

Then Came The Morning – A Message of Hope

CAST

Woman I (Woman at the well)
Man I
Mary Magdalene
Peter
Martha
Woman II (Woman with the issue of blood)
Thomas

SETTING

Seven people enter, each with a candle lit. The candles should all be different... And except for them, the stage should feel dark... like it is night. They should sit on stools or chairs, maybe on top of a barrel, a box, a small stepladder... all very casual.

The whole point of what they say is to convey hope to people who are in similar situations to theirs. They can be in Biblical dress. It is important that they interact with each other, but that they also are constantly aware of the audience, as though this is a conversation with them as well.

As each character blows out his candle, the stage, instead of getting darker, should get a little lighter, so that by the end, it is morning.

THOMAS

Hello.

I'm so glad you could be here with us. We have some important and exciting things to share with you. I hope you'll listen closely.

WOMAN II

Yes, that's so important. You may think you already know our stories, and so as we introduce ourselves, you may be tempted to tune out. I pray you won't. Because even though you may have read what happened in our lives, you really don't know us.

MAN I

We're hoping that you'll feel what it was like to live in the darkness some of us lived in.

MARTHA

Maybe you'll be touched somehow with the sadness and grief we felt because you've felt that same thing too.

PETER

Perhaps you've only thought of us as names on the pages of the Bible. Yet we were just like you... with hopes and dreams and hurts and disappointments we carried around... just like you.

MARY

We'll try to be brief and to tell you our stories simply. And we're hoping that the songs you'll hear will make what we're saying more meaningful.

WOMAN I

(interrupting) Could I say something? Have you noticed how many times already we have used the word “hope?” We hope you’ll listen. We hope you’ll understand. We had hopes. (to audience) You have hopes.

THOMAS

Well, of course, that’s the whole point, isn’t it. This is a story about hope.

WOMAN II

How some of us had lost it...

MARTHA

How we tried to cling to it...

MAN I

How hope seemed completely futile...

PETER

And really... what kind of life can you have if you don’t have any hope?

THOMAS

Ah... but then Jesus gave hope back to us!

(They all agree.)

WOMAN I

May I tell my story first?

MARTHA

I never get tired of hearing you tell it!

WOMAN I

Because... unlike some of you... I HAD hope. Oh yes... in spite of everything I’d been through and everything I’d done... I kept hoping. I had been married five times... and I was living with a man who wasn’t my husband... but I kept hoping... hoping that the next man would finally really love me.

You thought I was just wild... just a sinful woman with no morals at all. That’s what everyone in my town thought too. Everyone thought I was worthless and hopeless.

Don’t tell me you haven’t been there? Have you never made stupid choices in your life because you just wanted someone to love you and make you feel special?

That’s who I was and what I was the day I met Jesus at the well. He talked to me like I was... **somebody**. He listened to me like what I thought and felt mattered. He answered my questions. He didn’t just want something **from** me. (She almost laughs.) It turned out that He wanted something **for** me. He knew exactly who I was and what I had done... and that should have scared me to death. But instead, it turned out that even though he knew my worst, He loved me. I believed Him. I trusted Him. And that day, I took all my hopes, and put them on Him! (She blows out her candle and sits down.)

HE COMES TO US WITH LOVE

MARTHA

Like I said, I never get tired of hearing that story. It was just so like the Master to take time for people that other people ignored or despised.

PETER

He was always doing that, wherever we went. Sometimes, I remember, it made me so impatient. We'd be in a hurry to get somewhere in time for the evening meal, and Jesus would just stop and spend time with anybody we met along the road.

THOMAS

It might be some leper or some beggar.

PETER

A Roman... a Gentile ... or a bunch of little kids. He'd stop for anybody.

THOMAS

(laughing at Peter) Believe me, Peter, the rest of knew how impatient you would get! You were always in a hurry... always charging full steam ahead... exactly where, we weren't sure. But we always said, the poor fish didn't have a chance when you went out fishing for them!

