

## CHAPTER 10

### INSIDE JERUSALEM

LATE THE NEXT evening we went up to the great City of David. Dividing into pairs, as their custom was, the disciples found lodgings in private homes. Cleopas arranged for me to stay in a fruit vendor's but near the sheep gate.

Early the next morning I heard many footsteps, and hurrying to the door I saw throngs of men and women going toward the gate. Although I could not see whom they were following, I knew at once that it was the gentle Jesus. I knew it was he because of the way they followed. For they followed not as crowds follow a caravan where the thought is barter and trade; not as they follow a Roman company when a centurion comes to town, but they followed with a loving and harmonious tread, with lighted eyes and a wistful eagerness that I saw only when he was near. With great joy I joined them.

They followed him through the gate, and then outside the city the crowd halted. Jesus was talking.

"Come unto me all you who find that life has become nothing but toil and tears and you who have become restless under the weight of your burdens." His voice was compassionate as a brooding dove, yet clear and triumphant as a nightingale. "I will show you a way of peace and joy. Listen to me as if you were listening to God, and all that weighs you down will be lifted from you and in your souls you shall have rest. Believe that the Father speaks through me and believe that I speak of the Father. All that the Father knows is known to us as we need it if we but put all our trust in Him. If you receive me, not as a mere righteous man but as a prophet, I shall unfold God's truth to you as He wants it unfolded. You do not see the Father, and you will not see Him, unless He is unfolded to you in ways that you can understand. But as you can see me and understand me I can give you the peace you yearn for. Take your eyes off that which binds you, burdens you, saddens you, for it will but absorb you and bind you the more. Focus your eyes instead on God and the will of God. Whatever you have lost you have lost through bondage to sin or greed or lust. Sometimes you may feel that all is lost. Fear not, little ones. Lose yourselves in the will of God and all will be found." He reached down and picked up an olive leaf.

"There was never a leaf that came to bud, there was never a flower that came to blossom and fell to the ground without the Father's knowing it. Only as the flower obeys the Father's will shall it be immortal. He who would cling to the old, the past life, which is fading and going, and tries to save that life, is forever losing it.

"As you go with the Father's will and not against it, and move even as the sun rises in the morning to bring day, you will be forever rising to eternal day. Darkness will never engulf you. For wherever you go, you will be living, moving and having your being in the Father where there will be nothing but day. Then you will be experiencing the light of the will of God who is the ALL LIGHT. But if you think only of mammon and never of God, then the light that is in you will become darkness, and great will be the darkness. But fear not, little children, for it is the Father's good will to give you the Kingdom. Therefore, seek to know Him and all these lesser things will be added unto you. Love Him, little children, with all your mind, all your heart, all your strength and all your soul, and if you love Him enough, He and you will become one. Inasmuch as you give unto the Father, He will give unto you, and with the love that you love Him He will love you. Love Him, then, with wholeness, and He will love you with such wholeness that He shall make you whole and will give you the power to make others whole. Love Him with perfection and He will love you with such perfection that He shall make you perfect, and through your forgiveness you will help to make others perfect. Love Him with freedom from the world's limitations and He will free you from the world's limitations and give you the power to set others free. For there is nothing that God gives that is not to be shared with others, and indeed, there is nothing that God gives that can be retained unless it is so shared. When that time comes, you need only ask, believing, for this mountain to be cast into the sea, and behold it will be moved. For verily, verily I say unto you, that whatsoever you in faith ask of the Father, the same shall be done, and what you ask in heaven will indeed be done on earth."

## CHAPTER 11

### A WOMAN OF SYCHAR

THREE DAYS we remained in Jerusalem. On the afternoon of the third Cleopas left for his own city in Peraea. He begged me to go with him and meet his wife and family but this I declined as I wanted to be with Jesus when he departed for Capernaum the following afternoon.

"At least come with me part way," he concluded. "There is a lovely little inn on the Damascus road where we can spend the night, and you can return here in the forenoon before Jesus leaves for Galilee."

The lure of the Damascus road settled it. So, late in the afternoon we started on our way. It was growing dark when we reached the inn, but the torches and glowing lamps, gave it a cheery atmosphere. The innkeeper himself, an old friend of Cleopas, spread almost as much light as did the torches.

