

This isn't the first time I've knelt here, at his feet.

My sister, Martha, hated it. She thought that when I was sitting at his feet, I was being lazy and selfish, like I was trying to get out of helping her with the chores. I wasn't trying to get out of anything. I just couldn't help it. I had to hear every word that Jesus said. I moved to be near him as desperately as a thirsty person moves towards water.

Even when my brother died, and Jesus wasn't there, and the cracks in my heart let in waves of doubt and anger and fear – even then, when Jesus finally came, I ran straight to him. I had to hear what he was going to say, because a part of me still believed he could make this terrible thing right.

So I fell at his feet and all my hurt came tumbling out of my mouth before I could stop it: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died!"

Jesus didn't respond with wisdom or comfort or hope. He wept. He wept for me. He wept for my sister. He wept for my brother. He wept because he loved us.

That would have been enough for me – to know that my teacher and lord saw us and felt our pain, that he was there with us in the depths of our suffering.

But then, through my tears, I saw him walk to my brother's tomb. I heard the sharp rumbling of stone against stone, and then suddenly the smell of death was in the air, and I knew that for some reason they had opened my brother's grave. I stood up and tried to stop crying, to get the tears out of my eyes. I was trying to see what they were doing. And then suddenly Jesus yelled: "Lazarus, come out!"

And as my vision cleared, the first thing I saw was my brother, standing in the door of his own tomb – alive.

Jesus's words were even more powerful than I had ever imagined.

After that Jesus had to go into hiding. Rumors started flying, and we know they are true: all the religious leaders are looking for their chance to kill him. He is causing too much of a stir. There are too many of us following him. The leaders are terrified that Rome will come with swords and fire, like they've done to so many other places in Israel when we Jews start getting too rebellious.

I would have believed that death would never touch Jesus, the one who had snatched my brother back from death's hands. I would have believed that with all my heart – if I hadn't heard what Jesus keeps saying.

*The Son of Man must suffer many things.*

*The Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death.*

*I lay down my life for my sheep.*

He's been telling us he's going to die for so long. I think we keep trying to ignore it. It's not what we want to hear. But Jesus' words are too true and too powerful. His words filled me with meaning and grace; his words raised my brother from the dead. I have to believe his words now, too, even though I don't want to.

Jesus is going to die.

I'm already weeping for him. I can barely sleep – imagining what he's going to suffer, imagining life without him here.

And tonight he came to dinner at our house. Lazarus was asking him questions about his favorite Torah stories; Martha was running back and forth between the kitchen and the table to make sure everyone's plates and cups were always full. Everyone was just acting like everything was normal. And I couldn't take it anymore.

I came running into the room with the most beautiful jar of oil I could find. I didn't even realize I was weeping until I was already here, back at Jesus' feet, tearing the lid off the jar and pouring the oil over his calloused skin. My eyes start blinking so fast, I can barely see – the smell of the nard is sharp and strong – but I just keep pouring, pouring, pouring until I'm weeping so hard that my arms can't hold the jar anymore.

I set it down, and then I see the oil still dripping off of Jesus' feet, into a puddle on the floor. It's too much, it's too much – and I don't have anything else, so I start to wipe his feet with my hair.

Through the sound of my panicky breathing, I hear Judas: "If she was going to waste all that fancy perfume, she should have sold it and given the money to the poor."

Guilt rips through me and I collapse on the floor at Jesus' feet.

But I feel a gentle hand on my head, and I hear Jesus stand up for me, like he always does. He's telling them all that I did the right thing. That I'm helping him prepare for his death.

I'm feeling too many emotions. I don't know what to do anymore – but I do the best thing I can think of. I remember Jesus' words, what he said at Lazarus' tomb.

*I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.*

I don't know what it means yet – but I believe. Lord, help me believe.