PETER

I was that way, wasn't I, Thomas. (Turning to the audience) I'd guess I'm not the only one. Lots of you... oh you're so busy with all the important stuff you've got to do and places you've got to go... you charge right over people who seem to be in your way.

MAN I

(raising his hand) I was one of those people... a guy that other people ignored. It was almost like I didn't exist. What could I do for anybody? I was blind. You talk about feeling hopeless... that's how I felt. I was completely helpless... dependent on other people to feed me, shelter me, take me anywhere I went.

Even so, I was better off than some. I did have some people who cared about me, and they were the ones who brought me to Jesus that day he was in Bethsaida. They told me they had heard this man had actually made cripple people walk again. People who had been deaf could now hear! And people who were possessed by some kind of demon... he had made them sane and normal and given them peace!

Did I dare to hope he could help me? (to the audience) Some of you feel just like that, don't you. Light... any kind of light in your life... seems impossible and you've been disappointed too many times. You're afraid to risk hoping again.

I felt His hand take my hand and He began leading me. He touched my eyes and He as He put His hands on me, He said, "Can you see anything now?"

The light... the light was amazing... so bright... and I squinted and tried to look. I said, "I see people! They look like trees walking around."

Then Jesus put those strong, carpenter's hands on my eyes again... and this time when I opened them... I could see everything perfectly! (He blows out his candle.)

HE TOUCHED ME

MARY MAGDALENE

Hearing these stories does take me back to the wonder of those days we spent with Jesus.

WOMAN II

How I wish I could have spent more time with him than I did.

PETER

I've gone over every moment so many times... as John wrote, there are so many things that have never been told, all the books in the world couldn't hold them! We were so filled with hope. How could we not be?

THOMAS

Peter, remember the day He blessed those five little loaves of bread and the two little fish and then told us to hand out the food to the people?

PETER

(They both laugh heartily throughout all these next memories) Oh... I can just picture the look on your face as we kept reaching into the basket and more food kept coming. You were so shocked! Mr. I Don't Believe Anything I Can't See With My Own Yes...

THOMAS

Well what about that afternoon when the Master was teaching and we looked up and someone was dismantling the roof of the house to get to him?

PETER

Oh... oh... and that night in the boat when He came walking on the water and we thought He was a ghost!

THOMAS

And you jumped out of the boat and started heading toward him and then you started sinking and almost drowned! (He is laughing very hard at this.)

PETER

(stops laughing) Hey... now that wasn't funny!

THOMAS

(wiping the tears away and getting control of himself) Oh right... right. I guess not. It just sure seems funny now. (He laughs again.)

PETER

One of my favorite memories is of that last Passover meal we shared with Him. That was such a special evening. And now when I think about each detail... the way He wrapped the towel around His waist and got down on His knees and washed our feet... the way He gave thanks for the bread and said it was His body, broken for us... and how He said the wine was His blood poured out for us... I didn't get it then. But now, it all means so much to me.

That night, that dark, horrible night... when I failed him so miserably, was too painful to think about for a long time. I can't imagine anyone feeling more hopeless than I felt then. But then... (to audience) I guess some of you have failed Him too. You talked and great game and you had wonderful intentions. But when push came

to shove... you blew it. You've been told He forgives you... but you can't forgive yourself. Yes... yes, I still remember. (He blows out his candle.)

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

THOMAS

You know, I've always wondered about something, Mary.

MARY MAGDALENE

What is it?

THOMAS

We all ran... in the garden when the soldiers came... we ran for our lives, scared to death. And most of us went into hiding. But you... you and the other women who followed Him and loved Him so much... you went all the way to the cross.

MARY MAGDALENE

(touching his arm lightly) Oh Thomas, that's simple to explain. I had nothing to lose. Have you forgotten who I was when He found me... the way I was tormented day and night with demons that had taken hold of me? The only worth... the only peace and happiness I'd ever had was after I met Him.

(to audience) I can sense that sometimes in people I meet. I feel the misery coming from deep inside them. Some of you here today... I feel it from you. You know you have no hope unless who He claimed to be and what You've heard He did is true.

