

Palm Sunday



**The Passion of Our Lord
Jesus Christ
According to Matthew**

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(Matthew 24.6-27.54)

The Gospel Acclamation is omitted before and after the reading

PLEASE LEAVE THIS LEAFLET IN THE PEW

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)

Narrator
Mary Magdalene
Judas
Jesus
Peter
Disciples (Judas and Peter)
Liar
High Priest
Girl 1
Girl 2
Pilate
Pilate's Wife
Women at the foot of the cross
Mob/All (The whole congregation)

Jesus stands at the stage centre

Narrator at the lectern

All other characters stand behind the altar and enter stage centre prior to their speaking parts.

The Anointing at Bethany

Mary Magdalene enters stage and kneels at the feet of Jesus

Narrator: Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said,

Disciples: 'Why this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor.'

Narr.: But Jesus, aware of this, said to them,

1.

Jesus: 'Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.'

Judas Agrees to betray Jesus

Narr Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said,

Judas What are you willing to pay me if I turn him over to you?

Narr They agreed on 30 silver coins. And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

The Passover with the Disciples

Narr On the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying,

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

Jesus Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The teacher says, *My time is near, I will observe the Passover at your house with my disciples.*'

Narr So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, Jesus took his place with the twelve. And while they were eating he said,

Jesus So help me, one of you is going to turn me in.

Narr And they became very upset and each one said to him in turn,

Disciples I'm not the one, am I, Master?

Jesus The one who dips his hand into the bowl with me – that's who's going to betray me! The Son of Man departs just as the scripture

2.

predicts but damn the one responsible for turning in the Son of Man – it would be better for him had he never been born.

Judas I couldn't be the one, could I, Master?

Jesus You tell me.

The Institution of the Eucharist

Narr As they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of unleavened bread, gave a blessing, and broke it into pieces and he offered it to the disciples, saying,

Jesus Take and eat this. This is my body.

Narr And he took a cup and gave thanks and offered it to them.

Jesus Drink from this, all of you: this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of wrongs. I tell you, this is the last I will drink of this vintage from now till that day when I drink it new with you in the Kingdom of my Father.

Narr And concluding with a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Peter's Denial Foretold

Narr Then Jesus said to them,

Jesus All of you will lose faith in me and let me down tonight, just like the scripture says, '*I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of his flock will be scattered,*' but after I am raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.

Narr And Peter answered,

Peter Even if everyone else lets you down, I'll never lose faith in you!

Jesus So help me, tonight before the rooster crows, you'll disown me three times.

Peter Even if they condemn me to die with you, I would never say I didn't know you.

Narr And all of the disciples took the same oath – all of them.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

Narr Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to the disciples,

Jesus Sit down here while I go over there and pray.

Narr And taking Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to feel dejected and full of anguish.

Jesus My soul is so full of grief that I could die. Wait here and stay awake with me.

Narr Then he went off a little ways and fell on his face, praying and said,

Jesus My Father, if it's possible, take this cup away from me! Yet it's not what I want that matters, but what you want.

Narr And returning to the disciples, he found them sleeping and said to Peter,

Jesus You couldn't stay awake this one hour with me? Keep awake and pray that you don't get put to the test: the spirit may be eager but the flesh is weak.

Narr A second time Jesus went off and prayed.

Jesus My Father, if it's not possible for me to avoid this cup without drinking it, let your will and not mine be done.

Narr And once again he came and found them sleeping since their eyes had grown heavy. And leaving them again he went away and prayed, repeating the same words for a third time. Then Jesus came to the disciples and said to them,

Jesus Are you still sleeping and taking a rest? Look, the time is at hand! The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of the godless Up now! Come on! Here comes my betrayer!

Narr And while he was still speaking, suddenly Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived and with him a great crowd wielding swords and clubs, sent by the high priests and elders of the people. The betrayer had given them the signal.

Judas Whoever I kiss is the one. Take him.

Narr And going right over to Jesus, he said,

Judas Good evening, Master.

Narr And Judas kissed Jesus.

Jesus Brother, what are you here for?

Narr Then they all came up to Jesus and grabbing him and holding him fast, began to take him away. And all of the sudden one of those with Jesus reached for his sword and hit the high priest's servant, cutting off is ear. Then Jesus said to him,

Jesus Put your sword back where it belongs. For every one who takes up the sword will be done in by the sword. You think I can't call on my Father and have him supply me even now with twelve legions of his angels? Burt how with the scriptures be fulfilled that say this must happen?

Narr At that point Jesus said to the mob,

Jesus As if in pursuit of a robber, you came out to get me with swords and clubs? I used to sit there in the temple day after day teaching and you didn't lift a hand against me.

Narr All this happened so the writings of the prophet would come true. Then all his disciples left him behind and ran.

Jesus Before the High Priest

Narr Those who had arrested Jesus brought him before Caiaphas, the High Priest, where the scholars and elders had assembled. But Peter followed him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the High Priest. He went inside and sat with the attendant to see

how things would turn out. Now the high priests and the whole high court were looking for some false testimony against Jesus, so that they could sentence him to death, but they weren't finding it even with many false witnesses coming forward. Finally, two came forward, saying,

Liar This fellow said I can topple the Temple of God and in three days build it again!

Narr And the High Priest, standing up, said to Jesus,

Priest Don't you have any answer as to why these people testify against you?

Narr But Jesus kept silent. And the High Priest said to him,

Priest I command you by the Living God to tell us if you are the Anointed, the Son of God!

Jesus That's what **you** say. But I'll tell you this, next time you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of the sky.

Narr Then the High Priest tore his vestment and said,

Priest That's blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Didn't you hear the blasphemy just now? What do you say?

Narr And they all answered,

All This is punishable by death!

