

SEARCH FOR UNDERSTANDING

by Margaret Rose Fisher



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The Search for Understanding

A collection of Lenten monologs

by Margaret Rose Fisher

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Search for Understanding consists of seven monologs. They can be used on consecutive Lenten weeks plus a Holy Week service, or presented all at once. It is suggested that they be presented in the order shown, as each monolog contains a thought that is picked up by the following character. The third monolog (“More Important than Rules”) may be eliminated if there is not a young girl available who is able to do the piece. The titles are for the convenience of the players and do not necessarily have to be revealed to the audience.

The setting of each piece is the person’s home, with the exception of “Were You There?” where the character is on a street in Jerusalem. The time is evening. If possible, the lights should be dimmed more with each piece — except, of course, for a light on the actor! If the monologs are done as a single presentation, an effective method of staging is to have two benches, one to the left and one to the right of the playing area, with a light for each bench. As a character finishes his or her monolog, his/her light fades to a blackout. The other light then comes up to reveal the next character on the opposite bench. The actors can move around the area of the bench as their piece requires. Their movements should be simple to keep the emphasis on their words. The minister or a narrator should announce each character’s name before his/her light comes up, unless printed programs are used.

COSTUME NOTES

Costumes can be historical or contemporary. The wealthy characters (Joseph of Arimathea and Pontius Pilate) should be the only ones in bright colors, as those dyes were rare and costly. Orange was not available at all, and purple was so expensive that it was worn only by royalty. The upper class would often indicate their wealth by a stripe or fringe of purple on their garments. The other characters should wear dark clothing with a rough texture, as the fabric would have been linen or wool. Until the invention of the cotton gin, removing the seeds from cotton balls was such a tedious process that only the rich wore cotton garments. The only exception might have been the head coverings.

If historical costumes are used, be aware that most of the characters are in their homes. Thus they would be wearing tunics over loose leggings. These tunics served as undershirts beneath the robes or togas worn in public. Everyone wore sandals. Indoors the men removed their *kaffiyeh* headdresses (cloth draped over the head and held in place by a cord wound around the head). Women covered their hair completely at all times, since only their husbands were allowed to see it.

If contemporary clothes are used, avoid designer names, corporate slogans, etc. Women should wear dresses or skirts.

The Roman soldier is off-duty, and not in uniform. He can have five-o'clock shadow on his face. For contemporary dress, he should wear cargo pants or fatigues in tan or olive drab. The top should be a T-shirt or tank top in the same shade, or white. He could have a pack of cigarettes rolled up in his sleeve. His footwear should be sneakers or other comfortable casual shoes. A tattoo on one arm would be appropriate, but jewelry would not.

The member of the mob is a country bumpkin visiting the big city. If historical dress is used, this character, if male, would be wearing a *kaffiyeh* on his head. For contemporary dress, a male would wear jeans with sneakers or cowboy boots. His top should be a denim jacket with a T-shirt or flannel shirt underneath. If portrayed by a teenage actor, he could wear a plain baseball cap with the brim turned to the back. An older actor could, if desired, hold a cowboy hat in his hands, but wearing it would block his face from the audience. If the character is female, she might wear a denim jumper with a turtleneck underneath.

The daughter of Jairus is dressed plainly and modestly, whether in historical or contemporary clothes. Gergesa is a small town, so although her father is the high priest, the family is not wealthy. Her hair is uncovered because she is unmarried. For contemporary dress, a good choice would be a school uniform of white blouse, dark skirt, knee socks, and flats.

The member of the Sanhedrin is of a higher social class but is not wealthy. For contemporary dress his outfit should be “dressy casual,” perhaps slacks, dress shirt, and sweater. His shoes would be penny loafers or tassel loafers.

Joseph of Arimathea is the wealthiest character, but his clothes are not ostentatious. His tunic could have a thin stripe of purple around the hem. In contemporary clothing, he would be in his best suit since he had been meeting with the governor.

Pontius Pilate is alone at the end of the day and therefore would have removed all the trappings of his office. His clothing would still emphasize his rank by its color and texture. For contemporary dress, he should be wearing a suit with the jacket removed and perhaps tossed over a chair. His tie should be loosened, and his collar button undone.

Mary, mother of Jesus, never wore the blue and white that everyone associates with her; those colors came from medieval symbolism. She most probably wore black, because in traditional societies when a woman was widowed, she then wore black for the rest of her life. Even in contemporary dress she should wear black, since she is mourning her son’s death. If desired, she could wear a shawl or loose sweater. Her dress should be tea length or longer, and her shoes should be black flats.

