

# **Reflections for Holy Week and Easter**

by Andy March

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## **An Easter Poem for April Fools**

### **Part I**

I want to tell you the real story  
of Jesus the king and his crazy glory.  
He broke all the rules, didn't play by the book  
Want to know why? well let's take a look  
Begin at the beginning, with his birth  
Circumstances of which were quite absurd.  
If you were a king you'd be born to a queen  
In a castle or palace, you know what I mean!

This king was born and placed in a manger  
Where, if you ask me, he was in danger  
Of being eaten by animals or at least licked  
Not the birth place I'd have picked.  
As for his mother she was dirt poor  
and came from Nazareth (somewhere obscure).  
The father was God - or that's what they said,  
(Though sceptics scoffed and blamed Joseph instead).

And the first ones to visit this family  
Were men who had sheep for company,  
then wise men from distant lands afar  
lined up to pay homage - they'd followed the star.  
It was all a bit weird, no nobles in sight,  
Not the normal guests that kings would invite.  
All in all, so far and so strange,  
Can you believe God this would arrange?

Then what we get is three decades of silence;  
When he could use the time to form an alliance  
Of powerful people to back up his claim,  
Paving the way for power and fame.  
Instead he settled for obscurity:  
A lifetime of learning, obeying Mary.  
He took up his tools, and learned his dad's trade  
Until God gave the nod - it was God's game he played.

When the time came to step into the light,  
He still didn't seem to get anything right.  
He stayed in the North, far from centres of power,  
Said something about it not being his hour.  
He spent all his time with all the wrong folk -  
to outcasts and poor, the good news he spoke.  
The good news he spread through great acts of healing;  
he even touched lepers, now that's not appealing.

The people they loved him - well, most of them did.  
Others were jealous and planned to get rid  
of this rabbi who simply made them look bad  
and threatened their power (what power they had).  
But he wasn't afraid of the powerful folks;

Instead they became the butt of his jokes.  
As you imagine this didn't go down  
well with the ones who were close to the crown.

In Jerusalem (the capital city)  
the leaders formed a deathly committee.  
Dark deeds were plotted, they formed a plan  
That would end the life of the miracle man.  
So, they waited and watched, bided their time  
for the perfect moment to commit their crime.  
And soon that time came - the Great Festival.  
This man would be silenced once and for all.

This King knew their plans, saw into their hearts  
Could have stayed where he was, didn't need to depart.  
But obedient to God, he made his way down  
to Jerusalem (that is, David's old town).  
There crowds greeted him, hailed him as King  
Lining the streets to cheer and to sing  
songs of joy and of hope - a new day was dawning.  
By the end of the week, they'd all be mourning.

It went downhill so fast, the vengeance was swift  
Jesus' friend Judas gave them a gift  
- in exchange for some money - he'd show them where  
to capture Jesus, when no-one was there.  
So, dead of night, they came armed to the teeth  
to arrest this King, this prince of peace.  
As for his friends - well, most of them fled,  
Left him alone to face the trial ahead.

The rulers now had him right where they wanted  
they beat him and tortured, his words they distorted.  
They lied and colluded, schemed and connived,  
He wouldn't be leaving this city alive.  
He was sentenced to death and nailed to a cross.  
The rulers had triumphed, showed who was boss.  
"This King, what a fool!" they sneered and said,  
"His dream is over, it's finished, he's dead."

And is that the end of this King's story?  
Has it really finished, with death, not with glory?

## **Part 2**

So far and so bad, the King is now dead.  
Laid in the tomb, when all friends had fled.  
They must have felt foolish to trust in this man,  
To have dared to dream, to follow his plan.  
Grief-stricken and stunned, they all hide away  
Until early in the morning one special Sunday  
Two Marys and Salome head to the grave

Find the stone rolled away from the front of the cave.

Jesus' body's gone – there's an angel instead  
Tells the disbelieving women he's alive, he's not dead.  
"He is risen, as he told you, this is how it had to be."  
Then Mary turns round, and through tears she can see  
The risen Lord Jesus who calls her by name –  
"Mary" – "Rabboni", on her knees she exclaims.  
Then he sends her to tell Peter and all Jesus' friends  
That this story's not over, this is not where it ends.

And it doesn't stop there, no it just carries on  
as the disciples pick up their Saviour's baton  
They give all they have to tell people the news  
Of this crazy King's love for Gentiles and Jews.  
He died, but he's risen. There is hope for mankind,  
Through the deepest of darkness a new light will shine.  
Hatred and death your day is now done  
For hope, love and life the victory have won.

And this foolish King looks to me and to you  
invites us to be part of this story too.  
Will we, with his flame burning inside  
Tell others of grace and hope that's alive.  
Will we be fools for Christ, he invites us to choose  
To give up our rights - we've nothing to lose -  
Because we'll gain life in all of its glory  
Taking our place in his everlasting story.

Through his words and his deeds his message rings through  
that God's love is boundless for me and for you  
Wherever we've strayed, whatever we've done,  
there's always a way back to the arms of the Son.  
Thanks to the events of that Sunday morning  
There'll always be hope that a new day is dawning.  
So, come let us celebrate Jesus the King  
and hope that he makes us as foolish as him.

## **Last Hour at the Cross – A Service for Good Friday**

### **(1) Based on the Passion readings from John's Gospel**

#### **Reflections**

**Reading: John 18:28-40**

**Reflection: Pontius Pilate – Playing the blame game (Part 1)**

He really ruined my day, you know. All was going well in Jerusalem until he came along. I was doing my bit, keeping law and order – which isn't easy to do with that riff-raff, especially when it's their festival season. I don't know what they put in the water, but everyone seems to get rather excited. Tempers flare up and before you know it, you have a full-blown riot on your hands – and you can't have that. The walls have ears you know, and any hint that you've lost control, Caesar is sure to find out, and then there'll be trouble. No, it needs a steady hand to keep the peace, you know: A man of intelligence, experience, courage; a master diplomat; a man of the people. Someone exactly like me, in fact.

And that's what I was doing that Friday morning: keeping the peace. The religious authorities – who, by the way, are far too big for their boots – called on me to intervene in their affairs. A man, Jesus, from the north, was causing them trouble. I couldn't quite see what the fuss was all about; couldn't they deal with the problem themselves? After all, this man was their problem, wasn't he? But they insisted, saying he was calling himself the King of the Jews, and that only I had the authority to execute the man. So, I interviewed him; and quite frankly I couldn't see any reason to charge him of any crime. He talked about having a kingdom from another place. He said that he came to testify to truth. All in all, he wasn't a threat to anyone. So I made up my mind: I was going to release him. No one was going to push me around.

