



## WORDS FROM THE CROSS by Godfrey Rust

Poems based on the seven recorded sentences spoken by the crucified Christ.

Note the poems do not have titles as written but are referred to in the handbook as follows;

1. Father forgive them
2. It's hopeless
3. Woman
4. Forsaken
5. Nothing
6. I saw it first
7. I have travelled

These poems were especially written for WORKTALK by Godfrey Rust and are read on the tapes by Natalie Kirk.

Godfrey is a consultant to the music industry and also one of the UK's leading Christian poets. His latest book, *Welcome To The Real World*, is published by Words Out and contains poems and performance pieces written over a period of twenty years.

"In these seven poems" says Godfrey, "I have tried to imagine something of what might have been in Jesus' mind leading up to his speaking out each of the seven words from the cross. It is fanciful, of course, and no-one could do it justice, but God expresses himself on a human scale, and I think it is the work he gave to poets and other creative artists to try to capture a glimpse of truth and eternity in a world of mortality and illusion. There is no better subject matter for that work than man's 'execution' of God on the cross".

Natalie Kirk is a classically trained actor who, after leaving the Webber Douglas drama school specialised in Shakespearian theatre paying a number of roles such as Desdemona in *Lady Macbeth* and *Hermia*.



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1

Father forgive them for they did not know what they were looking for  
when I slipped past into humanity in my now famous disguise.

My light shone strangely in the dark of a desire they could not comprehend.  
Forgive them for they did not know what I was doing.

The streets were full of people saying *Peace Peace*, but there is no peace  
for I came to bring a sword that would be used against me.  
Forgive them for they could not know the price of an immortal's suicide.

They tried with all they had to keep us from this meeting here.  
Father forgive them for they do not know what we are doing.

They were so negligent I almost got away.  
How hard it was to be the silent Word.  
At the last I had to spell it out"  
You have said it: *I am a king.*  
*What you must do, do quickly.*

Forgive them all, my dear beloved dull accomplices  
following orders from another kingdom.  
Forgive the crowds who made the right choice of Barabbas.  
Forgive Pilate's wife, whose conscience almost ruined everything.

Forgive them for they do not know what they were building.  
I was the architect and these rough beams  
were cut to meet my most exacting standards.

Forgive them for they do not know what will be executed here.  
How could they understand these hammer blows  
would be the final acts of our creation?

Like workmen at the launch of some great enterprise of state  
they gather faithfully to watch the ceremony of our fierce ambition,  
and as they hoist me up to you  
before this brutal act of love obliterates my mortal life completely,  
*Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.*



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2

All those deceptions:  
nothing is what it seemed.  
Hopeless. No way back  
and no way down.  
Nowhere to turn  
but over in your mind  
and it's all over.  
No mistake but yours.  
No more chances, just  
this last surprise, a God  
dying next to you. It took  
a lot to nail you down  
and gain your attention. Strange  
to find that after all  
you were the victim. Stranger still  
that robbed of hope your prayer  
is answered, and you will see  
one last deception unmasked here.  
Nothing is what it seems.  
This desolate place  
is entrance to my kingdom, and  
*I tell you the truth, today  
you will be with me in paradise.*



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3

Woman, as I prepare  
to slip the leash of time

for a moment your grief  
reels me back in; the sword

pierces us both  
but you alone will feel then

the pain I feel now,  
watching a mother

watch a son die. Before  
you gave birth to me

*I AM*, and at a word  
I set time flowing

like tears: but what  
could I in my eternity

know of such loss as yours? Timeless  
I became mankind"

there was no other way  
to learn the meaning

of this moment. Soon  
I will have gained

eternity again; you have  
the meantime, and I will

not leave you comfortless.  
Beside you is one

whom I have loved  
more than a brother:

*Dear woman, here is your son.  
Son, here is your mother.*



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To be human is to deal with death,  
and I have wagered all to taste the fruit

of this desperate new Eden. To be human  
is to court the risk of failure, and so I

embrace this tree of knowledge of despair.  
And to be human is to know that God

may be illusion, and so I have made myself  
human enough for doubt and disbelief.

What else is left for God to understand?  
Faith is the gamble of a dying man.

The condemned son crying out into the dark  
guesses his father hears, yet does not come.

What kind of love is this that keeps such silence?  
*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*



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Nothing  
up my sleeve.  
There's no sleeve.

Look on  
your naked God.  
Look on  
your reflection.

Follow me  
and show  
humanity  
like this.

This is  
the tree  
of life.

You need me.  
I chose  
to need you"

to love you  
God became  
animal.

Help me.  
*I thirst.*



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6

I saw it first, this bloody work of heart,  
conceived in my mind's eye *in the beginning*,

or what you call the beginning. Time  
was the canvas I prepared to paint on.

I drew its outline in the life of Abraham,  
my palette history, its colours mixed

in Israel's rise and fall. I worked from life:  
against a landscape of an Eden spoiled

my people with their untamed rebel hearts  
stared out through masks of beauty scarred with sin.

Painstaking detail. Light and darkness. Then  
the hardest thing I ever did. Love

was daubed with every brush-stroke of the Spirit  
on the ungiving texture of the soul.

Finally to shape the central figure  
I needed human hands. I laboured with Mary

to bring the enterprise to birth. Three more decades  
of preparation were meticulous"

it is not irony that I was framed  
and hung up here to die: it is the point.

I am the artist and the portrait too,  
painting out at last in the blood of God

a perfect self-expression: my still life.  
This is my masterpiece and *it is finished*.



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7

I have travelled light, so that the leaving  
should be easier. What I bequeath

is left according to your will  
and this new testament: I leave a church

to be built on a broken rock. I leave  
nothing written down: I heard my words

blown freely on the winds of Galilee  
to seed the fertile hearts of men. I leave

no money, debts or property, no house  
for shrine, no artefact for relic. I leave just

the remnants of a meal. My cloak  
is cast aside and gambled for. I leave

no tomb to raid, no corpse to disinter,  
no fingerprints, no blood, no DNA.

I could have gained the world, but now  
nothing stands between us except this

last legacy. Because it is written; because  
it is the only pledge by which all souls

that fill the devil's pawnshop are redeemed;  
and because until I give it up to you

it cannot be returned to anyone,  
*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*