

Mike Keller



~~The Woman Caught in Adultery~~

John 8:2-11

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN:

The scribes and the Pharisees brought

a woman who had been caught in adultery,
and placing her in their midst they said to [Jesus],

"Teacher, this woman has been caught in the
act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded

us to stone such. What do you say about her?"

This they said to test him, that they

might have some charge to bring

against him. — John 8:3-6a



THE FIRST WORD

And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Luke 23:33-34a

Open My Eyes # 659

All I Ask of You # 1713
(re Frank X2)

WHEN I CAME INTO THE WORLD, my mother died in childbirth. Because of that, my father always resented me.

I never felt his love, so I lived my life trying to fill that void. I loved every man who paid any attention to me, trying desperately to make up for the love I never had.

I met You, Jesus, under the most embarrassing of circumstances and I was so ashamed. I had heard about You, but I didn't pay You much mind — until I found myself thrown on the ground at Your feet. I was caught. They caught me — and this man I didn't even know — in adultery. How did I know he was married? I didn't even care if he was or wasn't. I just wanted someone to love me.



I thought that this was the end. They all had rocks and they were aimed at me. But You remained calm. You began to write with Your finger on the ground. The sand began to reveal words: *pride, envy, anger, sloth, gluttony, avarice, lust*. I will never forget them; they were etched into my memory as You wrote them on the ground. Then You said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."

I held my breath and braced myself for the first blow. You began to write on the ground again: *mercy, forgiveness*... I closed my eyes and saw nothing more. I waited for the worst... but instead heard the thump of one stone after another falling to the ground.

Soon they had all disappeared. There was no one left but You and me. I held my breath, wondering what You were going to say or do to me. Then calmly and gently You asked me where they all were. "Has no one condemned you?"

With my voice shaking I simply replied, "No one, Lord." Then I heard the words that I waited all my life to hear, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again." Finally, love — real love — the love that I was searching for my entire life. Everything became clear at that moment. I didn't realize what I was doing with my life. I had no idea until You calmly spoke those words to me. It all made sense, only because of Your compassion.

Now I am once again on the ground at Your feet, clinging to Your Cross. I hear You speak, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*" Even nailed to the Cross, You have this amazing capacity to forgive. I didn't know what I was doing all those years, but You knew. You understood what I didn't.

Now they turn on You with the same fury with which they were determined to destroy me. But sadly, instead of the sound of stones falling to the ground, I hear the sound of the nails being driven into Your hands and feet. Mercy and forgiveness are no longer written on the ground but are spoken from Your lips. I will not leave this spot for as long as You hang here. I will cling to the foot of Your Cross for as long as it takes.

The Rich Young Man

Matthew 19:16-22

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW:

And behold, one came up to [Jesus], saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep

the commandments." He said to him, "Which?"

And Jesus said, "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?"

Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. — Matthew 19:16-22

I WAS INTRIGUED BY YOU, but I can now admit that I thought more highly of myself. I knew the law and was somewhat proud of my observance of it. My family was wealthy and I enjoyed the respect our wealth received from the people of our region.

I heard about You, Jesus. I was curious. I devised a question whose answer would not reveal Your wisdom as much as it would reveal my pride. You engaged me and we went back and forth. Throughout our conversation, You looked at me in a way that made me very uncomfortable. It felt as if You were looking into my very soul — like You knew me — better than I thought I knew myself. Intigue was replaced with respect; pride was turned to embarrassment.

Something strange was happening to me while we spoke; something I never experienced before. I was almost brought to tears but fought with every ounce of my strength to control myself. I asked You what I lacked, and Your words burned themselves on my mind and soul. You said to me, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

First, I thought I was already near perfect. The fact that You used that word stung me to the core because You were letting me know that I was not. Sell what I possess? Never in a million years would the thought of doing such a thing enter my mind. It would be an impossibility. How would I live? What would my family say? What of my position in our village? There was too much to risk, too much at stake. Sell everything... it’s madness, just madness. Then the final blow, “Come, follow Me.” Part of me wanted to, but the other part of me was stronger.