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King of the Jews

(A Roman Soldier)

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This character is a Roman soldier who was not at the Crucifixion. He is a common foot soldier, rough and uneducated. His grammar is poor. This is a rare moment of solitude for him. If props are used, he can be polishing his shield or repairing a piece of equipment.

ROMAN SOLDIER: King of the Jews — did you ever hear anything so funny in all your life? Who would even want to be king of such a miserable people? Now, Emperor of Rome I could understand. If this nut case said he was the real Caesar and the guy sittin' on the throne was an imposter, that would make more sense. But King of the Jews? Please! Pilate musta thought it was funny too, 'cause he put that on the guy's cross. Of course, that's against procedure, but the higher-ups tend to look the other way when it comes to these executions. What a rotten way to die. I'm no weak-stomached new recruit, but it would be a lot simpler just to run 'em through with a sword. This business of waitin' around for hours ... gets on the soldiers' nerves, you know? Even my buddy Septimus — he comes back to the garrison all shook up, carryin' one of the guy's sandals. What is he gonna do with just one sandal? I asked him, but he keeps mutterin' something about "the Christ."

This Jesus, he had a lotta people shook up. They say King Herod's been obsessed with this guy for years. Then when he hears all the wild stories about Jesus healing sick people, he thinks maybe it's some guy he had beheaded that's come back to life. Talk about your nut cases! Don't tell anybody I said that, awright? But come on — he orders the guards to cut off the guy's head, then he carries it around on a serving platter all

1 night! I'm glad I've never been invited to his palace for
2 dinner.

3 I can't believe people are so gullible. They swear this
4 Jesus could do miracles, like turn water into wine.
5 Come to think of it, I wish I could do that. They also say
6 he made bread appear out of nowhere. Big deal. When a
7 Roman patrol marches into some dusty village, the local
8 big shot always says there's no food. But as soon as you
9 put the point of your spear against his wife's throat, he
10 remembers they got all kinds of food stored away. I
11 don't call that a miracle — more like military tactics.

12 Speakin' of military tactics, the officers had been
13 gettin' nervous the past couple years with all these
14 rumors about a Messiah that was gonna lead the Jews.
15 They were debating whether or not to send to Rome for
16 reinforcements in case of an uprising. But it turns out
17 this Messiah spent all his time talkin' about tending
18 sheep and sowing seeds. It's no wonder the Jews were
19 so easy to conquer. The only thing they get really
20 worked up about is religion. I don't pay much attention
21 to religion myself. Us Romans are more practical. See,
22 every time we conquer a new country, we add their
23 gods to the ones we already got. Better safe than sorry,
24 right? And we woulda done the same thing here, except
25 the Jews insist there's only one god — theirs. I admit
26 there's a simplicity about that which appeals to me. The
27 Roman Empire has so many gods now, I can't remember
28 them all. But the problem with this Jewish god is
29 there's a big long list of what's allowed and what's not.
30 I guess this Jesus fella didn't do everything according
31 to the rules. Like I said before, these people are really
32 serious about this religious stuff. I never thought I'd be
33 sayin' this, but sometimes I almost envy them. What I
34 mean is, it must be nice to be so sure, to really believe
35 in something, you know?

1 I tell you what, yesterday all of Jerusalem believed.
2 The sky got dark, the ground shook, and people were
3 runnin' around sayin' the world was ending. Even the
4 soldiers pullin' guard duty at the crosses got a little
5 crazy, sayin' this Jesus musta been King of the Jews
6 after all. He musta really been somethin' special to
7 cause all that commotion. I wish I understood it better,
8 but I can't get a straight answer outta Septimus. I know
9 what I could do, though. I bet I could track down one of
10 those guys that used to hang out with Jesus, that they
11 call the disciples. I bet one of them could tell me about
12 the King of the Jews.

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Were You There?

(A Member of the Mob)

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This person can be male or female, adult or older teen. He/she has come to Jerusalem from a small village for a sort of “spring break.” He/she was swept away by the emotional mood of the crowd and now deeply regrets it. He/she is scanning the faces of those passing by.

