

Joanna's Journal

Luke 22-23

Dear Diary

I couldn't write anything yesterday and barely know what to write now, but I feel I must. Everyone else has gone, only us women remain. Only two days ago the so called disciples had been arguing who would be the greatest in Jesus kingdom, and now they are nowhere to be seen. Mary Magdalene said in her usual colourful way "Joanna, the boys have gone from playing *Whose the king of the castle* to *Hide and Seek*."

It seems appropriate that we are here at the end as we have been around since the beginning in Galilee, supporting Jesus and his mission. It wasn't always miraculous meals for the multitudes. Most of the time it was us, his women from Galilee including Suzanna, Mary and myself. It was part of Jesus revolutionary teaching that we were part of his team. Now the men have deserted but we remain. We cared for him in life so we will care for him in death, it is the least we can do for our rabbi who showed us that we mean as much to God as any man.

And what have the men done. Most have simply vanished, even Peter. And Judas, oh Judas, how could you? You were with us so long, how could you do it? What will become of you now? There are other men involved in this sorry saga. My husband, down here on a junket with Herod for Passover said that Jesus had been brought to him. Herod was apparently initially pleased but quickly turned to mockery when Jesus refused to do a party trick for him and sent him back to Pilate: Pilate, the judge who wouldn't know justice if it slapped him in the face, releasing that thug Barabbas and condemning Jesus; murderer for healer. They all had a chance to stand up for Jesus but they abandoned him to the hate of others.

We did not abandon him. We followed him as he was dragged by the soldiers to outside the city wall. We couldn't believe what was happening. Yet even as we cried for him he was concerned about us and our future. How could he have such compassion? How could people hate someone who had so much love. He even prayed that his Father God would forgive the Roman soldiers as they cruci.....

Oh I can't even write it, it is too terrible. The nails, the blood, the sounds, it will stay with me forever. Fortunately for Jesus he did not take long to die and after a few hours in a strange darkness he committed himself to God and died.

When he died I heard one of the Romans mutter "Surely this was a righteous man." I don't really know what he meant. At first I agreed with him, Jesus hadn't done anything wrong. Then I started to get angry, it's a bit late Mr Executioner to announce him innocent now. And then I got even angrier because Jesus was not innocent, he was guilty as charged. He was tried for being the Christ, the King of Israel, those words hung above his battered, bloody, lifeless body. And he was the Christ, we all knew it.

Last week all of Jerusalem had known it. I can still hear the cries of "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord" to the swishing of palm branches as Jesus rode in to Jerusalem as Christ riding on a donkey fulfilling the ancient prophecy of the coming of king of peace. I can still remember the pride we all felt as he in royal fashion cleared the merchants from the temple. He was the Christ, he was, he was guilty of being the King.

But rather than being touted as Christ he was taunted. Our religious leaders said "if you are the Messiah come on down", oh how they laughed. Then

the Roman soldiers got in on the act "strange place for the King to hang out" Even one of the condemned had a go.

Strangely the other condemned man wouldn't join in, in fact he told the other one to stop, that Jesus didn't deserve this and spoke to Jesus of his Kingdom. I couldn't hear all the man said but I heard Jesus reply, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." I looked at Mother Mary, who was with us looking as if a sword had pierced her soul as she watched her son dying. I thought of some of the things that she had told us, that an angel had told her that Jesus was to have the throne of David for ever, and that he was to be the Saviour for all people. Here then was the Eternal Saviour King dying, his only crown made of thorns, raised high but on a cross

But Jesus still acting as if he had a kingdom and he could save. He still believed and right to the end he promised so much: a kingdom open to all where those who would accept him as King whether they be condemned criminals, women or men, rich or poor with the promise of eternal security.

All those promises now seem so empty.

Well the promises may have been empty but the tomb is filled and we have to prepare spices for his body now that the Sabbath is over. Ah that the opposite could be true, that the tomb was empty and the promises were fulfilled. Imagine that when we went to tomb tomorrow it was empty, that it all was true, Jesus was vindicated, the King had returned, the promises were real, a new kingdom was established, salvation was offered to all, the doors of paradise were now open... Ahh what am I thinking, and who would believe a group of women from the sticks anyway. All our hopes died with Jesus yesterday and lie with him in that tomb. That was Friday and now Sunday is coming.

JOANNA One of the female followers of Jesus during his earthly ministry listed with Mary Magdalene and Susanna in Luke 8:2-3. Joanna was one of the women who provided monetary or material aid out of their own pockets and efforts to help Jesus' band of disciples. Later, Joanna was a witness to the empty tomb who reported what she saw to the apostles (Luke 24:10). Thus, her name is probably preserved because she was known to the post-Easter community as a witness to the life, death, and empty tomb of Jesus. That only Luke ever mentions Joanna may be because she was one of his sources for the uniquely Lukan material in his gospel.

Joanna is also notable because she was the wife of Chuza, one of Herod Antipas' estate managers. Thus, she is an example of how the gospel affected people connected with the established authorities, people who were financially comfortable compared to most of the Galilean populace. We are led to believe that this rather prominent woman left her family and home to travel with Jesus and to provide assistance for his itinerant band of disciples. We may also see here an example of how the gospel breaks down class barriers and nullifies social taboos, for in the Jewish society of Jesus' day women were not allowed to be disciples of a prominent Jewish teacher, much less to be part of his travelling entourage. In 1st-century Judaism, such behaviour would have been considered scandalous for any woman but especially for a married woman. Thus, to some degree Jesus presents both a religious and a social threat to the structure of early Judaism, for he gave both men and women the opportunity to be full-fledged disciples. (Ben Witherington III in Freedman, David Noel, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, (New York: Doubleday) 1997, 1992.)