

Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti
Ministério Seara Ágape

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COME!



Ministério Seara Ágape
Estudo Bíblico Evangélico

Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti
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I thank Him through whom all things were made and who was born to save me, restore and make me listen to His voice. To Him all honor, all glory and all praise.

I dedicate this book to the bold ones, who like adventure and are true searchers of the truth, experiencing it by themselves; to those who wish to have intimacy with the Lord and yearn to know Him more each day.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” (Jn. 1: 1-5; 14)

Introduction

What kind of tourist are you? Are you the type who likes to stay in excellent five-star hotels, to sit comfortably by the pool, having sun bathing and drinking iced pineapple juice? Or you are the type who is content with a three-star hotel with breakfast included in the daily rate, but having the freedom to go wherever you want and know everything, and to experience everything the place has to offer? Are you a type of tourist who likes to take lots of photos and make an album to store as a souvenir?

What do you usually do when planning a trip? Don't you usually acquire tourist information leaflets, showing feeding sites, tourist attractions and information about hotels and if there is transport to the airport or bus station? Usually this is what is done to travel with relative safety.

Now, suppose you were awarded in a raffle with a trip abroad with the right to free stay for nine days, tour of ship, meals included in the daily rate, all tours scheduled by the most interesting tourist sites, the best guide of the company, and entitled to all the emotions and extreme sports. The only observation is that the ground transportation will be done on foot, with no cars, trains, wagons, or camels; at most, a donkey to the most aged or tired. Would you accept?

Once I went to visit my mother and while waiting for lunch I leaned back to rest in the bed. I closed my eyes and began to imagine Jesus in His ministry on earth, passing through the crowd, healing, comforting and teaching people. Suddenly, He stopped in front of me, stretched out His hand, looked directly into my eyes and said to me in an inviting voice, "Come!" I was surprised because He was calling me to share His life and have a deeper understanding of what He has come to do on earth. I opened my eyes, but continued with His presence in my heart and I knew this was a calling to be a disciple. It had not been just my imagination. I had entered the spiritual world and witnessed something different. I kept the experience with me, and when He gave me the direction of writing this book, I remembered it. Hence the title: *Come!*

This is not a book of study or doctrine, but an instrument of healing and personal learning with the Lord, making us know directly His personality as a human being while He was among us and taking us to have more intimacy with Him. It has no intention to cover the whole gospel, only a few episodes chosen by the Holy Spirit to speak directly to the heart of His people. It is a novel, so it doesn't take into account time and space, but gives us the freedom to travel through the experiences of Jesus' life, causing us to experience in an imaginary time of nine days what was lived by Him in three years of ministry.

It won't be addressed here the experience of the cross because this work has another goal.

Although the illustrations are inviting to children this is a book for adults, and the images also have a divine purpose to be where they are and to be as they are.

Although it's not a textbook, much research was done and I tried to be faithful to names, places and dates. However, names of people, places or description of the personality of some characters not mentioned in the evangelical bibliography were fruit of my creativity and permitted by the Holy Spirit to enrich the text.

You may notice that the text is written in two types of style concurrently, so to speak: the biblical text, as it's exactly written in the bible, and the rest of the narrations

and informal dialogues. This was intentional, so that the true word is preserved and revered as it should be, differentiating it from what is the result of creation and imagination. Therefore, although it is a serious book in its purpose, it's not a formal book, but uses much of good humor and situations of our day by day. Thus, I hope you read with a childlike spirit, a heart open to the Holy Spirit's voice, sense of humor and willingness to travel together, that is, as if you were not a mere spectator but a participant in the story.

You can also note the small heart of gold in the chest of each character of the illustrations, showing figuratively that those who are touched by Jesus receive His particular mark as a sign of His lordship.

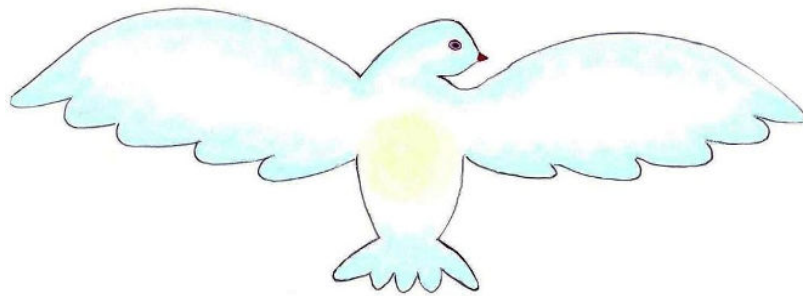
I hope you enjoy the trip and come back with good memories to tell your friends.

Tânia Cristina

Note: The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV – 1989 (1995)

Email: relacionamentosearaagape@gmail.com

This will be our tourist guide:



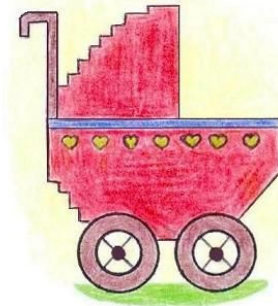
First, He will show us the travel itinerary



Come! Let's travel!



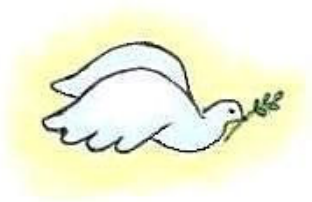
He already existed even before being born. He was announced, awaited, desired and conceived with love. He was a dream of God's heart implanted in a woman's heart. He divested Himself of His glory and became tiny and defenseless; He trusted someone to take care of Him. But even small, it was impossible to deny His royalty and majesty. He was born with a dream and a purpose: to repeat Himself in us.



The child grew and became strong in spirit, filling himself with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him. He grew and became strong until the day to manifest himself to Israel.

1st Day

Capernaum, Cana of Galilee, Return to Capernaum



When Jesus heard of the arrest of His cousin John, He left Nazareth and made His home in Capernaum. The city was located northwest of the Sea of Galilee. Its name comes from the Hebrew *Kephar nahüm* ('village of Nahum'); *Nahum* (comfort, consolation). It was the seat of tax collecting, and the presence of a centurion there, may have meant that there was a Roman military post in the city. Jesus condemned it several times by the lack of faith.

He was coming from a great test of forty days and forty nights when the Spirit of God led Him through the desert. There, He knew deprivation and found out within Himself the ability to resist evil. He was faced with him who was His mortal enemy; this one tempted Him in every way, but He managed to emerge unscathed and strengthened, for He had left behind His flesh and His desires in that lifeless place. What was inside Him now was His true Lord, His friend and inseparable companion who connected Him strongly to the Father. The Spirit of the Father was in Him and would never let Him falter. He would lead Him in victory until His mission was fully fulfilled.

That particular morning, after having washed and trimmed the beard, He went to the beach. He was hungry; more than hunger, He was eager to enjoy that beautiful creation which so attracted Him. The sea meant something special to Him. The sea meant the nursery of lives He loved. He had come for this, to 'fish them.' The sky was beautifully blue and the sun shone in its strength. Oh! The sound of the sea! It attracted Him. He knew what was going to do there today. It was a special day.

Passing along the beach, He saw two men casting the nets into the sea. They had already heard of Him, for one of them was a disciple of John the Baptist and his teacher had told them about Him, "Behold the Lamb of God, He who takes away the sin of the world!"

The sturdy man among them was Peter. His black hair was completely disheveled by the wind that blew at the moment and by his effort to keep the nets in the water. He was too involved with what he was doing to realize the presence of Jesus watching him. He was this way, always very concerned about doing the best he could, and in everything he did he put his whole being, all that muscle mass committed to the goal he had designed. He was impulsive, but spontaneous, sometimes even childish in his emotional manifestations, which made him unique and sincere. There was someone else with him, his brother Andrew. His red and smooth hair also fluttered in the wind, but his manners were calm, quiet, almost calculated. His face showed certain weariness, as well as his slender body seemed to have exceeded his capacity for work that day, perhaps for the frustration of not being able to catch anything all night. His name was Greek, and meant *manly, virile, winner*. That's what he would definitely like to feel right now, a winner. To work and come back without the fruit of his work, this was hard indeed! He also did not notice the presence of Jesus there, watching him and loving him. His prudent and sensitive temperament seemed to balance his brother's. They were from Bethsaida, also a seaport city near Capernaum. A few yards from where they were, Jesus saw another boat. This one was anchored on the beach and two men were mending their nets. Jesus knew them; they were His cousins James and John, sons of Zebedee and Salome. They were physically alike: smooth and brown hair, lively and cheerful eyes, of a character always willing to serve, but with some ambition in their hearts to be one day more than they were now. Their spirits strong and determined and impetuous as genuine Galileans caused Jesus to call them Boanerges, *Sons of Thunder*. Their zeal often was not disciplined, but their hearts were not malicious; their intentions were always good. John, however, had something that made him different: he was gentle and loving and knew to be quiet when his wisdom commanded him. Sometimes,

he preferred to listen and observe; he learned from this. He was faithful and he would never be able to leave a friend in trouble, even risking his own life. His outbursts of anger could quickly turn into laughter of joy, because his heart was not given to keep grudge or hurt, but he was saddened with something in his soul: the indecision and shyness in face of certain situations, and this made him feel vulnerable. In the presence of his cousin he felt strong and could not explain why. Perhaps to please his brother he also maintained that fearless and secure posture. His name was Jewish (*Yōhānān*) and meant: *God is gracious*.

Jesus was standing there smiling at them. They looked at Him all at once, and heard Him say, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

It was not necessary any further order. They left everything and followed Him.

I was there close to Jesus and I could feel His joy when they ran to Him. They had found a new motivation to live. They had searched for a Rabbi to teach them. Now they found Him.

They had not noticed the crowd that followed Jesus to the beach. His fame had already spread through those villages. Everyone heard that the son of Joseph and Mary returned transformed from His unexpectedly trip of the last forty days. People heard rumors of miracles. They wanted to experience for themselves. When Jesus saw the crowd very close, He got into Peter's boat and asked him to stay away a little from the beach because he wanted to preach. We got on the boat and sat at some distance from Him. He sat in the stern and Peter kept the boat in the correct position with the force of the oars. He told the crowds,

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near. Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever does these commandments and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool', you will be liable to the hell of fire. Before you bring your offering at the altar, be reconciled to your brother or sister. Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one. No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain

on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

In fact, perfection was not the absence of sin, but indicated fullness, maturity, exercising the law of love to God and men. These people needed to mature and we, His disciples, too.

He was there, preaching with gentleness and love, with all His life flowing in those words, looking directly at each face as if was His old friend and they absorbed every one of His words like one who feels very thirsty. The faces of some, even without fully understanding what He said, showed a change. The marks of anguish dissipated and tranquility took place. By preaching these lessons His face was not smiling, but neither showed anger or desolation. He taught them as one who had authority, not as the scribes, so the people believed in Him. The sun behind His back gave Him a silhouette of light as it increased and strengthened which emanated from His spirit.

When He finished speaking to the crowd He sent them back home and returned to us who were seated in the bow of the boat. His face was smiling now. He said to Peter,

“Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch. Let’s eat. All this left me very hungry. What’s going on Simon, two hours rowing took your strength away?”

“All this? No, Lord, I’m still strong as ever. I obey because you ask me for, but I spent the whole night without fishing anything. The responsibility is totally yours, Master.”

We were in the Lake of Gennesaret, also called the Sea of Galilee, Sea of Chinnereth or Sea of Tiberias, which lies two hundred and thirty-two yards below the sea level. The position of the lake, which has thirteen miles long and almost seven miles and a half wide, in the depths of the Jordan Valley and surrounded by hills, made it subject to atmospheric disturbances and sudden storms, which the superstitious assigned to Baal, the god of the Gentiles. The depth is about fifty-five yards and its waters clear and healthy are propitious to fish breeding.

The men began to row and, at some distance from the beach, they cast down the nets. Suddenly, the water under the boat began to boil like a pot with boiling water. A huge amount of fish spontaneously began to jump into the nets, fish of all sizes and colors, and the strength of their arms had to increase to pull into the vessel that big shoal. We would have a big meal. Jesus kept His hand stretched and the brothers strove to bring into the boat the miracle they were witnessing. Peter, amazed and confused, fell down at the feet of the Lord and said,

“Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”

“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people. Simon, from today you will be Peter (Cephas) – *rock, stone*.”

Simon was a later form of the name Simeon, which in Hebrew means ‘*hearing, he who hears, God heard*’. The Hebrew word is *Shim’ôn*, which derives from *Shâma* ‘(to hear)’. Yes, Simon, ‘*he who heard*’, from now on would be the strong stone on which the Lord would build His Church. Peter was receiving more than a name; he was receiving the ability to hear more clearly the voice of the Lord. Some time later he would receive the Father’s revelation about the identity of His beloved Son, so the Lord had said he was a *rock*.

While Peter was there prostrated, Andrew shouted at the brothers James and John to come and help him; he also screamed to Peter to leave the formalities and the intimacies for later, for the boat was so full that it could sink. Peter got up and went to help him

and within minutes we were back on the beach, having our breakfast. The experience had not been only to Peter but to all of us. Jesus looked at us confident of Himself and curious of our reaction. He knew what was going on in our hearts; however, wanted to hear something from us. We were learning something important: when we get exhausted during the 'nights' of our life, trying to seek strength in the void, He comes and tells us to hear His order. And when He tells us to cast our nets, we can be assured that we will not be frustrated, but we'll see the abundance of His living word. Nothing can remain sterile with Him around.



We took the rest of the morning to walk along the beach and Capernaum. It was when Jesus stopped near a spring and looked into the eyes of a young man with fair hair and clever and determined look, named Philip, from the Greek *Philippos*, 'lover of horses', 'tamer of horses.' He was with the scroll of the Law in his hands. He didn't seem to be of the priestly class, but remembered someone observer of the Word and eager to learn it. He was an intelligent person, the type willing to have experiences, regardless of risk. He showed also to be there waiting for someone.

I saw His hand raised again and His voice calling him,
"Come! Follow me!"

Those hands could never be forgotten. Strong hands of a carpenter who had known the taste of the work; not harsh or rough, or smooth, weak, helpless or accustomed to futility, but gently strong and determined, that conveyed warmth and comfort to those who were touched by them. They emanated power and spoke for themselves. Philip saw, heard and felt His calling and followed Him. He only said,

"Master, wait for a few seconds. There is someone you need to know."

While we waited, we sat under a fig tree and started eating figs. The eyes of Jesus wandered by the passers-by and looking at the faces each of them as seeking for someone else.

Philip soon returned, bringing his friend. His name was Nathanael, from the Hebrew, which means 'a gift from God, God's gift, God has given.' He was also known as *Bartholomew*, from the Aramaic, 'son of Timaeus or Tolmai, son who lifts the waters, son of the highly esteemed.' His face with strong and safe features, his black and bright hair, and his beard well made and trimmed was of a genuine Israelite. His steps were

decisive, meticulous and precise; his mind, lively, sharp and curious of who knows the Law and eager for confirmation. He himself had said to Philip,

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

“Come and see.”

When Jesus saw him, He said,

“Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!”

“Where did you get to know me?”

“I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

“Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

“Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.” And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Nathanael came from Cana of Galilee. *Cana* came from the Hebrew: *qānâ*, a place of reeds, and was more or less 4.35 miles northwest of Nazareth on the road to Tiberias. It had abundant springs of water, supplying a lot of fig trees that provided much shade. It was where we were going now. Jesus had been invited to a wedding and so did we. The night promised to be full of surprise.



The sun was at its zenith, the heat was starting to bother and now our perspective was exciting: climbing mountain, for Cana of Galilee was at the top of the mountains. We started our journey towards the southwest. Jesus was walking ahead of us, safe steps, quiet face, mind raised to the Father. Each of us tried to approach His presence; we wanted to participate in His thoughts and His will. Suddenly, He started running and we did the same, but we were not prepared to jump obstacles among the stones and rock crevices. We saw Him turn right at the next ledge of the mountain and then we lost Him of sight. How to know the way? It was the first time we passed by there. Even Nathanael from Cana of Galilee seemed confused. Suddenly we stopped and looked at each other. We just realized the joke when Jesus miraculously appeared right behind us and began to laugh, to laugh out loud and in a funny way. He laughed and we screamed in fright. Then, we began to laugh at our childishness and the tension that we sought to hide by feeling unprotected in such a place. And as a loving father He comforted us with His voice,

“Did you think I had left you? I would never do that. I was just testing your trust. Come on! The feast awaits us.”

We arrived to Cana in the late afternoon, however, we would have plenty of time to restore ourselves from the trip and prepare ourselves for the marriage.

Mary His mother would be there. She should already be in the house of the couple for quite some time, helping the hostess because they were old acquaintances. Rachel, the groom’s mother, knew Mary and Joseph since they came to live in Nazareth. She knew Jesus since he was little; their children played together in the mountains of Galilee.

We went to the place where the wedding would be celebrated. The Jewish ritual had been obeyed and the joy of the dance and music filled that house. In the late afternoon, the groom and his friends went in procession to the bride’s house and escorted her back to the groom’s house, where the party would be held at night. The guests would be there with festive garments. The groom had his group of companions, one of them the closest, which was the best man, also called *companion of honor, friend of the groom or master of the banquet*, supervising the party. The bride wore embroidered garments, jewelry, ornaments and a special belt, beyond the veil. This bride wore the veil only; she didn’t choose the wreath. She also had her bridesmaids also properly dressed. The parents and closer friends, Jesus among them, blessed the couple and wished them happiness. The oath of allegiance was presented, as usual, by the bride’s father, through a marriage contract in writing. A bridal chamber was specially prepared, a *huppā*, like a tent, where the couple stood during the ceremony. Now was the time for dancing, joy and jokes. Probably, the guests would still remain there for a week, celebrating, as was the custom at weddings. The bride and groom danced with their respective companions, women and men separately, until it was time for the groom to take the bride away. He had placed his special cloak over her, sealing the pact.

Jesus was sitting quietly among His disciples while Mary was looking for something with her eyes. She didn’t have a great stature; she was a woman of medium height, brown hair that appeared beneath the veil, small hands, lively and watchful eyes, warm and expressive smile as her son’s. She came to Jesus and said,

“They have no more wine.”

But Jesus said to her,

“Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.”

They went to the servants, and she told them:

“Do whatever He tells you.”

Now, standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus commanded them to fill the jars with water and they did; they filled them completely. When they drew some water to taste, the water had become wine, a good wine. Having the steward tasted the water that had become wine he called the bridegroom and said,

“Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

At first, we thought strange the way Jesus spoke to Mary, but then we came to understand. He was reminding her that it was not yet time for men to recognize His true identity. She understood His desire to remain in secret for the time being, so she gave those orders to the servants and trusted in Him. Moreover, ‘what concern is that to you and to me’ also meant ‘What do we have in common?’ This meant that the motive for being there was different, as well as their life projects.

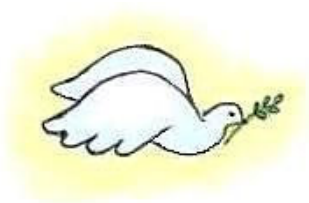
But after all that, who could remain in secret?



It was time to leave. All of us, the disciples, Mary and the brothers and sisters of Jesus followed Him and went down to Capernaum. It seemed by His countenance that He still had something to do that night; something between Him and the Father. It was His custom to withdraw to pray alone, for this way He could know the secrets of His *Abba* (in *Aramaic: Father*) and act with power and authority the next day. We would go to sleep now, while He would climb the mount. We would have surprises the next day.

