

1. The water carrier

I am going to tell you this story tonight because Malcolm was to be embarrassed to tell it.

He was really taken aback when our master gave him the order.

“Mal” he said, “I want you to do something for me”.

“Sure boss”, he replied, “What can I do for you?”

“I want you to go to the well, draw a jug of water and carry it home on your head!”

“What”, he replied, “I can’t do that, it’s women’s work!”

We weren’t happy with his reply, why should we have to do it, why not a man!

“I know”, said our boss, “But please would you do this for me, it’s important”

Our boss is a good guy and didn’t usually ask awkward things of his servants, so I knew there was something special about this task. Mal asked if he could do it later when no one was around, but was told it had to be right now, so he grabbed a pot and went to the well.

A couple of us followed him to see what would happen. He got some funny looks as he dropped the bucket down the well and as soon as he lifted the filled jug onto my head the jibes flowed!

“Oh, look at you, dearie, has your wife got you doing her chores?” was one of the milder jibes!

He was concentrating on balancing the jar on his head to take too much notice of what was said. He said to us later, “I tell you what, it has renewed my admiration for you women, that task was really difficult!”

“Yes, I thought and I bet you wont offer to help next time we need water”

On the way home, two men were following him. He turned and asked what they were doing, and they just said, “following orders” so we guessed this had something to do with the request our master had made to him.

As he got home the men followed him inside and had a short conversation with the boss.

Next, the staff were called together and told we were to prepare the upper room for a Passover Meal that night. This was strange because Passover was normally the next night, but today had been a day for strange things so we went to work getting everything ready.

Later that evening, people started arriving out of the shadows, clearly, they didn’t want anyone to know they were there.

Then I understood why – Jesus was with them!

He can’t go anywhere without crowds flocking around Him!

I guess He just wanted a peaceful evening without interruption.

Poem What kind of king?

What kind of king, rides on a donkey
a donkey that might be borrowed, or might be hijacked?

What kind of king, builds a castle
with a wide-open door for children to enter
but a needle-eye sized hole for the rich?

What kind of king, rides on a donkey
into the city where his assassins are waiting?

What kind of king, enters his assassins' city
with a ragtag commotion for all to see and not one security guard?

What kind of king, lets his subjects
treat him like a military liberator but doesn't
come with a single sword or weapon?

What kind of king, lets his followers send a
public message to the competing powers
with no intent of answering a single challenge?

What kind of King are you?

What kind of King can send two followers to fetch a donkey
and know exactly what they'll need to say?

What kind of king, can tell a blind beggar
"your faith has made you well." and actually make him see?

What kind of king, can weep at the funeral of his friend
only to say, "Lazarus, come out!" and watch him come back to life.

What kind of king, can sit at the dinner table with his subjects
and be subject to them and wash their feet?

What kind of king, can carry his own cross
can serve his assassin and help in his own execution?

What kind of king, can die so that his assassins can live?

What kind of King are you?

A King who came not to be served but to serve
and to give his life as a ransom for many.

A King who keeps his promises
A King who I can trust
A King who can save
A King I want to follow

And so I come to you, King Jesus
not to be served by you, but to serve you and to give my life to you.

So take my cloak, use it to clothe the naked,
or use it for your donkey to step on.
I don't care so long as you're the one taking it.

Because you're the only one who will give me a new garment in return,
a white robe made of saints' righteous deeds,

a garment that fits so well it'll be a new self, yourself!

Use me, King Jesus, all of me. As you see fit.

Make me a knight, a bishop or a rook, or make me an expendable pawn.
I don't care what piece I am.
So long as yours is the hand that's moving me.

Because yours is the mighty hand with an outstretched arm.
Yours is the hand that rules with an iron sceptre,
and that knit me together in my mother's womb.

So, let me follow you King Jesus, all the way to Golgotha.
Let me walk next to you and put palm branches at your feet
and shout "Hosanna!" with the children.

And if the child in me shouting "Hosanna!"
grows up to an adult shouting "Crucify!"
bring me back to the water where I can be born again.

Let me sit at the table with you and take bread and wine from your hands
and let me lay my head on your chest.

And if thirty pieces of the world's silver are ever enough to draw me away
Wash my feet and make me clean again

Let me pray with you at Gethsemane
and learn from you how to be vulnerable with the Father
let me see your tears and sweat and grief.

And if my prayers give way to sleep
wake me again with the waters of regeneration.

Let me walk with you to the cross.
Let me be Simon of Cyrene, and learn to carry your cross with you.

And if my Simon of Cyrene becomes Simon Peter
and I walk away from your cross to deny you,
lead me back to these waters where I can still die with you.
and live.