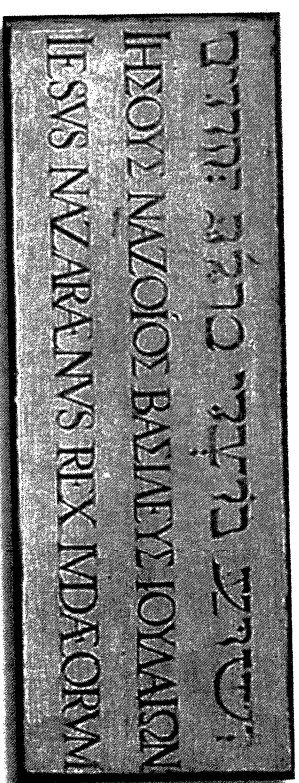
Sorrowfully, I walked away. I didn’t know what else to do. I was disappointed in myself—embarrassed, ashamed. I walked away and I’ve regretted doing so all this time. Yet, despite the regret, I still can’t leave behind everything that defines who I am. My possessions own me rather than the other way around.

But now is the moment of truth. I heard what was happening to You here in Jerusalem so I came. I’m not sure why I came. I am just here. I see You stripped of everything. They nail You nearly naked to the cross.

No possessions here, yet everything is now accomplished. You once asked me if I wanted to be perfect. Now perfection is revealed in the ability to forgive.

Forgive me, Lord, for not letting go of my wealth. Forgive me for not having the courage to follow You. Forgive me, Lord, because it is only now on this hill of Calvary that I realize what I turned my back on.

I thought I went away sorrowful after our first meeting. That was nothing compared to the sorrow I now feel in the very depth of my heart. *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* Those words are not only directed towards those who physically nailed You to the Cross today, but I can swear that when You say these words You look at me. I had no idea who and what I walked away from then. But I am here now. I hope I am not too late. Please, Lord, may I not be too late.





THE SECOND WORD

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Luke 23:39-43



The Paralytic Lowered from the Roof

Mark 2:1-12

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK:

And when [Jesus] returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. — Mark 2:1-3

FOR A GOOD PERIOD OF MY LIFE I could not walk. The doctors told my parents that I had some disease; others were of the mind that my affliction was the result of some sin, some transgression of the law. All I knew from my youth was that I could not walk. I was dependent upon my family and friends to get me from one place to another. At times, I felt that I was a nuisance. Other times, I just resigned myself to waiting. I was not always patient... especially with myself.

One evening, my friends came over to visit. They were discussing You. What they were saying seemed amazing, beyond possibility. They said that You could heal. They said that there were stories about miracles and cures, and they were really intrigued. I never heard them talk like this before and I began to daydream about... possibilities.

Whenever they came over to visit, I would ask for more news. What else have you heard about Him? What else has He done? One evening they said You talked about a kingdom, but they weren't quite sure what that all meant. Their focus was always that You could heal.

Then the day arrived—a day that started out like any other but ended up changing my life forever.

My friends came running into the house all excited, so out of breath they could hardly speak. They told me that You were in my village. They wanted to take me to You. They lifted me onto my mat and began to run to where You were. I was so frightened because they were going so fast I thought they were going to drop me.

A huge crowd surrounded a house. They said You were inside, but we couldn't even get close to the door. No one was moving to let us through. They laid me on the ground and said that eventually You would have to come out, and that when You did, then they would bring You to me. We sat there for what seemed an eternity, but You didn't come out.

One of my friends went off. He walked around the crowd to the back of the house. He was gone for a while. When he returned, he called my other friends over and they were talking. Finally, they came to me and said that the back of the house was clear and that my friend had found a ladder.

They wanted to bring me up on the roof and lower me down. I told them they were out of their minds. What if they dropped me? What would the owner of the house say? I began to list all the reasons why this was not a good idea. Then finally they said to me, "Do you want to walk again?"