2nd Day

Capernaum, Nazareth, cities of Galilee, return to Capernaum



He got up early. Even having slept a few hours, as usual, He was in good humor and smiled at us at the table while we ate the breakfast,

“Get ready! The day will be exciting.”

“It seems that we’ll walk again and too much.”

“Right, Peter, and if we have time we’ll row too. Are you ready?”

“Yes, Lord, so I’m feeding my fragile small body, to withstand the emotions of the day. I only ate three fish for now; my custom is seven.”

“One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Let’s go, it’s late!”

We started walking. The day was clear again and the sun was not yet high. The air filled our lungs with the delicious scent of the sea through the gentle breeze blowing. We were walking toward the beach. What was this strange hum that came along with us? There seemed to have no insects around us. Oh, yes, it was the crowd again! Jesus had barely woken up and the crowd followed Him closely, insistently, as bees around the hive. He attracted them; however, sometimes He seemed oblivious to them, going straight to His goal, not caring about any disturbance around. Today, His gaze was fixed ahead as if He was already seeing someone He was looking for. We arrived to the street near the beach and we could hear the voices of the people buying fruit and fish in the booths, besides the usual cries of complaint against the tax collectors. Those boxes in front of them provoked insults and, if it were not by the protection of the Roman guards at their side, they would suffer physical aggression every day. We stopped at some distance from a somewhat corpulent man, counting silver coins and putting them inside the safe. His black and curly hair was already dripping drops of sweat, maybe by the spicy words that he heard from the passers-by and taxpayers in front of him. He was just doing his job in a practical and professional way; it was what his precise manners denoted. However, his eyes showed the pleasure he had to take those pieces of bright material between his fingers. It seems that he fed himself with its glow. His golden-brown eyes were like the radiance of the metal. Suddenly he felt a strange cold inside as it were generated by a small voice almost inaudible that he searched to silence for many years, the voice of his conscience. *“Yes, yes, I’ve heard, now be quiet. I know that I collected a little more, but we have a ‘fair’ reason for this, you know.”* Matthew did not realize the man in front of him until he came pretty close. Then he discovered that the still small voice came from inside Him and seemed to speak through His eyes. Jesus said a few words; however, they were true military orders, so much that the man did not care about the Roman guards posted at his side.

“Come! Follow me!”

He immediately left everything and followed Him. Perhaps, the guards had thought he was going to meet his physiological needs, so they didn’t bother with his so sudden departure. Jesus called Matthew, the tax collector there, at the tax booth. *Matthew* is a Hebrew name that means, *God’s gift, man of God, God’s reward*. He was also known as *Levi*, which means, *attached, joined, united, connected, adhered, set apart for the Lord, holy to the Lord*. Was he known as Levi, or it was Jesus that gave him this name at that moment? Jesus called him *Levi*. A tax collector (In Greek, *telōnes*) was a collector of taxes or customs in favor of the Romans, employed by an employer of the collection of taxes. It was a despised and hated class because it was composed by selfish, greedy and ambitious types, eager for money and for the benefits it offered. The tax collector was reputed unclean because of his continuous contact with the Gentiles. It seemed a great contradiction with the name he had, Matthew, Levi, *the separate; the consecrated to the Lord* ... Jesus was restoring something in the personality of Matthew at that moment.

We continued walking, and not far away Jesus saw another man. Thomas was his name, an Aramaic name (*Te'ômā*'), which the Greeks called *Didymus*, *twin*. Jesus seemed to know Thomas, what fascinated him, for he knew such a *Rabbi* (teacher) just from hearing about Him. In fact, he would like to know if He was in fact what He claimed to be. The rationality of Thomas did not allow him to go further than his limited human vision allowed him. He preferred the real and tangible things in order to believe in something. His keen eyes and his broad forehead seemed to support this tendency. Nobody made him a fool. No one deceived him; this was what he said. "*Where are the proofs that what you say is true?*", "*I am a man of reason, not of emotion; prove to me what you say.*" But he could tell nothing to that humble carpenter and Rabbi before him. His inviting hands, His clear smile, His sincere eyes and His voice, unquestionably full of authority, made him silent. For a moment, he seemed to have stayed with the mind completely empty of explanations, totally still and silent to hear the voice of the heart saying, "*I love you and I will serve you all my life.*" Thomas really needed to experience something different from anything he had felt and seen so far. The experiences that the Lord would give him would be felt deeply in his being. Maybe his attitude externally practical, rational and superficial was a protection placed by his frail ego not to feel the pain and the deep desires of his heart; a real and deep need that nothing and no one could meet, only the *Eternal*. And suddenly, there was He; He who seemed to be this someone, the One that he had sought all his life and with just one glance had caught and called him to Himself forever. The experience he had at the time was quick, but it seemed like an eternity, a sweet eternity. He didn't remember of having ever felt this kind of thing within him: love. His rationality would be transformed in his walk with Jesus and his apparent disbelief would be a way to show others what a disciple can expect and ask of his Master.

Jesus continued to walk and His calm countenance seemed to smile. We knew what He was doing: choosing His disciples, whom He would give the name of apostles.

A path so short to the beach turned into long because every step He stopped and let His eyes wander until alight on those whom He sought. The next of the list was right there beside Him: James the son of Mary and Clopas, also called Alphaeus. He had a brother named Joseph, but Jesus did not call him. James the younger was known this way because he was a little younger than the brother of John. Actually, he seemed to be still a beardless boy in comparison with the companions of the Master, though John was the youngest of them. He displayed the freshness of the youth, eyes of a light blue that emanated life, fair skin and soft as that of a baby. His name was derived from the Greek, *Iákōbos*, a transliteration of the Hebrew, *Ya'qōbh*, *Jacob*, '*who supplants, the deceiver, who holds by the heel*'; another translation is: '*coming and going*', '*the one who oscillates*', '*which bends but does not break*'. That's why he showed certain indecision and insecurity in his attitudes, which made him feel eternally childish and helpless in face of certain situations. Perhaps, in his inmost he has felt grateful for Jesus to be there, calling him. Hasn't God changed Jacob's name to Israel? Perhaps Jesus could do the same to him, James: to turn him into a *Prince of God* (Israel), to teach him how to fight like God and prevail. That was an invitation to grow and be a respected and bold man; a huge challenge for the poor James, but who called him did not accept a '*no*' for an answer. Yes, James said, "*Yes, Lord.*"

Amid the crowd, Jesus focused on another pair of eyes, Judas', also called Thaddaeus, son of James. Judas, a name derived from *Judah*, means, '*praised, celebrated, commemorated in praise to the Lord.*' Thaddaeus was also a Hebrew name that means '*he who praises or confesses*'. Thaddaeus (in Aramaic) meant, '*brave, courageous*'; and in Syriac, '*kind*'. Judas was really someone celebrated to the Lord.

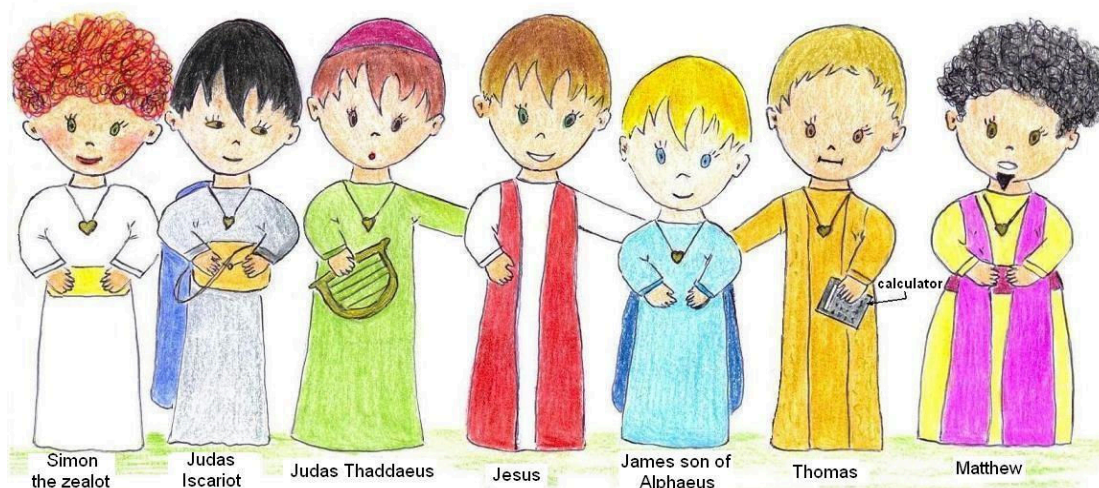
His family had many children and his birth was a great joy for all, because, apparently, his mother couldn't have children anymore. He was 'the miracle child', as if he was the firstborn. Something special was prophesied about him at his birth. Jesus was now before him confirming His choice, and Judas had reasons more than enough to praise and magnify the name of the Lord. He was not aware of what would happen from now on, but his answer, as well as the others', was to leave everything and follow this Rabbi. His name showed in his poise and countenance, the kindness, the spirit of those who had reason to thank God, though he was human and subject to frailty as everyone else. When his sensitivity was touched beyond its capacity, he had the tendency to sulk and complaint. He looked like the spoiled little child who sought lap and approval. Henceforth, he would have a much better lap, however, a disciplinarian father and maker of children responsible for their choices. Jesus would transform him into a better vessel, stronger and more aware of his sensitivity. Yes! Judas would really have reasons to praise and exalt the name of the Lord.

It seemed that we would not give another step, because the crowd didn't permit us to proceed. However, Jesus had not been praying on the mount almost the entire night for nothing. The work and the will of the Father needed to be made. We walked more slowly now, and over the wall, like a sentinel watching the horizon, Jesus could see another one of His chosen: Simon the Zealot. He was so called Zelot (Greek: *zelōtes*), because of his zealous temper with the things of the Lord and the kingdom of God. Perhaps, the people have given him that nickname by the fact of his zealous spirit remind the behavior of the followers of the party of the Zealots, founded by Judas the Galilean, who led a revolt against the Romans in 6 AD and opposed to the payment of tribute from Israelites to a pagan emperor. They received the nickname of zealots for following the example of Mattathias and his sons and followers, by their zeal for the Law of God when Antiochus IV tried to suppress the Jewish religion (Revolt of the Maccabees, 167-160 BC). Simon, in particular, had not openly joined the followers of the party; however, he did not see the Romans with good eyes. Despite the revolt of his interior, and his spirit a little inclined to criticism, to anger and action, something inside him seemed not to have allowed him until that moment to follow such a path. His face always reddish, his red and abundant hair, and his muscles, strong and stiff, gave him an appearance of a lion, the appearance of someone always willing to go to war. What he lacked was the wisdom, the discipline and peace required to a warrior. Just as the '*sons of thunder*', he was a true Galilean, proud of his homeland and willing to end the slavery of his people. Jesus saw him and loved him; two warriors who communicated to each other by the eyes, who knew how to carry out orders. However, the meekness, the safety and serenity of Jesus touched Simon with something else; he knew he still had much to learn to be a real warrior. As if he had saluted a general, he came down from the wall and 'marched' alongside the Master, smiling, proud to have been chosen. The excitement had gripped him.

Someone was missing to the group and Jesus came now at the end of His choice. Face to face with Him was a skinny subject, with black hair like a raven's, and cunning eyes like a fox's, apparently a bit nervous about that meeting, showing some anxiety as who wants to get away from there to a comfortable and secure place. His controlled and calculative attitudes seemed to give him a characteristic of premeditation and malice in everything he did, as well as the concern for his bag inferred him a permanent character of avarice and excessive care for material goods. Just as Simon the Zealot, he also did not see the Romans with good eyes, and his rebellious and warlike personality made him eagerly wait for the awaited Messiah of Israel who would deliver everybody from that bothersome yoke. The inner cowardice was opposed to the exterior boldness and

had prevented him from joining any revolutionary party. Instead, he preferred to be just an instigator of abolitionist ideas, as long as he stayed in the margin of any direct conflict that exposed him to shame or danger. His family had possessions and clear social position and he could not compromise it with careless attitudes. In addition, by not being the firstborn he was at risk of losing his inheritance, which did not suit him. His name was Judas Iscariot, from the Hebrew *'ish q'riyoth*, *man from Kerieth*, referring to the city of Kerieth-Hezron located about twelve miles to the south of Hebron. In Aramaic is *'isqaryā'ā*, *'a murderer*.' Even knowing everything, Jesus did not received him as a potential traitor at the time, but as one whom the Father had chosen to learn from Him, be restored and turned into an instrument of blessing to His people (He would test Judas). Like all those who He chose, Jesus loved him. The same word: *Come!* for the 12th time. I also had heard it and knew the strength and love printed on it. The answer would be always the same: *Yes!*

The choice had been completed. Now it was time to work. From that moment, twelve men and one Master for a long time together.



If Jesus had walked the whole time towards the sea, why now He went toward the desert as someone who wants to climb mountains again? Peter, Andrew, John and James were already ‘feeling the taste’ of the sea in their mouths; they yearned for the sea wind and the taste of fresh fish. Jesus seemed to realize their thoughts. He smiled broadly and said,

“Nothing like some sport to spend the energies of the breakfast, isn’t it really, Peter?”

He looked at me and said,

“Prepare yourself for many interesting emotions.”

The frustration in the disciples and the expectation in my heart temporarily paralyzed us. But one could not stay paralyzed for a long time, because Jesus was not there, He had gone out of our sight. Someone from the crowd, wanting to help us and participate in the joke, said,

“He went there.”

“Oh, no! He goes to Nazareth. Get ready for the mountain climbing class!”

Jesus went to Nazareth, His hometown. It was Friday, and although the *Sabbath* had not yet started, He used to be there in the synagogue to teach and read the Word.

The city of Nazareth was very close to several important trade routes in order to easily get in touch with the outside world at the same time that its position as a border town on the limit of Zebulun, in front of the plain of Esdrelon, gave an aspect of indifference. It was this attitude of independence of the Lower Galilee that caused Nazareth to be reputed with mockery by the strict Jews. It was located in the high valley between the hills of limestone to the south of the Mountains of Lebanon, which runs approximately from south-southwest to the northwest. In the south there is a rapid descent to the plain of Esdrelon. The base of the valley is nearly four hundred and thirty-eight yards above the sea level. Steep hills rise on the sides of the north and east, while on the west side they reach a height of almost five hundred and thirty-four yards. Main roads coming from Jerusalem and Egypt ended in the south of the plain of Esdrelon. Caravans from Gilead crossed the fords of the Jordan River and continued on their way further down. The main road that came from Ptolemais to Decapolis and the north, along which the Roman legions traveled, passed a few miles from Nazareth. Such a location, perhaps, has given rise to its name, which is possibly derived from the Aramaic term *naṣ̣erath*, 'watchtower'. Another derivation suggested is from *neṣ̣er*, which means, *sprout*. The temperate climate of the valley makes the flowers bloom and the fruit appear in abundance.

We could not realize how we came so fast. Perhaps, our thoughts about the latest events have made us ignore the difficulties of the way. We stopped only to drink water and eat dry figs that we had brought with us. Jesus ate with pleasure and seemed to enjoy the moments of rest in our company. It was we who should 'drink' every moment of His fellowship, His smile and His patient and loving gaze upon each one of us, seeming to understand our weakness and our greater lack of understanding of why being there. By looking down there to the valley and the cultivated land we could realize the greatness and the care of God with His children. In fact, looking at the land from that altitude made us feel closer to heaven. However, by seeing Jesus with us we were sure that the heaven was there because He was there. He was the heaven itself and it was a comforting feeling to feel Him within us. He looked at us from outside, but was looking at us from within. He knew us deeply and it was as if each desire and each motivation of our being was fully opened before His eyes. It was as if during that trip His silence worked with us, shaping us, healing us, making us more like Him and connecting us more lovingly to each other. Thirteen people so different, however, one thing in common: Jesus.

Finally we arrived and were greeted by His mother and His brothers. We stayed there for a short time, long enough to rest from the journey. Then Jesus took us to the synagogue for the prayer was about to begin. Along the way, Andrew explained to me,

"Synagogue comes from the Hebrew, *K^eneseth*, which has the sense of a meeting of any persons or things and for any purpose; also, a meeting of individuals from one location with the purpose to worship or to do something in common. The basic activity in the synagogue is the prayer and reading of the *Torah* (or *Pentateuch*, which corresponds to the first five books of the bible). The synagogues were built following the model of the temple of Jerusalem."

We arrived and entered. I sat in the seats reserved for women and waited. While waiting, I observed the presence of a portable ark like the Ark of the Covenant, where they kept the scrolls of the Law and the Prophets. It was opposite the entrance of the building. In front, there were the principal seats for the religious leaders and rulers of the synagogue. Beside, there was a platform for the reading of the Law. Adjoining to

the platform, were placed the most honorable seats. Jesus sat there. The religious ritual began with eighteen prayers, eighteen blessings. The first magnified the Lord's name. The second interceded for Jerusalem. In the others, the restoration of Israel to the land of their fathers, the return of the glory of God's presence to the temple and the city of Jerusalem already rebuilt, and the restoration of the Davidic dynasty were themes repeated, and remembered the origin of the synagogues during the exile in Babylon. After the prayer came the reading of the Word and the priest read the Torah scroll. Then usually comes the reading of the Prophets. In Jesus' time this portion was not yet fixed, but the reader was allowed to make his own selection. Finally, would come the final blessing. Jesus got up and went to the platform of reading and all the people present smiled to Him, for they knew Him since He was a baby, and they admired His wisdom. A simple carpenter spoke like a true Rabbi and Teacher of the Law. He had been away for a long time, but now stood there among them and they wanted to hear Him. The face of Jesus was serious and reverent. He took the scroll of the Law and opened it in the place where it was written by the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."



Having closed the scroll, He returned it to the attendant and sat down; and all eyes in the synagogue were turned to Him. Then He proceeded to tell them,

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum'. Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. There were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

Everyone in the synagogue hearing these things were filled with wrath. They began to get angry and accuse Jesus of blasphemy. In fact, they raged against the truth that came out of His lips. Jesus had touched the wound. He showed them their unbelief, comparing them with the unbelieving Jews of the Old Testament. In a stubborn and rebellious region it was not possible to perform miracles. They saw with their eyes, but

did not understand with the heart, for listening with the heart would force them to change their attitude and it would cost them a lot. It was more comfortable for them to remain as they were. Jesus came with something new, a new doctrine, a new way of seeing life and the true God in another way, and this was unbearable. Who did He think He was? He was comparing Himself with the prophesied Messiah. But everyone knew that the Messiah would come, bringing military power and authority, driving out the Romans and the other Gentiles from Israel. The Messiah would bring a material realm, military. How, then, an ignorant carpenter came, suggesting that He was the Messiah, speaking now of spiritual things? It was too much for them. The main leaders stood up, seized Him and led Him to the cliff to throw Him down. A simple reading of the Word had exposed before their eyes, the hatred, hypocrisy, and what was in their hardened hearts. The disciples went out and I followed them. We knew what Jesus was able to do. Nevertheless, they were afraid of the angry reaction of their countrymen. When they were at the peak of the mountain ready to throw Him down He miraculously turned away from them and hid Himself among the rocks, fleeing from their presence. He knew those mountains very well. He used to play there when He was a boy. He liked to cause fright in Mary's heart when she saw Him at the edge of the cliff, having at the background the beautiful and fertile landscape of the plain of Esdrelon and the Kishon River, where Deborah and Barak delivered the Lord's people from Sisera. Yes, Jesus knew all the stories of the Scriptures and that place where He was now had been the scene of His youthful adventures of battle and victory. We returned to His mother's home and there He was sitting quietly, drinking fresh curd and tasting grapes and honey cakes as if nothing had happened, looking with curiosity at our face of amazement. He was truly God, and nothing stopped Him, nothing frightened Him. He was not afraid of man, but faithfully obeyed what the Spirit put in His heart. He did not care about the carnal reactions of those who were around Him, for knew His true Father and who He, Jesus, was. All that mattered was to have His Father's approval. However, as a man, He was grateful for our friendship and solidarity. He had seen our concern when people were about to throw Him down the cliff. I knew His end was not there, but the others didn't know their Master yet.

