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EASTER REFLECTIONS

A Walk through Jerusalem

By Diana C. Derringer
SYNOPSIS: Imagine walking through the streets of Jerusalem a few days after Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. Life has returned to normal, yet a new normal. Wonder, excitement, and confusion fill homes, businesses, and synagogues. Listen to the stories of people whose lives Jesus changed. End the walk with John’s vision of heaven, the New Jerusalem. Scenes may be staged in one of three ways: as an actual walk with extra props and unscripted characters, combined in one Easter service, or as individual scenes on the Sundays leading to Easter.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(4 females, 12 males)

GATEKEEPER (m) ........................................ (Monologue)
MOTHER (f) ............................................. (1 line)
FATHER (m) ............................................. (3 lines)
DAUGHTER (f) .......................................... (Non-Speaking)
SON (m) .................................................. (2 lines)
MARTHA (f) ............................................. (Monologue)
ZACCHAEUS (m) ....................................... (Monologue)
HEALED MAN (m) ..................................... (Monologue)
PILATE’S WIFE (f) ................................. (Monologue)
NICODEMUS (m) ..................................... (Monologue)
PETER (m) ............................................. (Monologue)
SIMON (m) ............................................. (Monologue)
ROMAN SOLDIER (m) ............................ (Monologue)
JOSEPH (m) .......................................... (Monologue)
JOHN (m) ............................................. (Monologue)
ANGELS (m/f) ........................................ Any number. (Non-Speaking)
JESUS (m) ............................................. (Non-Speaking)
PRODUCTION NOTES

Running Time
Approximately twenty-six minutes performed consecutively. Individual times are listed for each separate script.

Bible Verse References

Performance Options
Appropriate for audiences of all ages, these scenes can be used in three ways. Our church chose to present them as a walk through the streets of Jerusalem, ending with John’s vision of heaven, the New Jerusalem. The number of dramas used may vary, depending on space and resources. We offered ours in our church’s Christian Life Center, but others may choose an outside presentation or an indoor/outdoor combination. We included additional scenes and characters with no scripted speaking parts. Possible supplemental roles include sellers of cloth, a baker, a carpenter, shepherds, a potter, a tent maker, beggars, and roaming soldiers. Adults or youth should fill most of the scripted roles if possible. Children work well in supplemental scenes.

The dramas may also be used in one Easter service or as individual scenes on the Sundays leading to Easter. If used individually, they serve well as brief introductions to sermons, since they run about one to three minutes.

When presented together, the scenes should be performed in sequence. Select from Scripture references listed and use music relevant to each scene. If stage space is limited, station scenes around the auditorium or sanctuary and spotlight them there.
Props and Costumes
Make props and costumes as simple or elaborate as resources allow. Simple suggestions are offered at the beginning of each scene. If staging a walk-through, more elaborate props lend greater authenticity. Add to the reality by painting walls between scenes with images that correspond with the characters inside. Distribute greenery, straw, baskets, pottery, wood bowls and spoons, rugs, fruit, fish, and other relevant items about the set. Sheep, donkeys, and other livestock may be included. Offer pollen masks for anyone with allergies when using live animals, straw, or mulch indoors.

Sound
Every character should wear a wireless microphone, if possible.

Scripture Credit
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The Gatekeeper: A Welcoming Witness

SYNOPSIS: A Jerusalem gatekeeper welcomes visitors and shares events of recent days.

DURATION: Two minutes.

SET: Gates into Jerusalem suggested by opened gates or a painting of opened gates.

COSTUME: Knee-length or long tunic and head covering.

CAST OF CHARCTERS

(1 male)

GATEKEEPER (m) ...................................... youth or adult

◆ ◆ ◆

AT START: GATEKEEPER steps forward at the gates and speaks with enthusiasm and animation.

GATEKEEPER: Shalom! Peace be with you, and welcome! Welcome to the holy city of Jerusalem, the city of God, home of King David, home of prophets and priests, and the lifetime home of (Bows.) your humble servant.