"Yes," I said. "Do you believe that Jesus can heal you?" "Yes," I said. "Then let's go."

They picked me up and off we went. I was nervous, scared but at the same time excited and hopeful.

We made it up onto the roof, then they began to open it up and lower me down. There You were, teaching. You stood up and helped lower me to the floor along with the assistance of some others. I will never forget what

You said. I will never forget what You did. I believed that You could heal me, and You did.

For the first time in my life, I was able to walk.

Little did I know that my footsteps would bring me here to Calvary. I almost wish that I couldn't walk up that hill, but I would go anywhere to be with You, especially now. I hear the thief taunt You. "Come down," he says.

Come down. I think of how I was lowered down from the roof. But You don't come down. I hear the other thief say, "Remember me when You come into Your Kingdom," and I remembered the conversations with my friends about this Kingdom. Then I hear You say, "*Today you will be with Me in Paradise.*" It only takes a day, I think to myself, for one's whole life to change. One day, that's all. And Paradise? Is that the Kingdom? Is the Kingdom Paradise?

All I know is that I couldn't walk but now I can. That on my own I was able to walk up this hill to stand beneath Your cross. That I, too, want to be part of this Kingdom. I, too, want to be with You in Paradise. Until now, "paradise" was being able to walk. Paradise was being able to get to one place or another whenever I wanted to go, not having to wait for anyone else to bring me. Yet now there is another place to go, and only You can bring me, and I want to go.

Carry me once more, Jesus. Bring me to Your Kingdom. Bring me to Paradise. You made it possible for me to walk; now I see that You make it possible for me and others to have a place to go.



The Raising of the Widow's Son

Luke 7:11-17

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE:
*Soon afterward [Jesus] went to a city called Nain,
and his disciples and a great crowd went with him.
As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man
who had died was being carried out, the only son of
his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd
from the city was with her. — Luke 7:11-12*

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THE THIRD WORD

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Mag'dalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

John 19:25b-27

WORD SPREAD QUICKLY in our village of Nain. They said that You were arrested and brought to trial. They said that it didn't sound good for You and that there was a strong possibility that things would go badly for You. We packed a few of our things and got here as soon as we could. We wanted to be with You when You needed us most. It is a small way to give back to You who were certainly with us at the time we most needed You.

I lost my husband years ago. Thank God I had my son. He took care of me, he protected me, and he made sure that I had whatever I needed. Then suddenly, he died. There was no warning, no illness, nothing... just here one day and gone the next. I was devastated. What would happen now? My grief was so strong that I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, I could hardly walk behind my son as we took him to his grave. The people of my town held me up; each step was agony.

Then this stranger came.

They told me You stood for a short time off in the distance and just watched me. You were obviously moved by my loss and my grief. You came closer and stopped the procession. I will never forget what happened next.

You spoke and my son came back to life. I was so shocked that I nearly fainted. You gave him back to me. You whispered in my ear, "Mother, behold, your son."

Here You say those very words again. *Behold, your son.* I am amazed that You say them now, from the Cross. This time, not to me but to Your own mother. I look at her and remember how I felt. My heart breaks for her. I know her heart is breaking because mine was broken. I want to hold her tight and let her know that if You could give me my son back, You will make sure to take care of her, too.

Then I hear You say, "*Behold, your mother.*" A young man goes to her and puts his arm around her. I ask who he is and am told his name is John. My heart skips a beat because that is my son's name as well. *Behold, your son. Behold, your mother.* I can't help but think what these relationships mean now, as we stand at the foot of Your Cross.

Everything is different now. You, Jesus, on the Cross change everything, even our relationships. *My* John isn't really *my* John at all; he is every mother's son. And am I everyone's mother? That's what You do, Jesus. If we belong to You, then we belong to each other.



