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**A BLOKE CALLED JESUS**

***Drama***

John (Narrator)

Who is this bloke they call Jesus. With his red prickle beard and his dog. Some prophet God sent to the outback? Or a flamin country mug?

Announcer

This is Messages of Hope and I’m Richard Fox. Today’s program is a special radio drama, retelling the Easter story but with a bit of a twist. It’s from the viewpoint of John, one of Jesus disciples, and best mates. But instead of Israel, where the original story took place, it’s set in outback Australia. So let your mind drift back about 100 years or so to the bush, to the stock routes and mining towns, and remember Good Friday, the day Jesus died in the blistering heat.

John (Narrator)

It was flaming hot that day with Jesus hanging from that tree. You wouldn't think Good Friday would be a name for it. Jesus. What a mate. But you couldn’t help wonder who he really was or where he'd come from. He was always so full of surprises and yet he seemed an ordinary enough bloke, you know just like you and me. He liked a beer or two. He was a good mate. I remember the time he was at the wedding reception of a couple of friends of mine. Well talk about surprising!

Song: Tin Kettling At Cana

John (Narrator)

Well after this little episode word spread pretty quickly and Jesus got a reputation as a bit of a miracle worker. But changing water into grog was nothing compared to a lot of other things he did. One day he fed this huge crowd with a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. And there were leftovers. He even healed the sick. Blind fellas could see. A crippled shearer started leaping about the shed like, like he just struck gold. But there was a lot more to Jesus than miracles like that. You see when Jesus healed someone he usually fixed more than their eyes or their legs. He had a special sense for people. He could see inside to, well to their deepest needs. And he could do something about those needs. That's what he did for Martha's sister Mary.

Song: Love of Mary

John (Narrator)

I’d never seen Mary glow so much since she’d spoken with Jesus. I reckon her cheeks were so red you'd reckon she was permanently sunburnt. I knew another Mary back then too. She'd been hanging around since we were toddlers especially when we’d go pitching stones down by the creek.

Actor 1

We'd walk us children through the white limestone rocks that cluttered the ground and pelt them with glee at rabbits, mice or an old black stump with a face like the devil. When a sleek brown snake would weave its way towards us eyeing, sliding, eyeing us from rock to rock, we’d throw fast stones and pelt to it was shouts of power. Years later I became a barmaid in the Goldfields outback. I could hear the tongues of pious wives slide and twist and sliding back and forth their curse on me, a devil they could hate. The night they stormed my room I was sleeping with a lonely squatter’s son. They said “leave town you whore” and asked the Bushman for a verdict. Twisting, yearning, twisting words to justify a death and let them revel in their song. White stones white stones to break her bones and chase the devil away. Jesus drew a line across the dust and said “Let any free from sin throw the first white stone”. The angry crowd looked on yearning, squirming, yearning for the sound of fallen stone. Instead they heard the Bushmen say. “I set you free. Now sin no more and remember what I say. Throw stones, white stones, if you alone have never sinned that way”.

John (Narrator)

You know what happened that day. Jesus saved Mary's life. He made everyone see they weren't any better themselves. We're all in the same boat he said. Sin is what he called it. Well some people got pretty riled up because of that. He even called them hypocrites and liars later that night. I reckon that was the start of his trouble. He was starting to make some people uncomfortable, especially the powerful ones. Mostly because they knew he was right. Still most people wanted to see him. He'd become the talk of the bush and word got round he was heading into town so everyone went out to meet him. Just like when the circus used to come through. What a stir.

Song: Enter The King Of The Bush

John (Narrator)

I thought the people who were going to make Jesus the next governor. But he slipped out of sight and the strangest thing happened. A complete turnaround. Within the week nearly everybody wanted him dead and his closest mates, including me, cleared out while the heat was on. We all pretended not to know him. I can't remember a time when I felt worse about anything I’ve ever done.

Song: You Said You Didn’t Know The Man

John (Narrator)

But the damage was done. Everyone turned on Jesus, probably stirred up by the authorities. Jesus was a threat to the old ways of doing things, the old systems. You see, he preached freedom and love. Well it could have ended up in civil war. So the authorities arrested him and handed him to pilot the governor, pilot the dingo.