**Reading: John 19:1-16**

**Reflection: Pontius Pilate (Part 2)**

I'm here to keep the peace, you know. I'm very good at it, actually. Every decision I make is in the interest of keeping the peace. That Jesus was simply causing too much trouble. The Jewish leaders didn't want him around anymore. I told him I was trying to help him, but he wasn't at all cooperative! In fact, he said that the only reason I have any power at all is because it's been given to me from above. The cheek of it! I'm a very powerful man, and what I say goes in this part of the world. But those Jewish leaders kept on nagging and nagging; they just wouldn't shut up. So, I gave in and handed him over so they could do what they wanted with this man. I only did it to keep the peace; so why can't I find any peace myself?

I mean, I had the best of intentions. It was obvious to me that he was innocent. I did my best to let him off. It's not my fault he's dead. It's not my fault. All I'm trying to do is keep the peace. To do my job. I don't think any one else would have done better in my position. I had the best of intentions. It's not my fault that it didn't work out exactly as I'd planned, is it? If you want to blame anyone, blame the Jewish leaders – they were the ones who wanted him dead. There would have been all-out rebellion had they not got their way. I only backed down to keep the peace; so why can't I find any peace myself?

**Reading: John 19:16-27**

**Reflection: Mary – sunshine and shadows**

I watched him die. There was nothing I could do about it. There is nothing worse than seeing your child die in any circumstances, but the way he died made it even worse. He'd been beaten and whipped so badly that I barely recognised him. The agony was etched across his face. It was just so cruel. And

there was absolutely nothing I could do about it. I was helpless. It's a mother's duty to look after her son, but I just stood there, powerless, as his life ebbed slowly away.

To add insult to injury, the soldiers and passers-by mocked him. The soldiers even gambled for his clothing while he was nailed to that cross, dying. I wanted to shout at them, to stop them, to ask them to help my son, or at least ease his suffering in some way, instead of acting as if he was there for their enjoyment. It broke my heart.

And as he hung there dying, flashbacks came to me of moments that I treasured throughout his life. The moment I first held him and wrapped him in those swaddling bands to protect him from the cold, Bethlehem night; those extraordinary visitors we had when he was born; the first smile; his strange disappearance in Jerusalem; the day he first worked with Joseph in the workshop; the day he told me he was beginning his ministry of teaching and healing. The way he spoke to me, it was clear he was saying goodbye. He knew his message would get him into trouble with the religious and political leaders: I think he knew that they would end up killing him; but it didn't stop him. Nothing would stop him from carrying out God's will. And now his journey has ended here; his life in the hands of people who have nothing but hate in their eyes.

He could have complained. He could have given in to self-pity or anger – and would have been perfectly within his rights to do so. After all, he didn't deserve what was happening to him – it was so *unfair*! And yet, he was selfless, as usual, thinking of others before himself. He looked at me, and our friend, John, and made sure that I'd be looked after. My dear, dear, son, looking after my interests, when I should be the one looking after him. But out of the deep, deep hurt, healing has come. And he did often say that he would rise again on the third day. Is it foolish to believe that this isn't the end? Is it possible that out of the darkness, light will come? Jesus has brought hope to so many people. Is it foolish to believe that there is still reason to hope?

**Reading:     John 19:28-42**

**Reflection:   Nicodemus – No longer afraid**

The first time I met him face-to-face was in the middle of the night. I'd seen him at a distance before; been there when he'd engaged in debates with the other religious leaders. He was extraordinary. Whenever he spoke, something burned within me. He also performed the most incredible miracles – healing the sick, turning water into wine – that only someone inspired by God could do. I had to come and see him. I had to find out more about him. The problem was that I was rather important – I had a place on the Jewish ruling council – and I didn't want others to find out I'd met with him. They were threatened by him, you see. So, I came to see him in the middle of the night, so I wouldn't lose face.

I'll never forget that encounter. He spoke about the need to be born again and said that we could have eternal life if we believed in him. At first I didn't have a clue what he was talking about, it seemed so new, so confusing. I didn't sleep for days afterwards. I didn't know it at the time, but my heart was beginning to change. I found myself sticking up for him when the Pharisees began to criticise him. They felt threatened by what they'd heard about Jesus, so refused to allow themselves to actually listen to what he was saying. I may have done that once, but no more.

I could scarcely believe the events of this past week. I knew they'd got it in for him, especially after Lazarus was raised from the dead, but I didn't really think that they would succeed in having him executed. I was there at his trial. I watched, helpless, in horror as they levelled groundless accusations at him and contrived to have him sentenced to death. I wish I could have spoken out, but I was frightened. They could have turned on me. So I kept silent. Not any more. It's time to step out of the shadows. It's time to stand up and be counted; to show that I'm not afraid any more – not afraid to be

identified as his follower. That's why I went with Joseph of Arimathea – another one who had been afraid to speak out – to make sure Jesus got a proper burial. It's the least I can do for him. And now everyone knows where my allegiance lies. And I don't care what they do to me. I don't know what the future holds, but I do know that I feel like there's new life coursing through my veins and I feel more alive than ever. Perhaps that's what Jesus meant when he spoke about being born again!

**Hymn:        478 My song is love unknown**

## **“The Last Hour” – A Devotional Service –** **“Father, forgive”**

**Hymn:**       **478 My song is love unknown**

**Reading:**   **Mark 14:43-52**

**Reflection:** **Judas Iscariot – “The guilt won’t let me go”**

Dear Rabbi,

I’m writing this although I know it’s too late. I wish I could turn back the clock, undo what I’ve done, but I know that there’s no going back – it’s past the point of no return, and there’s no way I can make up for what I’ve done. The guilt’s unbearable. I can’t live with myself.

Over the time we spent together you built up our hopes that you weren’t just an ordinary teacher and healer – you were so much more – I knew you were going to be the one who’d bring us freedom. The crowds loved you. They would do anything for you – just one word from you and they’d join the revolution, anoint you as king, and the new era would begin. I just knew it. And then came last Sunday, when we entered the city of Jerusalem and the crowds gathered to cheer you on. You rode in on the donkey and the message was clear – you were the long-awaited king, come to take your rightful place. This was the moment we’d all been waiting for, when change would come. We, your closest friends, your disciples, we knew it; the crowds knew it too – this was the time you would come in power and we, who’d been there from the beginning – hand-picked by you, would share in your glory.

