

For Broadcast: 14th April 2019

A BLOKE CALLED JESUS

Drama

John (Narrator): Who is this bloke they call Jesus. With his red prickly 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: The priests called for the death of Jesus the Bushman. Why did they want Jesus dead? Because he upset their hold on the truth, because he brought God close to the weak? 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.

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. If you want to know more about Jesus and the new life he offers you, go to messagesofhope.org.au or for a free booklet call 1800 353 350, that's 1800 353 350.

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 another message 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.

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