right, why do you strike me?"

After this Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas; I followed. As I warmed myself by a fire in the courtyard, others were watching me. Someone said, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" I answered, "No, I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of Malchus, the one whose ear I cut off said, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" I answered, "No, I do not know that man. May God curse me if I am lying. Just then a rooster crowed. Jesus turned, and when his eyes caught mine, I remembered his words: "Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times." *Oh, Lord, what have I done? I had to get away, so I ran, and as I ran, I wept and wept until I could weep no more.*

The Sanhedrin, our supreme council, convened. Its members were trying to bring testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they had nothing. False witnesses were brought forward, saying, "We heard him say, 'I will destroy the Temple made by man, and in three days I will build another temple not made by man.'" But their testimony was not consistent. Finally, Caiaphas rose up and questioned Jesus. He said, "Have you no answer? What about these charges brought against you?" Jesus said nothing. Caiaphas continued, "If you are the Christ, tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me; and if I ask you a question, you will not answer. But hereafter the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." Then they all said, "Are you then the Son of God?" Jesus replied, "I am." Caiaphas was outraged. He tore his robe and cried out, "Blasphemy! You have heard it with your own ears! What further need do we have of testimony? What is your judgment against this man?" The entire council responded with one voice, "He deserves death!" The men holding Jesus were mocking him, spitting in His face and striking him. They also blindfolded Jesus, saying, "Prophecy to us! Who struck you?"

#### Matthew 27:3-10

When Judas heard the verdict, he was overcome with guilt and remorse for what he had done. So, he took the thirty silver coins, the price of betrayal, and returned to the chief priests in the temple area, saying, "I have betrayed innocent blood." The priests responded, "What is that to us? See to this yourself!" Not knowing what else to do, Judas threw the coins into the sanctuary, ran out into the darkness and finding a tree, hung himself. *Oh, Judas, why did you not return to find the mercy of God? We all denied him, but the Lord shows mercy to those who repent. When the chief priests heard about the fate of Judas, they said to one another, "We cannot put this in the temple treasury, for it is blood money." So, they decided to use it to purchase the Potter's Field, making it a burial place for strangers and giving it the name "Akeldama," which means, "Field of Blood." This fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah, and the words of Zechariah, who said, "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set upon him by some of the sons of Israel, and with it they purchased the Potter's field."*

Matthew 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28-32

The Sanhedrin bound Jesus and led him from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, *which is the palace of the governor, Pontius Pilate*. But they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium because a Jew is defiled if he enters the house of a Gentile, and a defiled Jew cannot eat the Passover. So, Pilate went out to them, asking, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" The Jews answered, "If he were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered him up to you." Pilate replied, "Evildoer? Then take him yourselves; judge him according to your law." They answered, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death" (*for only Rome can impose the death penalty*). This fulfilled the words of Jesus, who signified the kind of death by which He would die.

Matthew 27:11-14; Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23:2-7; John 18:33-38

Pilate entered the Praetorium again, summoned Jesus and said to him, "Are You the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own or did others tell you about me?" The governor said, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered you up to me. What have you done?" Jesus stated, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, my kingdom is not of this realm." Pilate said, "So, you are a king!" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born; for this I have come into the world, to bear witness of the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate asked, "What is truth?" After saying this he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in this man." But they answered, "He leads the people astray throughout Judea, all the way from Galilee to Jerusalem." Pilate remarked, "Galilee? You say this man is from Galilee? That is Herod's jurisdiction, and he is in the city now. I will send this Jesus to Herod, and be done with the matter." *And he did.*

Luke 23:8-16

Now Herod was very glad to see Jesus, for he had heard much about his power and was hoping to see some miracle performed so that he might be entertained. When they brought the Lord in Herod questioned him at length; Jesus said nothing *and did nothing*. The chief priests and scribes who were standing there became angry. Herod was angry, too, and with his soldiers they treated Jesus with contempt, dressing him in a royal robe and mocking him as a king before sending Jesus back to Pilate. Herod and Pilate had been enemies because of a previous matter, but because of this they became friends that day.

After returning Jesus to the Praetorium, Pilate called the Jewish authorities and said to them, "So, this is the man that you say leads the people to rebellion. Well, I have examined him carefully and find him not guilty of any charges, nor does Herod, for he has returned him to me. He does not deserve to die, but in order to please you I will punish him and then release him."

Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:17-25; John 18:39-40, 19:1

For there is a custom at the feast that one prisoner should be released to satisfy the people. And there was a man named, Barabbas, in prison for murder and for insurrection during a political uprising. The Jews were asking Pilate to make good on this custom, so he said to them, "Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?" For he knew it was out of envy that they delivered Jesus up, and besides, while Pilate was on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man; for this night I suffered greatly in a dream because of him." But the Jewish authorities had persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be released, and for Jesus to be crucified. Pilate asked, "Whom shall I release?" They responded, "Barabbas." He asked them, "Then what shall I do with the one who is called Christ?" They cried out, "Crucify him!" A third time Pilate said, "Why, what evil has he done? No, I will punish him, and then release him." But the crowd cried out louder and louder, "Crucify! Crucify!" When the governor saw that he was losing control, that a mob was forming and a riot was about to break out, he called for a basin of water. Then, after washing his hands, Pilate declared, "I am innocent of his blood; see to this yourselves." They answered, "Let his blood be upon our own heads, and upon our children also!" So, Pilate released Barabbas and delivered Jesus over to their will. He ordered Roman soldiers to take Jesus to the place of scourging. *It is a large open area with a wooden post set upright in the center. They faced Jesus to the wood and stripped him. Then they raised his arms high overhead, securing his wrists to the post. Two soldiers positioned themselves behind Jesus, one to the right and one to the left, each with a scourge in hand: whips of leather cords with iron and bone attached to tear the flesh of the victim. They drew back and then with great force began to strike Jesus. Over and over they whipped him until his body was torn and bleeding. Finally, they stopped. Jesus hung limp by his wrists. When they cut him down, he collapsed on the ground. Soldiers lifted Jesus up, and dragged him into the Praetorium.*

Matthew 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19; John 19:2-3

The Roman battalion gathered around the Lord to taunt him. They stripped Jesus and put a royal robe on him, mocking him again as a king. Soldiers wove a crown of thorns and set it on his head, *pressing it down until blood streamed down his face and beard.* Then they put a reed into his hand as though it was the ruling scepter of a king, knelt before Jesus in mock humiliation and declared, "Hail, king of the Jews!" The soldiers were spitting on Jesus and striking him on the head with the reed.

John 19:4-15

Finally, the governor came out and said to the Jewish authorities, "Look, I am bringing him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in him." Jesus came out wearing the royal robe and crown of thorns. Pilate declared, "Behold, the man!" When the chief priests and officers saw Jesus they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" Pilate responded, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no guilt

in him.” But the Jews answered, “We have a law, and by that law he ought to die because he, being a man, made himself out to be the Son of God.” When Pilate heard this statement, he became even more afraid. He entered again into the Praetorium and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” The Lord said nothing. Pilate went on, “You do not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you?” Jesus answered, “You have no authority over me, except what was given to you from above, and so for this reason he who delivered me up to you has the greater sin.”

As a result of this Pilate tried to release Jesus, but the Jews cried out saying, “If you release this man you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.” When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat on the judgment seat at a place called Gabbatha, which means, “The Pavement.” It was the day of preparation for Passover; the governor said to the Jews, “Behold, your king!” But they answered, “Away with him; away with him; crucify him!” Pilate answered, “Shall I crucify your king?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” *No king but Caesar? We Jews hate our Roman occupation; to say Caesar as our king is unthinkable. It could only mean that their hatred for Jesus was far worse than their hatred for Caesar himself. So, Pilate was faced with a decision to either release a man he knew to be innocent, and risk his own position as governor, or condemn an innocent man to protect his position. The governor made his choice.*

Matthew 27:31-50; Mark 15:20-37; Luke 23:26-46; John 19:16-30

*Roman soldiers were dispatched to Jesus. They tore the royal robe from his injured body, opening again the wounds which had dried to the robe; then they returned the Lord's clothing. A heavy wooden beam was tied to his shoulders, and Jesus was led into the street to carry it to the place of crucifixion. But the weight was too much for him, because the scourging was severe. One of the soldiers compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, to carry the cross beam. Two criminals, also condemned to die that day, were led away with Jesus. Many people gathered to watch the pathetic parade, including women, who were weeping and wailing. At one point, Jesus turned to the women and declared, “Daughters of Jerusalem do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, the breasts that never nursed.’ And they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us,’ fulfilling the words of the prophet, Hosea. For if they do this when the tree is green with life, what will they do when it is dead?” Move! A soldier forced Jesus to go on, down the way of sorrows and out the city gate to the place of execution called, “Golgotha” which means, “Place of a Skull.” There they gave him wine mixed with gall to drink. How strange that those causing the pain would give a drug to ease the pain; but after tasting it, Jesus refused to drink. No, he would not escape the pain, but Jesus would feel the fullness of our punishment, so that we might know the fullness of his mercy. They stripped the Lord and pressed his back against the wooden beam now lying in the dirt. One of the soldiers took Jesus by the hand, stretching out the Lord's arm and kneeling on the inside of*

