

Radio Program - The Crucifixion, Resurrection

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Scourged and mocked, the Son of Man was led upon the last of his earthly journeys. It was but a short journey, for the place of crucifixion lay not far beyond the city walls. But all the unutterable weariness of his trial before the Jews, his trial before the Romans, the scourging and shame of the final mockery had sapped his strength so much by now that when the soldiers placed upon his shoulders the cross upon which he was to die, he scarce could carry it, could carry it no further than the crowded street that led out of the city. The centurion in command summoned from the crowd a strong and sturdy man whose name has passed to history as Simon of Cyrene and him, says St Matthew, they compelled to bear the cross along the Via Dolorosa, that way of aching shame and grief. There were the thousands of pilgrims to the Passover, and among them there must have been many who but a few short days ago had cast their cloaks before him, had lifted their voices in those glad hosannas, had seen with their own eyes the sick made whole, the lepers cleansed, the blind restored to sight, the halt and maimed returned to freedom.

And many must there also have been watching, who gloated that the man they had so long sought to ensnare was on his way at last to crucifixion.

They came at last to the place where which is called Calvary, and there his cross laid down by Simon of Cyrene on the ground, and the crosses of the malefactors laid on either side of him. The Son of Man was stripped and nailed to the cross over his head. They affixed the superscription Pilate had commanded. The words were written Greek and Latin and Hebrew, so that no single soul who saw them might fail to grasp their meaning.

The King of the Jews, that superscription said, and now, as the cross was lifted up against the sky, that title, too rose with him, and on either side of him the crosses of the malefactors were also embedded in the ground.

Among the crowds who stood and watched, deriding him or holding their pe, came yet another little group of people to the foot of the cross. They were Mary his mother, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and the disciple John.

He looketh first at me, John, and then at thee, and then at me again.

Woman, behold thy son, O Mary. Now he hath turned his eyes on me. Behold thy mother. So be it, Lord. So be it.

Mary, mother of God.

I thirst.

The centurion took a sponge and dipped it in a vessel brought by other women of Jerusalem, a mercy drink of vinegar and gall to deaden pain. But when he had tasted thereof, we are told he would not drink.

Into what agony the pains of crucifixion had now brought him, we do not know. But in unutterable torment, he spoke into the night the most terrible of all words from his cross.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

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Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.

It is finished.

And now there came into the record a good man and a just, as St. Matthew refers to him, Joseph of Arimathea. He was a member of the Sanhedrin itself, yet he had not consented to the deeds his fellow councilors had had a hand in, and now, risking their fury on himself, he begged from Pilate the body of Jesus, and we are told, he took it down and wrapped it in linen and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone where never man before was laid.

Against the mouth of this sepulcher a heavy stone was rolled, and the women of Galilee, who had watched the burial returned into the city to prepare spices and ointments with which they might anoint his body. Throughout the whole of the period of the Passover itself, through the quiet of the Sabbath, they rested in accordance with the law of Moses. To the disciples, who had forsaken Jesus in his hour of need in Gethsemane, all now seemed over. The Master they had hailed as the Messiah was crucified and buried.

And as they drew together again in Jerusalem, torn with grief and overshadowed by despair, it seemed to them that all for which they had worked and prayed was now forever lost to them among the many thousands of happier men and women keeping the Passover. They withdrew into a house where they found some peace and stillness. In their mutual grief, another day began to dawn at last upon the holy city.

And those faithful women who had been last at the cross were now first at the sepulchre. But Mary, the mother of Jesus, was not with them. In the twilight of earliest dawn, they made their way with the spices they had prepared up the lonely hillside to the tomb where Jesus had been laid.

In their eagerness, the two Marys, Mary, the mother of James and Mary Magdalene, hurried a little ahead.

It is yet hard to see where we are going, Mary. Here, take thou my hand across these rocks. Who shall roll us away? The stone from the door of the sepulchre. I did hear tell last night that the chief priests asked the governor that they might keep the guard about the tomb.

I see no sign of them. Look, there is the sepulcher. This stone is rolled away already. I wonder. Oh, I wonder what has befallen here.

Here. Come with me into the sepulcher. Look. I do perceive her vision there. It seemeth like.

Like a young man sitting there, all wrapped in light. Or is he dressed in robes so white I cannot tell them from the light. Be not up. Friday. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified.

Why seek ye the living among the dead? Behold the place where they leave him. Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and the third day rise again. He is not here.

He is risen.

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