

Gospel Stories 'Servant Woman' monologues

Originally written for worship at the Place for Hope 'Gathering in Glasgow on Conflict and Faith' October 2019.

© Jo Love, WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G5 9JP, Scotland

1 **Luke 5:1-11; 27-32 Calling of the fishermen & tax collector.**

*Table fully covered with a large cloth to floor level
Fishing net/floats on floor to one side of table
Abacus to other side*

In at the deep end!

That's the understatement for the new Rabbi in town.
Well, when I say new Rabbi, I mean Jesus,
the Nazareth carpenter turned Rabbi.

So he's started gathering some followers.
Not in the usual way, though.
Not waiting to attract some of the respectable synagogue brigade with his teaching.
Nope!

(moving to fishing visuals)

Straight to the lakeside and into our Simon's boat
while the boys are busy washing their nets.

I don't know what the Rabbi said to them about religion,
but next thing is he's telling fishermen how to fish!
And before you scoff – like I did –
let me tell you, they got a catch.

The thing is, our Simon is not your timid, self-effacing type – oh no! –
but when he saw those bulging nets...
he was... overcome.

And the Rabbi says, 'Come with me'
and all four of them went.

Then late this afternoon,
they're all trooping past the tax booth,

(moving to tax booth visuals)

averting their eyes as usual,
except for Jesus,
who stops, goes right over to the booth and says to the taxman,
'Come with me.'

A taxman joining a bunch of fishermen? Aye right!
A bunch of fishermen welcoming a taxman? No chance.
But before you scoff – like the entire neighbourhood did –
the word is that tonight, the taxman is throwing a dinner for the fledgling Team Jesus.
And I have been roped in for serving and washing up.

Well. this is going to be good!
Will any of them come?
Will they really sit at the one table?

What are you up to, Jesus?
In at the deep end...
in up to your neck!

Watch this space...

.....

2 **After the dinner at Levi's home**

Table fully covered with a large cloth to floor level
Fishing basket/net/floats on floor by one chair
Abacus/papyrus scroll/money bag on table in front of other chair

Levi.
The taxman's got a name. Levi.
I actually found him quite likable.
He paid us servants pretty well!
Bit of grumbling around the table about where his money comes from of course...!
But they all survived dinner.

The boys *all* came –
Simon and Andrew and James and John –
bringing backup too, a bunch more pals from the boats.
Some of Levi's cronies came too.
Reinforcements for both sides.

But they did it. They sat down together.
Jesus took the lead, but they did it, they shared this table.
He's a pretty good host, Levi.
And we cooked up our best and kept it coming –
meat and veg, good wine, plenty of refills...
and clearing away and bringing in more.

You could feel the tension easing the more they talked.
There was even laughter.

Who would have thought it.
Are they really going to stick together though?
I think Jesus is being a bit naïve...
They're going to be up against lots of complaining and criticism.

The Pharisees got wind of it right away
and showed up outside the house.
No surprises their take on it.
A Rabbi mixing with the unclean.
Explain yourself, Jesus!
All he would say was
it's not folk who are well who need a doctor.

I don't know what cures he thinks he's bringing us.
But I saw what I saw round this table tonight.
What next...?

3

LUKE 7:36-50 Pharisees & Woman

*Table fully covered with a large cloth to floor level
Perfume, oil, dusty sandals added to other items*

Well well, after the Pharisees *complaining* who Jesus keeps company with,
now they're keeping company with him themselves...

Were they hoping for a respectable occasion this time,
maybe a chance to remind him
of the accepted ways, the accepted people,
for a dinner party.

Oh my!

They didn't reckon on Ariella gate crashing.
She had heard about Jesus sitting down with the tax collectors,
not that she sat down with him exactly, but fell at his feet...
touching him, washing him, kissing him, his feet that is,
but oh my goodness, nobody knew where to look.
No loud complaining this time though,
but a silent, seething outrage...

And what does Jesus do?