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MEMBER OF THE MOB: Were you there the other day? Were you one of us? I’m sorry, I shouldn’t ask that. If someone asked me if I had been part of a mob howling for a man’s death, I would be offended. How could anyone suspect me of being involved in something like that? But I was. I’m not even sure how it happened. I didn’t plan it. I just came to Jerusalem to celebrate the holiday. I needed a vacation, a break from the everyday drudgery of my life. I wanted to enjoy myself in a place where nobody knew me. Was it so wrong to want to have a good time? I wanted it to be an experience I would never forget. Well, I certainly got my wish, didn’t I?

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It’s tempting to blame someone else, but I was part of it. When the Sanhedrin urged us to shout for Barabbas to be released, I shouted. And when Pontius Pilate asked what should be done with the prisoner known as the Christ, I was one of those chanting, “Crucify him!” I wasn’t even sure what he had been accused of, but that didn’t seem important. The elders said he deserved to die, and I didn’t question it. Would you?

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I’ll tell you what was strange, though — that Pilate took so long. They say he’s usually much faster to condemn a prisoner. It’s that famous Roman efficiency, after all, that enabled them to conquer the whole world. And what’s the death of one more Jew to a Roman?

1 I started to have doubts, though, when they draped
2 him in expensive robes and whipped him. He was going
3 to be crucified; surely that was punishment enough.
4 But everyone was cheering and applauding like it was
5 the best show they'd ever seen. I started cheering too,
6 even though I felt sick inside.

7 I kept thinking, "They'll stop it now. Someone in
8 authority will say, 'That's enough, you've had your fun.
9 Now move along.'" But nobody did. The crowd got
10 bigger and louder until it was like a wild beast, and
11 then anyone who tried to stop it would have been
12 torn to pieces. And it was terrifying, but at the same
13 time exhilarating, to be a part of that huge beast. I
14 felt so powerful. For once the Romans weren't in
15 charge. We Jews were giving the orders. This time
16 the Romans had to do what the Jews wanted!

17 And then that man — Jesus — turned his head and
18 looked at me. No, not at me — into me, like he knew
19 everything I had ever done, every thought I ever
20 had. And that look said that he understood the
21 exhilaration and power, and the confusion and
22 queasiness I was feeling. And I heard his voice inside
23 my head, saying that he forgave me. I couldn't stand
24 it anymore. I forced my way out of the crowd, and I
25 ran as fast as I could, and I hid where no one would
26 find me. But I still heard that voice echoing in my
27 mind. "I forgive you." Those three words changed
28 everything. They've changed my whole life! If he
29 could forgive the terrible things we did to him, then
30 I can surely forgive all the little wrongs that have
31 been done to me.

32 I'm going home tomorrow. I'm going to try to
33 become the person he knew I could be. I don't know
34 yet if I'll tell my family or my friends about what
35 happened — about what I did. They wouldn't

1 understand, even though he did. They weren't
2 caught up in it as I was. They'll never feel the shame
3 that I feel. They'll never know the power of that look.

4 Before I go I'd like to find someone to talk to, to
5 discuss these unbelievable events. But in the whole
6 city of Jerusalem, there isn't a single person who
7 will admit to being in that mob. Even those whose
8 faces seem a bit familiar to me just shake their heads
9 and hurry away. They claim they weren't involved. I
10 guess that's true, because no one raised a finger to
11 stop it. So we're all responsible. We're all guilty.

12 You probably think I'm an awful person, and I
13 suppose you're right. But you don't know what it was
14 like. It's easy to say now that you would have acted
15 differently, but you weren't there ... were you?
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More Important than Rules

(The Daughter of Jairus)

This young girl is the one referred to in Mark 5:22-43. She is twelve years old, but the part may be played by a teenager who can appear younger. She is a bit shy and bewildered by the uproar in the household. If props are used, she can be practicing her needlework.

DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS: Everybody keeps asking me about what happened, but I really don't remember much. I mean, I remember being sick, but then I fell asleep — or I died. That's the part they all want to hear about. But there's not much to tell. I woke up, and this man I'd never seen before told me I was going to be fine, and he left. Now they expect me to tell wonderful stories about it. I'm sort of tempted to make up something. You know, so they won't be disappointed. But my mother would be furious if I did that. She always says how important it is to follow the rules, and making up stuff is definitely against the rules.

You see, my father is the high priest of the synagogue here in Gergesa. Our family has to set a good example. I get so tired of it. Sometimes I wish my father was a fisherman or a merchant or something normal like that. Then everyone wouldn't be watching me all the time, expecting me to be perfect.