Every year during this season, our city swells with throngs arriving to celebrate Passover. What a time for renewing old acquaintances, enjoying family and, most importantly, recalling God’s deliverance of our ancestors from the bonds of slavery.

(More subdued.) This year’s festival took a terrible turn, however. Authorities arrested Jesus of Nazareth, the one many believed to be our promised Messiah. The lies told at his trial, the beating and mockery he endured, and then his crucifixion ... (Shakes head and looks down briefly.) As he died, so did our hope.
(Renewed excitement.) Yet none of those cruelties defeated our Lord! Death did not conquer him! His sealed tomb with posted guards stands empty. The grave clothes remain inside, but not Jesus. He walks and talks among us again. And now, because of his perfect life, his death on our behalf, and his triumph over evil, we who follow him can celebrate another deliverance—one from slavery to sin and death.

Hear what our citizens say about the difference Jesus made in their lives. Walk where he walked. See where he died. Then view his empty tomb. Who knows? Perhaps you too will come to know his truth in a personal way.

But I talk too much. Forgive me for delaying your journey. (Bows.) Shalom. Go in God’s peace.

THE END
A Family Celebration: Passover Fulfilled

SYNOPSIS: A family briefly explains Passover and its relevance to the promise of Jesus as Messiah.


DURATION: One minute.

SETTING: Inside a biblical-era home.

PROPS: A rug with the following on it: a loaf of unleavened bread; a plate filled with parsley, bitter herbs, a lamb shank, and chutney; four filled cups.

COSTUMES: Long tunics with head coverings for Mother and Daughter and knee-length or long tunics for Father and Son.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(2 females, 2 males)

MOTHER (f).................................................. (1 line)
FATHER (m).................................................. (3 lines)
DAUGHTER (f)............................................ (Non-Speaking)
SON (m)...................................................... (2 lines)

♦ ♦ ♦

AT START: FAMILY sits around the rug prepared for Passover. FATHER and MOTHER rise, step toward crowd, and smile as MOTHER begins talking.

MOTHER: We heard that guests curious about our traditions might visit, so (Gestures toward rug.) we left our setting as it was for our Passover meal.

FATHER: During Passover we look back and celebrate God’s deliverance of our people from Egyptian bondage. We also look forward to the coming of our promised Messiah.

SON: (Enthusiastically.) This Passover turned out to be really special!

FATHER: (Motions for SON to remain silent.) Yes, our Savior has finally come. However, not everyone was pleased with what he taught. They tried to destroy both him and his message.

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SON: But Jesus couldn’t be held down!

FATHER smiles but silences SON again. MOTHER and DAUGHTER frown and shake their heads at SON.

FATHER: They crucified Jesus last Friday and posted guards at his tomb, and now everywhere I go, people say he rose from the dead. At first I thought, No, that can’t be. You know, wishful thinking sometimes clouds our judgment. Nevertheless, after rereading Scripture and recalling Jesus’ words to his followers, I have to believe it’s true. Please, let me know if you hear more about our Promised One. May God go with you for the remainder of your journey.

THE END
Martha: Ms. Neat As a Pin No More

SYNOPSIS: Martha from Bethany explains the change Jesus’ teaching made in her attitude and priorities.


DURATION: Three minutes.

COSTUME: Long tunic and head cover.

SETTING: Inside a home.

PROPS: Old-style broom.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female)

MARTHA (f)

♦  ♦  ♦  ♦

AT START: MARTHA sweeps floor, then stops and beckons to listeners.

MARTHA: Come on in! Oh, don’t worry about making a mess. This place can be cleaned. Besides, what does it matter anyway? (Free hand on hips, eyebrows and voice raised.) You wouldn’t have heard me say that a few years ago! Why, everything at my house in Bethany had to be perfect. (Shakes head.) Circumstances can certainly change a person’s perspective.

(Pauses and puts hand under chin.) I remember hustling around on one occasion, preparing a meal, serving the guests, and finishing all the other details I thought had to be just so. Tense sounds mild compared to how I felt.

