

## Trial, Crucifixion, Torn Curtain & Borrowed Tomb

### Painting 1 :“Trials” 5am

Mark 15:1-14: “Very early in the morning the leading priests, other leaders, and teachers of religious law—the entire high council—met to discuss their next step. They bound Jesus and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

<sup>2</sup> Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “Yes, it is as you say.”

<sup>3</sup> Then the leading priests accused him of many crimes, <sup>4</sup> and Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to say something? What about all these charges against you?” <sup>5</sup> But Jesus said nothing, much to Pilate’s surprise.

<sup>6</sup> Now it was the governor’s custom to release one prisoner each year at Passover time—anyone the people requested. <sup>7</sup> One of the prisoners at that time was Barabbas, convicted along with others for murder during an insurrection. <sup>8</sup> The mob began to crowd in toward Pilate, asking him to release a prisoner as usual. <sup>9</sup> “Should I give you the King of the Jews?” Pilate asked. <sup>10</sup> (For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.)

<sup>11</sup> But at this point the leading priests stirred up the mob to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. <sup>12</sup> “But if I release Barabbas,” Pilate asked them, “what should I do with this man you call the King of the Jews?” <sup>13</sup> They shouted back, “Crucify him!”

<sup>14</sup> “Why?” Pilate demanded. “What crime has he committed?” But the crowd only roared the louder, “Crucify him!” <sup>15</sup> So Pilate, anxious to please the crowd, released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to crucify him.”

### Commentary

There are two events occurring here -Two decisions to be made -Democracy and autocracy – both to the same outcome.

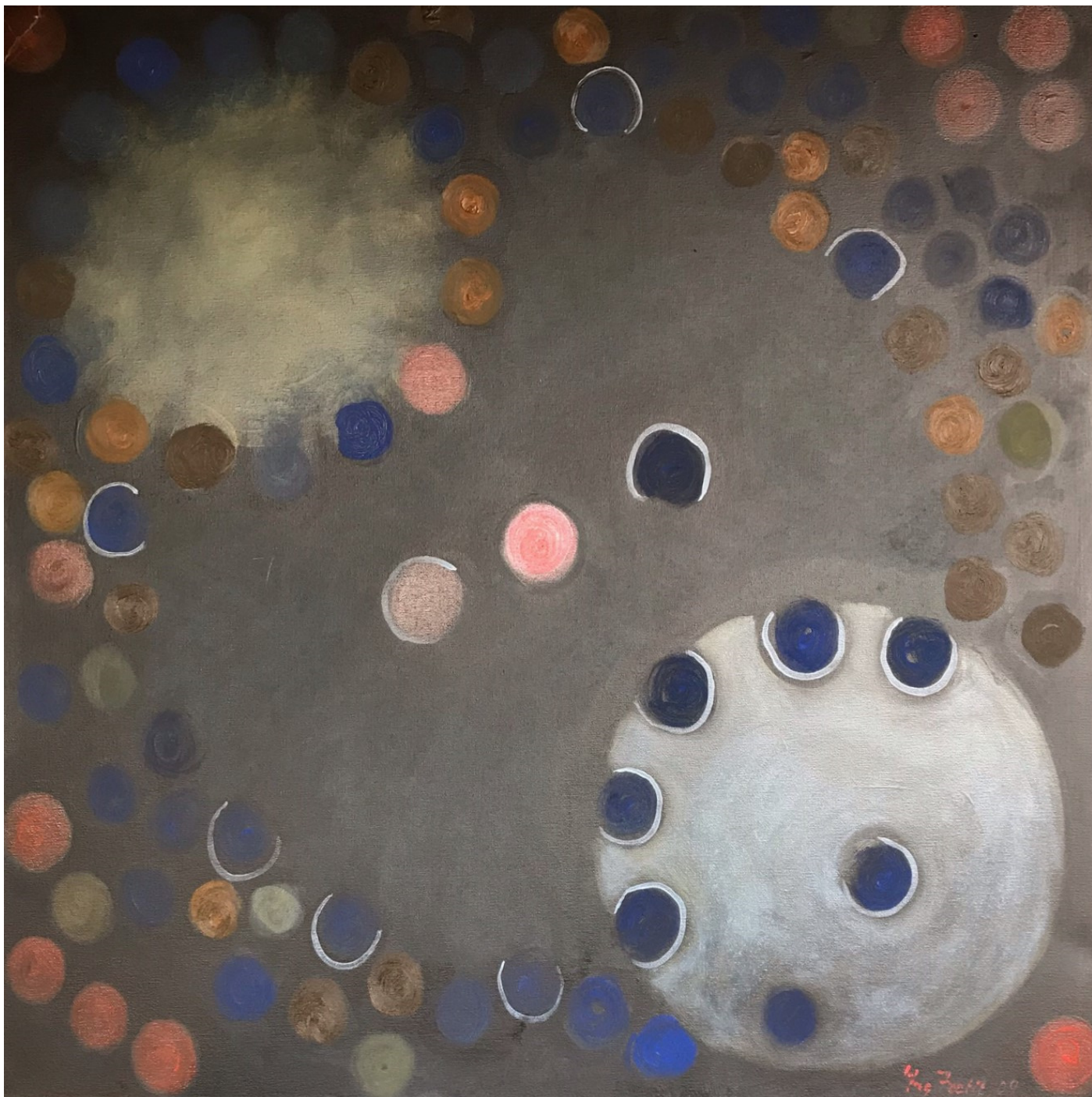
The first is the high council. They meet to discuss practicalities – what to do next? They have their man, but now what? It is very early in the morning, well before sunrise. Shadowy figures meet in council together. The majority rules, they have authority but no power to force an outcome. They must go to the seat of power.