But then you did – nothing – you went back to your base that day. I thought you were biding your time, finding the right moment – perhaps the next day. And when you made that statement by clearing the temple of all that corruption and greed, I thought that would be the time, after all. But again, you did nothing. All you did was teach and debate. You had the crowds in the palm of your hand, once again, but again you bottled it. I couldn’t understand why. I began to doubt – you couldn’t be the king after all. Why didn’t you take power? Why didn’t you set us free?

Then it dawned on me. You were never intending to become king by force. You’d had more than one opportunity to seize the moment – after the mass feeding in Galilee, on that heady day in Jerusalem, in the temple, and you’d refused each one. It suddenly became clear to me I’d been mistaken. I felt such a fool – I felt so angry – what a waste of time! All this had been for nothing. Those amazing times we had together. Those miracles, that teaching, those healings. All for nothing. I was so angry. And the problem with anger, as you yourself taught us, is that it can be deadly.

I wanted to punish you or to try and force your hand – force you to act, or do something. I’d heard the whisperings in the temple. The high priests, the authorities were out to get you – they saw what we saw, that you were a threat to their power, and the only way to deal with this threat was to get rid of you. You knew that too, and you weren’t going to stop them. You were going to walk into danger and allow them to do what they wanted to you. Suddenly, I saw my chance. Chance to get my own back. I could help them, provide a way for them to get to you away from the crowd and to make some money while I was at it. Soon it was sorted out – they gleefully accepted my help. Thirty pieces of silver. Seemed like a good deal at the time. Recompense for all the disappointment. We made our plans and waited for the right moment.

And so I led them to you at the Garden, greeted you with a kiss, so they would know who you were. I’ll never forget the way you looked at me. Reproachful. Sad. Hurt. Your gaze bore right into my soul and saw the darkness inside – the bitterness, the disappointment, the hurt. From a small spark, it raged like a fire in me, consumed me completely, and it led me to this. I betrayed you with a kiss. I wish I could go back, but I can’t. There’s no going back.

I never intended for it to end this way. I didn’t really think they’d have you killed. I didn’t really think you’d let them do it. They were like predators encircling their prey and they had no intention of letting you go once you were in their grasp. And you didn’t fight back. Why didn’t you fight back? You could



have done something to show them who you really were, but instead, you let them walk over you. You let them condemn you to death. Why did you do that?

I didn't know they were going to do that! I didn't want them to do that. I only wanted them to teach you a lesson. I never meant for you to die. As soon as it dawned on me that they were going to have you killed, I realised I'd made a huge mistake. You'd done nothing to deserve any of this. You were innocent. You didn't deserve to die. You'd done nothing wrong – and I'd betrayed you. The guilt won't let me go. I will never forgive myself for what I've done.

I'm sorry. I'm so, so, sorry.

**Reading: Mark 15:53-72**

### **Peter – “I let him down”**

I didn't sleep a wink. I couldn't. I felt so awful. Sick in the pit of my stomach. Those words he had said to me kept going round my head. “Tonight, before the cock crows, you'll deny you've ever known me.” I couldn't believe it! Me, Peter, the one he'd nicknamed Rocky, deny Jesus? I'd never deny Jesus. Never. As if I could. He was the man who had given me purpose. Life was so exciting when he was around. I'd made lots of mistakes, but he forgave every one – amazing really. How could I ever deny the man who'd turned my life upside down? Who'd allowed me to share in the greatest adventure ever? I couldn't!

But I did. Three times. Swore I didn't have the faintest idea who he was. And then he looked at me. He wasn't angry; he was reproachful. Disappointed. If I'm honest, that's worse. I was devastated. I couldn't believe I'd let Jesus down. I'd been so full of it. So full of good words and good intentions. But I couldn't back them up with my actions. I was so ashamed of myself, I ran out and wept. Wept like I've never wept before.

Friday was even worse. When Jesus needed his friends most, we deserted him – all of us, except John and some of the women in our group. It was fear that kept me away. What if they got me too and treated me the way they treated him? The one place I wanted to be was by Jesus' side – showing him that he could still depend on me and my support, yet I was too much of a coward.

So I had to rely on others to keep me posted. And the news got worse and worse as the day wore on. First, they told me that he'd been put on trial for blasphemy, that the authorities wanted his blood; then, I heard about the beating, the insults, the scourging; and then they told me he'd been sentenced to death. Crucifixion. A death so horrible that Roman citizens are spared such awful treatment. Finally, I heard the news I thought I would never hear – he'd died.

Jesus. The miracle maker. My hero. My captain. My leader. The one who was going to save us all from oppression. Dead.

I was numb. Devastated. Didn't believe it. My hopes were snuffed out with him. What was I going to do now? Where would I go?

Did you hear that I actually cut a man's ear off on Thursday night? One of the party who came to arrest Jesus. The man had it coming, if you asked me, but still, it wasn't a very clever thing to do. But Jesus healed him there and then. That's the kind of guy he was. That's why I couldn't believe that he'd died. You see, a man who could heal people in the blink of an eye. A man who could stop a storm. A man who could raise the dead. Well, that sort of man could save himself couldn't he? He couldn't be dead? So, why did he let them do that to him? Why did he let them kill him?

**Reading: Mark 15:1-15**

## **Reflection: Barabbas – “Jesus took my place”**

Right now I should be dead, or dying, at least. I was involved in the uprising. The Romans call me a terrorist. I'd say I was more of a freedom fighter. The Romans deserve everything that's coming for them. Anyway, that's beside the point ... the point is, I got caught and sentenced to death. I knew what that meant – the crosses are everywhere – a message to everyone that there's no messing with Rome, and soon I'd be on one. I was resigned to my fate. Nothing I could do about it.

But then, early in the morning, I was dragged out bound in front of the governor, Pilate, and the crowd. I heard something about a Jewish custom that meant a prisoner would be pardoned at Passover, and the crowd was given a choice – either I or another man, Jesus of Nazareth, could be freed. I looked over at this other man – first time I'd seen him. He certainly didn't look like your typical criminal. He was a political prisoner, apparently. Stitched up by the authorities, I reckon. Anyway, Pilate the Governor was trying to find out whose execution would be more popular – mine or his – so, here I was at the mercy of the crowd. “Who do you want me to release?” he asked, “Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Amazingly, the crowd cried out, “Barabbas” – my name. “And what do you want me to do with Jesus?” he asked once again. The crowd cried out, “Crucify him!” Pilate obviously smelt a rat, so he tried again. “But he's done nothing wrong.” But the crowd got louder and angrier, crying out again, “Crucify him!” So Pilate washed his hands of Jesus – “his blood is on your hands,” he said – and I found myself free.