He tells them that this notorious woman
has been more hospitable to him
than the owner of the house!
No welcoming kiss, no water for his feet,
no oil for his head...
A Pharisee shown up for his little love, Ariella for her devotion,
even declared forgiven by God.
How does Jesus dare to say such things?

Well Jesus, is this what you wanted?
Attracting *women* to your side?
It's not just the other 'working women'
who are glad to hear
of your close encounters with Ariella.

It's all of us, yes, me too...

Is there a place here for us?

4 **LUKE 10:38-42 Martha & Mary**

*Table fully covered with a large cloth to floor level
Large saucepan, wooden spoon, kitchen apron & colourful woman's shawl/scarf
draped from table to floor - added to other items*

Dear oh dear,
make up your mind, Jesus.
One minute you care about good hospitality,
the next minute you don't.

So just when I thought there was hope for womankind,
the Bethany sisters are squabbling again.
Blood is thicker than water?
But water is a sight more refreshing!

Why do families get so complicated?
Becoming a Rabbi
hasn't smoothed the trouble of still being a son and brother.
It doesn't look like Jesus can sort out anyone else's family strife either.

Is this where the table creaks and groans?
Is this where the empty chairs shout their final failure?

Fishermen and tax collectors,
Pharisees and prostitutes,
Men and women,
your work is cut out for you, Jesus,
but I thought you were getting through...
now I'm not so sure.

Siblings.
Not just any siblings, but your best friends.
And you took sides!

Or were you siding
with something more important
even than family?

Now there's a thought...

.....

5 **LUKE 22:7-13 preparing for the Passover meal**

*Table fully covered with a large cloth to floor level
Bread, wine - added to the other items*

Ah, here's the place.
Here's where they'll celebrate.
Nothing much for me to do, for once.
He's trained them well, has Jesus,
telling the *boys* to get everything ready!

Boys...?

Listen to me.

They're not boys any longer...
and they've learned a lot more
than how to prepare a Passover dinner.

How long is it now since they left their boats
and Levi walked away from his booth,
and Philip and Bartholomew joined them,
and Thomas, Judas, James and Simon...
not to mention the women and the hangers-on like me!

Who would have guessed
that the carpenter turned Rabbi
would be such a game-changer?

He's a prophet... a healer... and he's some storyteller!
But he hasn't wanted the glory, the limelight, no,
he's modelled what he's about, mentoring his team.

Ah but still they argue and fall out and don't 'get' him.
He hasn't won them all...
but we're still here, still together... Team Jesus.

And here we are – Festival time!
Please God, a peaceful dinner...

.....

6 **LUKE 22: 14-38 Last Supper and going onward**

Table as earlier but bread broken in bits, scattered.

(sounding utterly exhausted, despondent and bewildered)

Happy Passover, everyone.

What was all that about?

One of us is going to betray him?
Who? And why would we?
And what does he think we're going to do?

Does he mean me?

Or him, or her, or who?
We all felt it, we all know we are capable of it...
is it me?

Oh well, nothing like rehashing an old argument to break the tension –
“who’s the greatest?”

(exasperated)
Oh brother,
how many times has Jesus said it, shown it,
got down at your feet with a basin and towel –
the greatness that has no need of power;
no desire to grasp control, no thought to lording it over you.

Then he was back to the betrayal talk –
but to Peter, in front of everyone,
Peter! The last one capable of it –
“You’ll say you don’t know me *three times* before dawn!”

What??!

And after all his example of never relying on money, possessions or weapons,
suddenly he says, “*Take* a purse, a bag, a sword!”
and my goodness, two of them pull swords!
Where did they get them?
“Here, Lord!”
“ENOUGH!”

What was all that about?
What’s got into him?

The authorities are closing him on him, that’s what.
He knows it.

(Moving to table, picking up a piece of bread, looking at it, long pause.)

“Remember me.”

(Putting bread down.)

Jesus, don’t let us forget.
Don’t let us give up.

Keep us together.
Keep us coming back to the table...
Keep us...