(Waves hand and looks to the side.) On the other hand, my sister, Mary, (Rolls eyes, shakes head, and almost sings words.) was as serene as could be, sitting at the feet of Jesus, soaking up his every word. (Irritated.) She definitely had no problem relaxing. Finally my resentment boiled over. Without weighing the impact of my words,
I blurted, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” (Luke 10:40) (Quieter voice, hand to side of face.) How foolish those words must have sounded!

But Jesus calmly replied, (Speaks lower and slower.) “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:41–42) (Normal voice.) I don’t believe I fully appreciated the wisdom of those words until sometime later.

Yet, gradually I began to put first things first. (Brighter voice, hand on hip.) I’d like to say I’ve completely overcome my compulsive tendencies, but— (Shrugs shoulders.) old habits are hard to break. I still let domestic responsibilities get the best of me from time to time. (Holds up index finger, speaks in brighter voice.) However, I’m learning. I’m learning. (Nods head, smiles.) Sitting at the feet of Jesus definitely made a difference.

And now, following the news of Jesus’ resurrection, the joy of knowing him personally definitely overshadows any day-to-day concerns.

THE END
Zacchaeus: A Changed Man

SYNOPSIS: Zacchaeus, a tax collector from Jericho, details his dramatic transformation.


DURATION: Two minutes.

PROPS: A tree or painting of a tree.

COSTUME: Knee-length or long tunic and head covering.

SETTING: Outside.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(1 male)

ZACCHAEUS (m)

♦ ♦ ♦

AT START: ZACCHAEUS sits against a tree, then rises and steps toward the crowd.

ZACCHAEUS: What a fool I made of myself! As a tax collector in Jericho, I routinely overcharged my countrymen. Everyone knew it but, because of my position, they could do nothing about it. Then, when Jesus passed through, I flew like a maniac ahead of the crowd and climbed into a tree, (Gestures toward tree behind him.) much like this one. I suppose I thought no one would do anything about that, either. But what did Jesus do? (Returns to tree and looks up.) He stopped right under that tree, looked up, called for me to come down, and went home with me.

(Walks forward again.) I could hear the crowd grumbling about his going to (Speaks behind hand.) a sinner’s house. But I didn’t care. Jesus (Passionately, with fist against chest.) saw me. He really saw me for who I was inside: filthy, prideful, greedy, and despised by all who knew me. But he came to my home, ate my food, listened to my conversation, and treated me as one worthy. He not only saw
me as I was, but as I could be—as I was made to be. (Pause.) And he changed me. He gave me hope and purpose.

Taking whatever means necessary for personal gain and hoarding all my money was history. I wanted to give (Pause.) because he gave. (Threws hands in the air.) And did I give! Half of everything I owned I gave to the poor, and anyone I cheated I reimbursed fourfold. (Leans toward crowd, brings one hand to chest.) You are looking at a changed man, a happier man, a man with meaning in his life ... all because of Jesus. (Returns to tree and sits against it.)

THE END
The Man Set Free: Body and Spirit

SYNOPSIS: A man praises Jesus for physical and spiritual healing.
SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Mark 2:1–12.
DURATION: Three minutes.
PROPS: A thin rolled mat.
COSTUME: Knee-length or long tunic and head covering.
SETTING: Outside.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 male)

HEALED MAN (m)

✦ ✦ ✧

AT START: HEALED MAN picks up his rolled mat, turns to the audience, and speaks.

HEALED MAN: This was my bed, my home, my prison. If I wanted to move, someone moved me. If I wanted to eat, someone fed me. I could care for none of my basic physical needs and had no real hope for change. (Returns mat to ground.)

Then we heard of a man with power to heal the sick. At first I assumed he was just another fraud preying off the pain of others. But the stories increased, and my hope began to grow.

