

Emmaus Imagined & More

Narrator/unnamed disciple-Paul

Cleopas- Margie

Jesus-Karen

In the crisp coolness of the morning, we began the seven mile walk back to Emmaus. It normally takes a good three hours, but we seem to be dragging our traumatized bodies out of Jerusalem with a heaviness...A surreal sense had settled on us like a cloud. The unimaginable happened during Passover. There is no rehearsal of the events that brings any order or sense to what transpired. Anger mingles along the jagged edges of grief. A numbness makes its way deep into our bones. Our conversation drifts, mostly because we find ourselves losing the threads of meaning amidst the trail of our own inner thoughts. We apologize when the conversation falls silent and we realize we have not been listening to each other amidst the pain we feel.

The cool air sends a shiver down my spine. I pull my cloak closer around my shoulders as my sandals kick up the crushed dirt path. Cleopas turns to me and says, "Is it possible I will wake up from this nightmare?" But we know the horrors of the abuse, the terror and madness of these days, feel too real to be imagined. Have we ever seen a rabbi treated so abusively? This is low, even for the Romans. But was it not our own leaders who provoked his execution. Their better natures drowned out by jealousy and fear. Was this only the beginning of a great persecution...

We were so lost in conversation we didn't notice someone walking right up behind us. Startled, suddenly flooded, and agitated, we are unnerved by this intrusion. He, realizing he had caught us off guard, says "I'm sorry, I interrupted you deep in conversation... Don't let me intrude." (To which, I wondered how he could not know what we were processing, given all that has transpired.)

Now curtly responding, unable to recover quickly from the surprise, I snap, "you might be the only person who doesn't know what's happened in Jerusalem." He kindly doesn't take the bait, but gently asks "what things?". My heart rate begins to slow, feeling a genuine interest on his part. I'm also feeling bad for misjudging him, but too immersed in sadness I just begin to share about the injustice done to Jesus, a rabbi from the small town of Nazareth.

With an ease, like talking about a friend, we describe him to this stranger... His compassion, his teaching, so compelling and unlike what we knew growing up. This Jesus seemed to know where Judaism had gone adrift, how we had made it a rule keeping religion. And we had become those who tried to measure up. Cleopas,

energized by the story we were telling, said, “and the miracles. Blind people saw again, the tormented freed, even the dead, their bodies cold for days, were made alive as if awakened from a nap.”

Our new companion listened and asked questions. We were for a few minutes, re-living the horrors of the last few days. But we also felt a sense of company in this stranger.

“More recently”, I remarked, “the tension had grown around his ministry. Though you would think a rabbi feeding thousands living in poverty, would make the hardest person feel gratitude. Some of our leaders were swept up in the threat they felt to their place. Yes, he did confront their hypocrisy. And they struggled to admit they were adrift. But what was too much to imagine, was their conspiring with the Romans, even falsely accusing him of sedition. And it seemed so quickly that he was arrested, dragged out of the garden in Gethsemane while praying, and like a criminal brought to trial in the night. His disciples scattered, understandably terrorized. In a mockery of jurisprudence, he was convicted, no one cross referencing the false accusations.

Pilate seemed unnerved by the proceedings turned cowardly when it came to protecting a Jew. Before we knew it, we heard the chants, “Crucify him, crucify him.” Emotion flooded my eyes. I could not see as I recall that moment. What happened was a rush to judgement. And he didn’t fight it. He didn’t argue his case, but seemed resigned to his sentence. As if he, all along, knew what was in their hearts. As if he, all along, understood what we did not.

I looked up amidst telling this story, and he, this stranger, seemed so present to what we were saying and what we most needed to tell. In my mind, still not comprehending that he didn’t know any of this.

“And the beatings happened first”, I continued, “the horrific press of thorns on his head, and marching him through the city, carrying a cross to the hill we call Golgotha. Do you know where it,” I ask? “I do,” he replies. “And there they nailed him to the cross. I cannot understand how people can do this to another human being. Somehow you think they have to compartmentalize to do this kind of violence. No one seeing it is **ever** the same. And we think, all along, that he will call down angels from heaven to rescue him, but no such thing happens. Instead, he offered forgiveness to those who executed him. And with an unbearable despair we watched as he raised his voice saying, ‘It is finished’ as his body slumped down limp, his full weight collapsing on the cross.”

“What is finished,” Cleopas interjects. “I still don’t know what he was saying. Maybe he just meant it was finally over.”

We look up at our stranger, who has hung on every word, and see real compassion in his eyes. "I can't imagine what you are going through," he says.

"It really doesn't make sense to us," we reply.

