

Coffs Encourager

Newsletter to the Coffs Coast area
Nambucca, Port Macquarie,
Saphire Beach & Woolgoolga

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Coffs Coast church of Christ
www.coffschurch.org.au

CWA Hall, 3 Dalley St. Coffs Harbour
Worship-Sunday 10am, Study-Tuesday 6pm



A Street in Jerusalem

The Unwanted Guest

...I hardly know him. Who does he think he is?

I have offered him food and drink, what more does he really expect?

THE UNWANTED GUEST

A short story by Quentin Duffy

This is purely a fictitious story based upon God's Word. It was not written with an objective to add to God's Word, but rather to deliver one solitary but feasible scenario concerning the given circumstances surrounding a particular Bible passage.

Derived from chapter 7 of the Gospel according to Luke.

From this window, in my home high upon the mount, I can see the 10th legion in dazzling lines reflecting the brilliance of the afternoon sun. They are moving slowly but purposefully across the hills outside the city walls. They are the pride of Vespasian's forces, probably with Titus himself leading that glorious and prestigious column. I am old and tired and look towards death more as a friend than an enemy, but my fear now is for my people - God's people. This imminent threat of death and ruin upon my beloved nation brings to mind once again that enigmatic man, Jesus, they called the Christ, the troublemaker from Nazareth. Many hailed him as a prophet like those we celebrate from old, but to me he was just another agitator bent upon adding even more dissension to the witch's brew of discontentment that dwells inside these great walls. The result of this rebellious madness I now view from my window. The world's greatest army is here to break us again into a state of full submission, "Pax Romana". On the other hand, my struggles were towards encouraging unity between all the parties, not at all in favour of the violent covert work of assassins and bloodthirsty sedition that we all have witnessed around us to this day. Of course I'm sure you have heard that the followers of this Jesus all claim that he was raised from the dead. This was supposedly the greatest of

his wonders and signs – a feat undoubtedly assisted by the followers of this artful pretender. In the naivety of my youth, so very long ago, I invited this Jesus to a meal in my very own home. What a mistake!

The meal had been so meticulously prepared and laid out with the best of my wife's tableware. A magnificent table adorned with crockery and linen made by the finest Athenian craftsmen and women. The guests were seated in their respective positions around the table on fine imported cushions. I had invited all those whom I considered to be the most prominent and influential amongst the religious sects within Jerusalem for the purpose of creating opportunities to stimulate lasting inroads towards unity. It had been my goal for several years to innovate ideas to bring about this very end, hopefully settling at least some of our differences in an environment of hospitality and friendship rather than the usual high pressured confrontation that we had all become so accustomed too. Although my intentions were noble and the meal arrangements were universally considered acceptable for such dignitaries I could see that my efforts on this day would be undermined from the onset.

Joseph Caiaphas could not be present so his son filled the position of highest importance. Jonathon represented the Sadducees, Ananus the Essenes, I would represent the Pharisees, Eleazar the scribes, Joshua the city elders, Matthias the Zealots and finally Jesus of Nazareth who represented his own small but rapidly growing sect. It always amazes me that the minor groups consistently produce the most eccentric of leaders and advocate the most unorthodox views. This Jesus, whom I had invited, certainly fulfilled my predictions and expectations. He did not wish to stay seated around the table with the rest of us for any stretch of time but chose

rather to roam around close to the doorway as though haunted by his thoughts. This behaviour seemed to aptly reflect the nervous, precarious and often anti-orthodox nature of his sect that appeared to cling to the fringes of our community. Perhaps he was ready to run if needed, but none of us who had gathered were showing any singular distress at his presence among us. I asked Joshua, on behalf of Joseph Caiaphas to give thanks to God for our meal because he was the oldest. I stood up and took a plate of bread to Jesus who was standing upon the balcony now, close to the edge, watching us as we ate. He seemed a little anxious but he quite willingly took the food I offered him and quietly thanked me for it with a tone of voice that perhaps demonstrated that he was a little disappointed. So I asked him if the food was to his liking. He told me that it was good and returned quickly to his sombre and thoughtful state.