So, in the half light they take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman Governor. This is the second event. A few tired soldiers pulling early morning duty, an officer to command them, and figure of power that, strangely, must be protected from “the mob.”

Who else is there, hiding in the shadows?

Close to Pilate is Barabbas, one of “the mob” who had been unfortunate enough to be caught, a bit player in events much larger than his understanding.

Jesus is the centre of all this attention, and he is conflicted. Not because he doubts his course. He knew what would be happening to him from the moment he topped the rise and first saw the city laid out before him from the Mount of Olives. This was as he expected. No, he is conflicted because even now his heart reaches out to eleven shadowy figures that are scattered at the edges of the mob, and a few others caught up in the action.



### **Explanation**

Jesus once said, “For from within, out of a person’s heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness.<sup>23</sup> All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you and make you unacceptable to God.”<sup>1</sup> Our hearts reveal us as we are, our actions confirm it. They are the visible “nephesh”, the totality of what we are, and that is what these symbols represent. There are many in this crowd that are conflicted, confused, just doing their duty, or watching the play of events.

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<sup>1</sup>All scripture passages are taken from *The New Living Translation*. 1997 . Tyndale House: Wheaton, Ill.

**Poem 1 : Pilate's Dilemma Sharon Footit**

Dark, before dawn, in secret, the high council met,  
What shall we do with this Jesus, what 's the next step?  
To Pilate, the Roman Governor, they all agreed,  
So, binding Jesus, handing him over; their callous deed.

Pilate enquired "Are you the King of the Jews?"  
Jesus affirmed, to the chagrin of those who accused,  
To the many crimes they cited,  
Jesus uttered not a word  
Surprised, Pilate was unconvinced  
-moral dilemma darkening his mood.

Pilate's Passover custom - to set free one prisoner  
Anyone the people requested, that person, the prizewinner  
Relief for Pilate - Surely they would choose Jesus?  
The mob began to crowd in shouting 'Give us Barabbas!'

They were incited by the religious, who mingled among them,  
And repeated their shout regarding Jesus  
-'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!'  
And Pilate, anxious to please, did what they all cried out for  
He released Barabbas, flogged Jesus,  
and wondered what crime he died for.

Not crime, but love - love come from God, redeeming love  
-with death its price  
Love to encompass the world, God's justice and mercy  
-an offering of costly sacrifice!



## Painting 2: "Humiliations" 6am

The soldiers took him into their headquarters and called out the entire battalion.

<sup>17</sup> They dressed him in a purple robe and made a crown of long, sharp thorns and put it on his head. <sup>18</sup> Then they saluted, yelling, "Hail! King of the Jews!"

<sup>19</sup> And they beat him on the head with a stick, spit on him, and dropped to their knees in mock worship.

