

THE TWELVE VOICES OF
EASTER



MARY MAGDALENE: VOICE OF ADORATION

Matthew 28: 1-11

I am one of the twelve voices of Easter. Mine is the voice of adoration. Jesus changed my life. He loved me when no one else did. I have almost forgotten the days before. I will not speak of them. I will speak of Him.

I followed Him wherever He went. I was always in the crowd when He taught. I saw Him raise the dead and heal the sick. The blind saw, the lame walked, the deaf heard, and the dumb spoke. Those bound by evil spirits were released by His command. I was one of several women who followed Him. We were not as close to Him as the twelve--Peter, Andrew, James and John and the others--but we constantly felt the warmth of His smile and the gentleness of His voice. He loved us as much as we loved Him.

But then the leaders in Jerusalem arrested Him and killed Him. I stood at His cross and watched Him die. I wept to see Him suffer. The Roman soldiers were cruel. Our leaders were no better. The chief priests and scribes mocked Him in His agony. But Jesus had told us beforehand that this was the hour for which He came from the Father. He said He was laying down His life of His own accord, that no one was taking it from Him. We stayed there all day. From the morning when they drove the nails through His hands and feet into the cross, until it was over and the soldier drove a spear into His side.

Late in the afternoon, a strange thing happened. A member of the Sanhedrin approached the centurion in charge. Someone said he was Joseph, from Arimathea, a town just 20 miles away. He showed the centurion a document, and the soldiers took down the body for him. What was he going to do with it?

We followed him as they carried it to a tomb nearby. Another rich man met him and they worked together quickly, preparing the body; it was almost the Sabbath. They didn't have time to finish. They had time only for washing and wrapping. They laid His body in a new tomb; it must have belonged to a wealthy family. We watched, and remembered the place. We wanted to come back and anoint the body properly.

We spent a long, cheerless day together. As soon as the sun set, the bazaars opened. Mary the mother of James, Mary the wife of Cleopas, Joanna, Susanna and others of us hurried into Jerusalem and bought the spices we needed to anoint Jesus' body. We decided to go the next morning, early in the day, when we could go without notice.

We rose in the cold and dark, and set out. The sun was still behind the hills of Moab when we made our way down the dark path to Joseph's tomb. Someone asked how we would move the stone. That's right. We had watched Joseph and the others block the entrance to the tomb with a huge stone. How would we ever move it? And there was a report that Roman soldiers had been posted to guard the tomb. What would we do?

But when we arrived at the tomb, we were shocked: The stone was not there, nor were any soldiers to be seen. The stone had been rolled away--taken right out of its trough and tipped over.

As we stood and wondered at what had happened to the stone, two men dressed in dazzling white robes suddenly appeared. These garments were not the togas of Roman soldiers, nor were they the long white robes of the Pharisees. These were not men at all, but angels of God.

We were overcome and we fell to the ground. But the angels reassured us. They reminded us how Jesus had said that He would rise again. One of the angels bid us to look inside the tomb and see for ourselves. I ran as fast as I could to tell Peter and John. When we returned, the other women were gone. We looked in the tomb. Empty. I was convinced that someone had stolen the body of Jesus. The linen garments Joseph had wrapped Him in were lying there, neatly folded in their places. But the tomb was empty.

Peter and John ran from the garden, but I remained. I had nowhere to go. What had happened to the Master? Could it be that He actually did rise from the dead, or had the soldiers taken His body away? My heart was overcome again sorrow. I just stood there, weeping.

Then I heard a voice behind me ask, "Woman, why are you weeping?" I assumed it was the gardener. "Sir, what have you done with Him?" I asked, wiping my face.

It was fully light, but tears blurred my eyes. I turned, but could not see clearly. Then He called me by my name. "Mariam." That was my Aramaic name, the name my parents and my friends called me.

A gardener would not have spoken Aramaic to me. A Roman would not know my name. I knew that voice. I looked up. I saw Him. It was Jesus. I answered in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" I threw myself at His feet, weeping, laughing, not believing, believing. My Master, my Teacher, my Savior, my Lord. He was standing there alive.

Of course I became one of the twelve voices of Easter. A voice of astonishment and wonder. The first human voice of adoration. He told me to go tell the others, and I did. Marvelous news. A wonder beyond all wonders. God has accomplished great things in our midst. Jesus is risen from the dead!