When friends heard he was teaching and healing near here, they carried me to him. (Pause.) But we couldn’t get past the crowd. My friends would not give up, though. They took me ( Raises hand.) to the roof of the house, removed part of it, and then (Lowers hand.) lowered me at the feet of Jesus. I’m not sure if Jesus was surprised, (Laughs.) but everyone else certainly was!
I learned that day that persistence definitely pays, although sometimes in unexpected ways. Rather than healing me, Jesus told me my sins were forgiven. Well, let me tell you, that didn’t sit well with the teachers of the law! Although they said nothing, Jesus knew their thoughts. They believed he spoke blasphemy, as only God can forgive sin. Rather than avoiding the issue, Jesus asked them whether they thought it was easier to tell me my sins were forgiven or to get up and walk. Then, demonstrating his power, he told me to get up, gather my mat, and go home.

After all those years with no control, I was ready and willing to do exactly what he said, praising God every step of the way! (Leans toward crowd and smiles.) Can’t you just imagine what everyone said after I left?

Before meeting Jesus, all I wanted was physical healing. I wanted to walk. He gave me that, but so much more. Jesus healed my broken spirit and filled me with joy and peace like I have never known, and now I walk with him.

THE END
Pilate’s Wife: The Choice

SYNOPSIS: Pilate’s Wife agonizes over his decision regarding Jesus.


DURATION: One minute.

PROPS: Wash basin, pitcher, and drying cloth on a small table.

COSTUME: Long tunic and head cover.

SETTING: Inside a home.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female)

PILATE’S WIFE (f)

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

AT START: PILATE’S WIFE steps forward, hugs herself, then wrings her hands, paces, and speaks with frustration.

PILATE’S WIFE: I tried to warn Pilate, but he refused to listen. I don’t know when he will learn to do the right thing, whether it’s popular or not. After all, that’s his job as governor. *(Throws hands in air.*) But I’m just his wife, so he paid no attention. It’s not like I typically interfere, but my dream was so real that I had to do something.

*(Slower, quieter.*) Truthfully, I'm unsure if I'll ever know peace again, all because of Jesus. *(Pauses.*) The man had done no wrong, and Pilate wanted to let him go, but the mob shouting, “Crucify him!” over and over finally wore Pilate down.

*(Walks toward basin and cups water in left hand, letting it run out.*) Pilate washed his hands in this very basin and declared his innocence of Jesus’ blood. He told them the responsibility was theirs. *(Right hand over heart.*) But I knew, *(Pause.*) and Pilate knew, that he had to make a choice about Jesus, *(Pause, extends hands toward crowd.*) just as we all do.

THE END

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Nicodemus: From Darkness to Light

SYNOPSIS: The priest Nicodemus describes his growing conviction that Jesus is the promised Messiah.


DURATION: Three minutes.

PROPS: Columns or a painting to give the appearance of a temple entrance.

COSTUME: Blue and white priest costume.

SETTING: Temple entrance.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(1 male)

NICODEMUS (m)

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

AT START: NICODEMUS steps forward from the temple.

NICODEMUS: Many of the other priests think I’m a fool for believing. They say Jesus is nothing but a heretic and a fraud. (With strong conviction.) But he spoke of God’s love for all people, and his desire that none should perish. He healed the sick and gave hope to the hopeless.

I was also skeptical ... at first. He certainly didn’t fit our image of a Messiah. He accepted the outcasts, the criminals, those that everyone in decent society shunned. We expected some great military warrior who would free us from Roman oppression. We wanted (Raises fists.) a hero who would conquer, (Lowers fists.) not a servant who would die. (Pause.)

But the longer I watched and the more I heard, I knew only God’s power, his love, and his forgiveness could result in such miraculous transformations. Blasphemy? (Shakes head.) No. His words rang true.
I first approached him, however, under the cover of darkness. I'm not sure what I expected to hear, but certainly not that I must be born again. Born again? How is that possible? How can a grown man be born again? Then slowly and carefully, he revealed God’s plan. He told me God loves the world so much “he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

The second birth, he explained, is spiritual rather than physical. Each of us must choose: will we believe his truth and receive light and life or reject his love, choosing darkness and condemnation?