After lunch, Jesus got up in order to return to the sea and preach in the towns of Galilee.

The same amazing way as we went up to Nazareth, we descended back to the valley.

The crowd waited for Him, as if knowing of His arrival.

Reaching the plain, the Lord found a small elevation and began to teach us,

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

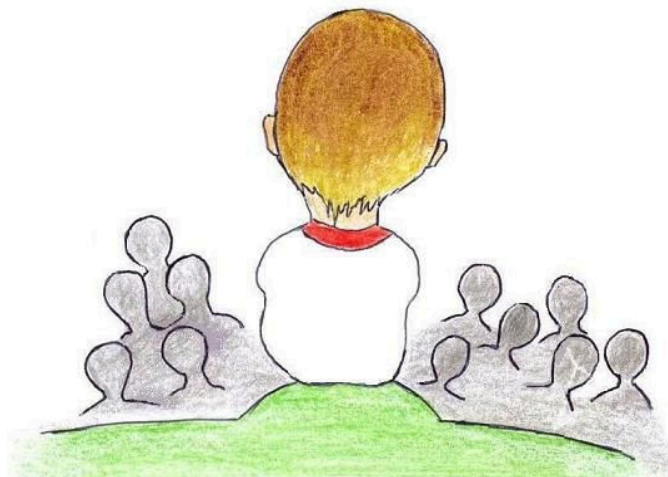
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”



I could look and see the attentive crowd, each with a particular interest in the heart. Many Roman soldiers were there to listen. Many scribes and Pharisees also listened to Him with curiosity and with the intent to compromise Him, but the humble, even not understanding deeply the meaning of that words could realize that they were important for God because He spoke of something that was known to them. The powerful and important fought against the truth they were hearing, for what Jesus was proposing was incomprehensible to them. How could a people oppressed for so many years, waiting for a Messiah to deliver them from the Roman yoke, needing to regain their honor and self-worth, how could they be happy with what they were hearing? Humility, meekness, weeping! What was that? To the humble that words sounded as comfort, however, for the leaders it was a complete surrender. Their pride did not allow them to do this. They could not discern that it was about a spiritual kingdom.

While Jesus spoke each word quietly, He spoke more deeply to us as disciples, His Spirit revealing to our hearts the true meaning of them:

Being humble or poor in spirit is to be aware of the lack of God. Those who empty themselves of their own self, of the pride of their achievements and of their selfish desires can feel the Holy Spirit filling that void. The humble receive the kingdom of heaven as a reward; and the kingdom of heaven is now, when everything is possible. It is an experience, not a place. So, humility is to know that we depend on God in all situations, to be like a child and be aware of the need to always learn and grow with Him, knowing that He alone is able to supply us.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they receive the consolation from God. And the weep that the Lord speaks here is the weep of repentance that produces desire to change one's own life. It's to cry so that the divine justice is established on earth, freeing, healing and bringing back the joy of fellowship with Him. Blessed are those who mourn because of their separation of Him, because He hears their cry and consoles them, restoring again their relationship and their intimacy with the Father.

Being meek is to be submissive to the will of God, to His laws and the divine plan. By being His, the meek shall inherit the earth, the sea, the air and everything contained in them, because everything belongs to Him. Meekness means: serenity, tranquility, calm, to let himself be shaped by God, calm in the certainty of victory, to be sure that everything has a solution.

To have hunger and thirst for justice: it means not to accept the injustices of the world, but to yearn by God's will and love being fulfilled in all men. Those who feel

these thirst and hunger will be satisfied. There is no need that Jesus can not supply. Seeing the righteousness of God in action is to see people accepting His truth in their hearts and receiving salvation and eternal life.

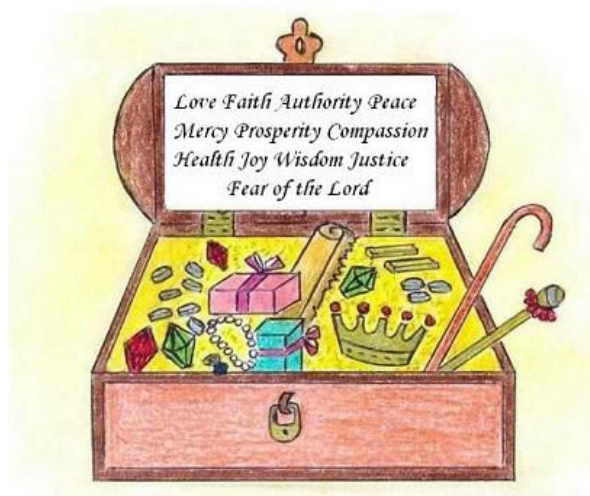
Mercy means indulgence, grace and compassion raised by the misery of others. It is to repay with good the evil that was received. But receiving mercy comes after to exercise it. It is to be like Jesus.

Being pure in heart is to maintain the purity and relegate the impurity, is to see God with the heart, is to keep within us the clarity and sincerity of intentions, it's to be transparent, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." Who sees through the eyes of Jesus sees the Father. The pure in heart do not harbor grudge or hurt, but look at the mercy and the divine justice and trust fully in His trial. The pure in heart flee from sin and keep within them the integrity of God's plan for their lives, not getting involved with anything that may divert them of it. They always maintain firm within themselves the pure word from on high.

In order to have peace in our soul it's necessary to uproot the other nature in us (the nature of the devil in our flesh) and cultivate Jesus in our hearts. Making peace is to stand on God's side. The peacemakers are called children of God, for they resemble Him. To bring peace to someone, we must conquer, first of all, the peace within our own being, that is, to be harmonized with the divine plan for us. In a way, it is something that arises from the meekness, from the fact of giving ourselves fully to the mold of the Lord in us.

Being persecuted for righteousness' sake is to fight for what belongs to the Lord, it's 'to pay the price' for His kingdom and have total rights over it. Once Jesus said, "They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world, so the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." Thus, the fact of being Jesus' brings us, inevitably, the worldly persecution, because the prince of the world (the devil) is not pleased for having lost us to the Son of God. However, when we are persecuted for being fighting for the truth, we have the guarantee of God's protection and His deliverance. "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm", says the Lord. It is also written, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them."

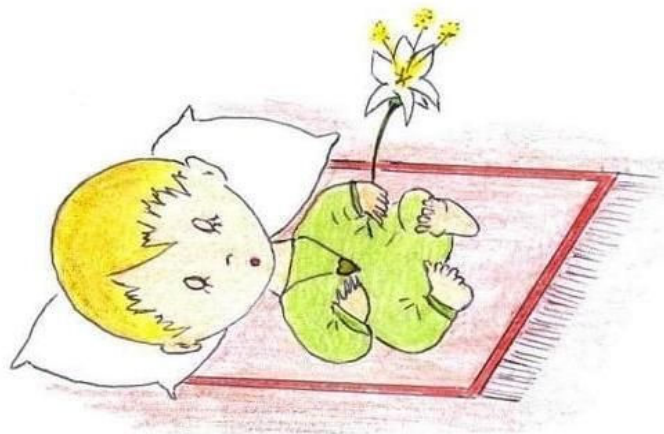
Jesus continued preaching,



“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today. Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.



“Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.”



The Spirit of God confirmed in our hearts: our Father in heaven is perfect, and His dominion is exercised by love, placing mercy in the center of the trial. But He is also holy, and we should ask Him to sanctify His very name, that is, that He reveals Himself to us. He who seeks Him with sincerity receives His revelation and knows His holiness. He reveals Himself through creation, the people and the action of His Spirit in us. May we show God's holiness to others through our actions. *Your kingdom come* (Greek, *Basilea*), that is, *His dominion, His power, His royalty and His authority over us*. This means to be willing to give up everything to have God. His will must be done on earth as it is in heaven. And in heaven there is peace, fullness, perfection, joy, absence of pain, sorrow and tears. In heaven, where God's government is happy and unconditionally accepted by all, His will is spontaneous and cheerfully obeyed by everyone and all occasions. Therefore, the will of God is good for us, it is the best and it is within our reach. He demands the best we can give, but nothing beyond this. We should not be afraid to ask Him to do His will in our lives, because He will do the best. Just as it is obeyed in heaven, it must be obeyed on earth. *Give us this day our daily bread* symbolizes all that we really need for our earthly existence so that we can sanctify His name and do His will on earth as it is practiced in heaven. Therefore, the Lord teaches us to ask Him to help us in this area, also giving Him all our afflictions and trusting that He will take care of our supply; we do not depend on men, but on Him. After asking this, Jesus reminds us that we must ask the Father to forgive our *debts* or *trespasses* (means *transgression, sin, offense, insult, affront*), because when we disobey His commandments, that is, when we sin and “*err the target*”, *breaking the law of God*, we hurt and offend Him by our sin, what creates a debt in the spiritual world. Therefore, when we ask Him to forgive our sins, His blood covers us and our debts are paid, closing our gaps. “*As we also have forgiven our debtors*”, which means to pray to God for forgiveness, sincerely and without any hypocrisy, free of any feelings of hatred and revenge against others. Only when God gives us the grace to truly forgive our debtors is that we will be prepared to make a true prayer. Finally, Jesus teaches us to ask God *to lead us not into temptation and deliver us from all evil* that may befall on our lives. This means not to allow us to fall into situations where we will be exposed to the temptation of evil. The expression “*deliver us from evil*” means: *protect, shield, guard against the assaults of the devil*.

Jesus went on, “So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and

everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

“No one after lighting a lamp hides it under a jar, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness. Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays. You are the light of the world. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”



Jesus was speaking their language. They thought that the eyes were windows through which things entered their lives, especially in the material area. Therefore, everything that their eyes saw and wished would come materially to them. That’s why Jesus had warned them not to look at a woman with lust in the heart, because they could commit adultery. Everything their eyes wanted, everything they read, other doctrines, other teachings with the appearance of light could come to be part of them, and if they were lies, what one would find in them would be darkness.

The Lord stopped speaking and began to walk and touch the sick, and power went out of His hands and healed them all. Unclean spirits were cast out, the blind saw, the deaf heard, the lame walked, the poor in spirit, tormented and anguished received life and hope, and those who had never felt loved and welcomed felt loved, cared and comforted. It was interesting to realize that hours have passed since we had arrived there, but we did not feel thirsty or hungry. His presence seemed to satiate us. We saw some signs of fatigue in Him for so much effort to bear the crowds, but He would not stop until the Father told Him that was over.

We went walking toward the other cities around the Sea of Galilee and the work of God was made. Some of the crowd brought us water to drink and some fruit, because they had understood the preaching and were already putting the kingdom of God into practice. They learned to give as He gave, to supply as He supplied, to smile as He smiled, to depend on the Father as He depended. The disciples felt something burning in their heart, which rekindled the flame that they had felt when they were called by Him. It was the same feeling of comfort and desire to follow Him and serve Him, to learn from Him. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and the scribes followed Him with those envious and critical looks by having awoke the respect and the interest from the crowds; yet, He seemed to ignore them for now. It was not time to face them yet. The time would come to call them to the truth and to confront them with their unbelief and hypocrisy.

The day was coming to the end and it was time to send people away. Tomorrow, they would surely be back! Each one walked to his own home until we were finally alone. We sat in the square by the fountain, and Jesus looked deep into our eyes as if asking us what we thought of the learning, as if He told us that had much more to show us. We wanted to be in silence there and even the most restless and daring of the disciples seemed to enjoy that peace and that quiet joy. We had already felt it before: the joy of being with Him in the stillness, where no word was necessary because His presence filled all things. Then He broke the silence,

“Are you not hungry?”

“It seems that it’s time for a good bath, a hot soup and a soft bed.”

“Lord, I go home. Tomorrow, I will meet you at Peter’s house.”

“You may go, Simon. You may go, Thomas, James, Nathanael, Matthew, Judas, Philip and Judas Iscariot. Go, your families should be waiting for you.”

“Lord, come to my house for dinner. Andrew went ahead. James and John, you may come. And you, our little sister, come with us. I hope you enjoy the food.”

“With pleasure, Peter.”

When we arrived, Peter’s mother-in-law could not greet us because she was in bed with high fever and her daughter was there to take care of her. Peter was worried; after all he had brought the Master and some guests for dinner. They asked Jesus to come and see her. He entered the room and saw Peter’s wife next to the bed. Her mother was there, a lady with fair hair, rosy cheeks, keeping her eyes lively and interested in everything that happened in the house and regretting for not being able to serve her wonderful meal to the guests of the best friend of her son-in-law. She was a little overweight and was trying with difficulty to sit up in bed. She asked,

“Did I eat too much and something was bad for my stomach?”

“Do not worry, Sarah, everything will be fine.”

Jesus touched her face fondly, but with power He rebuked the fever and it went away. He showed with this act that all things are under His sovereignty, and that no illness could prevail against Him. Now, He touched the cheerful and healthy face of Sarah, who gave Him a tight hug and invited Him to sit at the table. She was already getting up to prepare a delicious grilled fish. Meanwhile, she would serve fresh curd and cheese. Within a few minutes, she would knead bread for us. We helped her to get up and we went to the dining room.

Then we could talk excitedly about everything that happened that day. What a day! We did everything that was possible and much more.

“Master, did you see the face of the mob who wanted to throw you down the cliff?”

“Hah, hah, hah. They were furious, Jesus.”

“And you have never thought that I could escape, have you, James?”

“I said to John that if they put their hands on a hair of our Master I would break their necks.

“Oh no, James, you would do nothing! John was so pale, about to faint. If I had not gone ahead, they would not have looked behind by my scream; that’s what gave to the Master a chance to escape.”

“Oh, be quiet, Peter, you and your great mouth.”

“Why are you laughing, Jesus?”

“I think I chose stubborn children as disciples, troublemakers and jealous too.”

“Really! Why is this little sister sitting there as guest of honor beside you?”

“Because I’m jealous of Him too.”

“Hah, hah, hah.”



“Dinner is coming, my dear guests.”

“Yum, it smells good!”

The meal had been prepared with love, which made it even more delicious. More enjoyable, however, was what Jesus was teaching us and giving us: a communion between brothers, where not only the food was shared, but our own being in love and comprehension, with spontaneity and without criticism, moreover with laughter, what was lacking for many families. It was such a meal that He would like to see in the house of His children. He gave thanks to God for the food and we ate.

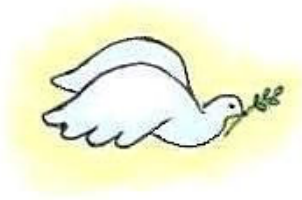
As usual, after arranging our accommodation, the Lord withdrew to pray to the Father. He needed to receive orders for the next day. Now it was His hour, His time of being in the lap of *Abba Father*.

The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was there and I opened it. Jesus had left it on the table. But how could I understand if it was written in Hebrew? Suddenly the letters leapt clear to my eyes:

“On that day: A pleasant vineyard, sing about it! I, the Lord, am its keeper; every moment I water it. I guard it night and day so that no one can harm it.” (Isa. 27: 2-3)

3rd Day

*Cities of Galilee (Korazin, Bethsaida, Tiberias, Magadan or Magdala),
Ship Tour*



We were now going out for a visit to some cities of Galilee, for Jesus had much work to do there. It was Saturday and we knew that we would have some trouble ahead, because traditionalism prevented us from doing certain things on *Sabbath*, but that day Jesus would surprise us in many ways, as well as would surprise many Pharisees and experts of the Law. We had not eaten, for it was already late, and went out to the field as we were. Going through the grain fields, His disciples were hungry and started eating the ears of grain. The Pharisees had also waked up early and were there, suddenly, close to Jesus, appearing from nowhere, as spies eager to find 'top secret' information. They soon said,

"Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."

But He said to them:

"Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests."

He added,

"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

Our day had begun 'very well' indeed. Soon in the morning, struggling with the Pharisees was too much for us! The disciples took advantage of the squabble to finish the meal, while Jesus was arguing with them. We ate and followed the Master because He had already started to walk towards the synagogue.

A man was there with a shriveled hand. They were watching to see if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath day in order to accuse Him. And Jesus said to the man with the withered hand,

"Come forward."

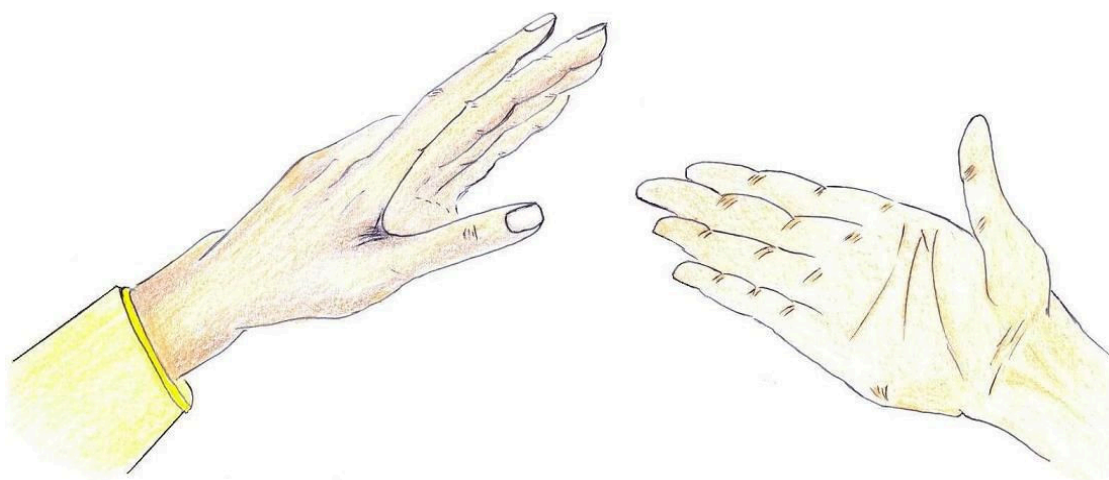
Then He said to them,

"Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?"

He looked around at them with anger; He was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man,

"Stretch out your hand."

He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.



The Pharisees withdrew and sat in their chairs confabulating among themselves; and there appeared a woman possessed by a spirit of infirmity that had crippled her for eighteen years; she was bent over, and was quite unable to straighten up. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said,



“Woman, you are set free from your infirmity. Then He put His hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.”

But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd,

“There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day.”

But the Lord answered him and said,

“You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?”

When He said this, all His opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that He was doing.

The Pharisees kept talking secretly to each other, but something in their countenance revealed what they were saying; they were plotting how to take His life. He was a hindrance, a stumbling block for them all, and what most made them furious is that they never could defeat Him in a duel of words. They had within themselves a dead letter that made them to exercise a hard and blind justice, without compassion or mercy, and their words charged with bad faith, malice and envy ended up turning against them. Their feelings of hatred and violence did not have the power to take away from Jesus His fellowship with the Father, or to steal the joy that came to His heart,

demonstrated in a catching smile, when another innocent was freed from the claws of Satan and the hypocrites who thought to stop him with their power.

Leaving there, Jesus went to the seashore and large crowds gathered around Him, so He asked Peter to put his boat again some distance away from the beach so that He could preach. So He began to teach the people,

“Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold. And he said, ‘Let anyone with ears to hear listen!’”



He continued teaching, “Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good things, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person brings good things out of a good treasure, and the evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure. I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. For it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks...

