

The Sword

By Joyce Catherwood

Luke 2:25-39; 4:16-30; 8:19

Mark 3:20-21; 31-35; 15:42-47

Tears of relief flooded my eyes when Joseph of Arimathea was allowed to remove my son, Jesus, from his execution cross. How gently Joseph and a friend, Nicodemus, handled his torn and tortured body—such a contrast to the violent and cruel treatment he had just suffered. I had ached to comfort him in his agony, and when I was finally able to touch his lifeless form, I didn't know what to do. He was unrecognizable, his entire body bruised, covered with blood and dirt, his wounds deep and swollen. The grief and pain that welled up inside me exploded in groans of mourning I did not know were possible. This was the dreaded sword that was to pierce my soul that had been prophesied by old Simeon when Jesus was a newborn. Never, ever, had I imagined it could be so devastating, so cruel, so unjustified.

Kneeling beside Jesus' body, I caressed his wounded hands, remembering how I had kissed those tiny fingers when he was a child. I remembered his laughter as he played with his younger brothers and sisters, his sunny disposition and bright inquisitive mind. Everyone loved him and wanted to be around him, even when he was an adult. He was a generous, engaging young man, destined to become the Messiah, the salvation of all people, the light to the Gentiles, a glory to Israel.

Jesus' ministry reflected him. It was filled with hope, forgiveness and healing. But at times, my heart pounded with fear for him. His merciful approach was unorthodox, and it angered some. In our own hometown, people were initially amazed at his gracious words. But in the end he was run out of the synagogue and a mob tried to kill him.

Bewildered by these malicious outbursts against him, we, his human family, became protective of him. It made me wish he had never left home. Once, when he was overwhelmed by the needs of the multitude and had no time to eat, we tried to rescue him and take charge of things. We thought he might have gone off the deep end from hunger and exhaustion. Another time his brothers and I found him, wanting to talk to him, but he was again surrounded by a great crowd. We were worried sick and didn't understand why he would not take refuge more often with his family he loved so much.

When it all ended so brutally, it did indeed feel as though a sword had pierced my very being. Only later, when Jesus was raised in glory, was my wounded soul healed. And you can imagine, what a jubilant family reunion we had with our beloved Jesus, the risen Son of God! Humbled and grateful to be able to express how deeply sorry we were that we had not been more supportive of his earthly mission, we very quickly became his ardent and faithful servants. [co](#)