I've been given my life back. Jesus took my place. There's no doubt in my mind that he's done nothing wrong, that he's an innocent man, and he took my place. I, the guilty one, have walked free. Life will be different from now on. It has to be different – I've been given a second chance. Better make the most of it.

**Hymn: 85 Come and see**

**Reading: Mark 15:16-47**

***Technically we should end there, with the pallor of sadness, with betrayal, sadness, hopelessness and guilt. Some of us may be in that place now – weighed down by our sin. But it wasn't the end of the story. While Judas couldn't forgive himself and thought there was no hope of redemption and forgiveness for him, Peter was given a second chance, because of what happened just two days later. Let's hear from him now ...***

## **Reflection – Peter – “A brand new start”**

Saturday dragged on. I was exhausted, but couldn't sleep; hungry, but couldn't stomach anything. A small number of Jesus' followers gathered together in secret. We cried on each other's shoulders, basically. I found out from Mary Magdalene where he'd been buried. A man called Joseph of Arimathea gave up his tomb for Jesus' body to rest. I wanted to go there, to be with Jesus one last time, but it was the Sabbath, so we couldn't go anywhere. I would have to wait until today to pay my last respects to Jesus.

But then, this morning, something extraordinary happened. Mary Magdalene came and told me that the stone blocking the entrance had been rolled away. The tomb was empty. What? Empty? How was that possible? She told me to go and see for myself. So that's what I did.

I ran to the tomb with John to check it out. To make sure that the extreme emotion we'd all experienced hadn't got to Mary's head too much. I could not believe it. She was right – the tomb was empty. I went straight into the tomb and there were the grave clothes. But no body. It had gone. Where was Jesus? Why was the tomb empty? Who moved the stone?

Could the impossible have happened? Could Jesus be alive? I could scarcely believe it. It was simply too good to be true. After all, dead men don't rise from the dead. Do they?

Later, things got even more incredible! Mary told me that she'd met with Jesus face to face – that she'd mistaken him for the gardener at first, but then she knew it was him once he'd called her by name. Perhaps it was true after all. Maybe Jesus was alive! Maybe he had defeated death!

You're not going to believe the next thing that happened! I met with him face to face! He appeared right in front of me. Out of nowhere. It was really him. I could see the scars and everything. At first, all the feelings of shame and guilt came flooding back. I couldn't look him straight in the eye – how could I – I'd let him down so badly. But then he spoke to me. He reassured me that he forgave me. That I could start over again. He told me that I was still Rocky, that I still had a part to play in the great adventure he's planned for me. In fact, he told me that there were even more incredible days ahead. He said that the adventure was only just beginning and that he would walk with me and show me the way!

Suddenly I feel more excited than ever. I can't believe that so much has happened in so little time. I can't wait to tell the other disciples that I've seen Jesus and that he's alive! Back from the dead. God is truly at work in amazing ways. Jesus is alive! He has risen! And I've been given a second chance. I can't believe it. All that guilt is gone. I'm free!

## **Reflections for Schools / All Age Services**

### **A Donkey's Easter Tale**

Hello, my name's Dave, the donkey. You won't know me ... not many people do. You might know my Grandpa, Darrell. He's the one who went all the way from Nazareth – that's a long, long, long way away – and carried a young woman – who was very pregnant – all the way to Bethlehem. Her name was Mary, and she was carrying a very special baby, Jesus, who was God's baby. She had been chosen by God to be the mother of the newborn King and saviour of the world. My grandpa, Darrell, was so honoured to bear such a special burden.

Anyway, I'm here to tell you about something incredible that happened to me! I was in Bethany – that's near Jerusalem, in case you don't know – I was minding my own business eating grass, thinking very important donkey thoughts, and that sort of thing, when two complete strangers came up to me and untied me. My owners came out and asked them what these two were doing – I'm not surprised really, it's not every day that you get taken away – they could have been donkey-napping me! The two men said something very strange, "The Lord needs it." But that seemed be ok for my owners, who let them go. Someone important needed me – that was good enough. It's not every day *that* happens! But who was it? Who was so important, and why did he need me?

And then I met him. At first he didn't look very important. He was dressed normally, but when I looked at him, he looked very kind, but a little sad too. There was something different about him. Something very special.

The men threw their coats on me, and then they put this man on my back. He rode me towards the great city of Jerusalem, and as we were walking along, people put coats on the road before us. There were lots of people – they all looked so excited and happy. They waved palm branches, shouted and cheered. They told each other stories of the wonderful things this man had done – he had healed the sick and done some amazing things. The people shouted out, "'Welcome! God bless the king who comes in the name of the Lord.' Peace in heaven and glory to God!"

I was amazed, the man on my back was a king? He was a king, coming into the city, and being welcomed by the people of the city. He didn't seem like a king, at least not the kind of king we were used to. He seemed so full of love, he seemed to really care for the people, and the people loved him. This king was called Jesus, and I carried him into Jerusalem. Me – Dave the donkey – it was the proudest moment of my life.

I said that the people loved him and welcomed him; well, some didn't love him – they looked very angry at what was happening, and were whispering to each other. Not everyone was welcoming this king. In fact, I heard something awful. A few days later they had Jesus arrested and killed, even though he'd done nothing wrong. I couldn't believe it.

But then a rumour went round – he'd risen from the dead. That's amazing. My owners told me that he said this would happen, that it had to happen. It's been an amazing few days. I won't ever forget them, or the king I carried.

### **Summary to say afterwards ...**

*Dave knew he carried someone special, he knew he carried a king, but he didn't know just how special Jesus was. When they put Jesus on the cross on Good Friday, it hurt. The people who did it were punishing Him for things that He never did, for Jesus never did anything wrong. Because God loved us and wanted to be friends with us, He took every one of our sins – you know, the things we do wrong – out of our hearts and put them into Jesus. Jesus felt all the sadness and loneliness that sin brings. Then Jesus died. But God brought Him back to life on Easter morning. And now we can be friends with God and enjoy life forever with him. That is why we celebrate Easter.*

## **A Thief in Paradise (inspired by Luke 23:39-43)**

Wow, where am I? It's so beautiful here, it's so beautiful here.

What am I doing here? Where am I?

Oh, hello, I didn't see you there. I can't take it in ... My name is Levi, and I'm not a good man. No, I'm really not. I've done some horrible things. I've stolen, hurt people, I even killed someone. I never intended that, it kind of happened.