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell – and great was its fall!”

He kept telling them many things. When He finished, he sent them to their homes and told Peter to let loose the boat, for many other cities still needed to hear the voice of God that day. The wind was gentle and blew steadily, so that it was not necessary much force with the oars. Peter and Andrew put the sails in the right position the same way

the other ships that were sailing close to us. So we sat at Jesus' feet, and someone asked Him,

"Why do you speak to them in parables?"

He answered, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak to them in parables is that seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn – and I would heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it. Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

We wondered a bit about what Jesus said. When looking to us there next to Him, we felt secure and loved; and His sincere eyes and His clear and deep speech made us partakers of His kingdom and knowledgeable of His innermost secrets. It was as if He Himself, for His will wanted us to see and hear what was important for having a special purpose for us, however, not allowing others to receive the same gift at that moment. It might seem cruel to say things that others did not understand, just so that they could not be healed and saved. Is not that what He had come to do on earth? But He knew what He was doing. He knew that men in their torts, misusing their free will, had contributed so that God Himself made them blind and deaf until they no longer bore their suffering and could abandon their arrogance and pride, seeking Him by their own strength. Often, the wrath of God on a given situation needed to be appeased, as He had done in the past with His people, leading them into captivity and allowing their suffering, to then rescue them truly, for they had known the difference between serving the living God and serving their own passions. Many of us were silent and meditative at that moment, thinking how many times we had suffered for those who stood beside us, and we had borne huge burdens to try to make them understand the truth, but they could not, because their eyes and ears were shut by their own will, preferring to maintain their attitude of rebellion to the calling of the Master. They had already made us suffer for many years, because despised us for our choice. Many there were living the same situation; they left their trade as a source of livelihood for the family in order to follow an unknown Rabbi who appeared from night to day and seemed to bring a teaching somewhat revolutionary for the closed and stubborn mind of that time. Their relatives told them, *'What is the purpose of this?'* *'What for?'* *'You're wrong by following this charlatan.'* What a pity! They could not hear the tone of His voice, the authority that emanated from it, the promise of victory and reward that shone in His look and His sincere smile, the strength of His hand that supported and conveyed the certainty that they would never be forsaken. He sealed His purpose in our heart: we would be honored

and would have the restitution of everything that had been stolen of us. He would defend us of every thorny word that had been launched against us and of those that could come. The strength of His presence there with us assured us His sovereign choice and the defeat of the envy of all blind and coward who had been obstacles in our lives. His hair was loose shining at the light of the morning sun, and it was like a mantle of love and protection falling upon our souls weary and hopeless with the concerns that afflicted us. That moment on the boat was a moment of eternity in which even the waters around us seemed quiet and attentive to the voice of Him who had created them. When we realized we were kneeling at His feet. There were no words to thank the gift that He had given us. We were just ‘tasting’ a little of His understanding and knowledge. How much our minds would still have to be open to understand His so huge heart! His hands comforted us. He passed them over our heads in a gesture of affection that healed, freed and strengthened. He kissed us one by one, and even the most resilient and secure of their virility and strength denounced their weakness, shedding a tear by the corner of the eyes. Sweet tears that shone like fine crystal in the sunlight and the morning sky. Then He said,

“I give you my peace and my safety. Now get up and prepare me some bread and fish. I’m hungry and the boat is coming to our destination.”

“Oh, of course, Lord! How could I have forgotten it? My Master needs to be fed. I, Simon Peter, captain of the boat, crying here like a weaned child! What would my wife and my mother-in-law say before this? Don’t say anything to them, Andrew, do you understand?”

“Of course, Captain! Bring the fish soon, for the hot coals are ready.”

I don’t know where the embers may have come from, as well as the bread and milk at the moment but in the blink of an eye the meal was being served as in an efficient service of the best hotel. That was much better than green and raw ears.

We arrived to the harbor and soon the crowds followed us. Jesus was coming out of the boat, because now He needed to be in their midst to heal. The disciples tried to do a ‘cordon’ around Him to protect Him, but it was impossible to keep the crowds away and disciplined, for all wanted to touch Him because power came out of His hands. The lame began to throw away the crutches; the unclean spirits came out crying, *‘What do we have to do with you, son of David?’* The blind began to shout for joy to see the world, which they often were born without see. The barren women exchanged the weep for the smile of the certainty that in a few months they could embrace a child and shame would be banished from their lives. Those who had hated each other suddenly walked arm in arm like old friends. Lepers who watched from afar, forbidden to participate in the acquaintanceship with the men ran to embrace their wives, children and friends. Now, the deaf could hear the words of life from that Rabbi who would place them as kings in the kingdom of heaven, and would grant them the eternal life. Children with defects from birth were kissed and embraced by their mothers, because from that meeting with the Master, they would begin to have a normal life like any other child. Swollen people and wounded with incurable pustules were being touched by the power of the Lord. Anguish of soul, loneliness, and impossibility of loving were banished of the hearts forever. Understanding was opened. Mouths that had complained until that day lifted their voices in praise to God. The humiliated by sin, who had felt apart and separated from their communion with God and have been banished from the synagogue by the leaders, at that time found the true altar in their lives. Roman soldiers who were there to maintain order among that disorderly and rebellious crowd not even thought of their military obligations; on the contrary, they meditated in their hearts on who their real commander was, and broke their hearts before those strange messages to their ears.

The people listened to the exhortations and hard reproofs, however, did not discuss or contradict them. Their hardened hearts began to be opened, and the ‘hot’ words like blazing coals became like honey in their mouths, as a gesture of affection of which they had never been worthy. Those living in marital sin acknowledged their mistake and ran quickly to the synagogue to rectify their situation. Adulterers repented and returned to their homes to be reconciled.

Many were happy there, but not all. Jesus was now sitting on a small hill watching. Like vultures, they began to arrive; Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes, the teachers of the law. The *Scribes*, from the Hebrew word, *Sōpherim*, also called *doctors or teachers of the law*, were technicians in the study of the Law of Moses (*Torah*). Their main activity was to study it. They emerged after the Babylonian exile, and exerted influence especially in Judea, but could also be found in Galilee and among the Jewish dispersion. Along with the Pharisees they were the originators of the worship in the synagogue. Some of them were members of the Sanhedrin, which was a court established by priests, elders and scribes who judged the ceremonial and administrative issues relating to a tribe or a city, as well as important political crimes. It corresponded to the Jewish Supreme Court or Court of Justice. The scribes had their importance increased after 70 AD. They transmitted faithfully the Hebrew Scriptures and expected of their students a greater reverence than that they rendered to their parents. They had a triple function:

- They preserved the law. They were professional studios of it, their guardians, and they copied the manuscripts many times.
- They had disciples and made conferences in the temple.
- They were called the doctors (lawyers) and teachers of the law because they were judges of the Sanhedrin. They were not paid for the service they did in the Sanhedrin, so had to earn a living by other means. They belonged to the party of the Pharisees, but as a body, the scribes were distinct of them.

The *Pharisees* controlled the State religion. They were experts in religion and wanted to achieve spiritual ends by political means and never stopped thinking about the public interest. They believed that ‘the oral law’ existed and was so authorized and inspired by God as the *Torah* (the written law). It was a Jewish religious party which was characterized by opposition to others, fleeing from the contact with them, and by the rigorous observance of legal prescriptions and traditions that they established. They were hypocrites pretending a sanctity that they did not have.

The *Sadducees* were a sect or a group of Jews present in Judea from the time of the 2nd temple, and that flourished from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD. Some scholars claim that the Sadducees were descendants of Zadok (Hebrew: Tsadoq, צדוק, which means ‘righteous’), a priest descendant from Eleazar son of Aaron, and who officiated as a priest in the time of David and Solomon. Its members were regarded as the religious, social and economic elite in Judea; therefore, they held the political power in the Sanhedrin. They fulfilled several political, social and religious functions, among which, the maintenance of the Temple. They disagreed with the Pharisees on the question of the oral law, which they did not accept, denied the resurrection, angels and spirits.

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries (*small leather boxes with portions of the Word of God. They were used by Jews who interpreted literally the instruction to tie*

word God to hands and foreheads) broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father – the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Again, there He came talking about delivery, submission, humiliation, revealing through His voice and with His caustic smile the unbelief of the leaders! It was unacceptable to them that an unknown rabbi, poor man, without wealth or fame was there, blaspheming and saying to be the Son of God through the works He did, ‘seducing’ the people with His goodness and, moreover, having the daring and insolence to touch their wounds: pride, legalism, hypocrisy and unbelief. Even more intolerable was His boldness, His safety and His controlled anger, revealed in His hard face, commanding, resolute, and in His cool smile of one who despises what is dirty. They the teachers of the Law, respected even by the Romans (at least that’s what they thought, since they didn’t meddle in the issues of their religion), now being disrespected for this ‘little prophet’ who, shamelessly, disclosed their behavior in public! They could never understand the depth of what Jesus was talking about. They gave too much value to religious leadership (like a godfather), misused their power and their position as ‘fathers’, they did what they intended to do, despising God, and acting as if they were God Himself. Their proud knowledge made them feel important masters, holders of wisdom and knowledge of the laws of God and men. That’s what kept their egos self-confident and proud by the smarmy disciples who fell into their claws. The religious and patriotic pride was still burning in their hearts, but cowardice and hypocrisy did not allow them to confront the common enemy face to face, Rome. On the contrary, they preferred to let the most humble and desperate to be their shield and their scapegoat, satisfying their need of shedding innocent blood. How could Jesus call them brothers of those beggars, a dirty crowd, poor, dumb, hungry and powerless? The guides proliferated at that time eager for a Messiah, and any prophet dressed in camel hair that appeared in the wilderness was soon considered a messenger of the Most High. They were false prophets, deceitful and unscrupulous that came with miraculous doctrines to lead the most unsuspecting to a false kingdom of God. Their words full of malice, deceit, seduction and darkness caused many to go astray because they had the appearance of light. So, John the Baptist was killed when he came preaching the baptism of repentance and showing the wrath to come upon the sinners, for he revealed openly, their rot and calling them a brood of vipers. Herod had finished with him and the Pharisees were grateful to him for that, but ... and this one now! What would they do with Him? Didn’t He shut up? But Jesus knew very well what He was saying and doing. It was amazing how in a few minutes, that sweet and sensitive man who we saw in the boat turned now into a pillar of strength and determination, seeking within himself a clear voice that burned like fire and cut like a sword. His face showed an ironical smile, as if despising the blatant lie of his opponents, as if disgusted with their moral rot in disguise of sanctity, as if angry of the pride and hardness of heart trying to be limiting walls to the release of the truth. However, there could be something that prevented Him from speaking? His anger was not an insane anger or an unbridled rage or out of control to give vent to some old bitterness, but a supernatural wrath for the sin of irreverence against the things of the Father. Jesus continued,

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going in, you stop them. [Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will be punished more severely]. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the sanctuary is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by the oath.’ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that has made the gold sacred? And you say, ‘Whoever swears by the altar is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gift that is on the altar is bound by the oath.’ How blind you are! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So whoever swears by the altar, swears by it and by everything on it; and whoever swears by the sanctuary, swears by it and by the one who dwells in it; and whoever swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by the one who is seated upon it. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!”

He was going too far; He was revealing what only they knew in secret of what was happening inside the temple. The altar was despised; the most important was the gold and the offerings that were placed on it, for the priests lived on them. They got used to swear by everything, for indeed God’s name did not seem to be enough for them. They fought against each other to make a disciple, for this would put them in prominence before their colleagues; it gave them an appearance of wisdom. They were meticulous in the fulfillment of the Law. Didn’t Moses say to give tithes of everything? How this one was saying the opposite? Their closed minds, without the Spirit of God, did not allow them to understand the *Spirit of the Law*, but the letter made it hard and inflexible. They paid so much attention to details and did not realize the great lies they had welcomed in their hearts. And what He had to do if they attended or not the house of widows?! Was He, by chance, their legal wives? He better did not stick His nose where He was not invited.



Jesus went on,

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous, and you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ Thus you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your ancestors. You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth ... Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation.”

They were being exposed before everyone, as if dissected like any animal to study of its internal structures. Yes, their law was dead, their behaviors and attitudes were hypocrites, full of appearance of balance and perfection, because it was too painful for them to be diminished to the status of mere mortals, sinners like the crowd that was there. The law forced them to so many rules of hygiene and purification with the objects and the external appearance of their bodies, but had not taught them to see within themselves, inside their own souls. They could not understand how a simple Galilean had the ability to reveal in a few words what existed within their hearts. And now that He had put everything out, what would they do with that? They did not know how to fix. Would they live with this shame the rest of their lives? If they put aside their pride and asked Him for help, they would leave like newborn babies. However, this thought did not pass through their mind even for a moment. On the contrary, they wanted to eliminate Him so that He was quiet and stopped telling those aching truths. Jesus would never stop, just as the prophets who came before Him: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Micah and others, poor unknown people. Many had been killed and persecuted by their own people, but This One here was different; more than a simple prophet, He was the complete owner of the ‘Vineyard.’

The turmoil was installed. What had begun as a pleasant preaching and full of healing and power of God became truly a war. It was late, almost six o’clock in the afternoon. Jesus stood up and, without the crowd noticed, He led us to the boat. On the way He said,

“Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops. I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but

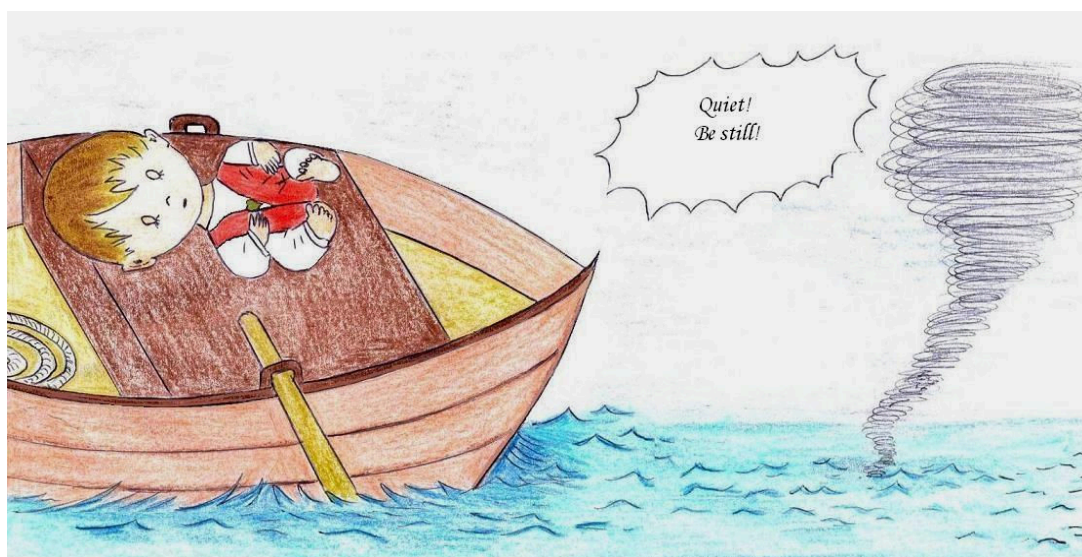
whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say, for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."

We were approaching the beach and Jesus got on Peter's boat and accommodated himself at the stern. All of us got on them and looked to the sky. Thick clouds began to form, the sky darkened, not only by the hour of the day, but because it was forming a great storm. That Sea of Galilee, many feet below the sea level and among so many mountain ranges was often subject to bad weather. However, not like that day. It seems that not only the Pharisees were angry with the recent discussions. The god of the pagans who controlled that lake also did not like what was happening, as the disciples said. Even because Jesus said to Peter,

"Let's go to the other side."

The other side was Decapolis, a region occupied by ten Greek Gentile cities, therefore, out of Jewish control, in the east of the Jordan River, ruled by Rome. Their names were: Scythopolis, Damascus, Kanata, Raphana, Hippos, Dion, Philadelphia, Pella, Gerasa (or Jerash) and Gadara. It was for the latter that we were going. Would Jesus have lost His mind? Was it not safer to sleep on land? Go to enemy territory? To the impure?

We looked at Jesus and we could feel His tiredness. He had fought hard that day. His countenance seemed sad, despite the victories He had had. Perhaps, because the hardness of heart and the rebellion always saddened Him. Perhaps, because He saw many hungry and dispersed sheep as without a shepherd to guide them. Perhaps, for many other reasons. We tried to console Him. He smiled, a little sad and tired, and we knew that we should leave Him alone. Within a few minutes, He fell asleep on the floor of the boat.



I was also quiet there by His side, watching the men that rowed with strength to bring the vessel into the sea. The wind began to blow and with it, heavy drops of rain began to fall making the deck slippery and shiny. Within minutes the sea became rough

and the waves beat strongly against the hull. The sails had been torn and the boat's bow rose above the waters. We had nowhere to hold, except in the edges of the benches and in the hooks that held the nets and the anchor. A sudden movement hit the boat from one side to the other; in fact, a sporting activity not recommended for those suffering from labyrinthitis. Peter, Andrew and the rest of us were trying at all costs to keep the boat without turning by the force of the oars, shouting to the boat of James that was a short distance to be careful too, for they were in the same situation. It was becoming critical until someone saw Jesus sleeping peacefully on the floor. It seems like He knew what would happen, but had allowed that everything came to this point to give another lesson to His disciples. Peter woke Him up,

"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!"

Then the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

What a singular experience! A day of so many clashes and emotions seemed to have left our nerves in tatters and He just told us, 'Why are you afraid?' In other words, 'Where is your courage?' The most appropriate response to that question was the reverent silence of a worshiper. He had done one more miracle before our eyes, showing us His power over the forces of nature, as well as on our inner waters, often stirred by the dark clouds of trouble that Satan puts in our lives to mislead us, in those moments so full of activities in which we let Jesus sleeping. And then when it's late, we charge Him for letting us perish in our misfortune. So, He peacefully wake up and with a simple command causes everything to quiet down again. Could it be that it was why He asked about our courage? If He was there with us, silent, couldn't be possible that He wanted to test us if we had faith to say for ourselves to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!'? Now it was easy to say, "Peace! Quiet! Be still!"

We said as if we had all agreed; all together as one large choir of voices certainly directed by an experienced conductor. The conductor in front of us approved of our 'daring' as if saying, 'Wait! You'll have more experiences of courage later.' We didn't have much time to make comments or jokes because the bottom of the boat touched the land. The men went down to anchor it and we could hear the screams very clearly. We were in the foothills of the region of Gadara, a place where the tombs were built on the rocks. We heard the cries that resembled howls of pain, despair, hate and all the emotions together, till a naked person came out of nowhere running desperately toward Jesus saying,

"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me—for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man."

For the second time Jesus spoke in a clear voice, high and secure,

"What is your name?"

"Legion—for many demons had entered him. We beg you not to order us to go back into the abyss, but to the herd of swine."

"Go!"

Between three and six thousand demons left him and entered the bodies of the herd of swine that were there and they rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. The man who had been possessed by demons was now lying on the ground seeming lifeless, full of sores caused by the cuts he himself made in his body, moved by the unclean spirits, and by the marks of the chains and shackles that were shattered by him when the men of the city tried to stop him. Those who cared for the pigs, seeing

what had happened, fled and told the fact in the city and by the countryside. Soon, the citizens would come to see what happened to the source of income of the region. While they did not arrive, we took care of man the best we could. Thus, in his perfect reasoning, cured, washed, shaved, dressed and grateful was found talking to Jesus around the fire that was already kindled. Those who saw the events of the deliverance were still scared and brought others, who were also filled with terror for what they were seeing. But some were not with terror; they were desperate and angry because of the economic loss. So they expelled us from there, especially Jesus. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with Him; but Jesus sent him away, saying,

“Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.”