In contrast, the conversation around the table was healthy and constructive and was taking a practical direction when that horrid woman took hold of Jesus' feet from below the balcony and began to wail mournfully. Her loud lamentations echoed her woe throughout the hallways of my home. I turned to see what the sudden awful din was about and saw the woman's face as she pulled her body up slightly to kiss Jesus feet. She wept upon his feet as she continued to pull her body upwards. Jesus aided her by stepping backward closer to the edge as she said something that sounded like a request to forgive her for some debt but she was very hard to understand through all the pitiful wailing. I returned to my guests at the table and explained who it was causing the noise. Jesus did not move and those of us at the table looked at each other with expressions that reflected our outrage at the disturbance. Amazingly enough, Jesus did not seem to know who she was because he allowed her to continue while those of us seated tried

to maintain the positive atmosphere by swapping smiles and rolling our eyes in light hearted frustration. Matthias sniggered sarcastically then plainly expressed his disgust. I was not only deeply embarrassed but was becoming more annoyed with every passing moment.

Without warning the woman broke from her fixation, raised her eyes and looked in our direction. Her surprise at our collective presence suddenly turned her expression to fear. "Master, I have dreamed of these men. These men will conspire to kill you", the woman uttered through her sniffles in nasal tones, while I raised my hands skyward in an expression of total frustration with the utter ridiculousness of the situation. "You have suffered many things in your dreams because of your sin", Jesus replied with some mysterious insight, still looking directly at the table. The woman's eyes returned to Jesus' feet and she said, "Yes my Lord, and I am so truly sorry for all the things I have done". Then she pressed something against the lower part of his right leg. Jesus reached down and she placed the item into his hand. She removed an Alabaster bottle of perfume from her bag and began to anoint Jesus feet, weeping and wiping his feet with her hair. I looked at the bottle she was holding and wondered where she had thieved it from.

I began to think this whole matter had become quite irksome and reduced Jesus' stature and credibility much further in all our eyes. As if replying to my thoughts he said, "Simon, I have something to tell you. Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" The answer was obvious and I was becoming rather bored and tired of all this unwelcome distraction. Then he turned

towards the woman and said to me, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little". I felt insulted at these bold and unnecessary statements of ungratefulness! Of course I had not offered water for his feet because most of us are not dusty from the roads outside Jerusalem. Why should I anoint this Jesus? I hardly know him. Who does he think he is? I have offered him food and drink, what more does he really expect? Then he placed it into my hands. To my great horror I realised that it was a jewel from inside the inner most precincts of the temple. How could this woman have possibly gotten inside? How could she have climbed up and prised it from its lodging? This was just too unbelievable and beyond understanding. Now if things were not outrageous enough he turns to the woman and says, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace". Before I had returned to the table with the precious and holy artefact my guests had become significantly unsettled and began to express their indignation. I thought twice about showing them the jewel and thrust it deep into a fold inside my cloak. Joshua addressed me first. "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Others began to stand, so I pleaded with them to stay. Then this Jesus walked into the room and sat down at the feasting table. Surely he could not expect to find any friendship now. We tried to rationally discuss with him the sinful nature of his blasphemy in a controlled manner but he said very little. Eleazar wanted to know how he came to obtain such authority that enabled him to forgive sins while so easily negating the need for Moses' sacrificial system that has been with us from antiquity. We all agreed that this was a fair question to ask and expected his answer to be forthright.

He didn't even twitch or so much as look like he had any intention of speaking. Then, when the guests had had their fill of this man's bizarre behaviour and began to stir, he said "As I have said before, so now I say again, answer me this and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism – was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!" Now it was time for us to adopt the concealing mask of silence because we all had heard about this clever question and the dire ramifications of a hasty unplanned answer. The guests all filed out of my door one at a time and left me with this man. He stood there for a time that seemed like an eternity, looking directly at me with a deep sadness in his eyes. Then he departed quietly as well.

Those penetrating eyes have stayed with me ever since, haunting my dreams and filling my wakening thoughts even now as daily I do what I can to evade the Sicarii. Lately there has been much discussion, amongst the educated and uneducated alike about this Jesus - about the fulfilment of certain prophecies concerning Jerusalem, and I can't help but ponder their possible validity as I look out of my upper window. The mournful voice of that unwanted guest echoes in my mind as the last of the sun's rays return to me from the legion on the hillside. At times like these you question everything. Is it possible that I have erred somewhere in my reasoning?

Proverbs 17:17 New American Standard.

A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.

1 Peter 1:22 New International Version.

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.



proverbs 17:17

1 peter 1:22