

**On the way to Calvary - Hilary McDowell**  
**Week 6 - The final Furlong**  
**Monday - The Faithful Ones**



Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

John 19:25-27 (NIV)

Of all the disciples with their bluster and boasting of how they would go to their death for him, one only stood at the cross. Perhaps only a beloved disciple can be the kind of friend who sees the object of his love in pain and yet, with the strength of their shared love, does not run away. John's suffering is not recorded; his eyes were on Jesus.

Like a loved one nursing a terminally ill relative to their death, he must have felt every shudder, every sob, every facial spasm of agony as though he was experiencing it himself. As those who sit by the hospital bed of beloved ones know, it is often harder to watch a loved one suffer than to go through the horror yourself. But John, who had fled with the others from Gethsemane, did not fail Jesus at the cross. It was this proven faithfulness that gained for John the greatest honour of all, the trust of his Master. 'Listen!' said the dream carrier to a distraught Tracy, as the general chatter and hubbub of the scene was interrupted by the sound coming from one of the crosses. At first it was difficult to hear the voice of Jesus above the noise of the crowd, but then, as he called again to the little knot of women standing below, watcher after watcher shushed and nudged each other into silence to eavesdrop on his conversation.

'Woman,' he said, and although there were many around it was Mary who raised her eyes to meet the gaze of her dying son, 'here is your son!' Tracy did not look around but kept her head lowered, her eyes closed, but she imagined John stepping forward towards Mary and taking her in his arms as Jesus' words rang out, 'Here is you Mother!' In the midst of his pain and agony, when the entire weight of the world's sin was about to make itself felt upon his shoulders, when

he was about to experience the devastation of a momentary barrier of sin separating him from the Father, at this time Jesus first secured a home and future for his mother, and a mother for his beloved disciple. They would both need each other dearly in the months and years to come.

Was this the moment when Tracy felt the weight slip from her heart - when she realised without a shadow of a doubt that this same Jesus who was faithful to his loved ones and disciples, even from the cross, would be faithful to her? DC could not say exactly how or when it happened but slowly, very slowly, he saw Tracy uncurl her taut limbs, raise her head, and with hesitation rise to her feet. He reached out his hand to steady her progress but she had turned around and was looking closely, not upwards, but into the faces of Mary the mother of Jesus, and Mary his aunt, and Mary Magdalene his devoted friend. Suddenly she was part of their group, their love and agony mixed also within her soul. She desperately wanted him to stay, yet she knew that if he did not die, hope would never find a home again in humankind.

For that hope to blossom, this Mary who had borne him would have to stand and watch her son die. What sharper sword could there be than this? (Luke 2:35). For hope to grow, this Mary who had helped to support the family as his aunt would walk through long avenues of grief and mourning with her sister, to help find the light of a new day. For hope to find a home, she whom they called Mary Magdala would have to journey to a dark tomb of despair and, with eyes of faith, believe the unbelievable until she clearly heard him call her name and could know without a doubt, that it was for this that he had come.

The traveller shuddered and pulled her coat more tightly around her body. She had not yet looked upwards - her eyes still avoided the cross - but her mind was full of wonderings. What might the Master still ask her to do before her life was finished? Would she be able to emulate these three faithful women and John to the very end? Could it be that, even now, she had failed him on her journey to Calvary, unable to look upon his blood-stained face?

DC watched her move slowly away from the cross, walking as though in a stupor. Believing her to be in shock, he followed her through the crowd, calling softly and insistently. 'Tracy,' he called, 'it's not over yet. You must not go; there is so much to tell.'

'Tell me then, DC,' she answered wearily. 'Tell me what I've missed.'

*Dear Lord,*

*one day I'll walk with you without the stain of sin and on that day I'll let your pain gain entrance to my soul. For on that day death will be full dead*

*and pain can no longer hold me hostage. When faith becomes my friend, no longer duty, I'll know it was the product of your love, and if our eyes would touch across the centuries I'll know it was not the turning of my head that grazed my heart and set hope alive but rather the soft and steady gaze of how you looked on me from the torturous miracle of the cross. Amen*