When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

### Commentary

The hard sun rises early in these parts. The whole troop is ordered out to do their duty, but first some fun for some. Who are these soldiers but you and me with weapons? Like soldiers in every army there are the small number who enjoy the opportunity for unrestrained violence, the many who just go along with it and stand around. There are those who watch with sickened hearts, those who turn away, and those who watch them for signs of weakness.



**Explanation**

Soldiers have off duty hours. They get around. The Gospels record occasions when Roman soldiers mingled with the crowds that followed Jesus and some even sought the ministry of Jesus. Should we be surprised that some of these are conflicted too? Some continue to watch Jesus very closely. Why the plural in the title? When the savagery of the human heart is revealed, all of us are humiliated.

Poem 2

Purple robe for a king!

Sharon Footit

Purple robe for a king! Yes purple - for a king!  
What else shall we dress him in? Crown of thorns – the very thing!  
Mocking salute, and cry “Hail! King of the Jews”  
Then beatings, and spitting they gave him his dues!  
Tired of their mocking fun,  
They removed the robe & whacked his side ,  
Then led him away to be crucified!

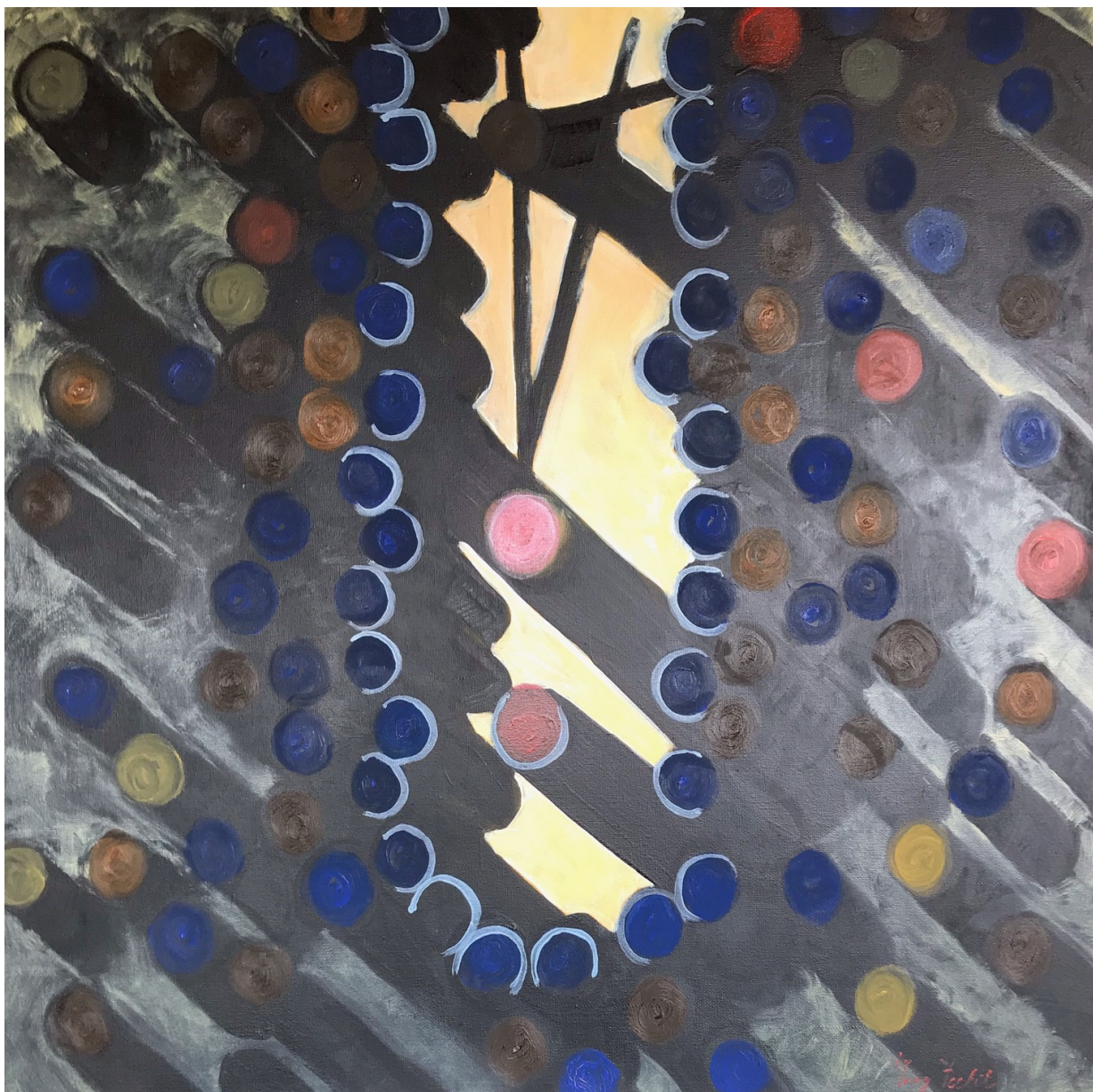


### Painting 3: "Journeys" 7am

<sup>21</sup> A man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, was coming in from the country just then, and they forced him to carry Jesus' cross. (Simon is the father of Alexander and Rufus.)"

#### Commentary

Just a couple of verses, but important. An early morning procession on an execution day. The crowd is strangely silent, hushed. The soldiers do their crowd control. Scattered amongst the mob who watch are some women. The Centurion continues to do his duty and control his soldiers, but he continues to watch Jesus closely.



#### Explanation

There are many journeys going on here. I cannot tell you much about Simon. A dark man in the wrong place at the right time? Legends will grow up round him, but I suspect that he is a little like the figure of Barabbas, a bit player in events larger than his understanding. The centurion is definitely on a journey, but he probably does not know it yet. He journeys in the shadows of a cross. The women who watch? Definitely. They are Mark's real witnesses of what happened to Jesus on this day. Those named disciples, are not here, not in Mark's account.

### Poem 3      Wrong Place; Wrong Time: Right Person

Alexander and Rufus; stay close, stay near  
The atmosphere along this road; full of fear  
So many crowding in; some to mock and yell, some to grieve; to see and hear  
This city, so different to Cyrene, mixed emotions very clear.