Anyway, I got caught. The Romans nabbed me, beat me. We all know what happens to criminals who get caught by the Romans. Those crosses, those awful crosses – everywhere. Soon I'd be on one, and to be honest, I deserved it – deserved everything that came to me.

Three of us were up on those crosses being crucified that day. One was like me – a robber – a bandit, getting his just desserts, just like me. The other one was different – a political prisoner. Claimed to be a King – and we all know the only *true* king around here was the emperor. Anyway, rumour has it that this guy, Jesus, had been very badly treated, that he hadn't done anything wrong – just stitched up by the Jewish leaders.

Crucifixion is awful. The worst possible punishment. The beatings are bad enough, but then they nail you to that cross. While we were being nailed, me and this other robber bloke were swearing and cursing, wishing we'd never been born. Jesus at first, didn't say a word, but *then* he did. It was amazing. "Father, forgive them," he said, "They don't know what they're doing." That's incredible. How can he say that? He was innocent; it was a disgrace the way they'd treated him. Yet, he could ask God to forgive them? They didn't deserve it, they deserved to be punished, just like us. And yet he forgave them, just like he's forgiven me. That's incredible.

Anyway, this man had to put up with dead awful insults being thrown at him. Dreadful what they said. They mocked him and spat at him. Again he said nothing, took it all on the chin. Didn't get bitter or angry. And then the other guy started joining in. He was so bitter and angry. He sneered at Jesus, "if you're who you say you are, why don't you save us and yourself. As if you could." And he laughed, a hollow, bitter laugh.

I'd kept my mouth shut until then, but I couldn't stand it any more – how could they do this to this bloke. He'd done nothing wrong! I turned to the other thief and said, "don't you fear God? You should do! You and I are guilty as sin. We've paid the price, we deserve to be here. But this man has done nothing wrong! He's innocent. Just leave him alone."

I don't know why I said the next bit, but something in him gave me hope – hope for someone like me. So, I turned to Jesus and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." I knew he was a King, but not the usual sort of King. And I knew he was the only hope that I could possibly have. I wasn't expecting much; I didn't deserve much good to happen to me – I was expecting him to reject me like everyone else *had*.

But he said something incredible; something I will never forget and always be thankful for. He turned to me and said, "today you'll be with me in paradise."

Me, a crook, a murderer, a scumbag, an awful, awful man, in paradise. I don't deserve it. I don't deserve to be loved in such a way. And yet, here I am. A thief in paradise. – and it's amazing. Why am I here? Because a crucified King opened the door and let me in. There is hope for people even like me – and it's amazing!



## The Centurion

My name is Marcus Justus Loginus. I am a centurion of the Sebastii cohort based at Herod's fortress in Jerusalem. It's our job to keep the peace. Not an easy task when it's Jewish festival season. Hundreds of thousands of people flock from all over the country for their celebrations – and there's almost always trouble. They get together and sing their songs of freedom. Let them sing – there's no hope of them getting freedom any time soon, not while we Romans are here – but it doesn't stop them trying! We know it's coming now – we're used to snuffing out any rebellion before it has any chance of getting going. The ringleaders are arrested, whipped and then crucified. This generally nips the trouble in the bud.

Crucifixion is horrible – the guy who came up with the idea must have been really warped. It's so horrible we can't use it for Roman citizens. No, it's the slaves' death – reserved for them and foreign rebels. Sends out a message to everyone that they need to behave. Anyway, we dealt with three of them that day. Two of them were pretty standard – they were bandits and murderers. Caught red-handed. They were shouting and cursing and screaming blue murder as we crucified them. But there was something different about the third man. We were expecting another man, Barabbas, who was another murderer, but then this bloke Jesus appeared. He'd been arrested in the middle of the night, hastily tried and sentenced to death because he claimed to be king. We all know there's no king apart from Caesar! I don't think Pilate, our governor thought that Jesus was any trouble really and he tried to have him freed, but the local rulers weren't having it. They wanted rid of Jesus no matter what and they promised him trouble if he didn't give in. So Pilate agreed. The rulers stitched him up, if you ask me. He was an innocent man.

Well, of course, as soon they heard Jesus had claimed to be king – and, rumour has it that he says he's the Son of God, the lads in my troop had a field day – twisted together a crown of thorns and forced it on his head, dressed him up in a robe and then bowed down, saying, "hail, King of the Jews!" – this was on top of the normal insults they threw at their prisoners. They then whipped him extra brutally – we're from Samaria, you see. Samaritans *hate* Jews, especially those who think they're kings. I suppose you could say the way we treated him was sick, but we knew no different. Normally our victims shout and scream and curse, but he never said a word, you know. Nothing. He was silent. Wouldn't rise to our abuse.

So, after mocking and beating him, we led him out to Skull Hill, just outside the city. He was too weak to carry the cross himself, so we got someone from the crowd to carry it for him. And we crucified him – with those two bandits. When he was up there, people hurled insults on him. The other people we were crucifying joined in too.

All the while he said very little. And the words he did say will be words I'll never forget. As we were nailing him to the cross, he managed to say, "Father, forgive them. They don't what they're doing." Wow. I didn't think much of it then, but the more I think of it, the more it amazes me. Here was a man who was innocent, who'd been brutally treated and mocked, and crucified, uttering words of forgiveness to the very people who'd put him there.

At about noon, something really strange happened – the sky went pitch black. It was spooky. That sort of thing is a sign of doom. Somehow, I knew that this darkness was to do with Jesus. Something was going on that was bigger than the death of a common criminal. It stayed dark for about 3 hours, and then Jesus gave a loud cry and died.

I'd watched him all that day. He'd gone through such horror, it was unimaginable, and yet never once did he rise to bitterness or anger. Amazing! I've watched many men die, and I can tell you there was something different about him. He was no ordinary criminal, no ordinary man. I knew he was special, so I cried out, "Surely, he was the Son of God."

“Father, forgive them,” he said. “Father, forgive them.” God knows the terrible things I’ve done; the blood on my hands. I don’t deserve to be forgiven, and yet that man, Jesus, forgave all those who killed him. That includes me. Could it be that I’ve been forgiven too? That all the terrible things I’ve done in my life have been wiped away? Could it be that I can have a brand new start, that these bloodied hands might be able to be clean once more?