*the elbow to hold it fast against the wood. He took an iron spike, a nail the length of my hand, and set the point against the wrist of Jesus. The soldier then lifted a hammer high overhead and brought it crashing down. Over and over again the hammer came down driving the spike through Jesus and into the wood. Jesus writhed in pain, but uttered no curse. The soldier moved to the other arm, and again the hammer did its work. Jesus cried out, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." There was no malice or threats, only a plea to forgive those who were killing him. What kind of man is this? I remember Jesus saying some time ago, "You have heard that it was said, 'You should love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say, love your enemies; pray for those who persecute you." He was living out his words unto death.*

*The beam was hoisted up, with Jesus hanging from the nails, and it was fixed to a large wooden post already set in the ground. A soldier brought the feet of Jesus together, and pressed them to the post. Another nail was set in place; then it was driven through both feet into the wood. Imagine the pain! No, you cannot, nor can I.*

After the soldiers crucified the Lord, they took his outer garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also the tunic, his undergarment, which was without seam, woven in one piece. They said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but let us cast lots for it to decide whose it shall be." This fulfilled the Psalm which says, "They divided My outer garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

After that, Pilate wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews." It was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, for all to read. When the chief priests saw this, they went to Pilate and said, "Do not write, 'king of the Jews;' but that he said, I am king of the Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." So, *the inscription remained.*

*Jesus was stripped of everything, even his dignity as a man, but the mockery continued.* People were passing by shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple, and in three days raise it up, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." In like manner the chief priests, scribes and elders were mocking Jesus, saying, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel? Then let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; well, let God deliver him now, if he cares for him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And the Roman soldiers, *who have no interest in Jewish religion*, were also involved, saying, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!" Even the two criminals, now crucified to the right and left of Jesus, were reviling him.

The only ones standing near the cross to mourn were his mother, Mary, his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene and John. *I was not there; I was too ashamed and too afraid.* When Jesus saw his mother, and John standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he looked at John, and said, "Behold, your mother." *Even from the cross Jesus ministered. he knew that he could not care for his mother as before, so Jesus gave the responsibility to John.* From then on John took Mary into his household and cared for her as his own mother.

*One of the criminals became silent, even thoughtful, as he watched Jesus minister from the cross, but the other one continued to mock the Lord saying, "Are you not the Christ? Then save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him saying, "Do you not even fear God, for we are under the same condemnation? And we justly, for we are guilty, but this man has done nothing wrong." He then turned to the Lord and said, "Jesus, when You enter your kingdom, remember me!" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, today you shall be with me in Paradise."*

*It was the sixth hour of the day, when the sun was at its peak in the sky, and darkness fell upon the land until the ninth hour. It was an eerie darkness, as though the light of the world was being extinguished. At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" Those who heard him said, "Listen, he's calling for Elijah." No, this was no call to Elijah, but a cry to the Father; "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." As the Son took our sin upon Himself, the Father had to turn away, and Jesus felt the loneliness of separation to the depths of his soul. After that Jesus said, "I thirst." A jar of sour wine was standing nearby; someone put a sponge full of it on a branch of hyssop and brought it up to his mouth, while others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will help him now." After tasting the sour wine Jesus said, "It is finished! Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Jesus breathed His last.*

Matthew 27:51-56; Mark 15:38-41; Luke 23:47-49

*When Jesus died, the curtain in the temple that divides the Holy place from the Holy of Holies, the very curtain that separates man from God, was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth shook, rocks split apart, tombs were opened, and many who had died in the Lord were raised, entered the holy city and appeared to many. The centurion keeping watch, and those with him who saw these things were amazed. The centurion praised God, declaring, "Surely he was innocent!" Others joined him to say, "Truly this was the Son of God!"*

*Jesus died when the lambs were being sacrificed for Passover. I remember the words of John the Baptist some time ago, when he looked upon Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Now the Son of God has become our sacrifice, that we might have life through his death.*