And all along this long rough road, let my song be: Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!
Hosanna in the highest!

Mary anoints Jesus – Judas makes his choice

We had been to Bethany many times, but this was different. Just a short while before Jesus had been there and brought Lazarus back from the dead. What a day that was!

What a smell! They had to bath him three times before they got the stench of death off his body. Lazarus joked that he usually only had a bath on his birthday so would he be getting three lots of presents? We told him he had already had the best present he could ever know!

Anyway, lots of us crowded around that table, Martha was in the kitchen preparing food as she always does, happier than ever to sort out the hospitality and beaming at her brother who she thought she would never serve again!

Mary wasn't around but Martha didn't seem to mind this time!

Then the door opened, and Mary came in carrying a very expensive jar of perfume. She stopped behind Jesus and silently unscrewed the lid and started pouring it all over Him. We were all stunned, Jesus just sat there and allowed her to do it.

As the oil dripped all over him, she knelt and started wiping his feet with her hair. None of us knew what to do, we all stared at Mary on her knees and Jesus sat there. His eyes closed, drinking in the fragrance that by now was filling the room.

It was an incredible moment that was shattered with the roar of the voice of Judas.

“Why have you allowed this”, he shouted at Jesus,
“That could have been sold and the money given to the poor”

John whispered in my ear, “By poor, he means himself!”

Jesus opened his eyes and wiped some of the oil away.

“Leave her alone Judas!” he said firmly, “You will always have the poor and you could help them anytime, but what Mary has done is for now. She has anointed my body for burial. What she has done today will be talked about through all generations to come!”

I don't think most of us really understood what Jesus had said but we all said, “Amen!” Judas was pompous and it was good to see him put in his place!

Judas was furious, I thought he was going to burst a blood vessel. He just turned and walked out of the door.

None of us gave it a thought, but we found out much later that he had walked straight over to the high priest's house and negotiated a deal to recoup his losses.

A deal that would involve the greatest betrayal of all time!

James' – I think it might be narcolepsy?

I visited the doctor the other day and told him I had trouble staying awake.

“How long has this been going on?” he asked

“It started on the night when Jesus was arrested” I replied and went on to tell the story.

We had enjoyed a big meal together and Jesus had been there with us. The usual kind of thing that happen when mates get together, we bicker, and everyone tries to look important.

Jesus watched us and smiled as he shook his head at our antics.

No one was prepared to wash feet, so Jesus got down and did it! We were so embarrassed! Peter even tried refusing at first but when Jesus said that he couldn't be in his gang unless he allowed him to wash him, Peter asked for a top to toe job, that made Jesus and us giggle.

Jesus went on to talk about us loving each other by serving one another like He had done. Peter went to grab the bowl, but Jesus restrained him and said; “Not now Peter!”

During the Passover Meal, Jesus gave fresh insight into what Bread and Wine represented and with those words ringing in our ears, we went out into the night air.

Now I know you get tired after a good meal, but the cool air should have counteracted that! We went into the Garden of Gethseme and Jesus asked John, me and Peter to go further into the olive grove with him while the others stayed near the entrance.

He asked us to stop and pray, as He went even further into the garden on his own.

Well we started off fervently, but within minutes we were all snoozing!
Three times He came back and each time we were off in the land of nod!

And then He said, “Quick, get up, soldiers are coming!”

I tell you what, the sight of the torches quickly cured my narcolepsy and I was wide awake. Judas was there with a kiss of greeting for Jesus, except it wasn't a greeting but a betrayal!

Jesus was arrested and for the next few days, none of us slept!
The horror of the trial and shock of people who had cried, “Hosanna” now crying, “Crucify”

The beating, the mocking, the pronouncement of Pilate and then the long road to Golgotha and the horror of our Lord nailed to a cross.

That night I was scared to close my eyes as each scene flashed through my head.

It was at that point I realised my narcolepsy was cured, my problem now was insomnia!

Good Friday – seems an oxymoron to me!

I've always thought the term 'Good Friday' seemed like an oxymoron.

What's that? you may ask – A contradiction in terms!

How can a beating and brutal killing be good?

Jesus had done so much good in the three years we knew him!

Healing people, feeding people, teaching them how to live the right way, making them whole!

Only a few days earlier, he'd ridden into Jerusalem and the crowds proclaimed him king!

But it wasn't long before their halleluiahs, turned to hatred!

But why?

Okay, so he had rubbed a few religious people up the wrong way, by exposing their hypocrisy!

But!

Was he wrong to overturn the money changers tables and declare the Temple a place of prayer!