## **Jairus' Daughter (for Easter Sunday)**

### **Part 1**

My name is Tamar, the daughter of Jairus and Abigail, and I'm nearly eight years old. I'm no one very special, but something very special happened to me. It didn't start very well. I got very poorly. I felt hot and sweaty, then cold and sweaty, I didn't want to eat or get out of bed – or do anything really. At first my mummy and daddy weren't worried – they thought it was just a passing fever. But I didn't get better – in fact, I got worse. I was even too poorly to be bored. After a week, my parents started to get really worried. The doctor came round, but just shook his head. Mum and Dad tried to hide it, but I could tell from their faces that they were scared. I asked them if I was going to get better, and they told me I would, but I didn't believe them – and I knew they didn't either. They did that really annoying thing that grown-ups do – talking about me when they were in the same room as if I wasn't there – I didn't really understand what they were saying. All I heard was them mentioning something about going to fetch a man called Jesus – he was the only one who could help. So, daddy left in a hurry. I'd never seen him like that.

I don't remember much after that. I must have fallen asleep. I had these amazing dreams filled with such love and joy – they were amazing. The next thing I heard was this voice. "Little girl, get up!" It said. I opened my eyes, shook my head, and got up. I felt like I'd been woken out of the deepest of sleeps. This kind looking man was sitting by my bed, holding my hand – and there were two men with him that I didn't know, but also mummy and daddy. They looked so happy – they had tears in their eyes. I was confused at first, but then they told me what had happened – I'd actually died, but the kind man, Jesus had brought me back from the dead. I was a miracle.

He didn't stay long, but long enough for my mummy and daddy to say thank you to him about a million times! He just smiled and told them to get me something to eat.

From that day our whole family became his followers – we spent as much time as we could with him and saw the amazing things he did, and heard the amazing things he said. It was amazing – and very exciting. We knew there was something special about him – after all, no one else could do the things he did. Who was he?

### **Part 2**

One day, a year later, we all went to Jerusalem together. It was very exciting. Mummy and Daddy talked about him coming into Jerusalem to become King, that he would rule now and we'd no longer have to be afraid of the horrid Romans. That sounded wonderful. Those Roman soldiers were so scary, with their helmets and swords – not like Jesus, who was so kind and loving. When Jesus came into the city, he was riding a donkey and there were loads of people in the crowd to welcome him, singing out songs of praise – Praise the Lord – here comes the King! We were all waving palm branches. It was so exciting!

But then, later that week, we heard that there were people who didn't like Jesus, who didn't want him to be king. In fact, they wanted to do horrible things to him. They wanted to kill him. That's impossible, I thought, after all, I know he's not scared of death – I'm alive because of him! Again, my parents started to get really worried. They tried to hide it, but I knew. Then came that Thursday – a day I will never forget. We had a meal all together, then Jesus said some strange things about the bread and wine we were eating being his body and blood given for us. I didn't understand what he meant at all. I just noticed that everyone else suddenly became very sad. It made me sad too. At the end of the meal we went to the place we were staying and I went to bed. Later that night, I was woken up by mummy and daddy talking. I pretended to be asleep, but I heard them saying that Jesus had been arrested. Powerful people wanted to kill him and there wasn't anything anyone could do to stop them. It didn't seem possible at all. I didn't sleep well that night.

The next morning – it was Friday – mummy and daddy were crying. Jesus had been killed. We were all so sad. It was so unfair – he'd never done anything wrong. Poor Jesus. They had hurt him badly. Been horrible to him. How could they? We were also sad, because everyone had been so happy when he was around. But all that had gone.

The next day we all cried and cried. I was so cross that people could be so horrid.

### **Part 3**

On Sunday, we heard some amazing news – when mummy's friends Mary went to see where Jesus had been buried, his body had gone. They didn't know where. But then, Mary saw Jesus. He was alive! It was amazing. I didn't believe her – I thought it was a story made to make us feel better, but then later on, we were all together and – there he was – he appeared in the room – he was alive. I was so excited and ran to him, to give him a hug! He was alive. He made us all so happy! Because of Jesus we can all be happy. We don't need to feel sad any more.

## **Mary Magdalene – The day everything changed**

I made my way numbly to the tomb that Sunday morning. I hadn't slept a wink since Friday, when my world fell apart, when I saw my Lord being laid to rest in that cold, dark tomb. I spent most of the time since then weeping. That man, my Rabbi, wasn't just any other man; he was the one on whom I had pinned my hopes. And I watched him die. It was so awful.

Before he came along, I was nothing – an outcast, plagued by seven demons; evil spirits that raged inside me – voices I neither recognised nor wanted to recognise. They wouldn't leave me alone. And then Jesus released me; he allowed me to hope again. So I followed him and witnessed incredible things. As well as that amazing teaching he performed incredible miracles: he healed the sick, cast out demons and even raised the dead. Amazing. Surely this man was the Messiah – the promised king who would rescue the Jewish people from all of their oppressors. As time passed, my hopes grew – my hopes and all of the others too. Only last week he entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey as the crowds shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

The excitement grew ... and then ... and then ... I could scarcely believe it ... it all went horribly wrong. The reports came on Friday morning that he had been arrested and the next thing I knew I was watching him die. Crucifixion was an awful thing, but it was even worse when the man being crucified was the man you'd loved and on whom you'd pinned all your hopes. People mocked him, saying that he should save himself if he were the Son of God – and I hoped that he'd do just that – after all, I knew he had the power to. And I continued hoping, but that hope got smaller and smaller the shallower his breathing got. And then finally, he breathed his last with a final cry, "It is finished" and my hope had gone. I was devastated. It was all over.

The rest of that day are a blur really. Me and the other Marys, and Salome, who'd been with him when he was dying, we began to wonder what would happen to Jesus now. Who would look after him? Thankfully a kind man, Joseph of Arimathea said he would ensure Jesus was laid in his own family tomb. He arranged for Jesus' body to be taken down from the cross, and took it to the grave. We followed; we wanted to know where they would lay him, so we could pay our last respects and care for him. We went back to our lodgings in the city and got spices and ointment ready to anoint his body. But the Sabbath was just starting, so we had to rest. It was so hard. We were reeling from all that had happened, all that we had lost.

