

UNTITLED HANDWRITTEN TALK

Not used

No date

I shall tell you of a vision I seemed to see when I removed the seal from a sacred book and began to study, ponder, and pray about the things I found written therein.

I seemed to see a little group of favored and select souls upon whom the light of heaven rested with a soft and hallowed radiance. These chosen ones lived and moved and had their being in the midst of an evil and wicked people whose minds were darkened with unbelief and whose souls were stained with sin.

I seemed to hear a babble of contentious voices speaking in the Aramaic tongue. They were evil and venomous voices, voices that spoke of vengeance and scourging and crucifixion. They cried out: "We are holier than thou for we keep the law of Moses and honor the traditions of our fathers."

As the ancient scene infolded before my eyes, I found myself in Perea, a portion of Palestine ruled by that vile and wicked wretch Herod Antipas who was living in adultery and incest with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.

I chose to mingle with those upon whom the heavenly rays fell, and as I stepped, with deep feelings of unworthiness, into that sacred circle, I beheld His face, the face of the Blessed One whose countenance shown with divine light shed forth abundantly upon those whom he had called and ordained.

They were all dressed after the manner of the Jews. Their clothing was woven from the country cloth of Galilee. They had turbans on their heads, sandals on their feet, and several of them carried staves in their bands.

I seemed to see a man called Peter, a rugged, courageous, valiant souls from Capernaum. With him were his partiers, James and John, the sons of thunder. These three sailed their boats on the Lake of Gennesaret and sometimes sold their fish as far south as Jerusalem itself.

These three had but recently climbed the snow-capped heights of Hermon where Jesus, his raiment white and glistening with celestial brilliance, was transfigured before them. These three had seen the divine Shekinah once more rest in the land of Israel and heard the voice of the Father testify: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt. 17:5.)

Nearby was Matthew, hated by the people as a publican and a friend of Rome; and Simon the Zealot, hated by Rome as a seditionist and a rebel; and Judas, an avaricious and scheming businessman of all repute. And I marveled how strong minded men of such diverse backgrounds could be so perfectly united in one great cause.

Methought I say Mary Magdalene—a serene and sweet and pure soul—who had knelt in her own Gethsemane of sorrow; whose faith and devotion was tested to the full before the Master cast seven devils from her tormented body—all before she joined the apostolic party in their missionary journeys through Galilee.

And that graceful and serene woman at her side—surely she is Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, was it not her son whom Jesus healed when the Master was in Cana and the young lad lay at death's door in Capernaum some twenty miles away?

And those other sisters, the wives of some of the apostles among them—are they not the ones who a few weeks hence shall weep at the place of a skull as their Lord hangs in that accursed tree?

Are they not the very ones who shall come, very early in the morning if the third day, to anoint his body with costly ointments, that the embalming begun by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus of Jerusalem on the Friday before might be completed?

I seemed to sense that some whose right it was to mingle in the sacred circle were absent. It came to me that the Beloved Sisters from Bethany were not there.

As I thought on this and wondered about them and their welfare, suddenly there came hastening to the little group a messenger weary from a long journey, carrying sad tidings. He went straight to the Master whom he knew:

“I come from the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany, the home where Martha and Mary dwell,” he said. “They bid me say unto you: Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick. Lazarus thy friend lies at the door of death. Please come quickly and heal our brother.”

Lazarus is sick; nay, Lazarus is dead. His body even now is cold and untenanted. His spirit has entered the paradise of God—all since the messenger left the borders of Bethany.

And yet Jesus said: “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”

Such were the words I seemed to hear, and yet as the soft tones fell gently on my listening ear somehow I knew they meant: “Lazarus now lies in his tomb. His body has been anointed with myrtle, aloes, and many spices. But he shall not remain long in the cave of death. His passing was for the glory of God. Soon, at my command, he shall

return to mortality to stand as a witness to all generations that I am the Son of God and have power over life and death. He shall live again as a sign that he and all men shall rise in the resurrection because of me, for I am the resurrection and the life.”

And yet Jesus made no move to go to Bethany. For two full days he remained in Perea, preaching, healing, testifying.

How often he had gone in haste at the behest of his sorrowing saints, to heal the sick and raise the dead. So it was when Jarius, the ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum, importuned him to heal his daughter. Jesus went only to receive word enroute that the maid had passed away. And yet he hastened to the home, cast out them that mourned, and said: “Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway.” (Luke 8:54-55.)

