

Joanna

“After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others.”
Luke 8: 1-3

My name in Greek is the feminine form of John. God is gracious enough to mention my name in scripture, along with my sisters Mary Magdalene and Susanna. Like my sister Mary Magdalene, Jesus cured me of some disease or demon possession and my life changed forever. Luke the doctor, who penned the gospel that shares my name, was such a devout young man when he was inspired by God to write. Some have said he was a perfectionist, so he interviewed each of us in order to make sure he had his facts straight. He was an originalist when it came to journalism, the truth was all that mattered to him.

As Luke shares, I was married to a man named Chuza (KOO zuh) who had an important position within Herod Antipas’ government, managing his business affairs. For this high position he was paid handsomely. Let me share with you some history about my husband’s boss. Herod Antipas is one of Herod the Great’s sons. Upon his father’s death (a whole sordid story on its own) Antipas became tetrarch, “ruler of a fourth part”ⁱ of his father’s kingdom, which was Galilee and Perea. My husband’s job was not an easy one. He had to continue to be a good employee despite the pitifully bad decisions Antipas made.

While married to his first wife, Antipas had an affair with the wife of his half-brother Philip I, her name was Herodias. Despite them both being married, they eloped. John the Baptist, who was “called a prophet of the Most High” who went “before the Lord to prepare a way for him” (Luke 1: 76) heard about this and “rebuked” them publicly (Luke 3: 20) and for this he was imprisoned. Herodias had a daughter, named Salome. Antipas and Herodias threw her a very elaborate birthday party and granted her a wish. Her wish, likely at the urging of her mother who “nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him” (Mark 6: 19) was “the head of John the Baptist...right now...on a platter” (Mark 6: 24-25). Despite “fearing John,” wanting to “protect him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man” (Mark 6:20) Herod (Antipas) fatefully granted her wish.

As you can imagine (scripture doesn’t tell us this), when my husband Chuza arrived home that night, he was distraught and knew that Antipas’ soul was in danger. I can’t quite remember when, but as a couple we agreed that with the financial gifts God had placed in our lives, and my healing miracle, we would support Jesus’ ministry. Thus, here I am happily serving in whatever way I can.

I witnessed many, many amazing things while serving our Lord and feel so blessed to have been an intimate part of the ministry. The most remarkable event occurred on the third day after Jesus' crucifixion. Listen to God describe what happened:

"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "why do you look for the living among the dead?" He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again." Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened." (Luke 24: 1-12)

Thank you for listening to my story. It cannot be overstated, that what I experienced in serving Jesus is not isolated to that time. The work continued, *"with great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them (us) all"* (Acts 4:33). The work of serving Jesus is just as important today. There are many souls to save and the Message of Jesus saving Grace we now lay in your hands, dear sisters.

Dearest Lord,

Thank you for sharing the story of Joanna who answered your call with, "thee I will serve." May her story through your word inspire us, despite our circumstances, to answer in the same way. Keep our hearts pure, forgive us and remind us that without the saving Grace of your Son Jesus, we are but dust. Amen.

ⁱ Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986)476.