

I am going to tell you a story today that most of you have never heard. O, it's been read here many times, but as it was in that Inn in Bethlehem so long ago, in our hearts for this story there is no room. This story is like those stories in my life that I never tell, Days of shame. Nights of sin and doubt. But God wanted this story told, just as he wants all of my story and your story to come to the light of day.

St. Luke and St. Matthew God appointed to tell the story of Bethlehem, of the girl Mary who believed. She was chosen by God to give birth to his Son. Always her quiet faithfulness has been inspiration, her love for God and for Jesus a model for all women.

St. John was privileged to tell another story, this time the scene was Golgotha, Our Lord, dying, spoke to his the disciple whom he loved and to Mary: Woman, behold your son, Behold your mother. He who was bearing the sin of the whole world, and all time, had on his heart the welfare of the woman who had nursed him, and raised him. Loved him with a mother's love.

But St. Mark was given quite a different story to tell. ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ Then Jesus went home, and the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for people were saying, "He is beside himself." And his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting ~~xxxxxxx~~ about him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you." And Jesus replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" and Looking around on those who sat about him he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

~~Here is the Mary of Bethlehem, who saw shepherds and wisemen, and pondered all that had happened in her heart. Here is the Mary who would be at Golgotha, faithfully watching, yet her heart breaking for her suffering son. Here was this same Mary~~ ^{was} ~~ashamed of Jesus. Or at least ashamed for him. People were talking about Jesus, He is beside himself, mad, insane. The scribes, those~~

who should know best about religious matters were saying, "He is possessed by Bēēlzebul and by the prince of demons he casts out demons."

Mary came with Jesus brothers to seize him. His own mother lost faith in him. His own brothers gave up believing in him. So what did Jesus do? Throw up his hands and say all is lost? No. ~~Maxdidwhatxhadxhasxalwaysxdone~~ He said, "Here are my ^{mother} ~~brathars~~ and my brothers." All those people who came to him in need. Who had nothing to offer ~~ing~~ him but their sickness. Their brokenness. Their feeling of worthlessness. Their sin. They did not listen to what others were saying about Jesus, they only knew that he was their only hope. He could ~~heakthem~~ touch them and heal them. He could lift the ~~hea~~ heavy weight ~~upon~~ ^{from} thier chest so that they could breathe ~~again~~ again. He took the stains of their yesterday and washed them out. He was life, and breather and joy. And they were his family.

In answer to the charge of the scribes that Jesus was possessed by Satan, ~~Jesus answer~~ Jesus said: No one can enter a strong mans house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man; then he ~~wa~~ indeed may plunder his house.

Those people crowding around Jesus had all been possessions in the house of the strong man satan. But Jesus was stealing them, taking them for his famil

But Mary tried to take him home. ~~How dare she would not cause such a disturbance. Where the so called good people would no longer be scandalized by him.~~

It is remarkable that God has been able to tell us this story through St. Mark. We don't want to hear it. We want heros, and heroines of faith, all sincere and pure and loving. We want them so that we can fool ourselves into belieing that we can become one of them too. If I just try a little harder belsive a little more sincerely, pray more fervently then God will be proud of me. That's what I tell myself.

You see, I'm really tired of sin. I am weary of falling down and srapping my knees. I don't want any more of striking out with the bases loaded, no more of having to say I'm sorry. But just this week I yelled at my son, when

he needed an arm around him. Just this week when Sue needed someone to listen
I found fault with her. Just this week, I spoke words that I intended to hurt
a fellow pastor. I just hate looking back to see ~~all~~ the ground littered
with my careless words, my unfeeling deeds.

Yes, I want God to tell me, Lynn, next week you will not have to endure
any of that. But he does not. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory
of God, ~~xxxxxxx~~ Not even Peter, companion, dear friend, leader of the
disciples was exempted. Not even Mary, ~~mother of Jesus, who sheltered the~~
~~only Son of God within her own body and nursed him at her breast, not even~~
~~Mary was exempted.~~ Not you, not I. We stand before God for one reason only.
We are forgiven through the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now ~~as~~ long as we want to sugar-coat the world, pretending that there
are ^{study} good people ~~and bad people~~, people deserving God's love ~~and those who~~
~~do not~~, then forgiveness is bad news to us. But when pride and selfrighteousness
has ~~the~~ come crashing down upon us, then the most precious words that we can
know are Christ forgives you. Then we are content to be part of that nameless
mass of people sitting at Jesus feet who hear him say, "Here are my mother and
sisters and brothers.

Hearing that word, we know that we are invited to take part in the family
business, plundering Satan's house. with our brother Jesus, we are about the
business of robbing Satan of the sick, of the hungry, the despairing, the
lonely. I think of a nurse. She is paid to hand out pills, and start IV's
to care for the body. But so many nurses I have known know that their real
work is to lift the spirit. ~~xxxxxxx~~ With words and touch they intend to
plunder satan's house of discouragement and loneliness and despair, that true
healing may occur.

I think of teachers, in school, in the church. Facts and figures and
knowledge are the form of their work, but the substance of true teaching
is the plundering of Satan's house. That blank, dull eyes would sparkle,
and sparkling eyes sparkle more still, that is the real pay for teaching.

You are family, mothers and brothers and sisters with Jesus. Each of you
God has invited to Join Jesus in plundering Satan's house. When you fall,
as he did with Mary and Peter Jesus will set you on your feet again. He
forgives you, and heals you and gives you hope, that you might take his ~~forgiveness~~
forgiveness, his healing his hope, to others. Amen.