How often he had sought out the sick and dieing and raised them.

So it was when he said to the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda whose infirmity spanned thirty-eight years, “Rise, take up thy bed and walk.” (John 5:8.)

So it was with the man, blind from birth, whose eyes he anointed with clay made of spittle and to whom said, “Go wash in the pool of Siloam,” and he having done so came again seeing. (John 9:8-9.)

So it was that wondrous day as, nearing the city of Nain, he met and stopped a funeral cortege. To the sorrowing mother he said, “Weep not,” and to the lifeless corpse on the bier, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak.” (Luke 7:13-15.)

But this time it was otherwise. Though Jesus loved Lazarus and Martha and Mary, he yet ministered for two more long days in Perea. Then he said to the little group upon whom I saw the light of heaven rest in radiant splendor, “Let us go into Judea again.”

They, anxious for his welfare and for their own, responded: “Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?”

His answer was a firm assurance that he would pursue the course of duty to its end however bitter. Then he revealed the need and purpose of their journey. “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,” he said, “but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.”

They said: “Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.” Jesus then said plainly: “Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.”

From Thomas, one of the most valiant of them all, came these pure words of love and devotion: “Let s also go, that we may die with him.” And as I heard them, there came into

my mind the even greater words the Lord Jesus would soon speak, “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13.)

I seemed to see the Holy Party travel from Perea to Judea. Over a spur of the Mount of Olives, eastward from Jerusalem, at the little village of Bethany. As they approached this sacred site, hallowed by frequent visits of Him whose all things are, Martha met Jesus and said:

“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” And then, with a faith like that of Enoch and Elijah she continued: “But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”

Lo, Lazarus is dead. His body, stinking with decomposition, eaten by worms, every vital organ in process of rotting away, had lain in its tomb for four days. His spirit, according to the tradition of the Jews, has closed its four day vigil over the dead corpse and has departed irretrievably into the nether realms. Lazarus is as dead as any mortal has ever been in all the long history of Adam’s race.

And yet Martha, the Holy Ghost guiding her tongue, said boldly that “even now”—even though death reigns supreme—“even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”

Jesus said: “Thy brother shall rise again.” But there is no question in Martha’s mind about this. “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day,” she says.

Then there fell from the lips of the Lord of Life the most glorious proclamation of his own divine Sonship ever uttered by mortal tongue. “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

Thus saith the Lord. He it is by whom immortality and eternal life come. He is the Savior and Redeemer. He burst the bands of death. By him the saints gain eternal exaltation in the Everlasting Presence.

As the full meaning of his words sank into my heart, I seemed to hear a Divine Voice, speaking from the midst of eternity: “Behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” (Moses 1:39.)

And building yet on this foundation I heard also the persuasive words of Paul: “Our Savior Jesus Christ,” he proclaimed, “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Tim. 1:10.)

And then, as a blessed benediction, there came into my mind that word of holy writ in which recites that “the Lord God” appointed “unto man the days of his probation—that

by his natural death he might be raised in immortality unto eternal life, even as many as would believe.” (D&C 29:43.)

And I knew, as the faithful of all ages have known, that he is the resurrection and the life and that salvation is in him because he is God’s Son.

And then I heard him say to Martha. “Believest thou this?” And her reply—Petrine in caliber, life that of the great confession made in Caesarea-Philippi—came in these wondrous words:

“Yes, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”

Then, before the veil of doubt shut out the visions of the past, I seemed to see the conversation with Mary, the rolling of the stone from the cave, the divine decree, “Lazarus, come forth,” and, lo, breath and blood and life again to him that slept the sleep of death.

And I knew with absolute surety that he who raised Lazarus from death was truly God’s Almighty Son; that he would call all men forth in the resurrection in due course; and that all his saints would be raised, not alone in immortality but unto eternal life in the kingdom of his Father.

And as I pondered upon these things I also knew that these visions shall pass before the eyes of all who will remove the seal of the sacred book and focus the eyes of the Spirit upon the holy accounts therein recorded.

God give us the wisdom to remove the seal and see the glories hidden therein.

In the name of Him who raised Lazarus from death and who is the resurrection and the life, even so, Amen.