So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him. This was Jesus! He healed, liberated, gave sustenance and provision and also gave in the hand of the freed person a tremendous ministry of evangelism so that the glory of the Father was manifest among men.

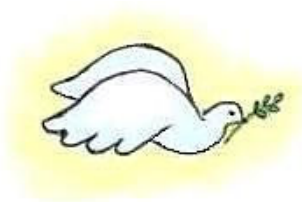
We ran back to the boat, because the population had descended the slope.

It was already dawn and we needed to rest.

The moon was still shining in the sky, which after the storm was once again clear and starry. The sea was calm like a lake and it did not take long for everyone to fall asleep. Now it was time to sleep, but ... what about Jesus? Did He sleep as well? We had not noticed; however, that feeling of comfort and peace made us think that He stood there watching over us. He certainly would take advantage of those hours that remained to pray, to talk to our *Abba Father*.

4th Day

Capernaum, other cities of Galilee



We woke up with the sun on us and with the sound of seagulls. Jesus was still sleeping. He must have fallen asleep after His usual prayer with the Father, but soon He woke up too. All of us seemed in a good mood, despite the scare and the great thrills of the previous day. We ate bread and some fruit. Only the dates were a little dry. Probably our breakfast would have to wait, for we could see the usual crowd waiting for us on the seashore. We were going to berth in Capernaum. Peter said,

“Lord, it seems to be your friend Jairus of the synagogue over there. He seems quite distressed.”

“Faster with the oars, Peter. I need to see him.”

As soon as the boat touched the sand, Jesus jumped into the water. It was Jairus indeed who waited for the Master. His robes of leader of the synagogue confirmed his position of prominence, but they were a little wrinkled as if they had not been changed since the previous day. His face of concern and anguish showed that he had spent a sleepless night, probably in prayer for some important cause. When he saw Jesus he fell at His feet begging,

“My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.”

“Calm down, Jairus. Everything will be okay.”

Jesus went with him. We followed them, running. The crowd pressed in on Him, and it became difficult to stay quite close one from another. I held the hand of one of the disciples and we stayed close to Jesus, close enough to hear Him,

“Who touched me?”

One of the disciples said, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’”

“Who touched me? I noticed that power went out from me.”

Jairus looked at Him, distressed, he had urgency. What was Jesus doing standing there? He was in no hurry to leave that place. He looked around patiently until the person who touched Him identified himself. He would not get out of there till he knew the truth.

The crowd fell silent. No noise, no comment, no sound, no laughter.



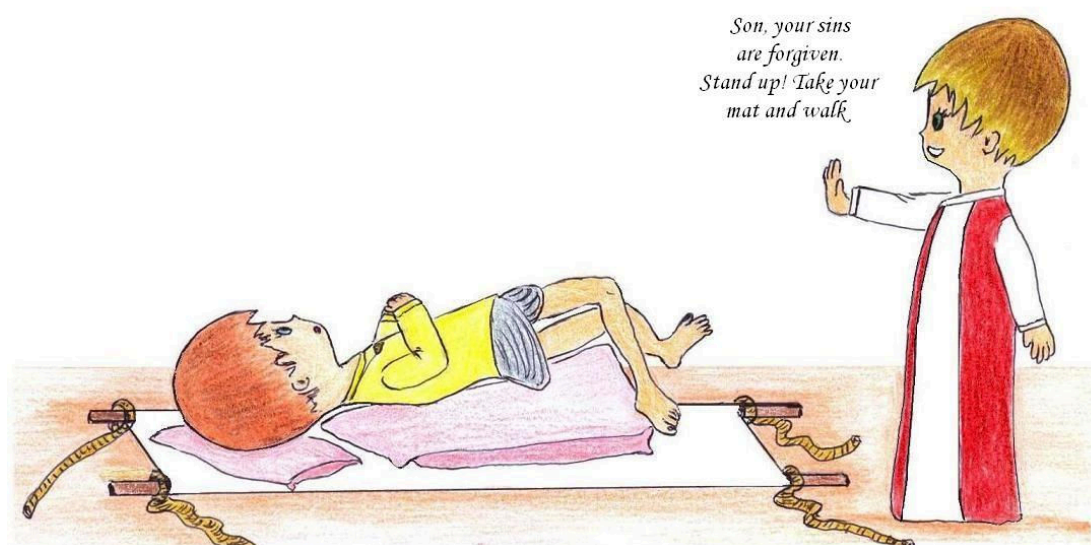
Suddenly, a pale and very thin woman appeared before the Master. It was incredible how such a creature still walked and moved! She still breathed! Her appearance was so fragile that aroused pity. Her flesh had withered long ago, her veins were easily visible under the skin and its color was like straw exposed to the sun for some time. Something else called attention on her: she trembled with fear, as if she had been caught stealing someone very rich.

She prostrated at Jesus' feet until He grabbed her by the shoulders and made her sit on her heels. He looked directly into her eyes and waited until she had the courage to speak. The crowd had moved away and they both were in a small circle, separated from everyone around, as if in an intimate and quiet place where no one else could hear what they said. Jesus had this ability to preserve the individuality of those that He healed, giving them always full attention, isolating them from the others to make them feel important and unique to Him. Then she spoke, at first in a small voice, which went increasing until all who heard her could be sure of the miracle that had been accomplished there,

"Lord, for twelve years I have suffered from a hemorrhage. I suffered a lot in the hands of many doctors, but they could do nothing for me. I spent all the money I had, but nothing worked; on the contrary, I was getting worse every day because they gave me wrong drugs that caused much pain and discomfort; herbs and ointments which brought no good and only made me suffer. Everything the neighbors told me I did, but with no result. I had already given up everything, including living, until I heard about a Rabbi who was doing miraculous healings in our midst. I was right in the middle of the crowd when the Lord came for the last time and sat in your house to teach. I saw when your mother and your brothers outside the house sent for you and you said, *'Who are my mother and my brothers? My family is the ones who do the will of my Father.'*



"I also saw when you healed the paralytic whose friends brought to your presence through the roof. I heard your voice of power restoring the man and when, happily, he went out with the mat in his hand before the crowd, with the smile and the lightness of who was forgiven of a great sin. I tried to get close, but you left because of the uproar of the Pharisees, trying to confront you.



“But here I am because I knew you would come. And I said to myself: ‘If I only touch His garment, I shall be healed.’ It was I who touched you and I’m healthy.”

Now, she didn’t look scared, however, she felt with strength and a determination that she didn’t experience for a long time. And her lips showed the smile of a winner. She overcame many barriers to get there. First, the physical weakness in order to get out of bed where she was almost daily; then, the envious, malicious and distrustful voices of those who did not wish her well-being and tried to make her give up. Moreover, she had to walk to the beach, to face the crowd that seemed an insurmountable barrier to her miracle and, finally, the shame and shyness of touching someone who didn’t even know her and that she did not know how He would react. But now she knew what He was able to do. He had given the life back to her and the joy of living, without having asked her anything nor rebuked her for her boldness; instead, He seemed proud of her. He also knelt beside her on one knee and embraced her with compassion, as if He understood how it had been difficult for her to do what she did. Then she heard His voice,

“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

Everyone looked at her differently, not with contempt, but with respect and admiration for her courage. She, who had always been ignored and insignificant, had become an example of faith and determination. Jesus had honored her before that whole crowd, and she felt the most important person in the world. All her effort had been worthwhile! She was healed and honored.

He was still speaking when some arrived from Jairus’ house saying,

“Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the teacher any longer.”

When Jesus heard it He said,

“Do not fear, only believe, and she will be saved.”

Jairus was pale and motionless at that place. There was no longer need to hurry. However, Jesus pulled him by the sleeve and made him walk. Arriving at his house, one could already hear the screams and the weep of the mourners. Jesus called Peter, James and John, and with a voice of authority and an impatient gesture He sent away those ‘professionals of mourning’, paid to do what they didn’t even care. Why were they mourning the death, when inside the house there was life? Only Jesus, Peter, John, James, Jairus and the girl’s mother entered her room. She was a twelve years old girl,

pale and with an angelic little face. She seemed to be sleeping peacefully. Jesus had said,

“The child is not dead but sleeping.”



He didn't mind with the cynical laughter of the curious who would like to see Him ridiculed. Jesus left their jealousy to themselves; He didn't mind with it. On the contrary, He looked at Jairus and restored his hope and faith.

Before the eyes of anxious parents He said with safe and gentle voice,
“Talitha koum! Little girl, get up!”

Her spirit turned to her, she immediately stood up, and He told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were amazed, but He strictly ordered them that no one should know this. Again, the same warning. But who could stay without knowing if the evidence showed otherwise? The news spread fast. The women who were there already preparing a funeral got out to tell the whole city what had happened. The girl was twelve years of age, however, she looked younger. Her fragile little body nestled now in the arms of Jesus and she kissed His face with joy and gratitude. The mother had left to the kitchen to prepare food for her, and Jairus stood silent near them with his arms raised to heaven in a silent prayer to God for his treasure that had been restored to him. He would never forget that day. The disciples were there in the room telling what they had seen and some of them began to sing praises of joy and celebration. Within minutes, there was a feast in the house. Jesus received the kisses of the girl willingly because He loved children and always took pleasure in their spontaneous joy. He was also grateful to the Father for hearing His prayer and honored His Son before men.

Jairus' wife insisted that we stayed, but Jesus said that He needed to go, for there was too much to be done yet that day; He would come back any other day for a meal.

It was time to go out and Jesus took us to a secluded place; He had something important to tell us. We had already noticed His worried face every time He preached for many hours to the crowds. He stayed silent, as if annoyed by what He saw, perhaps wanting something. Now, sitting in front of us, He said,

“They are like sheep without a shepherd. The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. I give you authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every

sickness. Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near'. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals; for the worker is worthy of his hire. Take the staff and put on your sandals. Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for that town. See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Do not worry about what you will respond; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. In the last times, because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. You will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they rejected me, will reject you too. If they accepted me, they will accept you also. Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

Then Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."

Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age – houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first. You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The Lord had already given us most of those orders before; however, He repeated them again so that they stayed recorded within us. He blessed us, laid hands on us and authorized us to go in pairs while He would preach alone in other cities. John and James invited me and I went with them.

If were not for the safety of Jesus in our hearts we could not get out of there because we were all accustomed to follow Him and see Him perform miracles, but now was different. We were being commissioned by Him to perform in His name the same miracles that He did. His Spirit was within us. His word was alive in our hearts.



We started to walk and let James choose the path. He walked toward the north of Galilee.

“Oh, James, right there? So far away?”

“What is it, John, are you scared now?”

“No, but we must be careful. The Lord directed us to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

“And who says there are not lost Jews here, faithful Jews who still seek for the true worship to the Lord?”

“Hey, look there! People are coming!”

The stranger said, “Shalom!”

“Shalom!”

“Are you followers of the Nazarene?”

“Yes, we are, and who are you?”



“My name is Isaac ben Solomon. I’m grandson of a priest, and it’s been a long time that I would like to know your Master. Many here have traveled to Capernaum and were healed by Him. Come to my house and stay as long as necessary. My friends are eager to hear you. Come, come.”

We headed for the house of Isaac and were greeted by his wife Ruth and their five children: Samuel, David, Rachel, Elisha and Rebecca; beautiful and wonderful children, talkative and receptive. The oldest ones gave us water to refresh ourselves because of the journey, and soon, Ruth brought the meal. But Isaac had another kind of hunger and thirst.

“Who is your Master?”

“He is the Messiah awaited by our people. He is the Son of the living God who came to perform miracles among us and to fulfill the Law of Moses; to show us to have intimacy with God and teach us to call Him Father. Everything that He does, He says it’s the Father who does through Him. He came to show us that the two most important commandments are the love to God and to our neighbor. That’s why He makes so many miracles; because the power of the Father’s love acts through Him.”

“If it’s so, I’ll call the neighbors. They do not hear such good things so long ago. I myself need to ask God’s forgiveness for my sins. My grandfather was a priest. We are from the tribe of Levi, but my fire went cooling and I can no longer fulfill my priestly offices. I feel myself dry, lifeless, and now I live on the fruits of my small harvest of grapes and wheat. Please feed me. Ruth! Call everybody and gather them in the garden. Tell them we have important guests. Call Gimmel too, the deaf boy. Say that today is his day of miracle.”

Ruth went out swiftly, as much as her plump body permitted, and went calling the acquaintances. Within minutes the garden and all rooms of the house were filled. Some were standing behind, also eager and hungry for words of healing. The children also had their friends and quickly the living room and the other rooms of the house were filled with joyful and curious child screams.

James, John and I sat down. We did not know what to say, but as if instantly, the Spirit of God filled us with such fire that words started to come out of our mouth and were addressed to everyone there, especially reaching the hearts and transforming sad and hopeless faces in faces of human beings worthy and respected, capable and ready for life. Some elderly got up like youngsters, leaving the crutches and rehearsing some dance moves. One of them began to prophesy and all the people remembered the days when Saul prophesied in the house of the prophets. The young Gimmel, deaf from birth, burst forth in a big laugh when he discovered what it meant to hear, and his friend Zedekiah who without reason had become mute, saw his tongue become loose and began to talk with his fellow. Many little children crippled from birth began to stretch and thicken their legs and want to jump from the laps of the mothers who, amazed, placed them on the floor. Those who were sad and depressed for a long time found out that there was a reason for living: a man called Jesus. Isaac rejoiced, because he began to feel again in the heart the flame of his calling and the love for God. But now it was different; he would no longer accomplish an empty ritual, meaningless and lifeless. Henceforth, he would be a disciple, a follower of the Nazarene. His wife had just discovered her evangelistic ministry and the neighbors were already planning to found an association of assistance to the needy. Their young children began to draw the picture of Jesus in a scroll and the miracles He did, and said they would take to the synagogue so that the Rabbi could see. The neighbors were also blessed and healed from all diseases. The possessed by demons no longer existed. They did not know how they had been freed. They had not felt anything, they didn’t see the demons leave

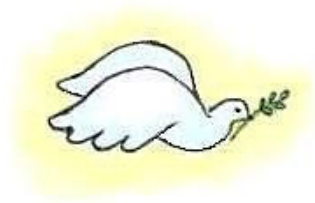
screaming as usual nor they were thrown to the ground. They just felt that the Word came strong as if releasing them from chains and shackles, showing inside them a new light.

Our stay there lasted until the next day, when they prepared a delicious breakfast and blessed us, letting us go away.

We had a lot to say to Jesus and the others.

5th Day

Bethsaida, one night on the boat



We came back at lunchtime and Jesus was already waiting for us, sitting on a stone. We arrived almost together and the joy was evident in our face. We wanted to talk all at once and tell the experiences we had lived. So Jesus quieted us and asked to each pair of disciples to talk and testify, one at a time, so that we could enjoy the teaching and learning that we had.

The phrase was the same in the mouth of all His disciples:

“Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!”

“I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said,

“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it. Come now to a deserted place to rest for a while!”

Peter took the lead and began to prepare the boat. Jesus climbed up and they unfurled the sails of the boat. The men were planning to anchor in a quiet bay, where we could eat something and talk about amenities. Suddenly, Andrew shouted,

“What is that?”

“It’s called crowd, little brother. Oh, Lord, again?!”

“Go there, Simon.”

“But wouldn’t we rest in a deserted place?”

“They are hungry for the Word.”

We turned the helm and anchored near Bethsaida. Bethsaida, in Aramaic, *beth çaydâ*, means: *fishing house*. Another term used is *beth çayyadhâ*, *fishermen’s house*. There was grass in that place and the crowd settled down the best they could; we also, next to Jesus. Then He started talking,

“Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones (He was referring to the children who ran in front of Him); for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven. So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

He had put a little child on His lap and it seemed to delight in the idea. While He spoke, it pulled His beard and tickled His neck with his slender fingers. He also seemed to like what He saw and felt. He felt very comfortable near the children. Where He arrived, they came to meet Him and He spent time with them, blessing them and kissing them. His face showed the joy by the naivety and spontaneity of what He had before Him.

“For the Son of Man came to save what was lost. What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. Just

so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”



He continued, “There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating [*carob pods, which are trees of the legume family, whose fruit is a pod of sweet pulp, commonly used to treat intestinal infections in infants, and whose red and hard wood is used in carpentry*]; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’” So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son’. But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe – the best one – and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate. Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound’. Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is

yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea', and it would obey you.

"Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said,

"Lord, this is a deserted place, and it's already getting late; send the crowds away so they can go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

"You give them something to eat."

"Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?"

"Philip, what do we have with us?"

"We have nothing with us, I think."

"Yes, we do have five loaves and two fish."

"Where did they come from, Andrew?"

"A boy brought to me."



"Peter, John, James, all of you, do all the people sit down in groups on the green grass... 'Abba, Father, I give you this food so that you bless it and show them your power.'"

He started to break the loaves that were in the basket in front of Him, and the disciples began to distribute them. And He divided the two fish among them all. It seemed incredible, but the five thousand men who were there besides the women and children, were eating and being satiated. When they finished, the disciples took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish that were left over. Jesus had already

stood up, and now, walked among the crowd, completing the miracle He had done, touching those who were sick. He healed them all. He turned to Peter and said,

“Get into the boat. I will dismiss the crowd. Then I’ll go up the mount to pray alone. Lead the boat to the other side of the lake.”

“Yes, Master. Come on, brothers!”

We went in the direction of the boat, carrying the baskets, for now it was our turn to eat. Andrew unfurled the sail and other boats did the same. John shouted,

“Simon, wouldn’t we better stay anchored? The wind seems contrary and the sky is getting cloudy.”

“The Master commanded us to go.”

Night was falling and the clouds began to form in the sky. The wind whipped the sails and the strong waves shook the boat. Nevertheless the men rowed hard and we were very far from the land, nearly two and a half miles offshore. Where was Jesus who was not coming? As it seemed, we would spend a night on the boat and with great emotions again. All of us hoped not to repeat the same storm that we faced going to Gadara. It didn’t repeat, but we had lost the track of time because we were concerned about Jesus.

“He knows what He does, we’ll soon have news.”

“Yeah! Maybe He is already waiting for us on the other side.”

“What time is it?”

“I do not know. I just know that we are rowing for a long time and my arms ache.”

“Look, what’s that coming towards us?”

“It looks like a ghost. It’s all brilliant.”

“Be quiet, do not scream.”

“Help!”

“Stop shouting all of you, I told you.”

“So, scream you too, Peter, the fearless.”

“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

“It’s Jesus!”

“Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

“Come!”



So Peter got down out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. It was about the fourth watch of the night, between three and six o'clock in the morning. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out,

“Save me, Lord!”

Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him,

“Man of little faith, why did you doubt?”

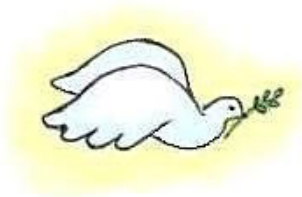
When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

“Master, you are truly the Son of God!”

“Now, my children, rest for a while. We still have a few hours before sunrise.”

6th Day

*Return to Bethsaida, Nain, passage through Galilee and Samaria,
arrival to Transjordan late in the afternoon*



A few hours later the sun came up. The sky was clear again, the sea was calm, the breeze was warm and gentle, and seagulls flew over the boat telling us that we were coming ashore. We had returned to Bethsaida. We anchored on the beach, the men jumped into the water to tie up the vessel and Jesus stretched out His body after the short night of sleep. He smiled at us and said,

“Good morning, my children. How about a delicious grilled fish? You’d better eat because the day can be hard. We will travel on foot for a good piece of the way.”

