

**I WAS THERE:
AN EASTER MEDITATION**

by Ruth Buchanan



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SYNOPSIS: Through a series of heartfelt monologues, we view the events of Holy Week through the eyes of Mary (the Mother of Jesus), Salome, and Mary Magdalene. Along the way, we are brought to recognize that the testimonies of these three women could very well be our own. We, too, have sinned. We, too, have suffered disappointment, loss, and pain. Most importantly, we must all question what Jesus' redemptive act means for us personally.

This is a mature meditation for mature actors, and the impact is most effective with adults cast in the roles. Although child actors are not forbidden, lines such as "I know how it feels to stand alone in the dark and wonder what it all means" and "The whole world seemed the graveyard of our hopes" are just not as convincing when coming from the mouths of babes.

As they study their parts, the three women in the cast will quickly notice that certain lines from their monologues are eventually repeated in the second part of the meditation. These lines tease out the universal steps that all of us take on the way to salvation and help to personalize the message for listeners. Because these lines are so important, it's vital that they're given time to breathe. When these lines are first spoken during the monologues, be sure that they're slowed down and emphasized, perhaps even with a tiny cushion of silence bracketing each one.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females, 1 either)

NARRATOR (f)..... (12 lines)
 MARY (THE MOTHER OF JESUS) (f) (4 lines)
 SALOME (f) (4 lines)
 MARY MAGDALENE (f) (4 lines)

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PRODUCTION NOTES

DURATION: 12-15 minutes

MUSIC

Interspersed throughout the script are places for three musical interludes. These could be choral pieces, congregational singing, or instrumental meditations. The first interlude should be “Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord)?” This spiritual is in the public domain and perfectly sets the tone, as all three women start their monologue with “I was there.” The other two interludes are at your discretion. If you choose to use licensed music, it is your responsibility to ensure proper permissions. In order for the music to flow naturally with the narrations, the recommended theme for each interlude is given.

RESPONSIVE READING

You may choose to have your Narrator lead the responsive reading; however, if you plan for the responsive reading to segue directly into a time of corporate worship, you may decide to ask one of your worship leaders to direct the reading. Either way, don’t forget to print the responsive reading in the bulletin or prepare projections for your screens.

COSTUMES

Mary (the Mother of Jesus), Salome, and Mary Magdalene should dress in traditional first-century robes and headdresses. The Narrator may dress professionally in modern-day clothes.

AT START: *NARRATOR is in place behind podium. MARY (THE MOTHER OF JESUS), SALOME, AND MARY MAGDALENE enter and stand to the side of the NARRATOR.*

MUSICAL INTERLUDE: *“Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord)?”*

NARRATOR: After any climactic event, we seek details to help us make sense of what happened. When history records only the bare bones of fact, we turn to eyewitnesses to flesh out the reality. These witnesses tell us what they heard, what they saw, what they experienced, and what they felt. Through eyewitnesses, we are reminded that these events actually happened to real people. We are reminded that those people didn’t have the benefit of hindsight. They didn’t know then—as we do now—how it would all turn out. It’s significant that when Jesus rose from the grave, the first eyewitnesses to his resurrection were women. Women, who at the time weren’t even allowed to give legal testimony in court, were among the first to see Jesus in the flesh after his resurrection. Though the law didn’t recognize their worth, God elevated their status by recording their witness forever in Scripture. Through these women, we’re reminded of the power carried by three small words: I was there.

MARY (THE MOTHER OF JESUS): I am Mary, and I was there—for all of it, really. Jesus was my son, so naturally, I was there right from the start, when he was born. I watched him grow into a man and take up the task given by his heavenly Father. Through it all, I saw that he was not just my Son, but also my God in the flesh. I know who he really was because I watched it all unfold. I witnessed glory on the night of his birth, I saw him turn the water to wine, and later, I saw soldiers drive nails into his hands. Nails into his feet. I saw the sky go black. I heard him cry out from the place of his execution, “Father, forgive them” and “It is finished.” I watched him die—my son, my Savior, my God. I know how it feels to stand alone in the dark and wonder what it all means—how it all will end. I know because I was there.

SALOME: I'm Salome, and I was there. I followed Jesus through his ministry, helping where I could. I stood with Mary and the other women on Golgotha that day as we watched her son—our teacher—die. But that's not all we had to watch. When the darkness passed and the light returned, we saw them take his body for burial. We grieved. Oh, how we grieved. As I walked with the other women toward the tomb on Sunday morning, the whole world seemed the graveyard of our hopes. But then I saw the open tomb. I heard the angels speak, asking us why we would seek for life in the place of the dead. I know the wonder of seeking death and finding life. I know because I was there.

MARY MAGDALENE: I'm Mary Magdalene, and I was there. I know how it feels to be lost and confused—I spent most of my life that way. Misery piled on misery, until life seemed completely pointless. I thought I'd found hope when I met Jesus, but then after his death, I felt more lost and alone than ever before. We came to see him in his grave—to mourn him, to honor him—but he wasn't there. The angels told us he was alive. The news should have thrilled me, but all I could think was that I had no idea how to find him. Even if he had returned, where was he? I didn't know where he had gone or if I would ever see him again. I couldn't have found Jesus if I'd wanted to—but when I didn't know where to look, where to turn, or what to do, Jesus came to me. He met me in the garden, stopped my tears, and renewed my hope. I know how it feels to be found by him—my Comforter. I know because I was there.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE: Theme—Jesus' Suffering on the Cross.

NARRATOR: When we consider the eyewitness accounts of these three—Mary, Salome, and Mary Magdalene—perhaps we might envy their ability to speak from experience on matters that we must take by faith. After all, they witnessed these events firsthand, and we did not. But if we listen carefully, don't we hear echoes of own experience ringing through their testimonies?

MARY MAGDALENE: I know how it feels to be lost and confused—I spent most of my life that way.

MARY (THE MOTHER OF JESUS): I know how it feels to stand alone in the dark and wonder what it all means.

SALOME: The entire world seemed the graveyard of my hopes.

MARY MAGDALENE: But when I didn't know where to look, where to turn, or what to do, Jesus came to me.

SALOME: The darkness passed, and the light returned.

MARY (THE MOTHER OF JESUS): I know who he really is.

MARY MAGDALENE: My Comforter.

SALOME: My Teacher.

MARY (THE MOTHER OF JESUS): Our Savior.

NARRATOR: We may not have been physical eyewitnesses to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, but in a very real sense, we were there. God had us in mind as he fulfilled the plan he himself had initiated to rescue his own fallen ones, so that instead of being overwhelmed by his wrath, they could be rescued by his grace. In order to satisfy justice, the Lamb of God—Jesus Christ—represented us before his Father. When Jesus poured out his blood as an offering, he paid the debt incurred by our sin. He died not as a misunderstood martyr, but as a conquering Savior—and we are the beneficiaries of his finished work. When the Father laid on the Son the iniquity of all humankind, our sin was part of the burden. Our sin held him to the cross until with the triumphant shout of "It is finished," Jesus secured eternity. When the victory was won, we were there. You were there. I was there.

Responsive Reading

NARRATOR: *(Optional Line: Please stand as we read together from the screen/from your bulletins.)* When he stood trial—

ALL: I was the cause.

NARRATOR: When they struck his face—

ALL: I was the fist.

NARRATOR: When his back was lashed—

ALL: I was the whip.

NARRATOR: When they mocked his pain—

ALL: I was the scoffer.

NARRATOR: When his brow was gashed—

ALL: I was the thorn.

NARRATOR: When his hands were spiked—

ALL: I was the hammer.

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