

As I watched my son on that cross, his whole life came back to me.

I remembered that moment when the angel came to me, giving me the good, and maybe a little scary news that I would be the mother of God's son. I remembered the joy and awe that I would be the one chosen to do that great task.

Of course, the cross wasn't the first time I had experienced hardships on behalf of my son. Trying to explain to Joseph that I was pregnant with God's son was one of the most difficult and terrifying moments of my life. Soon after he was born, we had to flee to Egypt so that Jesus would not be killed by King Herod... and who could ever forget the time we lost him in the temple, having to rush back in order to be sure that he was alive... we walked and looked for three days... THREE DAYS... and what was Jesus' response, ""Why were you searching for me?...Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Unbelievable. There was the time we traveled to see Jesus, his brothers and I, and we asked for him. He didn't come, but responded to those who carried our message to him, "Who are my mother and my brothers? Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

But, Jesus grew in wisdom. He became a respected rabbi. He had followers. He worked miracles... changing water into wine at that wedding celebration, healing the sick, walking on water, so many things. I wasn't always with him in those things, but word got back to me, you know. Like everyone else, I was always in awe of him.

And, I was often afraid for him. I knew that he had enemies. People who were jealous. People who thought he was too powerful. People who feared he was leading an insurrection. People who didn't understand him... and that, I understood, because all of us, even me, his own mother, never really fully understood Jesus. None of us really understood the death he would die... and the resurrection and life that was awaiting us.

I remember hearing the news. Jesus had been arrested. "What are the charges?" I asked others. Of course I knew there were no true charges. He claimed to be "King of the Jews." I tried to figure out where they had taken Jesus, but I wasn't able to get there.

Before I knew it, they were parading him down the street with his cross. Oh, my heart stopped when I first caught a glimpse of him. Bloodied. Bruised. He was so weak, so beaten, that he couldn't stand up. They pierced his forehead with a crown of thorns, and slammed nails into his hands, hanging him on the cross. My son. Hanging on a cross. Like a criminal. *With criminals.* My Son... the one who had loved them, taught them, fed them and healed them. A lot of mothers talk about feeling sad when people turn on their children and reject them. But, you have no idea. None. To watch an angry mob yell, "Crucify him." To watch people spit on him. To watch people feel glee over his suffering. I could barely stand as I watched. I wanted to run away and not look, but I couldn't move. I had to stay. Fortunately, some of the other women stayed with me.

You can imagine my surprise that in the middle of all of this commotion, I hear my son's voice calling out to me. "Women here is your son." Then to his disciple, he said, "Here is your

mother.” One final gift to me. Even as he was dying, he was showing love to me, providing for me.

I knew my Son was destined for greatness, but I didn't, I couldn't know how much this would be true. That day of horror would soon be changed to joy. My son would come back to life, overcoming death and the grave. That feat would change the world forever.

As you go through Lent, remember my son's sacrifice, remember my sacrifice. Don't let it drive you to feeling badly, but let it remind you of God's great love for you.

May that love carry you through all of life's storms and struggles.