At least the rules here aren't quite as strict as they are in Jerusalem. Anyone there who said that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ would be thrown out of the synagogue. I don't know if the elders heard yet about Jesus healing me. Maybe they think it doesn't matter anymore now that he's dead.

I finally asked my father about it. I was kind of scared to. I thought he might get irritated at me for

1 bothering him. But I told him that I'd been
2 wondering if he was afraid that day of losing his job.
3 He got a funny look on his face and said, "Don't you
4 know that I would rather lose my job than lose my
5 daughter? You are far more precious to me than any
6 position." Then he held me tight for a long time. He
7 said, "I'm sorry I was so busy at the synagogue that
8 you didn't realize how much I love you." And he had
9 tears in his eyes! I've never seen my father cry
10 before. Then he explained to me that my illness made
11 him realize how powerless he was in spite of his
12 fancy title. When I was dying, he didn't care if the
13 leaders in Jerusalem disapproved. The only thing
14 that mattered was that Jesus could make me well
15 again. I was more important to him than the rules.

16 Now that it's all over, my father is different. He's
17 not so stern, and he talks about things that Jesus
18 said. Like how the rules are meant to help us, and we
19 shouldn't be worrying about them all the time. He
20 says he wants to spend more time with me before I
21 get married and leave home. My mother is amazed by
22 how much he's changed. The high priest of the
23 synagogue saying that people are more important
24 than rules! Maybe Jesus did all those dramatic
25 things like casting out demons so people would pay
26 attention when he told them to love each other.

27 Jesus is dead and in a tomb now. At least that's
28 what they say. But he brought me back to life.
29 Couldn't he come back too? I'd like to see him again,
30 to thank him. Not just because I was healed, but
31 mostly because now my father tells me he loves me.

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Arithmetic

(A Member of the Sanhedrin)

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4 This character is an older man, an influential member of the
5 Sanhedrin. He is accustomed to taking charge and making decisions.
6 He is deeply devout and is truly concerned about the people he leads.
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9 **MEMBER OF THE SANHEDRIN:** We did what had to be
10 done. I'm not proud of it, but I'm not ashamed, either.
11 Part of being a leader is making the tough decisions. It
12 was easier than I thought it would be, though. Jesus
13 could have objected when he appeared before Pontius
14 Pilate, but he didn't. Maybe he thought it would
15 enhance his mystique with his followers, or maybe he
16 thought the Romans wouldn't execute him for what
17 must have seemed to them an unimportant matter. He
18 should have realized the Romans would rather crucify
19 one more Jew than subdue the entire population of
20 Jerusalem. Pilate may not have understood the crime,
21 but he certainly understood the arithmetic!

22 How can these Roman overlords of ours understand
23 how vital our faith is to us? In their minds they are
24 superior beings and can point to a massive empire as
25 proof of their superiority. They don't believe in a higher
26 power because they hold the highest power they think
27 possible. They claim to worship dozens of gods, but they
28 actually worship themselves. Theirs is the arrogance of
29 ignorance. They don't know what it is to be conquered.
30 They've never been forced to bow down to someone
31 mightier than themselves. They've never had to survive
32 on the crumbs left over from the bread snatched out of
33 their mouths. But we have. We have been tortured and
34 tormented, but we have endured. The Jewish people
35 may be ground under the Roman heel for decades or

1 even centuries, but we will triumph in the end. And it is
2 our faith that will hold the nation of Israel together.
3 Our religion is what defines us as Jews. To keep Israel
4 intact, we must follow the laws laid down in the
5 Scriptures. If we start making exceptions to the rules,
6 we would soon be scattered to the winds. The Jews
7 would be gone forever.

8 Jesus of Nazareth broke those rules. He argued with
9 the rabbis, he associated with undesirables, he didn't
10 observe the Sabbath properly. But all that could be
11 explained away as looser interpretations of the
12 Scriptures. There is no interpretation that justifies
13 aiding our enemies! We submit to their might and
14 comply with their decrees — nothing more. There is no
15 excuse for what he did. He healed a Roman! True, the
16 man was a slave, but even a Roman slave is part of the
17 occupation force that oppresses us. The Messiah is to
18 come for the Jews, not the Romans. And not for the
19 Greeks or the Samaritans or anyone else, but only for
20 the Jews.