Our Lady's Meditation

Luke 2:22-40

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE:

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

— Luke 2:33-35

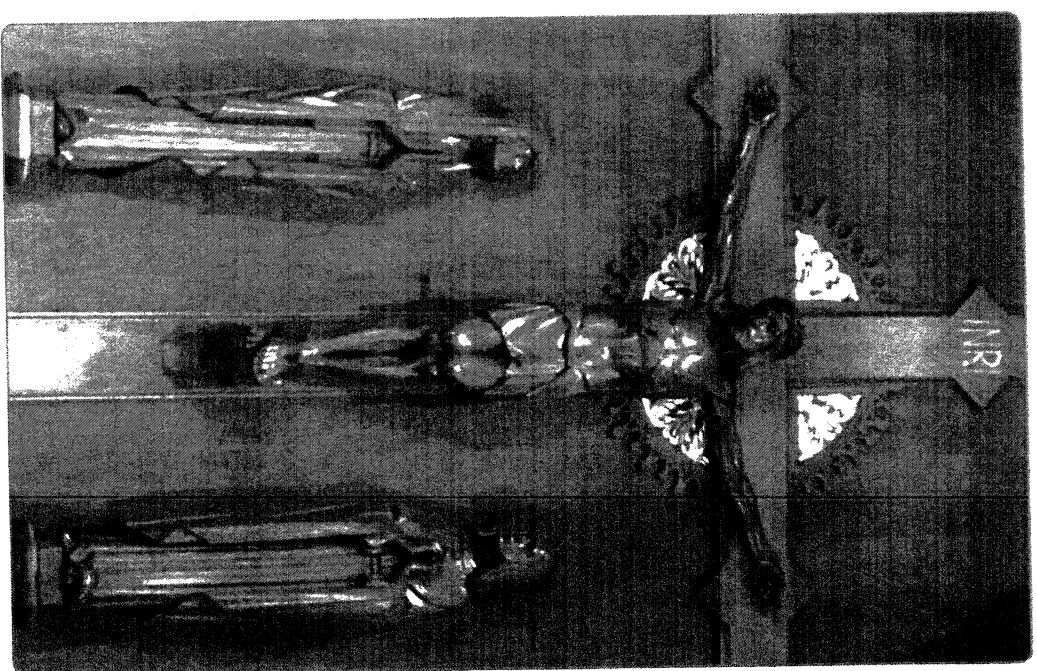
STANDING HERE makes me think of the day Joseph and I took You to the temple to fulfill the law. I held You in my arms, while Simeon offered the prescribed prayers. Then he took You from me and, while You were in the arms of this venerable old man, he looked at me and said words that I have never forgotten: *a sword would pierce my heart.* This is what he meant; this moment is what he foretold. I could never have imagined this moment. Never!

Now You look at me as You looked at me while in Simeon's arms. I felt helpless then and I feel even more helpless now. In the midst of Your agony, You are still taking care of Your mother — watching out for me,

making sure I will be taken care of, fulfilling the promise You made to Joseph while we both sat by his bedside before he died. "Take care of Your mother for me," he said. You looked at me then as well, with tears in Your eyes. I thought You were crying for Joseph, but now I wonder, were those tears because You knew this moment would come to pass? I treasure the times our eyes caught sight of each other throughout Your life. No words, just that penetrating glance that I had gotten used to but often didn't fully understand.

Here in the midst of this horror, I can't take my eyes off of You. This time You speak, "*Behold, your son.*" I have never stopped beholding You and I never will. You give me, John to make sure I am cared for. We will help each other; we will take care of each other. I promise. The pain in my heart is so intense, I don't think I can bear it.

I feel John's arm around me and I bury myself in his chest and weep.



*"...standing near the cross of Jesus
were his mother...and the disciple
whom he loved." – John 19:25, 26*



The Blind Man at the Side of the Road

Luke 18:35-43

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE:

As [Jesus] drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" — Luke 18:35-39



THE FOURTH WORD

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, la'ima sabach-tha'ni?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Matthew 27:45-46

FOR YEARS I sat by the side of the road that led to Jericho, relying on the kindness of strangers. As they passed by, some gave me something to eat, others a small shekel, but mostly, they ignored me as though I didn't exist. I am a human being, blind from birth. Because they thought that my blindness was the result of sin, they didn't want anything to do with me. I was like a leper.