"Cleopas, my friend!" he exclaimed. "How long I have wanted to see you. Come dine as my special guest. I have much to tell you, and I think your comrade would enjoy the hearing."

It seemed that most that he had to tell was of the depredations of brigands that had waylaid travelers on this lonely road. The only incident that I recall vividly was the following:

"One dark night when the wind was blowing a tempest," he said, "there came a loud knocking upon the door of the inn. When I opened it, a Samaritan stumbled in carrying a terribly beaten up Jew on his shoulder. The poor fellow was pretty far gone, but after we had worked over him a bit he came to. 'What happened?' I asked. All the helpless victim could say was 'Thieves,' and he went unconscious again. Surely he would have died had not that Samaritan stayed with him all night. While he massaged him and applied oil to his wounds and hot packs to his bruised places, he kept repeating until, bless my heart, it became so imprinted on my memory that I shall never forget it: 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing.'"

"In the morning when the wounded man had regained consciousness and was beginning to mend, the Samaritan opened his purse and paid me for the night's lodging and then added, 'Take care of him, and whatever you spend more, when I come again I will repay you.'"

The next morning Cleopas went on his way and I returned to Jerusalem. It was about noon when I arrived and I hurried at once to the house where Nathanael and John were staying.

"I am sorry," said the old housekeeper. "But they all left early this morning for Galilee."

I knew they were leaving that day but Nathanael had assured me it would be late in the afternoon. A great emptiness came upon me. My disappointment was so keen that it showed on my face.

"Don't worry," said the old lady, "They will come back some time."

"But I want them now. Can you tell me which way they went?"

"There is only one road, unless—," she hesitated, "unless they take the road that goes through Samaria. It is shorter. If they should go that way and you took the other, you would never catch up with them."

I thanked her and hurried on. As I started down the winding road, the same one upon which, with the Twelve, I had so happily come to Jerusalem, I felt as a lost little child must feel. All the compassion of my heart went out to all the lost ones everywhere. Was not the world filled with lost souls—little ones separated from the Great One—from their Protector—from their Saviour?

Fortunately the road that led to Galilee was downhill. I took advantage of this and walked with great speed. Loneliness still hung over me like a pall. More and more it clung and beset me as I knew it always would from now on whenever I was apart from Jesus. Was I growing to depend upon him too much? When I returned to the twentieth century would I be able to live without him? I smiled at the foolishness of such questioning. Of course I would carry him always with me then. For then he would have

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risen to the Father and come down again in the form of the Holy Spirit and I would know his abiding presence. But here in Palestine, in this hour and place, I felt a terrible need to be close to the person of Jesus.

Deep in my heart there was a little resentment that Nathanael or John had not left word of their change in plans. It must have shown in my face, for every man I met darkened and scowled back at me. It came to me that they, too, were lost souls and more to be pitied than I, for they were even traveling in the wrong direction! This realization brought a great repentance to me. "Forgive me, Father!" I whispered, "for I truly did not know what I was doing." My heart lightened, my face brightened, and the road ahead became easier. People who passed smiled at me.

Finally when I came toward one whose smile was especially radiant I stopped him with the query, "Did you see thirteen men going toward Galilee whose leader carried a light in his face?"

"I certainly did!" he exclaimed, and his own countenance glowed as he spoke. "But I was up early this morning hours and hours ago. I was helping my father in the wheat field."

"Then there is no chance of overtaking them before they reach Galilee, I suppose."

"Oh, they weren't going through Galilee. At the bend down yonder they turned off the main thoroughfare to the road that leads through Samaria."

"To Samaria!" I thought. "Now I am sure I will lose them, for I don't know the road to Samaria."

"Are you sure they took the Samaritan road?"

"I stood and stared after them," he asserted. "I was so surprised they would dare take that road, for it leads by way of enemies of our nation. Jews and Samaritans have nothing to do with each other."

"Can you direct me? Are you sure I won't miss it?"

"You can't miss it. It is the first one leading off to the left, down there where the road turns, a rough, rocky, God-forsaken road that leads straight to the God-forsaken city of Sychar."

"Oh thank you," I exclaimed and was on my way with redoubled speed.