Early on the Sunday morning, we went to the tomb. This was our chance to serve Jesus one last time, by giving the body the care it deserved. But the stone had been moved – Jesus body was no longer there! As if Jesus hadn't undergone enough already, now his body had been stolen. It added insult to awful injury. I ran to tell Simon Peter and the disciple Jesus loved, saying, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

Impulsive Peter and the other disciple didn't believe me, of course, and ran off to check out my story. I was left behind. In bits. Now I was weeping, not simply because Jesus was dead, but because they'd stolen his body. The one thing that had been left to me – the simple act of giving his body the treatment he deserved – even that had been taken away from me. My head was spinning. I didn't know what else to do, so I went back to the tomb, stumbling there through the tears. Why? Because I probably didn't have anywhere else to go. I felt that by being at the tomb, I would somehow feel closer to Jesus.

But then, something very unexpected happened. I was standing outside the tomb, weeping. I bent over to look into the tomb, double checking I wasn't imagining it all, and there were two angels in white there, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked me why I was crying, so I told them, "They have taken my Lord away and I don't know where they have put him."

I don't think I was really comprehending I was talking with angels – not your everyday occurrence, is it? All I could think about was the fact my Lord's body had gone. It was all too much – shock, grief, bewilderment – were all swirling round my mind.

*Let's pause there and rest in the sense of bewilderment, shock and despair. Because we know the end of the story, we gloss over the devastation that probably swept over Mary. But I think that to do so is to a mistake. There is a myth that Christian experience is all hunky dory; that once we come to faith in Jesus, everything will be easy and that we will always be joyful.*

*We expect that every day will be like Easter, but then awful things happen. Someone we love falls ill and then, despite our fervent prayers, they die. We experience the bitterness of divorce; our children deny the faith that is at the centre of our very beings. Whatever it is, we feel something like Mary did – hurting, lost, despairing and angry. It seems like too many days are like that awful Friday, or like that moment we've just paused on that Easter morning before the penny drops.*

*This morning I feel that I have to say one thing – that experience of brokenness and despair that you are going through; it's ok to feel like that. Just dip in the Psalms and you'll see that there is a lot of anger and despair around. You're not abnormal. If you want to shout at God, then that's ok – if you find yourself constantly asking "WHY", that's ok too – God knows. I'll say that again – he knows.*

*But that needn't be the end of the end of the story. God doesn't want to leave you like that. Mary Magdalene was in the depths of despair, but that changed.*

*Let's rejoin the story, to see how ...*

Suddenly I saw someone in the corner of my eye – perhaps he could help. I didn't know who he was, I couldn't see properly, my eyes were so blurred by tears.

He asked me, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

I thought he was the gardener; I wasn't sure who else would be hanging around. Perhaps he had something to do with the disappearance of Jesus' body? "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

*Let's pause there again. The first thing Jesus does is to ask Mary why she's crying. Of course, he knows already, but he wants her to tell him, for her to allow him to help.*

*And I believe that today, he is asking us the same question. If there is something troubling you, that causes you an ache in your heart, Jesus knows it already, but he longs for you to share it with him. Why are you crying? Why are you hurting?*

*Let's just be quiet for a moment and name that in our hearts – because Jesus wants to share our burdens, to listen to our pain.*

*Let's go back to the passage again. Mary thinks that Jesus is the gardener, so she asks him if he'd moved the body and if so, where it was. Even though he's standing there in front of her, Mary's grief blinds her to his true identity.*

Everything changed with one word. “Mary.” The penny finally dropped. It dawned on me who this man was – that the man who’d set me free from those demons, who’d taught incredible things and done wonderful works and who I’d watched die just two days previously; this was the man who wonderfully, incredibly, but truly, was alive. I couldn’t believe it. All I wanted to do was hold on to him and never let go, to stay in this moment, hoping it would never end.

Jesus extracted himself from me with a smile. “Mary, don’t cling on to me. I need you to go and tell my disciples. Tell them that I’ve risen from the grave, just as I said I would. So, I tore myself away from Jesus, then rushed off back to Jesus’ disciples, with this most incredible news, “I have seen the Lord!”

*Jesus is alive. And that is why we can hope again. He wants us to tell him why we’re hurting, he wants to share our burdens.*

*He calls us by name, because he wants us to see and to grow to understand who he really is. He is the risen Lord Jesus, who experienced the most incredible suffering that none of us will ever fully understand, but then he overcame the greatest enemies, sin and death. He is the reason we can hope.*

*He is Jesus, who is God in human form, who loved the world so much that he lived a fully human life, experiencing every emotion and experience, who died on the cross, but amazingly rose from the dead, showing us that he is king over sin, suffering and death – that he has overcome them all, and that he is Lord of life.*

*It is the same Jesus who knows us each by name, who knows everything we are going through and wants to meet us in the midst of our suffering and set us free. He is with us in our darkest hour and can bring us strength, comfort, peace and hope – hope that the pain and sorrow will end forever, and be replaced by unending and unfailing joy and peace.*

*This is Jesus, who restores us and brings hope out of despair.*

*If you don’t yet have this life-changing, hope-filling relationship with Jesus, Easter is a great time to begin or renew this transforming relationship. Speak to me afterwards if you want to know more.*

*This is Jesus. He is risen. He is alive. Alleluia!*

## **Peter's Story (Easter)**

*This has been inspired by the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection and also the following verses in 1 Corinthians 15:*

*“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.”*

*Let's listen together to Peter's story.*

I didn't sleep a wink. I couldn't. I felt so awful. Sick in the pit of my stomach. Those words he had said to me kept going round my head. “Tonight, before the cock crows, you'll deny you've ever known me.” I couldn't believe it! Me, Peter, the one he'd nicknamed Rocky, deny Jesus? I'd never deny Jesus. Never. As if I could. He was the man who had given me purpose. Life was so exciting when he was around. I'd made lots of mistakes, but he forgave every one – amazing really. How could I ever deny the man who'd turned my life upside down? Who'd allowed me to share in the greatest adventure ever? I couldn't!

But I did. Three times. Swore I didn't have the faintest idea who he was. And then he looked at me. He wasn't angry; he was reproachful. Disappointed. If I'm honest, that's worse. I was devastated. I couldn't believe I'd let Jesus down. I'd been so full of it. So full of good words and good intentions. But I couldn't back them up with my actions. I was so ashamed of myself, I ran out and wept. Wept like I've never wept before.

Friday was even worse. When Jesus needed his friends most, we deserted him – all of us, except John and some of the women in our group. It was fear that kept me away. What if they got me too and treated me the way they treated him? The one place I wanted to be was by Jesus' side – showing him that he could still depend on me and my support, yet I was too much of a coward.

So I had to rely on others to keep me posted. And the news got worse and worse as the day wore on. First, they told me that he'd been put on trial for blasphemy, that the authorities wanted his blood; then, I heard about the beating, the insults, the scourging; and then they told me he'd been sentenced to death. Crucifixion. A death so horrible that Roman citizens are spared such awful treatment. Finally, I heard the news I thought I would never hear – he'd died.