When I sat by the side of the road, I heard a lot of what people were saying. I couldn't see, but I could hear. I heard their problems, their disputes, their fears and anxieties. I heard it all. In my head, I would solve their problems, settle their disagreements, and be their mighty champion, saving them from all that scared them.

They would probably be amazed by what goes on in the mind of a blind man. I might not have been able to see like everyone else, but I could see what they could not. Yet no one asked; no one came to me for advice.

I had an answer, but they never asked the question. I was blind. What did I matter?

I remember the day You and Your friends passed by. There was a commotion. There was excitement in the air. I could feel it. I tugged on someone's garment and asked who was passing by and they told me it was You. I had heard about You. Some spoke of You with amazement, talking about healings and wondrous works and a new teaching. Others thought You dangerous and not to be trusted. All I remember is that You were passing by and if You were who they said You were, You would notice me. You might even heal me so that I could see.

I began to shout, to cry out. I called Your name over and over. Some told me to be quiet; others kicked me and tried to push me out of the way.

What happened next I will never forget. You called me over and asked what I wanted You to do for me. I could hear Your voice, but I could not see Your face. Your voice was like no other that I had heard by the side of the road. There was compassion in Your voice — there was real concern. No one had ever spoken to me in that tone before. I was so enthralled by Your voice that I almost forgot what I wanted You to do.

Finally I said, "Lord, I want to see." No sooner did I say the words than the darkness in which I lived seemed to disappear. I was able to see. I was overwhelmed. I could see. And I remember thinking later that the first thing I saw was You, Your face. I saw You!

But now I am here on Calvary. I came because I heard what was happening to You. For the first time since You gave me sight, I wish I could not see. This is horrible. I can't believe what is before my eyes. I close them and turn away. I don't want to see. For the first time since You healed me, *I don't want to see*. Then in the darkness I hear You say, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*"

I turn, with my eyes opened wide. You? You feel forsaken? I know that feeling. It brings me back to the roadside on the way to Jericho.

No, Jesus, You are not forsaken. I am here, Jesus, with my eyes wide open. I am here with You. You are not forsaken. I see You. I hear You. Jesus, it's me, the beggar. I'm here. Do You see *me*?



The Lame Man at the Pool of Bethesda

John 5:2-16

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN:

*Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate
a pool, in Hebrew called Beth-zatha,
which has five porticoes. In these lay a
multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed.
One man was there, who had been ill
for thirty-eight years. — John 5:2-5*

THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE HERE. Who are all these people? Are they like me? Are we all here because You changed our lives? Do You remember me, Jesus? I was the man by the side of the pool at Bethesda here in Jerusalem. You came up to me and asked me if I wanted to be healed. I didn't know who You were. I began to tell You that despite sitting there for thirty-eight years, no one ever approached me to help me into the healing waters. They ignored me. No one cared. But You came up and asked if I wanted to be healed. You were the first person to ever pay attention to me, to offer assistance. I said yes, thinking that You were going to help put me in the water, but then something amazing happened.

I felt this strange sensation go through my legs. I haven't felt anything in my legs for thirty-eight years. Then You offered me Your hand and I stood up. For the first time in a long time, I stood up and I didn't fall. My legs were strong; they held me up.

These strong legs carried me here today. I heard what was happening to You. I had to come to be with You, Jesus. You who came to me; I needed to be with You. But now I hear You say, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" Those haunting words remind me of my years sitting by the pool of Bethesda. Thirty-eight forsaken years. Thirty-eight years of no one paying any attention to me, only thinking of themselves. Your words pierce my heart and my memory.