And then I see him, stumbling along the road  
The crossbar of heavy wood such a heavy load,  
Blood soaked body, pouring down from his head  
Welts gouged deep in his back: how is he not already dead!

I remember a better time, I still hear his promising words of God's love  
I still see his compassion for those in desperate need; active love from above,  
And now we are so close, I can see the pain etched upon his face  
Alexander and Rufus, stay close, stay near, please keep apace!

He stumbles, and cannot pick up his heavy load.  
What's this? A soldier blocking my way on the road  
Spear in hand, he demands my service; to carry the load for Jesus!  
Alexander and Rufus, stay close, stay near, keep apace.

I sense God's Spirit, urging me to serve, to carry this load  
Not out of fear, but identity with this man, fallen on the road.  
I lock arms with Jesus, and lift the crossbar; raise the man  
Out of the dirt, His look of love, giving me a glimpse of a bigger plan.

We walked arm in arm, my broad shoulders carrying the heavy load  
Until we reached the end of our journey, Skull Hill; the end of the road  
For me, escape, to reach out to find my boys, and hold them safe in my arms  
For Jesus; more suffering, and then death; I wonder, is this truly part of the plan from above?



## Painting 4: “Crucifixions” 9am

“And they brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means Skull Hill).<sup>23</sup> They offered him wine drugged with myrrh, but he refused it.<sup>24</sup> Then they nailed him to the cross. They gambled for his clothes, throwing dice to decide who would get them.

<sup>25</sup> It was nine o’clock in the morning when the crucifixion took place.<sup>26</sup> A signboard was fastened to the cross above Jesus’ head, announcing the charge against him. It read: “The King of the Jews.”<sup>27</sup> Two criminals were crucified with him, their crosses on either side of his.<sup>29</sup> And the people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. “Ha! Look at you now!” they yelled at him. “You can destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, can you?”<sup>30</sup> Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!”<sup>31</sup> The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. “He saved others,” they scoffed, “but he can’t save himself!”<sup>32</sup> Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!” Even the two criminals who were being crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.”



## Commentary and Explanation

Have you noticed how Mark names the hour, the times of the day? The sun is well up now, but it seems strangely chilly. There are some in this crowd who know Jesus well, and love him. But most



take this last opportunity to mock and shame Jesus. I wondered what was going through the mind of Mary his mother right now?