It is true. You don't have to be afraid. The only thing you have to fear is not following Him. (She blows out her candle.)

THE DEBT

THOMAS

Those were dark, lonely days. All our hopes for the Kingdom... they were gone. All we had dreamed about Messiah saving us... ended. Our dear Master... all of His power to heal... all of His compassion and goodness... crucified. Dead and buried.

MARTHA

I wasn't there, and yet I know how it was. In fact, it was the second time in a very short time that someone I loved so dearly had been buried.

WOMAN II

It was your brother, yes?

MARTHA

Yes... our dear brother Lazarus. When he got sick, my sister Mary and I were so sure the Master would arrive to make everything all right. After all, Jesus had healed so many people. Why I had no doubt, he would rush to us and heal His dear friend Lazarus. But He didn't. Lazarus died and we buried him... and still Jesus had not come.

WOMAN II

Were you angry?

MARTHA

I was hurt. Disappointed. So confused. And so very sad. (looking at the audience) You know how it was, don't you. You've believed, you've prayed, you've trusted. And He doesn't answer the way you thought He would. Oh yes, I've been there.

When Jesus finally arrived, I ran to meet him and with all the faith I could muster up, I said, "If you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died." Oh sure, I believed I would see Lazarus again... in the resurrection. And I told Jesus that. That's when Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life."

I thought about that when He was crucified. And maybe of all people, Mary and Lazarus and I had hope even then. Cause you see, even when things don't make sense and when you can see no possible hope... you can keep believing.

I can't explain everything He does, but I can tell you this much from experience... You can't really appreciate how beautiful morning is, until you live through midnight. (She blows out her candle.)

THEN CAME THE MORNING

THOMAS

(to Woman II) I'm afraid we haven't given you much chance to talk.

WOMAN II

Oh, that's all right, Thomas. After all, you walked with him for three years. You were there for it all! I barely crossed paths with him.

THOMAS

But I remember that day very well.

WOMAN II

Do you? That's strange to me. My intention all along was to remain unknown and unseen. I simply wanted to get near enough to... to...

THOMAS

To touch him? We were so used to the crowds pressing in to touch Him. It was crazy sometimes.

WOMAN II

I didn't even need that. I just wanted to touch something that was His... the edge of His robe... something...

THOMAS

When Jesus stopped suddenly and said, "Who touched me?" I remember we were amazed. Hundreds of people were pushing and shoving, and He says, "Someone touched me."

WOMAN II

I was so frightened to be singled out of the crowd. But at the same time I was desperate. I wonder how many people are here today who know that feeling. (to audience) Maybe you're trapped by something... addiction, guilt, a past you can't outrun, a crushing burden no one knows you're carrying right now. You can reach out... just reach out for Him and He'll be there. He won't let you down. (She blows out her candle.)

RISE AND BE HEALED

THOMAS

I guess I'm the only one left. You might find my story strange. In some ways, I guess hope came hardest for me. His crucifixion... well, I didn't think I could survive it.

I remember so well the day the others found me and said, "We've seen the Lord! He's alive!"

I couldn't believe it. I wouldn't believe it. It was so horrible when He died, but I faced it and I had gotten through it. I wasn't going to get my hopes up only to have them crushed again. I said, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

What was I so afraid of?

What about you? There are plenty of people who will tell you Jesus is alive. He is who He claims to be. He won't disappoint you. He knows you and He loves you. He forgives you. But you say, "No... no, I can't believe it."

The next week, we were all in the room with the doors locked. Suddenly, there Jesus was, right in front of me. He said, "Peace be with you!" Then He turned to me and held His hands out and said, "Put your finger here. Reach out your hand and touch my side. Stop doubting and believe."

That's my final word to you today. You can stop doubting. You can rest. You can have peace and certain hope. You can turn to Jesus and simply say what I said to Him that morning: "My Lord and my God!" (He blows out his candle... and now the stage is bright with the light of morning.)

HAIL JESUS/LORD YOU ARE HOPE/ALL HAIL THE POWER