Was he wrong to curse a fig tree that was demonstrating false hope?

Had he been wrong to bring a man back from the grave four days after death?

Just what was it that prompted this treatment?

They said it was for blasphemy but only God could do the things He had done!

There had to be a higher reason to do what they had done.

Jesus had talked about this day, but none of us had really taken him seriously.

We knew it was dangerous to go near Jerusalem, but we didn't expect this.

We hadn't understood this was His plan right from the day we first met Him!

I don't know about you, but a brutal beating and a criminal's death does not seem just to me!

So I say again, 'Good Friday seems an oxymoron to me!'

The dreaded job

It's the one job no one wants to do! The dreaded job!

Kneeling at the front door, untying sandals and washing feet – it's so demeaning!

Most households give this job to the newest, youngest servant, but not our boss.

He saves it for the servant who hasn't pulled his or her weight lately.

To the one who gets caught shirking or maybe making the young ones do the messy jobs

But this time was different.

We had our instructions to lay the table, to prepare the food and to put the bowl and towel in the usual place by the door, but no one was designated to do the foot thing!

We all thought he had forgotten about it, no one wanted to say anything in case they got the job

I didn't want him to be embarrassed so plucked up courage to say something. I asked if he had forgotten to appoint the foot washer but all he said was, "It's all taken care of".

None of us were sure about what he meant but he said to leave it, so we did!

As the guests arrived, we took their cloaks, but no one took their sandals.

Some of them waited to be waited on but after a moment, shook off their shoes and went in.

Even when Jesus came in, He just smiled, shook off his sandals and sat with his friends

At that point I wanted to get over there and do something but the look on the boss's face told me not to move. And then I saw something that blew my mind!

Once they were all seated, Jesus got up, went over to the bowl, wrapped the towel round his waist and started washing the feet of his group.

All of us were stunned. One of the men, that hot head, Peter, didn't want to let him at first, then insisted on a complete wash down. Jesus chuckled and said, "Just the feet will do!"

And as He finished he said to them, "I've shown you how I love you, so in future, you show that same love for each other"

I tell you what, I never complained about washing people's feet again!

We just had to get in to Him!

We waited as long as we could, Friday evening, all day Saturday and then as soon as we were able, it was still dark, but technically morning, we were out of that room!

Oils, spices and clean linen in hand, we made our way to the tomb.

On the way we heard a strange rumbling and the earth seemed to shake a bit but we were so focussed on getting to the tomb, no one seemed too bothered by it.

On the way, one of the ladies asked how we would get in.

The tomb was sealed and guarded, but Joanna was confident she could talk the guards into opening it enough to let us in.

But as we got into the garden and Joanna approached one of the guards he seemed to be frozen to the spot and unable to talk.

And as we looked around, all of his troop were in the same state, and then we saw why!

The stone was rolled away!

We took our chance to get in there and get at the body, but there was no body!

We were in shock, what had happened?

As we stood outside the empty tomb, two men in dazzling robes suddenly appeared.

It scared the life out of us, and we all dropped to the ground before these heavenly beings.

One of them urged us up and asked us why we were looking for the living among the dead!

And then he said words I will never forget, "He is not here, He has risen"

And its true! Mary spoke with him, us ladies encountered Him and so did the disciples.

Two people walking to Emmaus, and over 500 other people also saw Him alive!

He is not here, He is risen - Halleluia

Four questions from the children

Why does this night differ from all other nights?

Why are there so many candles on the table

Why is it called a 'Tenebrae Meal'

Why can't I be at home playing 'Mario Carts'?

Then those who had seized Jesus led him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered.

And Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end.

Now the chief priests and the whole council^[a] were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward.

At last two came forward and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’”

And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?”

But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”

Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.

What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.”

Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, saying, “Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?”

Luke 23:1-17 Jesus before Pilate and Herod

Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.”

Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.”

Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.”

But they were urgent, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”

When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.

When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him.

So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer.

The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him.

And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate.

And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him.

Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore punish and release him.”

Matthew 27:15-26 The crowd choose Barabbas

Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.

So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?”

For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.”

Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.”

Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!”

And he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.”

And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!”

Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

Matthew 27:27-31 **Flogged, mocked and crown of thorns**

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him.

And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand.

And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head.

And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

John 19:17-30**Crucified**

And he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.

So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'"

Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be."

This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!", he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

John 19:31-37 Roman spear

Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.

For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.”

And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

John19:38-42 **Buried**

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body.

Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.

So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Luke 24:1-6 The Resurrection

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared.

And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.

And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead?”

He is not here, but has risen.