

## Reader's Theater: Matthew 26 – 27

*Our message today is the Palm Sunday story as told in the Gospel of Matthew.*

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

- + Jesus [HENRY TYLER]
- + Disciple [BELINDA TYLER]
- + Caiaphas [HARRIET TYLER]
- + Woman [PEGGY CONVER]
- + Crowd [PEGGY CONVER and LUCY TYLER]
- + Judas [DAVE CONVER]
- + Peter [TOM TYLER]
- + Witness 1 & 2 [PEGGY AND LUCY]

### I. The Plot against Jesus

JESUS: The Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.

DISCIPLE: The chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, and schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him.

CAIAPHAS: But not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.

DISCIPLE: Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper

WOMAN: A woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume

CROWD: which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

JUDAS: (indignantly) Why this waste? This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.

JESUS: Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me.

CROWD: The poor you will always have with you

JESUS: but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body

CROWD: she did it to prepare me for burial.

JESUS: Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.

### II. Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

DISCIPLE: Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests.

JUDAS: What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?

CAIAPHAS: Thirty pieces of silver.

DISCIPLE: From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

PETER: Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?

JESUS: Go into the city to a certain man and tell him

PETER: The Teacher says

JESUS: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.

DISCIPLE: The disciples did as Jesus had directed them

CROWD: and prepared the Passover.

DISCIPLE: When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve.

JESUS: Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.

DISCIPLE: They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other

PETER: Surely you don't mean me, Lord?

JESUS: The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. A

CROWD: The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him.

JESUS: But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man!

CROWD: It would be better for him if he had not been born.

JUDAS: Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?

JESUS: You have said so.

DISCIPLE: While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks

CROWD: he broke it and gave it to his disciples

JESUS: Take and eat; this is my body.

DISCIPLE: Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks

CROWD: he gave it to them

JESUS: Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant

CROWD: which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

JESUS: I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

DISCIPLE: When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

JESUS: This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:

CROWD: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

JESUS: But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.

PETER: Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.

JESUS: Truly I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.

PETER: Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.

CROWD: All the other disciples said the same.

### **III. Gethsemane**

DISCIPLE: Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane

JESUS: Sit here while I go over there and pray.

PETER: He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him

CROWD: Jesus began to be sorrowful and troubled.

JESUS: My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.

PETER: Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed

JESUS: My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.

PETER: Then he returned to his disciples and found us sleeping.

JESUS: Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

CROWD: The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

PETER: He went away a second time and prayed

JESUS: My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.

PETER: When he came back, he again found us sleeping, because our eyes were heavy.

CROWD: So he left them and went away once more

PETER: and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

JESUS: Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come

CROWD: the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners.

JESUS: Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!

PETER: While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived.

DISCIPLE: With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs

CROWD: sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

DISCIPLE: Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them

JUDAS: The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.

CROWD: Going at once to Jesus, Judas said

JUDAS: Greetings, Rabbi!

CROWD: and kissed him.

JESUS: Do what you came for, friend.

PETER: Then the men stepped forward

CROWD: seized Jesus and arrested him.

PETER: One of Jesus' companions reached for his sword

CROWD: drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest

PETER: cutting off his ear.

JESUS: (to PETER) Put your sword back in its place

CROWD: for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.

JESUS: Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

CROWD: But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?

JESUS: (projecting for all to hear) Am I leading a rebellion

CROWD: that you have come out with swords and clubs

JESUS: to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me.

CROWD: But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.

PETER: Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

#### **IV. Jesus before the Sanhedrin**

DISCIPLE: Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest

CROWD: where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled.

PETER: But I, Peter, followed him at a distance

CROWD: right up to the courtyard of the high priest.

PETER: I entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

DISCIPLE: The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus

CROWD: so that they could put him to death.

DISCIPLE: But they did not find any

CROWD: though many false witnesses came forward.

DISCIPLE: Finally two came forward

WITNESS 1 & 2: (in monotone unison) This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'

CAIAPHAS: Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?

CROWD: But Jesus remained silent.

CAIAPHAS: I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.

JESUS: You have said so. But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.

DISCIPLE: The high priest tore his clothes

CAIAPHAS: He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?

WITNESS 1 & 2: (snarling in unison) He is worthy of death!

DISCIPLE: They spit in his face

CROWD: and struck him with their fists.

DISCIPLE: Others slapped him.

WITNESS 1 & 2: (mocking) Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?

## **V. Peter Disowns Jesus**

PETER: I, Peter, was sitting out in the courtyard when a servant girl came.

GIRL: You also were with Jesus of Galilee.

PETER: I don't know what you're talking about.

DISCIPLE: Then he went out to the gateway

GIRL: This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.

PETER: I don't know the man!

GIRL: Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.

DISCIPLE: Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them

PETER: I don't know the man!

CROWD: Immediately a rooster crowed.

PETER: I remembered the word Jesus had spoken

JESUS: Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.

CROWD: Peter went outside and wept bitterly.