And there near Sychar I found Jesus. In a large clearing just outside the city he was completing a vivid parable of the Kingdom, but no one seemed to be giving him much attention. As he finished, one on the edge of the crowd remarked scornfully, "The woman said he told her all her past life; all that she ever did. We expected some thrills, but all we got was this trite stuff about loving one another."

"Bah! Time wasted," was his companion's comment.

"Young men," it was an old man speaking, "you are both wrong. The soundest wisdom rings trite to the shallow mind, and time wasted in the presence of a prophet is time saved in the sight of God."

The crowd dispersed, and I found myself beside the disciples.

"One at least caught the message," said John, and his eyes were following the old man limping away with his cane.

"But he is the only one," said Thomas. "Yes, I'll wager he is the only one."

Jesus moved away from the clearing. We followed. Matthew, walking by my side, said, "I'm afraid Thomas is right. Here Jesus can do no great work because of their unbelief. The people are seeking only outer miracles—they are seeking only some magic trick for creating crops through sorcery and other unseen powers. They care not for righteousness nor for love, and they are easily offended by us disciples because we are all Jews."

I soon saw that the disciples were not helping Jesus here. They returned the anger directed at them and were frankly irked at many things they saw the Samaritans do. It was then that I realized that Jesus could only work from within out as does the vine whose sap flows into the branches that naturally belong to it.

Matthew was again speaking. "I think Jesus will leave early tomorrow. I have often heard him say, 'From now on I shall come only unto the lost sheep of the tribe of Israel.' "

"It is not because he cannot let his heart go out to strangers," spoke up John, who was walking on the other side. "It is because the strangers will not let their hearts go out to him. Growth can come only through organic processes from vine to branch and from branch to leaf. It cannot leap from one vine to another, unless the roots be of the same parentage and united under the soil."

"Yes," said Matthew, "It was only as Andrew called Peter, and Peter called his wife, and his wife called the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, that Jesus' party grew, and never have I seen any group grow more like the vines and trees and shrubs of the field—from a seed into an ever-increasing plant of life."

But when the disciples with Jesus were making their camp in a field outside the city before leaving the area of Sychar, and its cold, forbidding group of halfbreed people, despised by and despising the Jews, there came by night the woman who first met Jesus at the well. She did not see me, lying near where he was sitting, for he had not yet pulled his robe over him to sleep. She went right to him, sat down at his feet, and put her hand in his.

"Blessed One," she said, "it came to me while I was listening to you this afternoon that you were speaking about me. It came to me then that you have been speaking about me all the time since you came to Sychar. Your parable of the woman and her leaven, of the woman who lost her coin and sought for it, of the importunate widow who persuaded the judge to avenge her—that woman was me, just me, and no other. When it burst upon me that you were directing all your words to me, I felt you were reproaching me and I was angry. I felt my face grow red and I thought everyone in the crowd knew that it was me you were talking about—until Deborah afterwards told me it was she you were talking about, and after a while Hannah, a neighbor, came to me and said someone must have told you her secret life. Then I knew you were a prophet and all my heart went out to you. I can see now why you spoke as you did and I love you for it. You want so badly to save us that you spent this day trying to reach us."

Tears were in her eyes. "I came to tell you not to tarry—at least not for me. I am not worth it. I am cold and dead. My heart is sold out to the fires of wickedness. All day I feared my people might rise and hurt you, and I would not have you hurt. I couldn't bear to see the hurt look come into your eyes when you knew I was failing you."

"Woman," he said, "henceforth you shall never fail me."

"Blessed One," she said, in tones of adoration as she bent and kissed his hand, "I am not worthy to speak with you, much less to kiss your hand. But please, please stay one day longer. I know you can do something for us that has never been done before. Hannah and Deborah and I will be out there in the crowd praying for the heavens to open and for all to know that you are a prophet sent from God." And without another word she vanished into the night. Thomas Didymus and John Barzebedee, who were lying beside me, both raised themselves on their elbows, deeply moved by what they had heard.

"Do you still doubt," John whispered, "that he is the Messiah?"

"All I know," Thomas replied, "is that he is a true son of God!"