Narr Then they spat in his face and boxed his ears, while others hit him with a stick and said,

All Prophecy for us, Mr. Anointed One! Who just hit you?

Peter's Denial of Jesus

Narr Meanwhile Peter was sitting out in the yard. And a girl came over to him and said,

Girl 1 You were with Jesus of Galilee, too.

6.

Narr But Peter denied it and said in front of everyone,

Peter I don't know what you're talking about.

Narr So Peter went out to the entrance where another girl saw him and said to the people there,

Girl 2 This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.

Narr And again Peter denied it with an oath, saying

Peter I don't know the man!

Narr A little while later, those standing there came over and said to Peter,

All Of course you're one of them. Why, even your accent betrays you!

Narr Then he started to curse and swear up and down, saying,

Peter I don't know the man!

Narr And just then a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the words Jesus had said, "Before the cock crows you will say you don't know me three times." And Peter went outside and cried stinging tears.

Jesus Brought Before Pilate

Narr When morning came, all the high priests and elders of the people had a meeting about Jesus, plotting to put him to death. And after tying him up, they led him away and turned him over to Pilate, the Governor. Then Judas, the betrayer, realising that Jesus had been condemned, was overcome with remorse and returned the 30 silver coins to the high priests and elders, saying,

Judas I have made a grave mistake in turning this innocent man in. I was wrong to betray innocent blood.

All What's that to us? That's your problem.

7.

Narr And Judas hurled the 30 silver pieces into the temple and ran out and went off and hanged himself. And the high priests, picking up the silver said,

All It wouldn't be right to put this money into the temple treasury since it's blood money.

Narr So they devised a plan and bought the potter's field as a burial place for strangers, (which is why that field is known as Bloody Field to this day. Thus the words of Jeremiah, the prophet were fulfilled, 'And they took the 30 silver coins, the price put on a man's head, from the sons of Israel, and gave it for the potter's field as the Lord ordered me.'")

Pilate Questions Jesus

Narr Meanwhile, Jesus stood in front of the Governor. And the Governor questioned him.

Pilate So, you're the King of the Jews?

Jesus If you say so.

Narr And while he was being accused by the ranking priests and elders, he said absolutely nothing.

Pilate Don't you have something to say to the long list of charges they bring against you?

Narr And he didn't answer him so much as a single word, which surprised and baffled the Governor very much.

Barabbas or Jesus

Narr Now at Festival time the Governor was accustomed to release a prisoner to the crowd, whoever they wanted. They were holding a notorious prisoner named Barabbas so when the crowd had gathered, Pilate said to them,

Pilate Who do you want me to release to you, Barabbas? or Jesus, the so-called Anointed?

Narr You see, he knew they had betrayed Jesus out of envy. And as he sat on the podium, his wife sent word to him saying,

Wife Have nothing to do with that innocent man! I have been upset all day by a dream I had about him!

Narr Now the high priests and the elders had persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and have Jesus killed. So Pilate said to them,

Pilate Which of the two do you want me to set free for you?

All Barabbas!

Pilate Then what do I do with Jesus, the so-called Anointed?

All Crucify him!

Pilate Why? What has he done wrong?

Narr But the crowd shouted all the louder,

All Crucify him! Crucify him!

Narr Now, when Pilate could see that he was getting nowhere, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in full view of the crowd and said,

Pilate I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves. It's your business.

Narr In response all the people said,

All So smear his blood on us and on our children!

Narr So Pilate released Barabbas for them but had Jesus flogged and then turned him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

Narr Then the Roman soldiers took Jesus into the Governor's mansion and got the whole platoon together and they stripped off his clothes and dressed him in a cloak of royal purple and wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They placed a stick of cane in his right hand and they had some fun with him, kneeling before him and saying,

All Hail, King of the Jews!

Narr And then spitting in his face they took the cane and hit him on the head with it and when they had had their fun with him they took the cloak off and put his clothes back on and led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

Women enter stage centre and stood by Jesus

Narr As they came out, they found a Cyrenean man, named Simon, whom they conscripted into carrying the cross. When they reached the place known as Golgotha, that is, Skull-place, they gave him a drink of wine mixed with bitter wormwood and after tasting it, he wouldn't drink it. Then they crucified him.

And after crucifying him, they divided up his clothes by rolling dice and sat there keeping an eye on him. And above his head they put the written charge against him, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then they crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those passing by kept taunting him, wagging their heads and saying,

All Destroyer of the temple, who rebuilds it in three days, save yourself if you are the son of God. Come down off the cross.

Narr Likewise the high priests, with the canon lawyers and elders, made fun of him saying,

All He saved others, he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel, so let's see him come down off the cross and we'll believe him! He trusted God, let God pull him out of this if he wants him. After all, he did say, 'I'm God's Son'.

Narr In the same way, the rebels who were crucified with him insulted him along the same line.

The Death of Jesus

Narr Beginning at noon, darkness blanketed the entire land until mid-afternoon. And at about 3 o'clock, Jesus shouted at the top of his voice,

10.

Jesus Eli, Eli, lema sabachthane!

Narr Which means,

Jesus My God, my God, why have you abandoned me!

Narr Some of those standing there, heard that and said,

All He's calling Elijah.

Narr And one of them ran right over and took a sponge and filled it with strong wine and put it on the end of a stick so he could drink from it. But the others said,

All Let's see if Elijah comes to save him!

Narr Jesus again shouted at the top of his voice and stopped breathing. And suddenly the curtain of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom and the earth quaked; rocks were spilt apart. And the tombs were opened and the bodies of many saints came back to life. And they came out of the tombs after his resurrection and went into the holy city, where they appeared to many. The Roman officer and those keeping watch over Jesus with him, witnessed the sign and what had happened and were terrified and said,

All This man really was God's Son!

All characters exit stage and returns to their seats.

Silence is observed.