After You healed me, I promised myself that I wouldn't let a day go by that I didn't extend some kindness to another person. ~~Now, I~~ a ~~fact~~ on Calvary with You. You are not forsaken. I am here with You. You are not alone.





The Woman at the Well

John 4:7-24

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN:

[Jesus] left Judea and departed again to Galilee. He had to pass through Samar'ia. So he came to a city of Samar'ia called Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. — John 4:3-6



THE FIFTH WORD

... Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture),
“I thirst.”

John 19:28

ICAME TO JERUSALEM FOR THE FEAST and I heard what they were doing to You. I had to come. I had to see You again. Little did I know when I sat with You at the well that I would one day be here beneath Your Cross. I hear You cry out, “*I thirst*,” and I cannot help but think of the time You said those very words to me. You were thirsty. By all that is proper, You shouldn’t have even spoken to me; yet You did. When I think back and replay our conversation over and over in my mind, I know now that it wasn’t just a coincidence that we met at the well.

I was just going about my daily tasks, drawing the day’s supply of water. I waited until the other women were gone, as I did every day. I hated the way they looked at me; their eyes felt like daggers piercing my heart.

It was better just to stray away than to endure their contempt. It was so hot, the sun bearing down at that hour of the day but I really had no choice.

You spoke to me, You were kind to me, and I didn't know what to think, or what to say. No one really spoke to me. I always felt so lonely. But You spoke to me and all of those hurts and sorrows just came crashing down. You were thirsty and asked for a drink. I was so foolish to think that it was just because of the heat. Now I understand that it was much more.

That guard tried to give You something to drink, but I was not surprised that You didn't take it. I was so much like him before. I, too, handed You a cup of water, but that's not what You wanted then, just as that sponge is not what You want now.

I know now what You wanted and I've tried ever since our meeting at the well to give it to You. You want my heart, You want my love, You want my sins because they enslave my heart and lessen my love. That's what You thirst for.

It is so hard to see You like this. Your thirst for us is so great. Your concern for us, for what truly matters — that's what You thirst for and we don't understand it, we don't get it. But I know what You mean only because You took the time to sit with me at the well. My life has been so different since then, and I am so grateful to You. That is why I am here, even though it is so difficult to be here.

It is not only difficult for me. The young couple next to me is breaking my heart. They are inconsolable, holding each other so tightly and sobbing in each other's arms. You came to me when I didn't even think I needed You. It seems only right to reach out to them now. You comforted me; it is only right for me to comfort them.



The Newbyweds from Cana

John 2:1-11

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN:

*On the third day there was a marriage
at Cana in Galilee, and the mother
of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited
to the marriage, with his disciples.*