John 19:31-37

*It was the day of preparation, and to keep the bodies from remaining crucified on the Sabbath (the next day was a High Sabbath), our religious leaders asked the governor, Pontius Pilate, to have their legs broken, that they might be taken down. It can take a long time for a man to die on a Roman cross; breaking the legs brings death quickly. The request was granted; soldiers were dispatched. They broke the legs of the first man and of the other criminal crucified there; but coming to Jesus, when they saw he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But to be sure, one of the soldiers pierced the side of Jesus with a spear. Immediately, blood and water flowed from the wound – evidence of his death. This fulfilled the Psalm, which says, "Not a bone of him shall be broken;" and the prophecy of Zechariah, who said, "They shall look upon him whom they pierced."*

Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42

It was almost evening when Joseph of Arimathea gathered courage to ask Pilate for the body of Jesus. Joseph is a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, *our supreme council, which opposed Jesus and condemned Him to death*; yet, Joseph had become a follower, but in secret. When the governor received the request, he wondered if Jesus was already dead, so he called his centurion to confirm before releasing the body. Joseph then laid Jesus in his own tomb; it was new, cut from solid rock and located in a garden *just outside the city gate*. *This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, that he would be buried in the tomb of a rich man*. Nicodemus came, too, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, spices for burial, about one hundred pounds in weight. *Now, Nicodemus is a member of the Pharisees, one of our religious parties in great opposition to Jesus. But, like Joseph, Nicodemus had also followed the ministry of Jesus with great interest.*

The two men took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, according to our burial custom. They released a large stone, which rolled against the entrance of the tomb, and then went to their homes to observe the Sabbath. Some of our women were watching from a distance and saw that the preparations for burial were made in haste. They also went away to keep the Sabbath. *This ended the first day.*

Matthew 27:62-66

The next day the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate saying, “Sir, we remember that while he was still alive, we heard this deceiver say, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ Therefore, post a guard at the tomb so that his disciples cannot steal the body, and then start a second lie, worse than the first, saying that he has risen from the dead.” Pilate said, “You have a guard; go make the tomb secure as you know how.” So, they made the grave secure, and with the guard they set a seal on it. *This ended the second day.*

Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-8

Then, early in the morning after the Sabbath, there was a great earthquake. An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, rolled away the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his garment was as white as snow. The Roman guards were terrified. They shook with fear and became like dead men, *until gaining enough strength to flee the scene.*

As the sun began to rise on a new day, some of our women set off for the tomb carrying many spices to anoint the body of Jesus. Along the way they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone from the tomb for us since it is large?” But when they came to the tomb, they saw that the stone was already rolled away. *They stopped. Slowly and fearfully the women walked toward the entrance of the tomb.* They looked inside, and then entered, but did not see the body of Jesus. As they stood there, wondering what happened, suddenly two men appeared in shining garments. The women were afraid and turned away. The men said to them; *no doubt, they were angels*, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here; for he has risen, just as he said. Come

see the place where he lay. Now go and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead and is going before you to Galilee. Remember the words he spoke to you while he was with you, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinners, be crucified, and rise again on the third day." They remembered the words of the Lord and ran from the tomb to tell us the news.

#### Matthew 28:11-15

Meanwhile, the Roman guards, *who fled the tomb*, entered the city. They found the chief priests and told them everything. The priests met together; they secured a large sum of money and brought it to the soldiers, saying, "Take this, and if you are asked about him, say, 'His disciples came by night and stole the body while we were asleep.' Now if this matter comes to the attention of the governor, do not be afraid; we will persuade him for you, and keep you out of trouble." The soldiers took the money, and did what they were told. This story has been spread among the Jews.

#### John 20:1-17

Now when the women first came to the tomb Mary Magdalene was with them. *And when they saw that the grave was empty Mary ran to tell us. She was very distraught* when she found me and John. Mary said, "They have taken away the Lord, out of the tomb, and we do not know where they laid him." Immediately I took off running, and John was with me. We were running together, but John ran ahead faster and came to the tomb first. He looked inside and beheld the linen wrappings, but John did not enter. After arriving, I went straight inside the tomb. I saw the linen wrappings lying there and the face-cloth, which had been on his head, not lying with the wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then John entered; he saw and believed *the body was not there. But where?* For as yet we could not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead; so, we left.

Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she stooped down, looked inside and beheld two angels in white. They were seated, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been, *but she did not know who or what they were.* The angels said, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Mary answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord, out of the tomb, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she said this, she turned around and beheld Jesus standing there, but did not recognize him. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Mary thought he was the gardener and answered, "Sir, if you have carried him away tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." Her eyes were opened and she and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which means, dear Teacher) *Mary fell at His feet and took hold of the Lord.* Jesus said, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my disciples and say to them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

#### Luke 24:9-10; John 20:18

Mary ran to us with the other women. *We were hiding behind closed doors, fearing arrest. When we heard the knock at the door we did not answer, hoping that whoever it was would go away, but the knock persisted. Finally, we opened the door, and they rushed in with excitement, shouting, "We have seen the Lord! Their words were nonsense to us, and we did not believe them. They said, "You do not believe? Well, we have seen him, and now have told you!" And they left. Seen him? Yes, we saw that he was dead... but alive?! Could it be?*

Luke 24:13-49; John 20:19-23

That same day two followers of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, a journey from Jerusalem of about seven miles. As they walked, they talked about all the things that had happened. A stranger appeared on the way and joined them on their journey. He said, "What are you discussing?" They stopped, and looking downcast, one of them, Cleopas, answered, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem, who does not know the things that have happened?" The stranger said, "What things?" They answered, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in word and deed, both before God and man; and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to the sentence of death, and had him crucified. We were hoping that he was the one who would restore our nation. Now, it's been three days since these things happened, and this morning some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early, but did not find a body. Then they reported seeing a vision of angels, who said that Jesus was alive. Some of those with us went to investigate, and found the tomb empty, but they did not see Jesus." The stranger said to them, "O foolish men, who are slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things, and then to enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses, and continuing through the prophets, he interpreted the Scripture with reference to Messiah until they came to Emmaus. This stranger acted as though he wanted to go on, but they begged him saying, "Please, stay with us, for it is almost evening. So, he joined them. They *entered an inn, and* reclined there for a meal. The stranger took bread, gave thanks and broke it. Suddenly their eyes were opened, and they saw that it was Jesus; then, suddenly he was gone. They looked at each other in amazement, saying, "Were our hearts not inspired as he spoke to us along the way?" Immediately, the two men got up and returned to Jerusalem. They found us that evening and told us about their experience with the Lord on the road to Emmaus, and how he appeared to them in the breaking of bread. As they were speaking, suddenly, Jesus appeared saying, "Peace be with you." We were startled and thought we were seeing a ghost. He said, "Why are you afraid? Why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look and see that it is I." He showed us the wounds in his hands, in his feet and in his side saying, "Touch me; feel me, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." But still we could not believe our eyes. He asked, "Do you have anything to eat?" Someone gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and Jesus ate it. *Yes, in order to prove that he was not merely a spirit, but a resurrected body, and one who was willing to have fellowship with us!* Jesus said, "These are my words which I spoke while I was still with you, that all things which are written in the Law of

Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled; *behold, it is fulfilled!* Then Jesus opened our minds to understand the Scripture saying, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead on the third day. And that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are my witnesses, and now I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. Remain in Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from above. Peace be with you, as the Father sent me, I also send you." Then he breathed on us, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, their sins remain."

#### John 20:24-31

Now Thomas, one of our own, was not with us when Jesus appeared. *When Thomas returned*, we told him about our experience with the Lord, but he said, "Unless I shall see in his hands the imprint of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." *Could we blame him, for we did not believe the testimony of the women?*

Eight days later we were all together, *still in hiding* behind closed doors, but Thomas was with us. Suddenly, the Lord stood in our midst, saying, "Peace be with you." Jesus looked at Thomas and said, "Reach here your finger, see my hands; reach here your hand, put it into my side; be not unbelieving, but believe!" Thomas declared, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus answered, "Because you have seen me, have you believed? Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe." Jesus did many other things which I have not mentioned, but what I have told you is enough for you to know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who gives eternal life to those who believe in him.

*Do you truly believe that God Almighty came from heaven to earth to clothe himself in humanity, and die on a cross to pay the price of your sins and mine? Do you believe that all who turn from sin in repentance and receive forgiveness through faith in Christ inherit eternal life? If so, then let this be a time to refresh your faith. If not, then I invite you to join me in this prayer of commitment: God, I realize that I have sinned and that my sin separates me from you. I come to you in repentance and I receive your forgiveness in Christ. Jesus, I believe you died on the cross for me and I join you in death to sin. I believe you rose from the grave for me and I join you in resurrection to eternal life, which you give by grace through faith. I take you, Jesus, as Savior and Lord, to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness, and in health; forsaking all others and holding only to you throughout eternity; I give you my life, and I receive your Spirit.*