The soldiers do their duty, as soldiers do." The blows they strike, to drive the nails, are well practiced. But some waver. Sure, they have seen many crucifixions, Romans were good at crucifixions, they kept the mob in line. The criminals get what they deserve, but one of these seems different, and "captain, my captain" seems .... "affected" - not quite his impartial self. And doesn't the crowd give it to him? They don't get their hands dirty with this work, but there is plenty of blood to go around and plenty of passion too. But there are some practicalities as well - Free clothes for the taking -Just a roll of the dice!

#### **Poem 4 The gamble of a life time!!!**

They gambled for his clothes, better quality than some.  
Sure, blood soaked through from his back, but the piece was nicely done.  
Gift from a rich person perhaps, and but blood can be washed away  
So, they gambled for his clothes; something to while away the day.

The sign said 'King of the Jews' – what a joke!  
Messiah, some whispered, the long awaited KING, this bloke?  
So, we gambled for his clothes, better quality than some  
And we laughed and joked and belittled him; that was how crucifixions were done!

But what if he is; you know "King of the Jews"?  
What if we are part of something important; what if we are called to choose?  
He seems so different to the others we have done,  
What if we are crucifying God's Messiah; his favoured one?

Can't stop to think about all this; Roman soldiers must do our job,  
So we gambled for his clothes, and ignored the yelling of the mob,  
We gambled for his clothes, and ignored the questions in our heads,  
We gambled for his clothes; waiting for this King to be dead!

## Painting 5: "Untitled" 12 noon

At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock.<sup>34</sup> Then, at that time Jesus called out with a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"<sup>35</sup> Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah.<sup>36</sup> One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a stick so he could drink. "Leave him alone. Let's see whether Elijah will come and take him down!" he said.<sup>37</sup> Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last.<sup>38</sup> And the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.<sup>39</sup> When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, "Truly, this was the Son of God!"<sup>40</sup> Some women were there, watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James the younger and of Joseph), and Salome.<sup>41</sup> They had been followers of Jesus and had cared for him while he was in Galilee. Then they and many other women had come with him to Jerusalem.

## Commentary

There goes Mark with his time call again. And now finally the bigger event is being revealed. It's all a bit confusing really - This sudden darkness and reports of strange events that sweep through the crowd of onlookers.

Who said what? Mark is unclear except for two voices clearly recorded, the voice of Jesus, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and the voice of the Roman officer, "Truly, this was the Son of God!"

Jesus is dead – trained soldiers know death when they see it. Something at this point has made Jesus "other" to his birthright. And this is all the evidence that the Roman officer needs to make his amazing statement of understanding and faith. He has watched, "and saw how he died" and is brought to faith right there, even as the curtain is split in two from top to bottom.

Again, in Mark's account, it is the wonderful women who stay close to Jesus and observe all these things.



## Explanation

This was probably the hardest painting to paint. The curtain motif was easy, I have understood for years that this which we call "reality" masks something far more real. So now the curtain is drawn back, and all the bit players in Gods great salvation event are swept aside as the curtain is drawn to reveal all the possibilities of a new heaven and a new earth - A new heaven and new earth, yet at the same time, wonderfully familiar. There are echoes in this new revelation of former paintings, former landscapes, former visions, but here untouched by the human hand. It's just a glimpse, but it is enough.



## Poem 5

## Surely this was God's Son

The heaven's darken, in grief and pain  
The Word that brought them into being, cries out again  
This time in anguish, not delight "Eloi, Eloi, Lema Sabachthani"  
"My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?"  
Perfect communion between father and son  
Now cut off, for us - undone!  
Bystanders reactions, encompass both mercy and disdain  
Jesus final agonized cry -no breath remains  
That very moment  
- the temple curtain tears in two  
From top to bottom  
-in this man's death renewal with God, for me and for you  
Word of truth declared , A roman soldier no less!  
-Surely this was God's Son!  
Women look on shocked and bereft -they witness his death  
- For solidarity they had come.

## Painting 6: “Last Rites” 6pm

“This all happened on Friday, the day of preparation, the day before the Sabbath. As evening approached,<sup>43</sup> an honored member of the high council, Joseph from Arimathea (who was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come), gathered his courage and went to Pilate to ask for Jesus’ body.<sup>44</sup> Pilate couldn’t believe that Jesus was already dead, so he called for the Roman military officer in charge and asked him.<sup>45</sup> The officer confirmed the fact, and Pilate told Joseph he could have the body.<sup>46</sup> Joseph bought a long sheet of linen cloth, and taking Jesus’ body down from the cross, he wrapped it in the cloth and laid it in a tomb that had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone in front of the entrance.<sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus’ body was laid.”