Pilate

In the dry night air, the cicadas crackling, oh crackling like fire overhead, the priests called for the death of Jesus the Bushman. The priests are such prigs. Why is their God so hard? Why do they claim like kings that they alone have the truth? Why is their faith so barren like breasts sucked dry of their youth? Why did they want Jesus dead? Because he upset their hold on the truth, because he brought God close to the weak? The laws of this land do not demand that a man like Jesus should die for his dreaming. I decided to play my cards with care and appeal to the bushman's pride. I asked “Are you a king hmm, a lord of some land out back?” “I am a King” said Jesus “but not like the kings you know who take their people to war. I come from the dreaming to rule the deep Bush, the Bush at the heart of our lives. I am here to reveal that truth to you all”. “Truth what is truth”? I replied. “Like all the rest you talk about truth. It is all a big game that no one can win. But we all take the blame”. I told the town council and the crackling pig priests I found no crime in their king. “By our truth the Bushman should die”, they said. Oh what could I do? I was for peace, not riots or truth. And Jesus seemed intent on dying as king of the Bush. As a gesture of kindness and peace and goodwill I set free Barabbas, a bushranger chappy from our back. I felt human and warm as I set that man free trusting that God in His mercy would lead him to change his ways and be human, like me. And Jesus, Jesus I whipped. Jesus I condemned to die. Well that's what everyone wanted, even Jesus.

Crowd

King of the bush, king of the bush, Jesus the king of the bush!

Actor 3

Jesus face was bleeding from Red whiplashes when pilot presented him to the crowd for their homage and their chant.

Crowd

King of the bush, king of the bush, Jesus the king of the bush!

Actor 4

The crown on Jesus head was spinifex and Wiregrass. The robe on his shoulders a ragged rug of Wallaby hide. The gold brocade a spray of withered wattle. His symbols of office were a whip and a long diggers shovel. The chant in his honour.

Crowd

King of the bush, king of the bush, Jesus the king of the bush!

Actor 3

The wise priests, their fangs spitting hatred into the soul of the man who exposed their greed, wanted the Bushman dead for claiming to be God's son and knowing more than they did, as subtly they changed the chant.

Crowd

King of the bush, king of the bush, kill the king of the bush!

Actor 4

The Lusty crowd barks for human blood. A demon force within led them to turn on one they once loved for not rebelling with arms and filling their pockets with gold. As the chant became a cheer.

Crowd

King of the bush, king of the bush, kill the king of the bush!

Actor 3

Pilate, the dingo pacing back and forth, sought a way of escape to free the Bushman, a man he knew in his heart did not deserve to die.

Actor 4

And we. His mates, his sheep, watch the world go wild and evil race like fire. Frozen by our fear we heard the chant for death rise louder and higher.

Crowd

King of the bush, king of the bush, kill the king of the bush!

Song: She’s Hot On The Hill

Mary

Jesus stood silent in that parody of royalty as an ugly evil longed to consume him with its lust, until it lapped his blood in cold anticipation waiting for the kill, calling for the kill, lusting for the kill with its chant. High on the hill, poised to die in the sun. He called to me and one of his mates named John. Mother he cried. Take John for your son and John my good friend take Mary my mother as yours. One Son, one, pain in exchange for another? In the end he chose to die. He took a drink, bowed his head to the sky, offered his spirit to God and shouted “it is done”. Through the bush it echoed like thunder before rain, pounding, pounding the heavens. It is done, it is done, it is done. Deep in my aching body I heard my womb reply. “I am mother. I am. I have only now begun”.

Song: The Lament Of Nicodemus

John (Narrator)

After that hot day on the hill, the dying and the killing of dreams, we were lost. We’d left our mate to die and where were we now? Couldn't he have one last surprise for us? Couldn't God turn back the clock? And then when Sunday came it hit me like a ton of bricks. It wasn't just the bloke called Jesus who died that day. It was God himself dying for us to bring new life and new hope. Not just the healing of an eye or a continual supply of beer. But life forever with God. I mean if you just remember good Friday as a sad story, or a gross injustice you've missed the point. You see Jesus can change your life. Just like Mary and the blind man and the crippled shearer found. Jesus was more than an ordinary man. He is the Son of God. God works through him to make new lives and a new future and he wants you to be part of it. Yeah I know some people say Jesus is a mug. Well I reckon the only mugs are all of us who didn't recognize who Jesus was, until he came back himself to tell us. Jesus blazing with life, living flesh and blood. What a flaming surprise.

Song: Who is this bloke they call Jesus?

Announcer

This is Messages of Hope and I’m Richard Fox. Today's program was a special in our weekly series called messages of hope. If you want to know more about Jesus and the new life he offers you, contact us for the free booklet HERE IN GOD”S PLAN. Simply call 1800 353 350, that’s 1800 353 350 and we’ll send you a copy. You can also order or download HERE IN GOD”S PLAN at messagesofhope.org.au. That’s messagesofhope.org.au.

I’m Richard Fox, a pastor of the Lutheran church, where love comes to life. I hope you can join us again next week for our regular weekly program. Or like us on facebook, to keep updated with our latest radio programs and videos. Just search for messages of hope.

John (Narrator)

Should you ask my considered opinion, since I am his best mate John. Of the things I've seen in his lifetime I would say he is God's only son.