21 Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah. The
22 Scriptures teach us that the Messiah will be a
23 descendant of King David. Joseph the carpenter was
24 descended from David, but it was said that Jesus was
25 the Son of God. If he was not the son of Joseph, then
26 Jesus was not descended from David. Therefore,
27 whoever he was, he could not be the Messiah. But the
28 people didn't understand this. When they listened to his
29 stories, when they touched his garments and begged to
30 be healed, they called him "Lord." It was appalling. The
31 descendants of Abraham committing such blasphemy!
32 We had to put a stop to it! We had to eliminate the cause
33 of this blasphemy. We had to show everyone the penalty
34 for dishonoring God.

35 Ironic, isn't it — the same crowds who flocked to hear

1 him speak also gathered to watch him die. Perhaps next
2 time they won't be so easily taken in by a compelling
3 voice and charismatic personality. It's a shame, really.
4 With his talents, he could have been a valuable asset to
5 the Sanhedrin. If he had only followed the laws! The
6 laws must be obeyed, or we Jews will be destroyed. It is
7 better for one man to die on a cross than for the entire
8 nation to disappear from the face of the earth. You see,
9 we of the Sanhedrin understand the arithmetic also.

10 But it doesn't matter now. Whether we made the
11 right decision or not, he's gone. The people will forget
12 about him soon. Even his followers will drift back to the
13 lives they abandoned when he showed up. And
14 everything will be as it was before. The rabbis will once
15 again teach the people that God will send us a Savior.
16 The only thing that makes our subjugation bearable is
17 the belief that the Messiah will someday come and free
18 us forever. If this carpenter's son had actually been the
19 Messiah, then we would have nothing to hope for. How
20 could the people of Israel survive without hope? Even I
21 need hope. If Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, then
22 he has come and gone and nothing has changed.
23 Nothing but a few ideas. I couldn't bear to think that. I
24 refuse to think that. But if it turns out that he was the
25 Christ after all, I can only pray that God will forgive us.
26 We did what we thought had to be done. It was, after all,
27 a matter of arithmetic.

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The Least I Could Do

(Joseph of Arimathea)

Joseph of Arimathea is a quiet man; a thinker, not a talker. He is middle-aged. He has just returned home from his secret errand. If props are used, he can be taking off his cloak and hanging it up.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA: Well, I've done what I could. I'm afraid it wasn't much. At least his mother can be sure that his body is safe. His tomb is actually being guarded by Roman soldiers! Is it possible that Pilate is having regrets? When I went to him and asked for the body of Jesus, I expected to be sent away empty-handed. I had to make the attempt, though. It was the least I could do. But I suppose Pilate knows my reputation for integrity, even when doing business with Romans. Besides, I belong to the council. If questioned, he can tell the other council members that he thought I was acting on their behalf. But no one is likely to question the governor, or me either. That's one of the advantages of being a wealthy man.

There are also disadvantages to being wealthy, believe it or not. I have a lot more responsibilities now. My employees depend on me for their livelihoods. It's odd how things turn out, though. Years ago I decided to do business with anyone and everyone: Jews, Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, whomever. I had no idea that decades later I would be needing the goodwill of a Roman governor. Perhaps it wasn't my decision at all, but God's plan.

I've never pretended to know the will of God. The teachings at the synagogue never satisfactorily answered my questions, although I kept my doubts to myself. The elders can recite entire chapters word for

1 word, but they have no comprehension of what those
2 words truly mean. Jesus of Nazareth might have been a
3 carpenter, but he could explain the Scriptures so that
4 even a child — or a businessman — could understand.
5 He was more than a gifted teacher, though. He was the
6 wisest man I ever met and, at times, the most
7 surprising.

8 I asked Jesus once if I, too, should give away
9 everything I owned to the poor. It would be difficult at
10 my age to start over, but I would manage somehow. But
11 Jesus said, “Joseph of Arimathea, you are different
12 from most wealthy men. You control your riches. Their
13 riches control them. Go home and administer well what
14 my Father has given you.” Again, I didn’t understand
15 God’s plan. I didn’t know then that my money would be
16 needed later for a tomb.

17 I never desired wealth. I never yearned to be on the
18 council, either. But serving on the council has given me
19 a broader perspective, a better understanding of the
20 community, than most businessmen have. Of course,
21 being a businessman has given me a better
22 understanding of human nature than most council
23 members have! They pray day and night for a Messiah
24 to overthrow the Romans. They don’t realize that our
25 detested Roman enemies are also our best friends. You
26 see, we Jews are united in our hatred for Rome. All
27 disagreements among us are put aside for the common
28 goal of freeing Israel. Once Israel is free, all the
29 squabbles that seem so minor now would grow in
30 importance. How long would it be until the Pharisees
31 and Sadducees came to blows over their differences?
32 How long before Jews crucified Jews?