### Commentary

“as evening approached” Mark tells us, as late as you can get before you have to stop all work. He is keeping the time sequence before our minds. But now some bits and pieces that we have seen before begin to spring into prominence. Remember the shadowing meeting of the “entire high council” in the first painting? That means that Joseph from Arimathea must have been there as well, and he is. And whose opinion does Pilate defer to in order to assure himself that Jesus was really dead? “so he called for **the** Roman military officer in charge and asked him. **The** officer confirmed the fact..” I had never noticed that before. It’s the Roman officer who was called out to duty with his soldiers before the dawn to control the mob. There he is standing right beside Jesus in the half light. It’s the same Roman soldier who must allow his soldiers to do their soldier thing in their barracks, but watches Jesus and them closely. The same Roman soldier who escorts Jesus through the silent crowd, following the cross now hoisted by Simon. The same officer who controls the execution and observes how Jesus is hated by those who call out from the crowd. The same officer who observes the manner of Jesus’ death, and comes to faith. This is **the officer** whom Pilate now acts for confirmation that Jesus truly is dead, and releases the body into the hands of one of the high council. And the women still watch and note.

### Explanation

The simplest painting. The tomb is sealed, the rock is cold and heavy. The circle of human life is complete, and those who had hoped, and dreamed, and loved prepare to fulfill the last rites. I wondered whether I should have put the Roman officer in this painting as well, but decided not to. But he is in the under painting. There in spirit if not in fact. What a long day.



**Poem 6                      Final Rites    Sharon Footit**

Sabbath approaching,  
Work quickly- no time to be upset  
Day of preparation  
– both his body and in readiness for Sabbath sunset,  
Joseph of Arimathea  
–a member of the Sanhedrin and secret disciple  
- Surely Jesus was the long awaited one?  
Now in grief,  
All hope lost, out of respect, he offers a place of final rest  
-his own carved out tomb  
The Women still look on  
– they see where his body has been laid  
Since Galilee they've served him,  
But now their final service delayed  
Awaiting Sabbath's ending  
– to give Jesus his last and proper sending  
What will the Sunday Sunrise bring?



## Painting 7: "First Lights" 5am

"The next evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene and Salome and Mary the mother of James went out and purchased burial spices to put on Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup> Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they came to the tomb. <sup>3</sup> On the way they were discussing who would roll the stone away from the entrance to the tomb. <sup>4</sup> But when they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone—a very large one—had already been rolled aside. <sup>5</sup> So they entered the tomb, and there on the right sat a young man clothed in a white robe. The women were startled, <sup>6</sup> but the angel said, "Do not be so surprised. You are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified. He isn't here! He has been raised from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. <sup>7</sup> Now go and give this message to his disciples, including Peter: Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died!" <sup>8</sup> The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, saying nothing to anyone because they were too frightened to talk."

### Commentary

Mark continues his time sequence again. There are two here. Immediately following the Sabbath three of the women go and purchase the necessary spices to perfume the body. This tells us clearly what they expected to find. Then in the early morning of the next day, the third day, they creep to the tomb in the half light. But they are already too late!

### Explanation

Big bang! Too late!

Who are you looking for: name, place of origin, mode of death confirmed, but Jesus is already on another journey and we must follow.

The women are the first witness, but I like Mark's little touch of mentioning Peter by name – how does he feel right now? – and the other disciples. And the women do what I would have done, run first, tell later.

And the telling still goes on, off the canvass, off in time, off in place. The witnesses grow in number, and still do today. The effects of that singularity ripple on till we too go beyond the curtain.

### Poem 7                      Light and life abound!!

Women watch and wait; they followed Jesus from the beginning, women, always in the shadows,  
Women always there.

Women watch and wait the long day and night, then up early Sunday morning, a body to prepare,  
The stone is rolled away!! The entrance to the tomb beckoning and open,  
They enter, filled with trepidation; Angel messenger, his message spoken  
Jesus has risen, just like he told you! Go tell the disciples, go tell the world.

Women watch and wait; they followed Jesus from the beginning, women always in the shadows,  
Women always there.

Women out in the bright light; light and life abounding,  
Out of the shadows; telling their story of Jesus, new life for all to share!



