

## Good Friday: Bishopscourt Chapel, Sale; 10 April 2020

### *Through the Eyes of Mary Magdalene, Part 3*

My name is Mary. The twelve call me 'the Magdalene' because I come from Magdala, by the shore of Lake Galilee. Others call me all sorts of things – especially the men. He always just called me 'Mary'. Let me tell you about those few days – those tragic, traumatic, thrilling days – which turned my world – what seemed like the whole world – upside down...

Somewhere between the High Priest's house and the Roman precinct, Thursday night had slipped into Friday, the day of Preparation – preparation for what, exactly, now that it had all come to this...

Half-blinded by tears I turn my salty face to look about me. Where are they?

Where is the human bandwagon that circled round him a few days ago? Where are his friends: Peter, James – where are they?

Apart from me, and the soldiers gambling for his few possessions, there is only his mother – inconsolable despite the brave efforts of Clopas' wife – and, of the twelve, just one, the one who never left his side.

Last night is still a blur – jagged, disconnected recollections of his anguished praying, then suddenly the soldiers with Judas, Peter trying to make things right, and he was gone. Gone. Taken from us. A few like me followed at a distance, but most melted into the darkness of the early hours of this black, wretched day.

I'm still trying to piece together how this could have happened so fast: reports of a mock trial at the house of the High Priest; then, it must have been right about daybreak, that fiasco before Pilate.

How can one who has risen to the station of Governor in such an empire as Rome's be so weak? Is Judea such a backwater after all? It was as though he needed direction, guidance, from those who sought his ruling, his authority. Nothing but a puppet dangling on imperial string – a string they know how to pull, trying to get the whole thing over with before the holy day, so they can eat with clean hands. I hope they choke on their bitter herbs!

But what does it matter, anyway, how it fell. He seemed to know it was headed for this end.

And it is the end. He said so himself, just before surrendering to the suffocating humiliation of this most barbaric of all Roman practices: 'It is finished!', he cried. And it is. All his good work, his love of the unlovely . . . his love for me. Our hopes gutted, our dreams emptied out like the blood and water draining from his precious, punctured side.

It is finished. It is over and gone.

What is to become of us? Forlorn wailing where once there was laughter and expectant talk of the Kingdom of God. He kept trying to show us how near that rule of love and justice was. Wherever God reigns in human hearts, in human communities, he would say, there it is – right there: the Kingdom of God.

Not now; not without him. Anger and hate reign in my heart today, and hurt, and self-pity. For my life will be as cold and empty as the tomb he will soon be laid in. In fact it will be worse than it was before I met him. At least then I hadn't known that things could be any different.

I found myself reciting from the Lamentations of Jeremiah:

How lonely sits the city that once was full of people!  
How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations!  
She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks;  
among all her lovers she has none to comfort her;  
all her friends have dealt treacherously with her . . .  
Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?  
Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow. (1:1a-b, 2, 12)

He knew that sort of desolation and loss. How he wept at the tomb of Lazarus, before . . . before – how could someone so full of the power of God end up like this?

I wonder who he really was?

Everyone had their ideas – I had mine too, but no, it couldn't be, not now.

With Passover he'll probably be forgotten come Monday. It'll be business as usual.

I wonder if I'll see Peter and the others around? What will we talk about? The weather? The price of fish? Will anyone dare speak his name? Will anyone try and keep his memory alive?

Deep in such thoughts I hardly noticed Joseph and Nicodemus arrive. Where are you taking him? Yes, yes, I know the place – thank-you for that kindness. Would you mind if I went there, after the Sabbath? Thank-you. *Todah. Shalom shabbat.*

*Shalom*, 'peace'. How could that word even pass my lips?

In the distance his mother and the one he loved stealing away, huddled together.

Alone now in the gathering darkness.

It is finished.

*+Richard, Gippsland*