Jesus. The miracle maker. My hero. My captain. My leader. The one who was going to save us all from oppression. Dead.

I was numb. Devastated. Didn't believe it. My hopes were snuffed out with him. What was I going to do now? Where would I go?

Did you hear that I actually cut a man's ear off on Thursday night? One of the party who came to arrest Jesus. The man had it coming, if you asked me, but still, it wasn't a very clever thing to do. But Jesus healed him there and then. That's the kind of guy he was. That's why I couldn't believe that he'd died. You see, a man who could heal people in the blink of an eye. A man who could stop a storm. A man who could raise the dead. Well, that sort of man could save himself couldn't he? He couldn't be dead? So, why did he let them do that to him? Why did he let them kill him?

Saturday dragged on. I was exhausted, but couldn't sleep; hungry, but couldn't stomach anything. A small number of Jesus' followers gathered together in secret. We cried on each other's shoulders, basically. I found out from Mary Magdalene where he'd been buried. A man called Joseph of Arimathea gave up his tomb for Jesus' body to rest. I wanted to go there, to be with Jesus one last time, but it was the Sabbath, so we couldn't go anywhere. I would have to wait until today to pay my last respects to Jesus.

But then, this morning, something extraordinary happened. Mary Magdalene came and told me that the stone blocking the entrance had been rolled away. The tomb was empty. What? Empty? How was that possible? She told me to go and see for myself. So that's what I did.

I ran to the tomb with John to check it out. To make sure that the extreme emotion we'd all experienced hadn't got to Mary's head too much. I could not believe it. She was right – the tomb was empty. I went straight into the tomb and there were the grave clothes. But no body. It had gone. Where was Jesus? Why was the tomb empty? Who moved the stone? Could the impossible have happened? Could Jesus be alive? I could scarcely believe it. It was simply too good to be true. After all, dead men don't rise from the dead. Do they?

Later, things got even more incredible! Mary told me that she'd met with Jesus face to face – that she'd mistaken him for the gardener at first, but then she knew it was him once he'd called her by name. Perhaps it was true after all. Maybe Jesus was alive! Maybe he had defeated death!

You're not going to believe the next thing that happened! I met with him face to face! He appeared right in front of me. Out of nowhere. It was really him. I could see the scars and everything. At first, all the feelings of shame and guilt came flooding back. I couldn't look him straight in the eye – how could I – I'd let him down so badly. But then he spoke to me. He reassured me that he forgave me. That I could start over again. He told me that I was still Rocky, that I still had a part to play in the great adventure he's planned for me. In fact, he told me that there were even more incredible days ahead. He said that the adventure was only just beginning and that he would walk with me and show me the way!

Suddenly I feel more excited than ever. I can't believe that so much has happened in so little time. I can't wait to tell the other disciples that I've seen Jesus and that he's alive! Back from the dead. God is truly at work in amazing ways. Jesus is alive! He has risen! I feel more alive than ever. If the adventure's only just begun, then bring it on!

## **Poetry**

### **The Passion Ballad**

All eyes on a garden - a kneeling man  
Cries out to his father, "Take this cup if you can."  
A gasp heard in heaven - angels can't bear  
Watch the scene of a broken man crying down there.

The fate of the world is now left unsure,  
The plan for salvation could stutter and fall.  
It hangs on a man who feels so much pain;  
His burden is great, his sweat falls like rain.

Urgent discussion - is there a way out?  
No sign of the Father, beginnings of doubt.  
Fervently pray that the man will find strength,  
Agonised moment, unspeakable length.

Until . . .

A look of decision. All heaven awaits.  
Resolution is formed, no time for debate.  
"Not my will but yours," he'll follow the way  
Ordained by the Father. He'll face the next day.

All happens so quickly - soldiers arrive.  
Fulfil their destiny, keep our hope alive.  
Man stands on trial; he's committed no wrong.  
Agony in heaven as the Father looks on.

A sprinkle of water - case is dismissed  
In the hands of the Jews who betrayed with a kiss.  
The sentence is passed: a criminal's death.  
Hang on a cross, no dignity left.

Each blow of nails through hands and through feet  
Echoes through heaven - a desperate beat.  
The Father winces as his son hangs down there  
In desolate loneliness, there's no one to care.

Dignitaries mock as the sinless one dies.  
"Father, forgive," is all he replies.  
His life ebbs away, the darkness descends.  
"It is finished!" he shouts. The struggle just ends.

Leaderless people - the light has gone out.  
Fail to see what the anguish was about.  
They don't understand that he had to die;  
They secretly mourn, and simply ask why.

The third day dawns and it all becomes clear:  
The tomb is empty, there's nobody here.



“The Lord is alive,” the angels rejoice.  
Relief in heaven, for he made the right choice.

The great gamble worked - he carried our sin,  
Died on the cross so we could go in.  
United to the Father through the Son.  
Mission accomplished and the victory won.

## One Saturday

A headline in the paper read,  
“Religious nut and freak is dead.”  
The spokesman for the Pharisees  
Explained (while looking very pleased),  
“This man had caused us lots of trouble,  
We had to get him on the double.  
He claimed he was the Chosen One,  
Almighty God, His only Son.  
We Pharisees weren’t having that! –  
Even worse, he claimed he’d sat  
At God’s right hand in heaven above  
And will again. You know, I’d love  
To see that day, but won’t of course –  
For that man’s words are just a source  
Of claptrap and of blasphemy,  
That’s why we killed him, can’t you see?  
He drew the crowds with clever tricks –  
They even claimed he’d healed the sick.  
The blind can see (or so they claim)  
And crippled people walk again!  
But that’s not all – you’ll laugh at this –  
A *dead* man (said with emphasis)  
Was brought back to life at his word –  
This claim’s preposterous, quite absurd.  
We all know that dead men don’t walk  
About, or eat and drink and talk.  
It’s clear to me they’ve all been had.  
Poor, simple people fooled – how sad!  
At first we’d tried to humour him  
Until he got beneath our skin.  
He insulted us, called us snakes,  
Told us that we were on the make.  
We couldn’t take it any more,  
That really was the final straw.  
We had him silenced, put to death,  
This carpenter from Nazareth.  
Let’s see him speak against us now –  
As he’s dead, I can’t see how!  
He could rise again and death defy.”  
The spokesman spat, “And pigs might fly!”