33 That’s why I was drawn to Jesus of Nazareth. The
34 Romans have taught us to hate, to be cruel, to despise
35 those weaker than ourselves. We learned those lessons

1 only too well. We needed to be taught love, compassion,
2 mercy. And Jesus didn't just teach these things, he lived
3 them. He showed us that what we considered weakness
4 was actually strength. Only a strong man can forgive
5 his enemies. Jesus was never stronger than when he
6 was on the cross.

7 And now that cross is empty. I've done everything I
8 can think of. I placed his body in the tomb and supplied
9 money for the burial spices. I also gave some money to
10 Simon Peter and the others for travel expenses. It's not
11 safe for them here in Jerusalem. I would gladly give
12 Jesus' mother an honored place in my household, but
13 she's making her home with John after the mourning
14 period is finished.

15 I'll be staying in Jerusalem, of course. No one here
16 knows of my involvement with Jesus. The elders know
17 that I opposed his crucifixion, but they weren't aware
18 that I was one of those who believed in him. Maybe I
19 should have protested more strongly. But speaking out
20 wouldn't have changed anything. That's what I keep
21 telling myself, anyway. And this way I was able to make
22 the burial arrangements. It was the least I could do ...
23 or did I do the least that I could?

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Justice and Honor

(Pontius Pilate)

Pontius Pilate is another man who is seldom alone. Normally he is surrounded by staff members, servants, guards, etc. The Jewish people consider him a blood-thirsty tyrant. His conduct regarding Jesus was uncharacteristic. Here he has dismissed his underlings and is mulling over the past few days. If props are used, he can be sipping wine from a goblet.

PONTIUS PILATE: In all my career I have never seen such a stubborn, hardheaded people as the Jews. The Roman Empire has the best-trained, best-equipped army in the world. Why do these peasants persist in fighting us? Do they think we enjoy crushing their rebellions? Do they think it gives me pleasure to order that the rebels be butchered and hung on crosses as a warning to others? If they would only cooperate, we wouldn't have to be such brutal masters.

I dispense justice. It is perhaps harsh, but it is justice nonetheless. I am a man of honor. Those who commit crimes will be swiftly and severely punished. Conversely, those who obey the laws can be certain they will not be harmed. Justice will be upheld. The Jews must understand this. When they appear before me, they will be judged according to their actions, not by who they are or who they know. In my court I have seen scoundrels of every kind. I have passed judgment on thieves and murderers. But I have never had such an infuriating prisoner as you, Jesus of Nazareth.

I was trying to save your life. Why would you not defend yourself? Was it because I am a Roman official, a symbol of the occupation? Did you feel that you should have been tried only by your religious leaders? I

1 agreed, but you refused to let me help you. One might
2 have thought you wished to die. If so, there were surely
3 easier ways to accomplish it! If you had only committed
4 some crime, however small, I could have justified your
5 punishment. I even sent you to Herod, whom I despise.
6 He has never worried about justice. He cares only for
7 his position and privileges. But even he could find no
8 crime to charge you with. And now we have something
9 in common, Herod and I. We both pronounced you not
10 guilty, and yet did not release you. You were put to
11 death for an absurd reason. Still, I insisted that the
12 phrase “King of the Jews” be placed over your head so
13 that everyone could see what you had been convicted
14 of. We Romans nailed you to a cross, but we were not
15 your true executioners.

16 I was told of the words you spoke on that cross.
17 Surely you realized the soldiers would report them to
18 me — or were you crazed with pain and thirst by then?
19 “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”
20 (Luke 23:34, KJV). Forgive whom? The soldiers? Yes,
21 forgive them, for they knew nothing of the political
22 unrest that led to your death. They were merely
23 carrying out the orders they had been given countless
24 times before. Forgive the crowds that clamored for your
25 death? Yes, forgive them, for a mob is easily aroused to
26 a frenzy. Forgive the religious leaders who insisted you
27 be crucified? Yes, forgive even them, for they truly
28 believed that you deserved to die. Forgive me, who
29 ordered your death? No! I do not want your forgiveness.
30 I do not accept your forgiveness!

31 My entire career, I have carried out my duties to the
32 best of my ability. I could not be bribed, blackmailed, or
33 threatened. But when faced with the first true test of
34 my character, I failed. I gave in to the demands of a
35 screaming horde, and I commanded the execution of an



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