“Lord, you know that I get nauseous on dry land.”

“Good joke, Simon. I’m glad that you are in a good mood today.”

“Men, to work! Judas Iscariot, leave the bag for a moment and do something useful, like cleaning fish. James the younger will help you. Do not worry, nobody will steal your treasure, actually, the Master’s.”

“I was trained for more scholarly things.”

“I know, ‘Rabbi’, but it’s a command. Come on!”

While the disciples were preparing the meal, Jesus sat down in front of me and looked at me. There was something in my heart those days and He knew how to treat. Then He said,

“Don’t be afraid, only believe, and you’ll see the glory of God. Nothing is impossible for him who believes. You’ll see much more today.”

When we finished eating, we walked toward Bethsaida. When we reached the city, some men brought to Jesus a blind man, begging Him to touch him. He was a thin young man, handsome and of loving temperament. Everyone seemed to be very worried about him.



Then Jesus took him by the hand and, to everyone’s astonishment, He took him out of the village. He seemed to want to be alone with him. We watched Him from a distance. Then the Master did something that shocked many. We, His disciples, we were already accustomed to His ‘creative’ manner to solve things, never repeating Himself in His cures. But that was really different! He spat on His hand and applied saliva to the eyes of the man by laying on of hands.

“Son, can you see anything?”

“I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.”

Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

“Go home, son, but do not go into the village.”

The Lord didn't return to Bethsaida, but called us with a gesture of hand, for He intended to go to Nain. We follow Him; however, it was difficult to hide the curiosity of all.

“Lord, why did you apply saliva to his eyes, why did you lay your hands twice on him and why did you command him not to return to the village?”

“I wanted him to see the power of my word on his vision. The main cause of his blindness was not physical but spiritual. His inner discernment was blunted by bad influences of that place, where the stubbornness and unbelief prevent the eyes and hearts from believing in the Son of Man. The two steps made him recover both the physical and spiritual vision and showed him that often, the healing process is gradual. His vision was distorted by the corrupted sight of the sinners. I restored him my vision, but he must be alone for a while, away from sin, to strengthen and walk again with the Father.”

We walked to the southwest, skirting Capernaum, Magdala and Tiberias, climbing slightly the mountains to the south of Nazareth to a city called Nain. *Na'im*, in Hebrew means ‘pleasant, delightful’, perhaps by the temperate climate of the region. As we approached the city, we noticed that we were not alone anymore; a crowd accompanied us. How long were they following us? We hadn't noticed, but they were there, curious to see what the Lord would perform in that place.

As we approached the gate of the city a widow's only son who had died was being carried outside, followed by many local citizens. Those who stood beside us said,

“Poor woman! He was her only child. He supported her and cared for her. He's always been a good son.”

“He was my friend too. I can not stop crying. Why did he die so young?”

“No one knows, it was sudden.”

“How will she stay now?”

“Who will take care of her? They have no more relatives.”

Seeing her, the Lord had compassion for her and said,

“Do not weep.”

Then He came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And He said,



“Young man, I say to you, rise!”

The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

All were seized with fear, and glorified God, saying,

“A great prophet has risen among us.”

“God has visited His people.”

Someone ran to tell others what had happened. The mother fell at His feet and worshiped Him. The Lord lifted her up and took her in His arms, for she needed to calm down, she didn't stop sobbing. Even the son came down the bier to comfort her. Jesus understood what she felt, but her loss had turned into restitution; her sorrow had turned into joy, her hopelessness, into faith. It was not only with her that things were happening; with us too. Our hearts and our eyes were being opened.

“Go in peace, your faith has saved you!”

We looked at Thomas and started laughing. He was also shocked. He was pale as melted wax and we took a while fanning him to recover his breath. We were all ‘Thomases’ too. Jesus always surprised us. He smiled and said,

“Let's go.”

Matthew objected, “Lord, the party will start; what a pity we can not stay for a quick snack!”

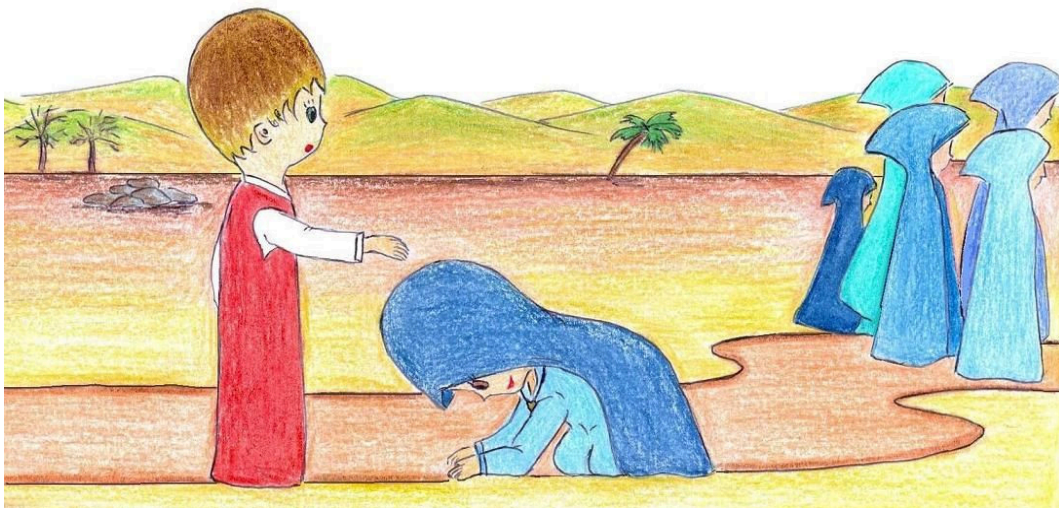
Jesus did not hear the comment, but He already walked away and we had to run to accompany Him.

Leaving Nain we began to go farther south into the region of Samaria. However, near the border in a small village, the Lord stopped. Ten lepers went out to meet Him, staying at a distance, and shouted,

“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

When He saw them, He said to them,

“Go and show yourselves to the priests.”



What a sad figure that of those lepers, always away from social life, carrying the stigma of unclean, expecting to see the body rot gradually and without possibility of cure! Constant isolation and loneliness! Some of them, desperate, longing for the family, waited for night to come and risked to enter the city, evading the vigilance of the sentinels, getting close to the windows of their houses in order to see, even from afar, their loved ones or touch slightly the fingers of the afflicted wife through the window of the bedroom. Now they were in front of Him who could everything and they no longer hid the euphoria and the desire to have an answer from Him. His word was enough for

them. They went out running and were purified. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him. And he was a Samaritan.

"Were not ten who were clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

Jesus has already started to walk again. We followed Him very close. Now we were entering the territory of Samaria. Samaria was the northern kingdom of Israel. Its capital was also called Samaria. It had been built by Omri, the seventh king of Israel after the division of the country into two kingdoms, which happened after the death of Solomon. It was built on a hill seven miles northwest of Shechem and dominated the major trade routes that crossed the plain of Esdrelon. Omri bought the site for two talents of silver (approximately sixty-eight kilograms or 150 pounds), and gave it the name of its former owner, Shemer. The hill was one hundred and nine yards high and it dominated a wide landscape over the plain. It was unassailable, except by the siege. Its Hebrew name, *Shōmrôn*, can be connected with the word that means 'lookout post'. It was dominated by the Syrians, then by the Assyrians, falling into its power in 722 BC, and then by the Babylonians. Its inhabitants were deported, while other exiles from other parts of the Assyrian and Babylonian empire were transferred to there. Those who remained in the city, Jews, remained faithful to YHWH, while other cults were established. After the exile, it was re-colonized by the Greeks in 331 BC and later the Romans took it. It was up to Herod to beautify it and it received the name *Sebaste* – Greek (Latin – *Augusta*) in honor of Emperor Augustus. Some faithful Jews remained worshiping in Jerusalem; the others worshiped on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal near Sychar, southeast of Samaria. Therefore, for many generations there was an antagonism between Jews and Samaritans. The Jews considered the Samaritans as schismatic (dissenters, a group that split from the Jewish community), but not Gentiles (other non-Jewish people), and trusted them, for example, concerning the tithes and the impurities coming from the graves. The main point of contention was the temple on Mount Gerizim.

Along the way we stopped in Sychar. Jesus commanded the disciples to go and buy food, while He would be there waiting, because He was a little tired of walking. Around noon, He sat next to a well near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her,

"Give me a drink."

"How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

"Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"

"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

"Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

"Go, call your husband, and come back."

"I have no husband."

"You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"

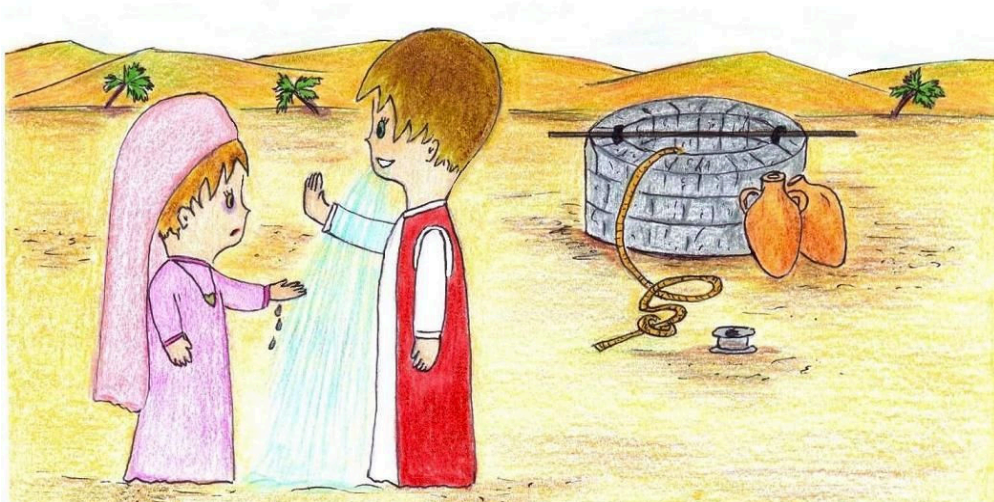
“Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.”

“Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

“I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.”

“I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

What a strange thing was happening there! Jesus, a Jew, alone, talking to a woman, also alone and, moreover, Samaritan. Women used to come together to the well in the cooler hours of the day, i.e., very early in the morning or late in the afternoon. They came always together, but this woman was there alone and at a completely inappropriate hour of the day, which made me think that she was rejected by the other women and even by the local inhabitants. I had stayed some distance from the well, watching, when Jesus addressed her. She didn't have the appearance of a dissolute woman, but a woman devoid of support, insecure, perhaps, who sought help for her loneliness in the wrong places and in the wrong people. It may be that her despair has done her even to prostitute herself not to suffer anymore the discrimination of the widowhood or the lack of a family. She did not say how all started to 'fall down' in her life, but Jesus knew; maybe He has purposely made His disciples to go together to town to buy food, in order to be alone with her and rescue her from that life. His face looked a little sad and denoted the weariness of the sleepless nights, of crying and the hard work. His soul showed her thirst for life, of comprehension and true support that had been denied to her; she seemed to be content with the 'drops of attention' that were given her, sporadically, in the superficial and unsatisfactory relationships she had lived so far. She did not know anything better. But now she was standing before Him who could quench her thirst and transform her 'desert' into a spring of life and joy, removing the shame from her and the words of charges of those who wanted to see her fall again.



She felt Jesus' concern for her and saw that in His eyes there was no prejudice or accusation. His eyes crossed her soul with compassion for her suffering and with a kind of love unlike anything she had ever felt, restoring her interior like one restores a broken jar. Now she had her mind and heart open to see the One who was talking to her. He was her real reason to live and her real object of worship. From that day on, she could rebuild her life with the right partner and have a family again. She knew, at that moment, something more than simply a religious ritual; she knew the true and living God who would occupy definitely her heart and would direct her at all times of her existence, helping her to make the right choices. She was His living witness in that idolatrous and prejudiced city, and from that day on, others would know and serve Him. She could tell everyone how Jesus was able to restore and give back the dignity of someone and remove the lies of someone's heart. She ran back to town to tell others what she had experienced. Yes, He was giving her a time to evangelize all the citizens until He came back there again. She would prepare His way in that village so that other lives could know Him.

When the disciples returned, we continued our walk.

Along the way Jesus was addressed and healed many. He also taught us, as well as those who began to walk together with us. And then a man, an expert in the law, questioned Jesus, in order to put Him to the test,

"Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

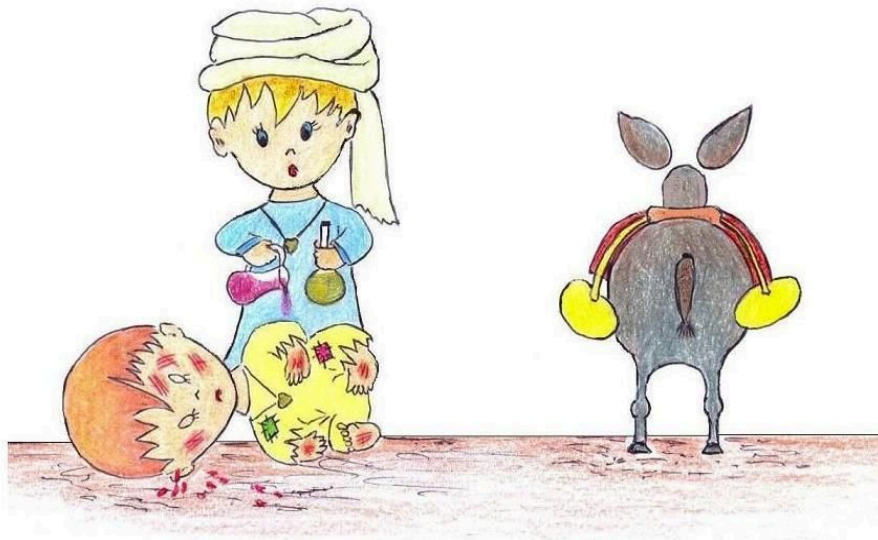
"What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

"You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus,

"And who is my neighbor?"



Jesus told a parable, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him

to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend'. Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

"The one who showed him mercy."

"Go and do likewise."

Many there listened and were healed by those words. Some had never been physical victims in the hands of robbers, but they knew the emotional wounds caused by those who oppressed them and tried to kill them with words of hatred and defeat. Often, we also live the same situation. Jesus was present there and is present now on our side like the Good Samaritan, when many do not want to stretch out their hands in rescue. He pours upon us the fresh oil of the anointing of His Spirit who, as our Counselor, comes to heal the wounds of the soul, and pours His new wine of joy on our distressed heart. His blood cleanses us from our sins and drives out the enemy of our lives.

We looked around us and one of the disciples said,

"It was taking too long! There come the vultures, the Pharisees. They are always snooping."

"There comes another rich boy dressed in silk to speak with the Master."

"Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother.'"

"I have kept all these since my youth."

"There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."

But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich.

Jesus looked at him and said,



"How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Those who heard it said,

"Then who can be saved?"

“What is impossible with men is possible with God. I tell you once more that, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

“Lord, tell us more.”

Jesus said, “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him’. Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out’. But the wise replied, ‘No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves’. And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us’. But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I do not know you’. Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

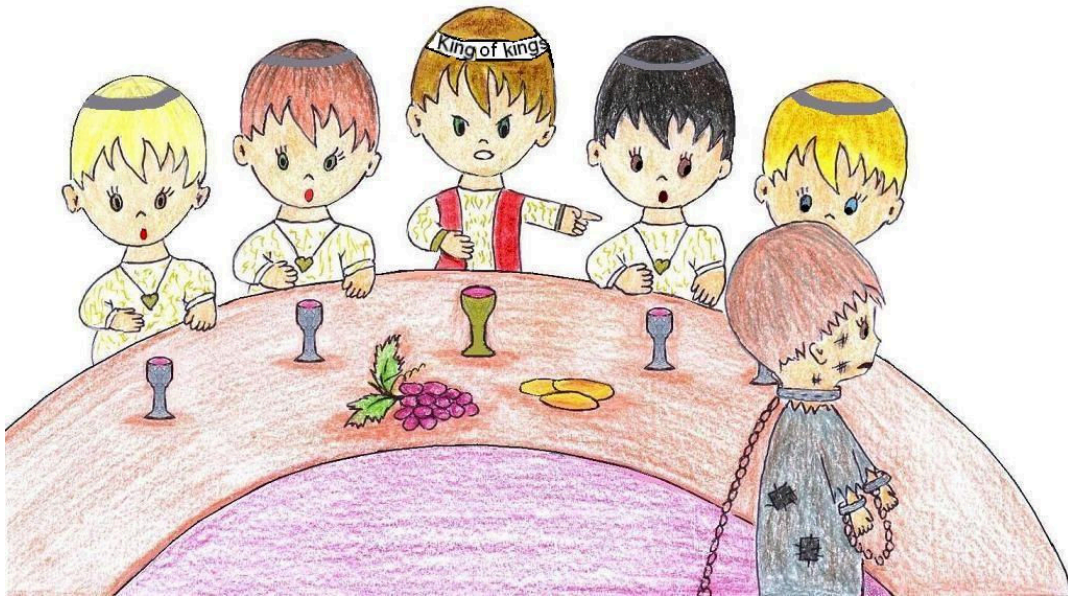
Why was He referring to ten virgins, why the number ten?

Because for the Jews the number ten means the first number of a major beginning, something complete, unity and fidelity; for us, it is the number of the Church. He was warning His Church to watch and not sleep and always remain faithful to God.



“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Beware, for you do not know on what day the Son of Man is coming.”

The Pharisees, hearing all these things, began to argue among themselves about Jesus' words, for it was unacceptable for anyone to sit in the chair next to Abraham and Moses. Jesus seemed to be opening the kingdom of heaven to those who did not have the knowledge they had and, moreover, warned them to watch over and be attentive. He should teach them, instead, the difference between holy and profane things. Jesus, as if perceiving their thoughts, addressed the people another parable.



“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet’. But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet’. Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.’

“No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, ‘The old is good.’”

The old wineskins were the Jewish system, inflexible, unable to receive the new wine of the kingdom of God. He touched again in the ‘wounds’ of the Pharisees. Their cunning and searching eyes sparkled once more with hatred against the truths of Jesus, but who could shut His mouth? The things that most annoyed them were His quiet manner and the sharp words as a sword that came out of His mouth, cutting the hypocrisy and lie. He did not lose by waiting. His day would come, they thought. They preferred to withdraw. All of us breathed more relieved with their absence, because then the conversation left the spicy tone to get again the character of loving teaching that

flowed from Jesus' lips. Children laughed around Him and He smiled back as grateful for that cheerful presence breaking the ice of the hardness of heart of the wise and experts. There, His love could run free.

We had walked a lot and we began to go to the east, toward the Jordan River. There, at that point, before the Jabbok River empties, we would cross their fords. In these shallow points of the river, we could cross it on foot, although in other areas the Romans had built bridges for the crossing. But Jesus was not interested in crossing it by bridges. That was the point that He had chosen. From there, we would go down to the south, to Transjordan. Part of the crowd returned to their homes.