## CHAPTER 12

### DISCOVERING THE GOOD SAMARITAN

THE NEXT MORNING a delegation from the city of Sychar visited Jesus. Their leader was a man of great learning. "Your parables yesterday made a deep impression upon some of us. We have come to plead with you to spend one more day with us. We can promise you a smaller but more devoted group of listeners if you stay. We liked your parable of the four fields of grain. You found some hard ground and some rugged tares in the crowd yesterday, but we think we can find you some good ground for the planting today."

Andrew asked, "What other parables did you like?"

"Oh, the one about Jacob's well," chimed in several.

"Yes," said their leader. "You see, it is very deep. It takes a long time for a bucket to go down and be drawn up. That is the way with our worship. We have so many feasts and ceremonies, so much doctrine and creed, and God seems so very far away. You told us that God is a loving Father, quick in mercy, eager to help, and ever ready to forgive."

And now Jesus was speaking. "Our prophet Isaiah said, 'When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make of the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.'"

The Samaritan leader caught him up eagerly. "Yesterday you said that everyone that drank of the water you would give him shall never thirst. You told us that if we would stop digging in the ruins of paganism and would sink a shaft straight to the God of Love who abides eternally within us we would have a well of water springing up to eternal life. Tell us more about this water of life."

"It is nothing but Love," said Jesus, "Love of God and Love of men. But it must not stop halfway. You must love God with all your mind and heart and soul and strength. And you must love your neighbor even as you love yourself. Is it so hard for you Samaritans to understand this?"

"Yes, because we bury our religion under so many forms that our God of Love is lost. Over seven hundred years ago the Israelites were evacuated from here and bands from Assyria—our ancestors—came in. We believed in many gods. Five hundred years ago we adopted as the basis of our religion the five books of Moses and thought at last we had found our true God. Some of us have even read your prophets.

"But you were right in the other parable you told us yesterday. You said we were like a woman who had had five husbands and the man we were living with now was not our husband. As long as our religion is clogged up with pagan ceremonies and our hearts are filled with hate for the Jews we are actually living in spiritual adultery."

"Come," said Jesus, "take me into the city and bring me only those who, like you, truly hunger and thirst after righteousness, and I will give them the water of life they seek. For again our prophets said, 'Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters . . . Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live . . . Seek ye the Lord while he may be found . . . For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways . . . My word that goeth forth out of my mouth shall not return unto me void but it shall accomplish . . . and shall prosper.' Follow this admonition of the prophets and you will find joy, peace and the kingdom of heaven."

As we were going into the city, their spokesman leading the way with Jesus, I noticed that our little procession had fallen into a unique pattern, each Jew walking with a Samaritan. I thought to myself how wonderful it would be if all the world might find the artesian well of God's Love and Harmony. Then opposing groups could walk side by side toward the perfect solution of all their problems.

My thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the Samaritan next to me.

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"Our spokesman," he said, "is the living example of everything Jesus teaches. Whenever he meets anyone in need—even a Jewish rabbi or a Roman soldier—he binds up his wounds or pays his debts and forgives his mistakes."

"If you have a man like that in your midst," I assured him, "just one man who really lives this religion of Love, then I know the message of Jesus today will bring a rich harvest to all."

Indeed this turned out to be amazingly true. I never saw a more intent and eager group of listeners than the little band that heard him that day. The woman of the well was there with Hannah and Deborah and perhaps a hundred other souls—men and women. Jesus closed his teaching with these words: "You have been confused even as the Jews have been confused. It is not *where* you worship (neither Jerusalem, nor in your sacred mountain) but how you worship. Every heart can be a shrine. Your worship must be in Spirit and in Truth. The Jews are more right in that they have tried to keep the Truth unadulterated. You must find the Truth too. And that Truth is that God is a God of Love, giver of every good and perfect gift, in whom there is no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning."

When he had ended speaking, the leader of the little band of Samaritans arose and said, "Friends, we have never heard anyone speak as this one spoke. Perhaps he is the one that can redeem the world." Then raising his hand as though pronouncing a benediction he said in a clear, melodious voice, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing. Amen."

And as I looked at the leader embracing Jesus, all the love in my heart flowed out and flooded over him. At last the parable of the good Samaritan had taken on new meaning. And I could almost hear Jesus profess, "I have not seen such faith, no not in Israel."