The scheming against Jesus grew in the days that followed until I could no longer keep silent and no longer cared what anyone thought. But they ignored my defense. Their evil plans continued until they convinced the authorities to put him to death.

(Subdued.) After Jesus’ crucifixion, I helped Joseph with the burial—a very small gesture for someone who gave so much. (Growing excitement.) But that sealed tomb did not hold him! The guards could not detain him! The grave clothes remained in the tomb, yet Jesus was no longer there! They say he lives again, that he rose just as he said he would.

Surely he is the one to fill this emptiness in my soul. I must believe Jesus. (Pauses.) I must believe.

THE END
Peter: Flawed but Forgiven

SYNOPSIS: Peter, an apostle of Jesus, speaks with wonder about Jesus calling him and continuing to use him in spite of his shortcomings.


TIME: Three minutes.

COSTUME: Knee-length or long tunic and head covering.

SETTING: Calvary. Set up three crosses (or paint a backdrop with them).

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 male)

PETER (m)

♦ ♦ ♦

AT START: PETER stands before the crosses, filled with conviction and sorrow.

PETER: How often I’ve wondered why Jesus bothered to call me, a lowly fisherman, to follow him. I have undoubtedly bungled more opportunities than any man alive. If I weren’t so headstrong and impulsive...

When Jesus asked our view of him, I had barely confessed him as Messiah before arguing against his chosen plan. When he started to wash my feet before our Passover meal, I went from one extreme to the other. First I said he would never wash my feet, then ended by telling him to wash my hands and head as well.

I couldn’t stay awake when he asked us to watch and pray in the garden. When soldiers arrived to arrest him, I fought like a thug and then ran like a coward.

Oh, I was so sure of myself. I vowed as we ate that I would lay down my life for Jesus. I should have eaten my words!
After Jesus’ arrest I followed, blending into the crowd outside the high priest’s courtyard. A servant girl approached, saying she had seen me with Jesus. In no uncertain terms, I told her she was wrong, that I had no idea what she was talking about. While I continued to warm myself by the fire, another person asked if I had followed Jesus. Not only did I deny Jesus that time, but I did so with an oath. Their scrutiny continued, however, as my Galilean accent gave me away. Calling down curses upon myself, I emphatically swore I (Stress each word.) did not know Jesus. (Pauses and lowers head.)

As soon as the words escaped my mouth, the rooster crowed, and I remembered ... I remembered Jesus' prediction that I would deny him three times before the rooster crowed. With tears of shame and sorrow running down my face, I couldn’t escape fast enough. While my Lord endured persecution and certain death, I turned my back on him!

(Voice brightens.) But in spite of my instability, in spite of my inconsistency, in spite of all my weaknesses and failures, he loves me. He forgave me. And he continues to call me to his work — to proclaim his message of forgiveness and salvation for all who turn to him.

THE END
Simon of Cyrene: Carrying the Cross

SYNOPSIS: Simon, a visitor from Cyrene, reflects on his role in carrying Jesus’ cross to Calvary.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Matthew 27:32.

DURATION: One minute.

PROPS: A blood-covered cross.

COSTUME: Knee-length or long tunic with head covering and sandals.

SETTING: Calvary.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 male)

SIMON (m)

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

AT START: SIMON holds the cross (or stands by it).

SIMON: Why did they choose me? I’m nobody special. I suppose some would say I happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. I’m not so sure about that. Perhaps I was in the right place at the right time. Perhaps I was where I needed to be.

Although I don’t understand everything that happened, this much I know: soldiers forced me to carry Jesus’ cross to Calvary. Beaten, mocked, stripped of his clothing, and crowned with thorns, he could no longer carry the load. A crowd trailed behind him, with many already in mourning.

Some said Jesus rebelled against the government and claimed to be King of the Jews. He acted like no rebel or king I’ve ever seen. Weakened by his ordeal and facing death, all his concern focused on others — his followers, his mother, the thieves who hung beside him, his accusers, and his executioners. Never have I known such love and forgiveness.

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