The Jordan was there before our eyes, the river that had been the stage of many victories of the Israelites. The depression of the Jordan is formed as a result of a fissure, and it is the lowest depression of the Earth. Ten miles to the south of the Sea of Galilee it is almost two hundred and thirty yards below the Mediterranean Sea level, and in the far north of the Dead Sea, the bottom of the cleft already lowers even further one hundred and ninety-two yards, making the river reach nearly four hundred and thirty-one yards below the sea level. Jordan River, from the Hebrew, '*Nehar haYarden*', means '*descender*' (*from the verb, 'Yarad', to descend*). Its wellspring is probably in the mountains of Syria and Lebanon where *Mount Hermon* is, with about three thousands and thirty-six yards height, also called *Senir* and *Sirion*. Abundant springs flow from the limestone to feed the upper streams of the Jordan. To the south is the Lake Huleh, where the river is dammed, and then begins to descend to the Dead Sea. Its route is approximately seventy-eight miles from Lake Huleh to the Dead Sea. It is a river full of meanders. As it's going down to the Dead Sea, the plains beside become scarce and turn into arid lands. Below the Jabbok River there are no tributaries streams that flow into the Jordan, and at Jericho the land is practically a desert. The waters of the Jordan become more salty, not propitious to the fish, until reach the Dead Sea where there is no aquatic life. The quality of water in this region makes it inappropriate for the Jewish rites of purification. So it was strange that John the Baptist had performed some baptisms in this region. His baptism had nothing to do with the Jewish rites of purification; it was spiritual, new thing for them.



We reached Transjordan in the late afternoon. We had arrived to a small village and, as it seemed, Jesus intended to stay there. People brought Him some children, to lay His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. However, Jesus said,

“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs. Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

We started hearing some murmur among the disciples. Jesus came and calmed the moods, for it seemed that it would start a discussion. John and James approached Him and wanted to ask Him something. They wanted Him to grant them the right to sit beside Him on His throne of glory. This was the core of the matter that caused discord among the disciples: they were all jealous. What if Jesus said yes? Jesus not only reminded them of the bitter cup that He would have to drink, and they also would do, but warned them that it was not up to Him to grant it. Then He said,

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Some Jews came to Jesus and said,

“We came on the part of His friends Lazarus, Martha and Mary of Bethany. Martha sent us to say to you that Lazarus is sick and she asks your presence immediately.”

“This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

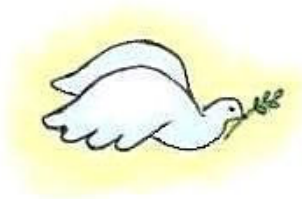
The messengers departed, for they had done their part.



Soon we heard voices and a nice lady came close to Jesus. Her name was Esther. Her husband was Jonathan. She embraced Him and invited Him to stay at her house that night. The house was great and was able to accommodate everybody. In addition, she already had clean clothes and a nice bath prepared for the Master and His disciples. He got up and we followed Him to the rooms of the house. After we take a bath, we participated in the meal. The conversation revolved around trivial things and laughter took charge of the table. It was amazing how the presence of Jesus there made us forget the weariness and the concerns. Then He touched each of us with affection as a father who gives a kiss of good-night in their children and was heading for outside in attitude of meditation. We all knew what He would do: to talk to *Abba Father*.

7th Day

Jericho, Bethany, Jerusalem, return to Bethany



What a beautiful morning! The accommodations that Esther had given us were cozy and we had quickly fallen asleep. From the window of her house we could hear the roar of the waters of the Jordan flowing swiftly in the distance. The birds seemed to be happy that day and busy with their chores. How could we hear the sound of birds in a desert place like that? It was easier to find scorpions, snakes and other crawly and unattractive beings. But there were some trees and Esther and Jonathan, her husband, seemed to love that land and look after it. In fact, it was what Jonathan was doing now: taking care of plants and birds.

Jesus woke up early and had gone out for a walk. He returned with some fruit in His hands and said it was for the breakfast. Applause, applause. As it seemed, He was thoughtful. He had something important to do that day.

We would go to Jerusalem and we had heard that the Jews were plotting to kill Him. That's when Judas Thaddaeus said, "What's on your mind, Master?"

"Exactly what you thought! We'll go to Judea."

Peter said, "Master, not too long ago the Jews were seeking to stone you, and do you go there again?"

"Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him."

"Oh, good! If he sleeps, he will be safe."

"Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

Thomas commented, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

"Thomas, I did not understand. Is this comment a fruit of faith, courage and loyalty or is it an ironic joke?"

"Interpret it as you wish, Philip."

"Stop this discussion."

"Lord, are you going? So soon?"

"Thank you, Esther, but the Father's work needs to be done. My Father is still working, and I also am working."

"Go in peace. Come back when you want, all of you."

Jesus said, "Shalom!"

She said too, "Shalom!"

We followed Jesus on the road to Jericho, for He intended to pass over there.

On the way Jesus looked at us with love and sometimes He smiled, as if preparing us for more surprises, but we noticed His worried face always looking straight ahead as if He was seeing something that required His attention. By entering Jericho, we started to cross the city.

This Jericho was not the same overthrown by Joshua, but built by Herod the Great. It was a rich place, especially for those who collected taxes.

Then something surprised us. Jesus stopped beneath a sycamore tree and looked up, calling,

"Zacchaeus! Hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today."

Who was Zacchaeus? Did Jesus already know him?

Zacchaeus was a tax collector, in fact, the chief of the tax collectors and rich, very rich; in Latin, a *publican*, or in Greek, an *architelōnes*, that is, an employer of men for the collection of all taxes of Jericho. He had collectors under his orders. Matthew had been hired by one of these. Zacchaeus was still young for someone who took on such a position. As it seemed, he wasn't a man more than forty-five years old. His hair had

very few white hairs and his skin still denoted freshness and youth. Often, Zacchaeus even showed a childish look. His stature, perhaps, is that gave this idea. He was very rich, but low in stature. That's why he had climbed the sycamore, not worrying about the ridiculous.



That day, knowing that Jesus was passing by there, Zacchaeus had made a decision: he wanted to see Him. Jesus had become well known. His name was on the lips of the people. The crowd would be there, as usual. How could Zacchaeus see the Master with so insignificant stature? His wife and children were taller than him. This often made him feel 'down', despite all his money. Zacchaeus had no physical illness but his soul was in need of some 'repairs'. His low self-worth was bothering him a little. His lively little eyes, watchful and suspicious, were now fixed on Jesus. How did He know his name if he had never seen him? By the way that Jesus looked at him they seemed to be close friends for a long time. While he thought about all these things, he quickly came down the tree and went to meet the Master. The crowd was amazed and Zacchaeus felt important, really, for the first time in his life.

"It will be an honor, Lord, to have you in my house. Come, bring your friends too."

Zacchaeus could hear the comments of the people while he walked with Jesus on his side,

"Again He'll eat with a sinner."

"Not only sinner, but completely dishonest, thief of the poor, tax collector, shameless!"

His name, *Zacchaeus* comes from the Hebrew and Aramaic *Zakkai*, which means *pure*. It may be a reduced form of *Zechariah* (*The Lord remembers, The Lord remembered*).

By entering his house, we heard him give orders to the servants to serve us a meal. His wife watched from afar the amazing reaction of her husband until he called her,

"Abigail, come and meet the Master."

She looked at Jesus with respect and admiration and also with gratitude for doing a real transformation in the heart of her husband. Her name means '*My father is joy*'. Yes! Jesus was giving her much joy that day. She was a calm and quiet woman, of talking not too much, but of listening and meditating a lot.

Suddenly, Zacchaeus said,

“Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.”

He knew what he was saying, he was aware of the Law of Moses, and this was twice the proportion for the return as to the things stolen. A true inner transformation was taking place that morning in the heart of Zacchaeus. Jesus was the cause of this transformation. The true values entered his heart. Even giving half of his goods, he would be still a rich man and his family would miss nothing. Now, he and his beloved would be participating in an even greater wealth: the eternal life.

That’s why Jesus showed a broad smile and said elated with joy,

“Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

Zacchaeus had not only repented, but he had put into practice his faith and believed in the healing power of the grace coming from Jesus (*Yeshua*, ‘*Salvation*’, meaning *forgiveness, protection, security, prosperity, peace and health*). Zacchaeus was receiving a gift that his money could never buy.

We said goodbye to him and went to Bethany, fifteen furlongs (one furlong corresponds to one Roman stadion, in singular, two hundred and two yards; stadia, in plural) from Jerusalem, that is, almost two miles from Jerusalem. *Bethany* means ‘*house of dates*’ or ‘*home of the afflicted*’. As we approached the city, a short woman, afflicted, came running towards us and threw herself at Jesus’ feet, weeping.

“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.”

“Martha, your brother will rise again.”

“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”

“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

Martha did not cry now. She had been in ‘shock’ for four days, barely realizing her condition and appearance, grieved by the death of her brother and perhaps disappointed by the absence of Jesus. How could a friend of the family abandon her in this moment? Her face was showing the weariness of sleepless nights, her clothes showed the sign of ashes that had been spread from the head to feet; and we could notice that in some points of her robes the fabric has been torn, showing the marks of her sorrow.

She was running now to her home to call her sister Mary who was supported and comforted by friends and neighbors.

She also came and fell at Jesus’ feet.

“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

That thing moved the heart of Jesus: the weep, the despair, the loss of who was his friend and who often ate with Him and welcomed Him in his home at the times when He searched for a place of refuge and rest from His wanderings and His great responsibilities. Jesus wept. Maybe Jesus was feeling not only the weight of death there, but also the weight of the unbelieving and envious looks of those who were always ready to incriminate Him or hurt Him with their irreverence toward God. Then, Jesus came to the tomb. Lazarus had been buried in a cave and a stone was lying against the entrance. Jesus still wept. Martha said to Him,

“Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.”

Jesus did not seem to hear her. He simply said,

“Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”

Jesus told the men,

“Take away the stone.”

And Jesus looked upward and said [in a low voice],

“Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.”

Then he cried with a loud voice,

“Lazarus, come out!”



The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. It was hard to believe how he had come to the opening of the cave the way he was, but the fact is that he was standing there, alive.

Jesus said to them,

“Unbind him, and let him go.”

While everyone ran toward Lazarus and some helped the most sensitive who almost fainted at the sight of the miracle, Jesus passed stealthily through the stones, making us sign to follow Him without delay. He had already seen the spies of the Pharisees nearby, ready to go around telling the news. Jesus could already see the malice of their hearts wanting to kill Lazarus who had just been risen only to put the Master in disbelief before the people.

The disciples were stunned. Thomas smiled as if saying, “Did I not tell you that He would succeed in this story?”

Jesus walked quickly to Jerusalem, to the temple.

Now, His countenance was not too sweet nor mourned the death of His friend, but His mouth twitched, and wrinkles of irritation began to form in His forehead. His muscles seemed stiff and ready for any fight and no one dared to tell Him anything. We were silent and worried. The only one who seemed more at ease and rejoicing was Judas Iscariot. Would the Messiah be showing His true identity, after all?

In the temple He found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, He drove all of them out of the

temple, as well the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves,

“Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace! My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations. But you have made it a den of robbers.”



He was angry. The Spirit of the Lord within Him gave Him an authority and a force that not even ten Roman soldiers could stop Him now. In fact, nobody seemed to have the intention to do so. They were all motionless, watching. The only ones who were not motionless were the small animals that tried to escape that mess as soon as possible. Mooing, bleating and cooing of doves, feathers and hairs everywhere! Someone else was moving: the money changers and the sellers of animals, who were still trying with effort to save some of them. Others, cursing, went after the coins of silver, gold and bronze that rolled on the floor, while the poorest people gave thanks to God for this ‘offering’ for their pantries. They tried desperately to get some small change. The others: Levites, gatekeepers, soldiers and priests of the temple were musing with themselves the reason for so much anger. Everyone knew that the worshipers should present a sacrifice considered without blemish by the priest. They knew that those who went there should pay the tax *per capita*, using the currency of the temple (the shekel of the sanctuary), for the priests refused to accept foreign currency (Roman and Greek). Their money-changers were there to exchange money. They just could not acknowledge that they did this for exorbitant rates and that they rejected any animal that was not bought in the temple by these inflated prices. It was a great hypocrisy disguised as appropriate worship to God. That’s why Jesus was angry. The holy and the profane walked there together in the House of His Father. This bothered Him too much: the lack of reverence to God, exploitation, theft, hypocrisy, falsehood, injustice and sin. He seemed to give vent to His wrath and none dared to stop Him. But He stopped. That’s when the Jews of the Sanhedrin came and asked Him,

“What sign can you show us for doing this?”

Jesus was a really cocky in their sight. He was Rabbi, but He didn’t have His exercise in Jerusalem. He was itinerant. He didn’t attend the solemn assemblies of the Jewish leaders; He did not participate in the religious discussions or in the judgments of the people by the laws of Moses as they did periodically. He had no permission from the

high priest to do anything there. So why did He do that? Was it daring, inconsequence or folly? That's when He answered,

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

“This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?”

But he was speaking of the temple of his body. The Jews was referring to the temple reformed by Herod the Great, in the likeness of the temple of Solomon. The disciples later would remember this episode and would believe in the word of Jesus. But at that moment they were silent and astounded, afraid of retaliation by the Jewish and Roman authorities, for they looked to the priests, soldiers and the people and perceived many contrary feelings on their faces. They were already used to the outbursts of ‘holy wrath’ of the Master when He faced the idolatry, legalism, hypocrisy and religiosity of the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes; however, that attitude made them frightened. All of us, disheartened and worried, looked at what was left around us. Who would clean up that mess? It was not our problem. It was up to them to clean up everything. Judas Iscariot was looking in another direction, to the ground. Was he still looking for some coins that fell or felt frustrated by the Master having not yet shown His strength as the Messiah?

Jesus had calmed down and was no longer there. He walked a little further, still in the outer court where the people looked at Him, hungry for the Word. His gaze was now tender and compassionate. He wanted to teach. His voice remained firm, maintaining the authority had been given to Him by the Father,

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

Jesus spoke of deep things there, but they did not understand. The sheepfold of the sheep was the world; the thief and bandit was the devil, who had no legal position in the world. He, Jesus, had become a man, born in the same way that everyone on earth to show His legal position and authority. He compared Himself to a shepherd, a figure of fidelity, compassion, guidance and protection, prophetic image of the Messiah who would come to shepherd the people of Israel. He was coming to separate the sheep that were His, because the gatekeeper, the Father, would open His kingdom before them so that Jesus could lead them. Those who were His would hear His call and would follow Him.

“I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away – and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.”

Here He no longer spoke that the door was the life on earth, but He Himself: the way, the truth and the life. He reminded His people of those who came before Him; false prophets, that with false teachings caused the flock to stray, mercenaries who could not defend His sheep from the clutches of the devil. He spoke that He was there to

give His life for them so that they could live eternally with Him. He spoke that His kingdom was spiritual.



“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

He spoke of the Gentiles, but they did not understand. The Jews talk to each other if He was possessed by demons or tried to open the eyes of the blind to the spiritual truths. Others were starting to notice something else in those words; would He have suggested, perhaps, that He was the Son of God? What intimacy was this when He spoke of God?

He began to teach them other parables, however, He made it clear that it was about Israel and what the Jewish leadership had done to the prophets sent by God to speak to them of salvation, beyond what they were doing and would do as well with the very Son of God present there. This made them furious, for it made clear the intention of their hearts. At that very hour, the scribes and chief priests sought to kill Him, however, they feared the people. Then they sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap Him by what He said, so as to hand Him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor.

They came and asked Him,

“Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach, and you show deference to no one, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?”

But He perceived their craftiness and said to them,

“Show me a denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear?”

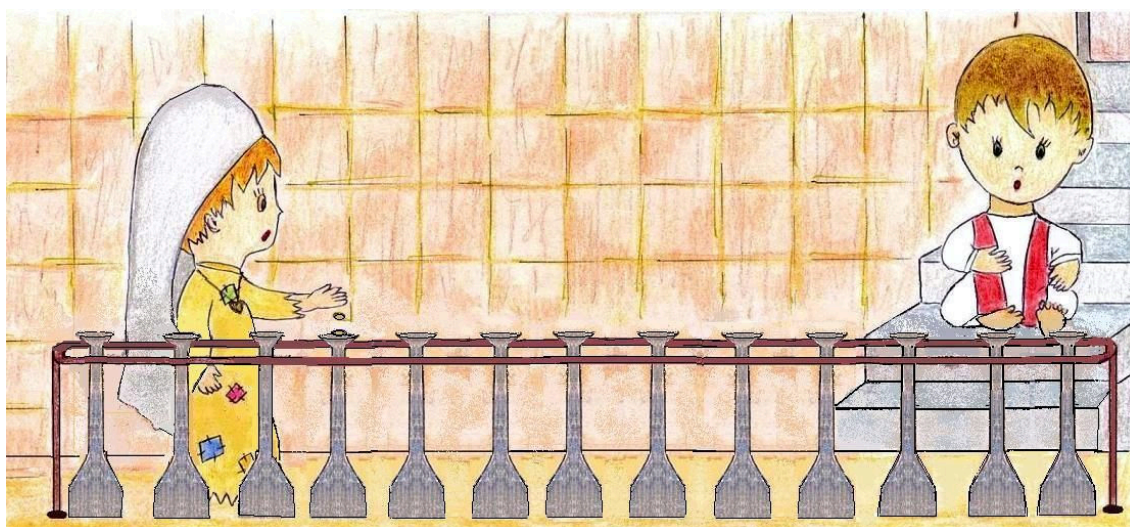
“Caesar’s.”

“Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

They became silent because they could not give Him answer. This Pharisees got even more furious because they couldn’t accuse Him of anything.

Jesus started walking and stood at the court of women in the outer court of the temple, where there was the temple treasury, the boxes for offerings. This one consisted of thirteen offering boxes in the shape of a trumpet, two of them for the temple taxes and eleven for the voluntary offerings. The trumpet was of hammered silver. For Jews, the trumpet was a symbol of convocation. The word used for hammered silver trumpet is *h^açõçerâ*, the same word used in *Numbers 10: 10-10*, when God commanded Moses to use this instrument to summon the people and decamp. Other times, in the Old Testament, it was used the ram's horn trumpet (*shophar*), which urged the people to repent from their wicked ways and turned to the Lord. The word *shophar* comes from the Hebrew root sh-f-r (שפר), meaning 'improve, reform, recover.' There, in front of the temple treasury, Jesus watched people give their offerings and pay the temple tax. He saw the rich men casting their offerings in it. Suddenly, a poor widow came. His garments denoted both her widowhood and her poverty. In a trumpet of voluntary offerings, she put two small copper coins. She did not realize she was being observed, but Jesus knowledgeable of the hearts, said to His disciples,

“Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”



Jesus always made a point of stressing this subject: to give everything, to give the best to God. He came to this, to give His own life. Avarice was a customary subject in His sermons, especially when it came to the Pharisees and scribes, besides the tax collectors, for He knew the weakness of His people very well. He always had to keep reminding them not to serve two masters. He was not against money, but against the love and the idolatry towards it, because He knew how much this could hold a man in spiritual bondage and prevent him from assimilating the eternal truths. More than anyone, He knew the human needs such as to dress, to pay taxes, to eat and live a life worthy of a human being created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, He taught too much about to sow, give and supply the needs of each other.