And as if on cue, he wonders out loud with us, recalling scriptures, talking about the suffering servant. He, quoting passages from the prophets and psalms, seemed to weave the disparate threads of scripture together like a seamstress.

(It appeared that this brutality was not unknown in the divine mind, though still unconscionable.)

As we continued to walk, this rabbi spoke, and we realized he must be from some obscure town, only here for the Passover, for neither of us knew him.

How long we walked together, I don't know.

His empathy, his words, his understanding, slowly putting us back together.

As we approached Emmaus, we suddenly felt another kind of sadness, not wanting this conversation to end.

So we invited him to stay with us.

And he said, "Well perhaps for a bit of bread. It has been a long few days."

We arrived home and set the table. Fresh bread had just come out of the oven.

And oddly **he** took it in his hands, and I wondered why he made himself so at home.

And then he held it up in the air and prayed a blessing, and broke it into two pieces, like a veil torn from top to bottom. And we saw him. Really saw him.

We wept, We laughed.

All this time, it was him.

And he disappeared.

All this time, he was alive. Didn't we know it, as our hearts awakened from our grief. As we felt a fiery warmth bringing us back to life.

-- Paul Conti

Found A Love, 7 Hills Worship

Lyrics

I found a love that would chase after me
In every heartache there it would be
It fills every break and each space in between
How it loves me
I found a love that would love honestly
And never be far from my hand when I need
It makes real the things that once lived in my dreams
How you love me
How you fight for me
How you'll always be
The air that I breath
In everything
God you're all that I need
I fall in to your arms and I find peace
I fall into the heart that beats for me
And loves me so hopelessly
I found a love that would make me believe
That beauty is found even in broken things
And every praise is a song I can sing
How you love me
How you fight for me
How you'll always be
The air that I breath
In everything
God you're all that I need
I fall in to your arms and I find peace

I fall into the heart that beats for me
And loves me so hopelessly
When I was hopeless
Every time I was broken
In Every word that was spoken
Jesus, your love was there
And in the trials
You are the strength and provider
You were my friend in the fire
Jesus, your love was there
How you fight for me
How you'll always be
The air that I breath
In everything
God you're all that I need
I fall in to your arms and I find peace
I fall into the heart that falls for me
And loves me so endlessly

Source: [LyricFind](#)

Songwriters: Kaelob Mecum

Found A Love lyrics © Capitol CMG Publishing, O/B/O DistroKid

<https://thebtscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Jan-Richardson-Poem.pdf>

Jan Richardson

Blessed are You Who Bear the Light

Blessed are you
who bear the light
in unbearable times,
who testify
to its endurance
amid the unendurable,
who bear witness
to its persistence
when everything seems
in shadow
and grief.

Blessed are you
in whom
the light lives,
in whom
the brightness blazes—
your heart
a chapel,
an altar where
in the deepest night
can be seen
the fire that
shines forth in you
in unaccountable faith,
in stubborn hope,
in love that illumines
every broken thing
it finds.

— Jan Richardson, from *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*. www.janrichardson.com

Blessing That Does Not End

From the moment
it first laid eyes
on you,
this blessing loved you.

This blessing
knew you
from the start.

It cannot explain how.

It just knows
that the first time
it sat down beside you,
it entered into a conversation
that had already been going on
forever.

Believe this conversation
has not stopped.

Believe this love
still lives—
the love that crossed
an impossible distance
to reach you,
to find you,
to take your face
into its hands
and bless you.

Believe this
does not end—
that the gesture,
once enacted,
endures.

Believe this love
goes on—
that it still
takes your face
into its hands,

that it presses
its forehead to yours
as it speaks to you
in undying words,
that it has never ceased
to gather your heart
into its heart.

Believe this blessing
abides.
Believe it goes with you
always.
Believe it knows you
still.

—Jan Richardson
from *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief*

Blessing in the Chaos

To all that is chaotic
in you,
let there come silence.

Let there be
a calming
of the clamoring,
a stilling
of the voices that
have laid their claim
on you,
that have made their
home in you,

that go with you
even to the
holy places
but will not
let you rest,

will not let you
hear your life
with wholeness
or feel the grace
that fashioned you.

Let what distracts you
cease.
Let what divides you
cease.
Let there come to an end
to what diminishes
and demeans,
and let depart
all that keeps you
in its cage.

Let there be
an opening
into the quiet
that lies beneath
the chaos,
where you find
the peace
you did not think
possible
and see what shimmers
within the storm.

--Jan Richardson, *The Cure for Sorrow, A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief*, 2016.