



### **The Collect**

#### *Easter Even*

**G**RANT, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with him; and that through the grave, and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection; for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us, the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. 35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. 36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. 37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced. (John 19:31-37)

### **THE GREAT SABBATH**

In order to redeem us from our sins, it was necessary that Jesus be perfect in obedience to the Law of Moses. He never failed in that obligation and, therefore, remained the only One born of woman able to save us. He never took His Father's name in vain, honored His Father (in heaven AND on earth) & mother, never told a lie, never stole, never killed or hurt, never committed adultery, never coveted, and always kept the Sabbath Day according to the Law. Jesus even kept the Sabbath during his time in the Garden Tomb.

We are told that the women were most faithful in remaining at the cross and then the Tomb on the eve prior to the Sabbath (Friday afternoon). *And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's children.* (Matt 27:55-56) We know that Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John even remained at the foot of the cross. These same women were courageous in following Christ, even in death, to the Garden Tomb. *And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.* (Matt 27:61) These kept watch as long as possible prior to the beginning of Sabbath about 6 PM. (Friday evening). When the constraint of time dictated that they retire to keep Sabbath, they went to their lodgings. There they must have been tortured in their minds over the events of the crucifixion. Mary Magdalene must have remembered, with profuse sorrow and tears – for she had shed many in times past – on that very sad and mournful Sabbath Saturday.

These women had watched every detail of the burial of Christ how two powerful men (Joseph of Arimathea & Nicodemus of the Sanhedrin) had laid Christ in a new Tomb to conform with scripture prophecy. The Tomb was, interestingly, hewn out of a rock with only one possible entrance – otherwise completely secure. Interesting also is the fact that the Rock of our Salvation Himself was placed in a tomb hewn out of a rock. Noteworthy as well is the fact that both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had previously been 'secret' disciples, but now came openly in the face of danger to claim the body of Christ. In every instance from the moment that Nicodemus came to Christ under cover of darkness, the Scripture thereafter ALWAYS refers to Nicodemus at the one "which at first came by night." That is the emboldening influence of Christ on true believers. We assume a courage that we never had before. Now, the women watched carefully and marked the Garden Tomb for a prompt visit as soon as Sabbath was past.

There was much mischief afoot in Jerusalem in those days (times never change, do they?) , yet Mary Magdalene, a defenseless woman, made her way through those dark streets, outside the gates, and to the Garden Tomb while it was yet dark. It was an inexplicable love that drove her there. She went seeking a dead body to honor, but found a live Savior to worship! What do we learn of this love? **Firstly**, we learn that love comes EARLY! The human love of Mary was strong and early, but the divine love of Christ and His angels was even earlier. Though human love, touched by grace, is warm and sweet, it can never outrun the perfecting love of Christ. **Secondly**, Love is mighty and powerful. Though the love of a mother can move tremendous weights, the Love of God can move mountains, and open the rock hewn tombs of its object.

"Looking at some trouble lying  
In the dark and dread unknown,  
We, too, often ask with sighing,  
'Who shall roll away the stone?'

"But before the way was ended,  
Oft we've had with joy to own,  
Angels have from heaven descended,  
And have rolled away the stone."

**Thirdly**, we find that Love is comforting. Remember what the great angel said to Mary when she came to the opened Tomb? "*Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified* (Matt 28:5) The first word of angels to God's people is always, "Fear not!" They always bear messages of joy and evidence of hope: *He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.* (Matt 28:6) How difficult for human ears to believe the great hope of angels! *But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre* (John 20:11) Often our greatest sorrow comes when Jesus, unbeknownst to us, is standing at the ready by our sides. **Fourthly**, Love sends us outward to those who need to share in it. Mary Magdalene was the first to carry the full Gospel to the disciples. "Go tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead." Have you experienced that kind of love – the kind that compels you to go out and tell others that Jesus has risen?

**Fifthly**, Love gives promise. Love is overjoyed to tell of good news. "*He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him.*" Are you poor and without means? Christ has gone before you already for He "*had not where to lay His head.*" Have you been betrayed by a friend, or deserted by your bosom companions? Christ has preceded you there. "*All the disciples forsook Him.*" Have you been saddened by the passing of a friend or family member? Christ has preceded you there. "*Jesus therefore groaning in Himself cometh to the grave.*" (of Lazarus). Are you faced with the nearness of the 'shadow of death?' Jesus has preceded you there as well. "*He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*"

Christ died the death of the righteous. He arose on the third day and thereby made our way Light and Life. We no longer need fear death, for there is no death to those who love Christ. Today, we dress in the garb of a dark Sabbath. Tomorrow we shall wear the white robes of rejoicing. Are you ready?

### Night in the Garden

By Bishop Jerry Ogles

*Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons . John 18:3*

*Out of the darkest Halls of Hell  
Came the marchers with torches raised.  
Into the Garden quiet and still  
They wandered forlorn and crazed.*

*Up to the Sovereign Lord of Love  
Their spears shining bright in the mist*

*With arrogant air and a hateful shove  
They took Him who wouldn't resist.*

*Now to the head of Scribe and Priest  
Was the Savior led that night,  
And to Herod's Court and Pilate's Seat  
Where Right gave way to the Night.*

*To the craggy heights of the Lonely Skull  
They took Him and laid Him down  
And into His Hands of Love they drove  
Iron spikes with a terrible Sound!*

*On His Brow a thorny Crown He wore  
And His flesh was torn and bruised.  
His Heart of Grace grew cold and sore  
As the Spirit of Life was loosed.*

*The world of woe a Hope has found  
In the Promise made sure by His Death  
And the Saints of God with Faith abound  
In the Fields that their Lord has blessed!*