Since the issue was money, Jesus proposed a parable,

“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents

went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents'. His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master'. Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you? That I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"



There was silence, not only by the meditation that was in every heart, but also by the weight of the teaching, which affected both the Pharisees and the greedy and us, His disciples. In the Old Testament, the talent had been a measure of weight equivalent to about thirty-four kilograms, but after the government of Darius I, the Persian, the talent, as well as other measures, has become a currency and its value corresponded to six thousand times the value of the denarius. The denarius was equivalent to the wage for a day's work, in our money, ten dollars. Thus, a talent would correspond, at that time, to

sixty thousand dollars. Jesus wanted to show with the exaggeration of this explanation that God is not miserable and that He can put in our hands both richness and abundance of gifts according to the capacity of each one. The parable showed not only that He would be able to put in someone's hands the sum of three hundred thousand dollars, but the infinity of gifts and talents to be used in favor of His kingdom for the sake of our neighbor. When He used the word '*few*', He was referring to the natural, the material, the life on earth. When He used the word '*many*', He was referring to the spiritual, the eternal life. If we fail to manage the material things from the perspective of God, how will He give us spiritual things and tell us His secrets? If we don't keep the spiritual treasures, we can not enjoy His eternal company. Another comment still passed through the minds of the listeners: Why give the talent that was not negotiated to the one who already had ten? Jesus had said why, "*For to those who have (treasures in heaven, gained through the understanding of the revealed word; in other words, a life with God, learning and growing with Him), more will be given, and they will have in abundance; but from those who have nothing (treasures in heaven, that is, a life on the altar with God, they will lose even the little interest that they have in God), even what they have will be taken away*", for he has no credit with God, but a huge debt; also because he knew how to negotiate.

The people began to disperse and returned downcast and thoughtful to their homes, just like the Pharisees, scribes and priests, who had nothing to say to Jesus after all they had heard.

We started walking and Jesus watched us. He had seen our reaction in face of everything we were witnessing that day since we left Jericho. We sat near the Sheep Gate, next to the temple and someone decided to 'break the ice' by saying,

"Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!"

But Jesus said to him,

"Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

It was a prophetic word, for He was referring to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD.

We looked at each other and we all felt uncomfortable. We looked, especially, at who had made the comment; he gave a clumsy smile and shrugged as if saying, "*I did the best I could, I tried.*" Who could imagine that the humor of Jesus would be so 'corrosive' there in Jerusalem that afternoon! He had left so happy and cheerful from the home of Esther and Jonathan...

"I knew it, Lord. Whenever you meet Pharisees and arrogant people along the way you stay in this state of bad humor. Forgive me, Master, but I have to say."

"Peter, shut up, don't you realize that the Master had a busy day?"

"I'm very sorry, Andrew, but will we sit here in this heat, hungry and thirsty, and mourning like a weaned lamb?"

"Mind your manners!"

"I agree. We need to eat."

"Matthew, do you only think about eating? Who fought was Jesus and you are starving to death?"

"Shhh! Be quiet, Jamie! You're still a kid; you do not know anything about nutrition."

Jesus went out of His silence, raised His head, which He had put over His knees, oblivious to the comments of men, and gave a hearty laugh. Now it was He who broke the ice,

“Judas Iscariot, is there any money left in the purse; or rather, did you manage to increase our funds with the defeat of the money changers?”

“Hah, hah, hah!” (General laughter).

How could He, the Lord, trust the office of treasurer to a guy like that and still make jokes, knowing everything that was happening?

“What do you want of me, Lord?”

“Take another of the brothers and buy figs, grapes, bread and fish to eat. Do not forget to fill the wineskins with water passing by the well.”

“Right now, Master, I go with him.”

“Bye, my children.”

“Jesus!”

“What is it, John?”

“Why don’t you embrace us just a little, and smile at us, only to show you are in a good mood again?”

“Are you surprised at the harshness of the words and strong reactions? Fear not, they are not for you. I came to show men the way, the truth and the life; but many have a hardened heart and the words have to be hard, as were the words of the prophets in the past. God loves His children and is always available to show His love for them, but He doesn’t delight in sin or in the lack of fear of Him, so, often He uses of discipline like a conscious father to put the child in the right way. The difference is that in the Father there is no hatred or pleasure in the punishment; the judgment is tempered with mercy, for He searches the minds and hearts of men and knows what each one can bear. Do not be afraid to hear His voice, and know that if you sin He will be ready to listen to you and forgive you, before using punishment. It is used for those who do not repent of their error. Everything will be forgiven to men, but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, therefore, do not let your hearts and thoughts be troubled. The Father knows who are His. For what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God. Come here, children, let me embrace you. So you’ll know that you please the Father, not because you are perfect, for only one is perfect, God, but because you are loved children and chosen to know His secrets.”

Everything returned to normal. We were on our warm fellowship with Him.

“I want this hug too! Just because I went out to buy food, do you take advantage?”

“Come, Simon the Zealot, the Master still have a hug for you.”

“Go there, Judas Iscariot, you also need it, do not be ashamed.”

“Lord, where will we spend the night?”

“Let’s go back to Bethany. I want to see how Lazarus is going.”

“Alive, for sure!”

“Hah, hah, hah.”

We returned slowly along the path that leads to Bethany and arrived to the house of Lazarus.

“Master, how nice that you arrived! You need a bath and clean clothes.”

“Thank you, Martha! You are always concerned about everything, aren’t you?”

“This night we’ll dine at the home of our kin Simon the leper, and the Master is invited to go with His disciples.”

“That’s why I see Lazarus here so well-groomed!”

“Well-groomed, perfumed and alive, thanks to you, dear friend.”

“Where is Mary?”

“She is out. She did not say where she was going, but said she would meet us there.”

Simon the leper was a Pharisee. He had spoken to Martha that he made a point to have Jesus in his house that night.

We were thinking: how a leper, who by the Law should be out of social life, could be not only at home with friends and also invite Jesus to dinner?

However, we must understand that in those times, other skin diseases were encompassed by the name of leprosy. Simon, in this case, should have a non-contagious skin disease.

Jesus went into the Pharisee's house and took His place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that He was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar with oil of pure nard. She stood behind him at His feet, weeping, and began to bathe His feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing His feet and anointing them with the ointment. The woman was Mary, Lazarus' sister. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw it, he said to himself, *"If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is— that she is a sinner."* Jesus spoke up and said to him,



"Simon, I have something to say to you."

"Teacher, speak."

"A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?"

"I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt."

"You have judged rightly."

Then turning toward the woman, He said to Simon,

"Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little."

Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Judas Iscariot said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?”

He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.

“Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”

Jesus had already spoken to the disciples on the preceding days about His death, and now spoke again.

While the Pharisees discussed about the authority of Jesus to forgive sins, the disciples tried to talk with Judas not to open his mouth anymore, not to make any more *gaffe*. Furthermore, what did he have to do with the price of the ointment if it was not he who had bought it?

Martha looked at Lazarus trying to understand what was going on in the mind of Mary to do that. Hadn't she listened to the teachings of the Master in their house so many times? Why now, did she come to expose herself before all those people like a 'no one', besides to expose Jesus to shame?

Oblivious to all comments and all eyes, for all the comments and all eyes were now also oblivious to them, Mary and Jesus were talking in silence, in spirit, like those pleasant and silent conversations that we, His disciples, already had with the Master. Maybe, she didn't know exactly why she anointed Him (perhaps she felt moved by God to do so), but Jesus knew and thanked her for it. Mary, in turn, had gone there with something more particular in the heart and left that place finally washed from everything that made her feel unclean. Perhaps the coexistence that she previously had in her own home with Jesus was transforming and preparing her for that decisive moment of healing that she needed and waited so much. Who knew what was going on inside her? Only she! She could see something inside her that needed the touch and the Lord's forgiveness, so the tears; bitter tears of repentance and tears of relief by healing and cleansing, by the joy of forgiveness and restoration. He understood her. Now she could walk before everyone with her head held high, no longer hearing the 'spicy' comments from hypocrite people who prefer to see their own impurity in the others, but have no courage to recognize it within themselves. She was a winner, a courageous person, a woman purified and at peace with herself, with God and with others. The compassionate and comforting look of Jesus was a true embrace. She left quietly the house of Simon, while the conversation remained heated. She needed to be alone.

Jesus stood up and was prepared to leave. He said nothing. We followed Him. No one noticed, not even Simon; perhaps, only his servants, when doing the cleaning after the departure of the guests. Jesus folded His napkin, as a sign of displeasure by the reception He received and left it by the side of the dish. It was the custom among the Jews, when invited to a meal at someone's house, to leave the napkin crumpled next to the dish as a sign that they had enjoyed the hospitality, but they folded it as if to say that they did not like and would not return there. It was also customary to wash the feet of the guests, to anoint their head with oil and kiss their cheeks. Simon had not done anything of this, in addition that the conversation ceased to be interesting when it passed from the tone of social courtesy to criticism and accusation. It was not part of the favorite meals of Jesus.

At night while we walked to the house of Lazarus, a Pharisee named Nicodemus came, hidden from the others, and asked Jesus,

“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.”

“Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

“How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”

“Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above’. The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

“How can these things be?”

“Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?”

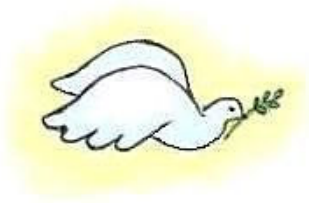
Yes! Jesus spoke many other things after this, about His mission on earth, but did not give a specific answer to the question of Nicodemus. He could not understand that ‘being born of the Spirit’ meant to let the Holy Spirit in action of rescue come upon him, and ‘being born of the water’ meant his true conversion and the baptism of repentance of sins and a new birth. It didn’t matter his age, what mattered was his inner disposition to change his life and his way of thinking, letting a new Spirit enter into action in his heart.



Jesus left him thoughtful and we continued walking.
We spent the night in the house of Lazarus.
In the morning, we would come back to Jerusalem.

8th Day

Jerusalem



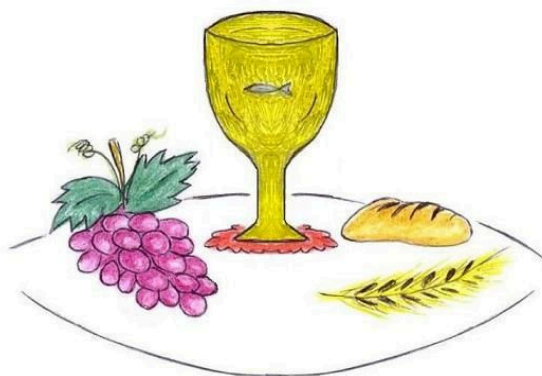
Jesus woke up that morning and left early. Martha said that He had gone to the Mount of Olives, because He needed to pray. How strange! Judas had gone out too hastily, as one who had to do something very important, but she did not know what. It was the feast of the unleavened bread.

Peter and the others, waking up and hearing the news, went in search of the Lord. He was on the Mount of Olives, leaving for Jerusalem. What was there of so important in His heart that disturbed Him? We know today what would happen to Jesus on that Thursday, but the disciples did not know. They knew that it was the 1st Day of Passover, the 14th day of the 1st month, and it was the day to sacrifice and eat the lamb and bitter herbs, reminding the departure from Egypt. What they didn't understand is that it was the last supper that Jesus would pass with them, for they had not yet understood the prophecies of the Master about His death.

The Lord called Peter and John and gave them the necessary orders to prepare Passover. He was now at the south of Jerusalem, and after the disciples went away, Jesus entered a place where He used to stay when He passed a few days in Jerusalem. That seemed to be a day of silence for all. Jesus entered the room, picked up the rolls of the Scriptures and began to read. He also began to sing some psalms of comfort and pray to the Father. He seemed to intercede for all His beloved followers; however, nothing seemed to have an effective consolation on Him that moment. His soul was distressed and afflicted, for He knew what He would suffer and had understanding of what would happen with all those He loved. He had interceded strongly for Peter, also for Judas; He knew what he had done that morning: he had agreed to betray the Master. The priests and rulers of the Sanhedrin gave him thirty pieces of silver in exchange for his information.

When the hour of the Last Supper came, they went to the upper room and Jesus sat at the table, and the apostles with Him.

Then the Lord said,



“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

Then He took a loaf of bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

And He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!"

They began to ask who it was and John reclined next to Jesus. He could hear Him when He said, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me."

That's when Judas Iscariot dipped his bread in the same bowl that Jesus placed His. Then Jesus said to him, "Do quickly what you are going to do."

Hearing this, Judas went out, but the others did not understand what had happened.

Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

And he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!"

But Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me."

Getting up from the table, took off His outer robe, and tied a towel around Himself. Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around Him.

By coming to Simon Peter, this one said to Him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

"You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"You will never wash my feet."

"Unless I wash you, you have no share with me."

Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

"One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you."

He was referring to Judas.

"You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. I have set you the example so that you also should do as I have done to you."

He went on saying,

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he

will be in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them. We will come to them and make our home with them. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You do not belong to the world, I have chosen you out of the world; therefore, the world hates you. But if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. The Counselor, whom the Father will send in my name, will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment. The ruler of this world has already been condemned."

This supper took place two thousand years ago with the apostles, preparing them for the death and the sacrifice of Jesus. We could not be there physically, but today, through our faith and His cleansing blood, we can stand before the Lord and enjoy His teachings and His life. Looking at each of the disciples who were there, we notice similarities with us. If you remember the description of the personality of each one that was made in the beginning of the book, you can fit yourself into any of them and understand why one betrayed Him, another denied Him, still other did not believe, though having walked with Him for three years; why another felt insecure and wanted to stay as close as possible to Him; why the other did not understand the reason of being chosen and needed revelation of who his teacher was, and so on, and everyone not understanding why the Lord had chosen them and which work He had for them. They did not know what would be of their lives after the death of Jesus.

Now, let the Holy Spirit lead you to an upper room inside your heart, where Jesus is waiting for you to tell you things that He always wanted to tell you, but you were afraid to hear because you didn't know Him well. Perhaps you have the strange feeling of having denied Him several times through your words and attitudes; perhaps, you have even given up follow Him because the fight was very difficult. Maybe, you need a release in any area of your life, or you simply need to feel deeply His comfort to never be afraid to hear His voice and never doubt His protection and His love. You may need many things, but calm down, do not be afraid to see Him, feel Him, touch Him and be touched by Him, to hear Him and ask Him for everything that you would like most. Do not be afraid to tell Him that you have sinned, for He will not kill you or punish you. On the contrary, He will cleanse your heart from all the pain, anguish and suffering and from the altars that were not erected to Him. In the place of all this, He will place His holy and powerful presence so that you no longer experience the fear or destruction. He's looking at you with love, knowing everything about you like an open book, protecting you from evil and stretching His hand of power and healing. Eat the bread and drink the wine that He offers to you in a private meal, of which only you two take

part. He calls you to be a disciple. Enjoy Him, hear Him, receive His security, embrace Him and receive His embrace. Ask Him that the path to this upper room can always be free so that when you need, the Holy Spirit can take you there, where there is peace, and where no one else has the right to enter, only you two.

Ask the Spirit of God to bring you back to the present moment and keep this experience in your heart. Take note, if necessary, of everything you lived so that you can never forget. Have within you the assurance that He knows how to talk to you and you will hear Him all the days of your life.

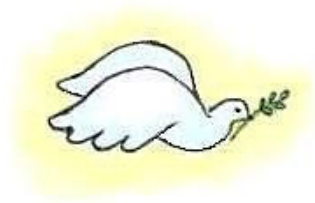
Now it's time to sleep.

There is yet another chapter where the Spirit will lead us to perform His work.

Good night.

9th Day

Galilee



The Lord had sent a word through His angel that He would meet His disciples in Galilee. So we headed for there. Everyone was very happy that morning. They remembered Judas Iscariot, but he had chosen his path. As for us, we were happy with the resurrection of Jesus, and even Thomas, after having touched the wounds of the Master, was euphoric and confident. It was good to get back to Galilee. The temperate climate was nice, better than the scorching heat of Judea. The plantations were lush, and the mountains around the plain of Esdrelon showed the greenish tones of the vegetation. We started to go to east, to the sea. Peter and the other fishermen broadened their nostrils a little, searching for the familiar smell of the sea air. It was a nice smell to them. Despite having seen Jesus and spoken to Him, Peter still showed sadness on his face. He spoke little. He seemed to want to be alone with his own thoughts.

The day passed quickly and soon sunset came.

Simon Peter stood up and said, "I'll go fishing."

Others also accepted the proposal, even without being invited directly. They were: Thomas, Nathanael, James and John (the sons of Zebedee). The other two came running: Andrew and Philip. How could one leave his brother going alone and the other one leave his best friend?

"Would you like to go along, little sister?"

"Of course, I don't get sick on the boat anymore."

We jumped into the boat and we were there all night, trying to catch something. That situation to cast the net and see them come back empty bothered us.

Just after daybreak, a man on the beach shouted,

"Children, you have no fish, have you?"

"No, we got nothing so far."

"Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."

The net was cast into the sea and started to get heavy with so many fish that jumped into it. At that time, John remembered that he had lived something like this, when he was called to be disciple. Yes, the man on the beach was Jesus! Who else could give orders like that?"

"Peter, it is the Lord!"

As soon as he heard the warning, Simon jumped into the water, putting his cloak over him, while the other disciples who had stayed on the boat tried to bring it to the beach.

When we put our feet on the sand, we saw that there were fish being roasted on the fire, besides fresh loaves of barley. It was useless to ask how Jesus had gotten that. He could simply have turned stones into bread, and scorpions into fish, or make them jump out of the water directly to the hot coals, just with one word. What matters? We were there and embraced Him, one by one, happy with His presence. He looked physically different now. Of course! We were seeing His glorified body, changed, brighter than ever, more powerful and strong.

After they had eaten He turned to Peter (Yeah, Peter, now your healing is going to start, oh glory!):

"Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

"Feed my lambs... Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord; you know that I love you."

"Tend my sheep... Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

"Feed my sheep."

Then the Lord said, "Follow me."



Pedro could not help himself and cried. He knew why the Lord asked him three times about his love. Didn't he deny Him three times? But at this moment, everything was being restored. The Master's hands were shaping his heart again, turning it into a new heart. The Lord was giving him a ministry as shepherd of His sheep. Peter remembered what Master had told him,

"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

What he was hearing was a confirmation of the calling. More than that, he was receiving enablement, a new strength, the strength of God's love to carry out the job.

His heart was light, for he knew the love and forgiveness of Jesus.

Jesus said more,

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover. So stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom I, the Lord our God, call to me. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."



Attention, passengers bound for the twenty-first century! Fasten your seatbelts and turn off any and all electronic device. Within seconds, we will be landing. We hope you have enjoyed the trip. The crew (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) thank all of you. We, from the Airline "The Wings of the Spirit", are always at your disposal for new and magnificent trips. May the love of the Father, the consolations of the Holy Spirit and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always. Amen.

Episodes narrated in the book:

- *Jesus anointed by a sinful woman*
- *Jesus calms a storm*
- *Jesus clears the temple*
- *Jesus' family*
- *Jesus rebukes the Pharisees*
- *Jesus receives the children*
- *Jesus sends out the twelve*
- *Jesus teaches Nicodemus*
- *Jesus the Good Shepherd*
- *Jesus walks on the waters*
- *Peter is restored by Jesus*
- *The bent woman*
- *The choice of the apostles*
- *The Great Commission (order to evangelism)*
- *The healing of a blind man at Bethsaida*
- *The healing of a paralytic at Capernaum*
- *The healing of Peter's mother-in-law*
- *The healing of the Gadarene*
- *The Last Supper*
- *The man with withered hand*
- *The multiplication of loaves and fish*
- *The parable of the Good Samaritan*
- *The parable of the lost son*
- *The parable of the sower*
- *The parable of the talents*
- *The parable of the ten virgins*
- *The parable of the wedding*
- *The poor widow's offering*
- *The resurrection of Jairus' daughter*
- *The resurrection of Lazarus*
- *The resurrection of the widow's son at Nain*
- *The rich young man*
- *The Samaritan woman*
- *The Sermon on the Mount*
- *The synagogue at Capernaum*
- *The ten lepers*
- *The wedding at Cana in Galilee*
- *The woman with flow of blood*
- *Zacchaeus, the tax collector*