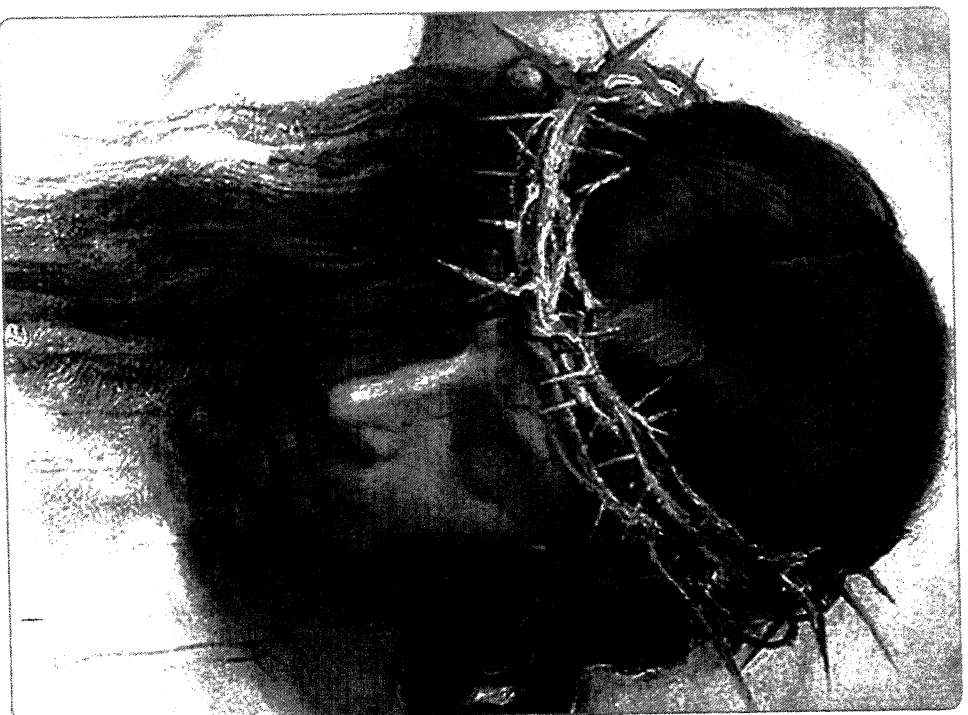
— John 2:1-2

WE WERE SO HONORED to have You and Your mother attend our wedding. We tried our best to make sure that our guests had an enjoyable time, as any young couple would. But the person in charge of supplying the wine was less than reliable. We found out that they ran out of wine soon after our celebration began. If it wasn't for You, Lord, we would have been very thirsty and very embarrassed. To hear You say that You thirst only makes this moment more painful in light of the memory of Your kindness to us on our wedding day.

We come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover every year; we have done so ever since we were married. Nowadays, we bring our children along with us. As we bless and drink the cup of wine during the Seder, we tell the story of what You did for us with the wine at our wedding. The story has become part of our ceremony.

Now You are thirsty and the only thing that we can give You in return is ourselves. We heard what was happening, and we risked the crowds, the guards, even the safety of our family, so that we could be with You in Your time of need—just as You were with us when we needed You.

We are all together here at the foot of Your Cross. We hold each other tight with tears streaming down our faces. We say nothing. We just cry. We hope that our tears and the tears of our children will quench Your thirst. We renew our promise to each other at the foot of Your Cross. We promise to be faithful. We promise to raise our children to love and serve God. It is our prayer that fulfilling our promises and living faithfully will quench Your thirst.





The Woman with a Hemorrhage

Mark 5:24b-34

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK:

*And a great crowd followed [Jesus]
and thronged about him. And there was
a woman who had had a flow of blood
for twelve years, and who had suffered much
under many physicians, and had spent
all that she had, and was no better
but rather grew worse. — Mark 5:24b-26*

FOR TWELVE YEARS, the flow of blood drained every ounce of my strength, my savings, my whole livelihood. I endured painful examinations from one physician after another. No one could help; no one could figure out what caused my problem. But it didn't stop them from taking my money. All of my savings was gone. I was at the point of being destitute. Worse than that, I was losing hope. I was giving up on my life. What life? I had no life, at least not one worth living. Despair—I was at the point of despair.

Wandering aimlessly through my village, my head in a daze, not knowing what to do, I suddenly found myself in the midst of a great crowd of people. I didn't know how I got there or what was going on. I gathered myself together enough to inquire what was happening and someone told me that You, Jesus, were there.



THE SIXTH WORD

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, **into your hands I commit my spirit!**" And having said this he breathed his last.

Luke 23:44-46

I remembered hearing about You from neighbors. They told me about Your teachings. They said that You healed the sick.

My thoughts were interrupted when I learned that You had received word about a little girl who was at the point of death and You were going to her. All of a sudden, I panicked. I thought that my last chance for being healed was stranding right before me. It was You. And You were about to leave. I tried to think of what to do, but I was a mess. I couldn't think straight. All I knew was that my last hope was slipping away. You healed the sick. I was sick! You could heal me! What could I do?

There were too many people shouting at You, demanding Your attention. Then I thought, *Just touch His garment*. Just to touch Your clothing would be enough. You were my last hope. You were my only hope. You healed others... I knew that You would heal me.

I reached out my hand and brushed Your cloak. As my hand met Your garment, I could feel a wave of warmth across my body, a warmth I had never felt before, a warmth that penetrated the very core of my being.

Suddenly, my mind was clear, my heart was full, I felt strong again. I was aware that my flow of blood had stopped. There was no more pain, no more discomfort. I felt well. After twelve long years, I finally felt well.

Then You turned and asked, "Who touched Me?"

I became frightened. Did I do something wrong? Should I have asked You first? You kept looking around and asking who had touched You.

Finally, I came forward. I was trembling uncontrollably. I was filled with fear. I fell on the ground at Your feet and told You the whole truth about my life. You were so patient and, I will never forget this: You called me "daughter."

"Daughter," You said, "your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

Faith was the only thing I had left and even then that was small and near empty. I had not had peace in so long and You gave me that gift

as well. And healing — after twelve long, agonizing years, there was finally healing.

Now I find myself in the midst of another crowd. I followed them up this hill to where You are hanging on this cross. Fear and trembling grip me once more. I fall on my knees before You, so great is my grief, and I want so desperately to touch You again. Then I hear You say, "*Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!*"

Your words fill my heart and rekindle my memory. On the day You healed me, I gave myself over to You. You were my last hope. You were my only hope.

Now, helplessly nailed to the Cross, You give Yourself to Your Father in heaven. Your offering of self reminds me that when I had nothing left to give, You filled me with new life. I cannot help but think that in giving Yourself over to Your Father, He will restore You to the fullness of life.

Since You healed me, I even think differently. I see beyond the present moment and see something new, something fulfilled, something beautiful and full of life. I can think this way only because I gave myself to You, Jesus. You addressed me as daughter. I commit my spirit with Yours to our Father. ~~I am here, Jesus, in Your time of need, just as You are here, Jesus, in my time of need. I am here, Jesus. You are not alone.~~



Lazarus, Martha, and Mary

John 11:1-44

FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN:

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it." — John 11:1-4



THE SEVENTH WORD

A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished."

John 19:29-30a

HOW OFTEN You visited our home. We were so honored that You found it to be a place to rest, far from the crowds that sought You out everywhere You went. That is what we wanted for You and Your friends: a quiet place to relax.

Now we find ourselves here beneath Your Cross. You mentioned this Cross time and again, but we never imagined the horror it would entail. It breaks our hearts standing here, seeing You like this, hearing You say, with such resignation, "*It is finished.*" We can see that Your poor body is straining, Your breathing so labored. "*It is finished,*" You say—but we know deep down in our hearts that it is not finished.

When Lazarus was sick, we called for You, but it took so long for You to come to us. We lost our brother and even placed him in the tomb before You came to us. You cried with us; You comforted us with Your presence.

Then You finally made Your way to his tomb.

We were amazed, even horrified, that You asked that the stone be rolled away. We knew all too well the reality of death — its loss, its pain, its stench. But You spoke the word and our brother came forth, alive. To our utter amazement, he was alive! You told us to unbind him and then You gave him back to us. Knowing and believing with all our hearts that You have power over death, we cannot help but hear, *It is finished*, and we think, no, it is only beginning.

We thought Lazarus was finished, but You restored him to life, gave him back his human life; but he will die again. For You, however, it will be different. You are different. A new and more radiant life will come to be.

Gathered here beneath Your Cross, all of these people hear what we hear; but their experience is not what we experienced. They hear that it is over — done. Some think You a failure. They had placed all their hope in You and they now see You helpless and nailed to this Cross. It is finished in so many minds, but we know better. If You can restore our brother, what will the Father do for You and for us?

It is not finished; it is only the beginning — a new world, a new life. We believe this with all our hearts. Your love called Lazarus back to life.

Encountering You has stretched the yearning of our hearts. We dare to hope for more than we know — the unimaginable. Death has no permanence. Love is the power and light that destroys death's darkness. Your love has overcome death. You are Love's Light!

In You is all our hope.

