

WHOSE CROSS IS IT, ANYWAY?

by Mark & Karla Jensen



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Whose Cross Is It, Anyway?

A series of Lenten sketches

by Mark and Karla Jensen

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PRODUCTION NOTES

The ongoing saga throughout the weeks of this Lenten series deals with a cross being delivered by a JPS (Jerusalem Parcel Service) man. Though the cross makes its rounds to many people, only one accepts its delivery. By blending biblical familiarity with contemporary society, these weekly scenes reveal how people across all generations make excuses for not wanting Jesus in their lives.

Staging for *Whose Cross Is It, Anyway?* is flexible enough for any congregation to utilize within any sanctuary configuration. If space is at a minimum, characters may enter and exit from Stage Left or Stage Right doors, giving the impression that someone's office or home is beyond the door, out of sight. Simple set pieces such as small tables with lamps, a card table, telephone, chair, or a fax machine might represent an office. The set pieces may be removed from the drama by the stage manager or simply left on the set while the action and characters move to another part of the sanctuary or closer to the congregation. The JPS Man can be given the freedom to roam down the center or side aisles to represent traveling across town or to someone else's address.

The costuming carries both biblical and contemporary options. The JPS Man is typically dressed in a brown T-shirt, matched by brown shorts or pants and walking shoes. He may wear a baseball hat with "JPS" on it and even have a pair of work gloves sticking out of his back pocket. The glamorous woman in the first sketch should wear a lot of jewelry and a fancy gown. The poor woman in the second sketch wears shabby clothing. In the fifth sketch, Joseph 1 dresses biblically and Joseph 2 dresses in a contemporary style. Many of the familiar characters within the Lenten story actually dress in biblical garb, if the director chooses.

The simple wooden cross the JPS Man carries should be large enough to be seen by those who sit in the rear of the sanctuary but not so heavy that it tires the actor.

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First Sunday of Lent

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CHARACTERS: JPS Man, John, Andrew, Church Secretary, Woman

PROPS: Large cross, clipboard.

SET: Desk or table and chair for Secretary.

(The cross is On-stage, leaning against a wall. The JPS MAN is in uniform, with clipboard in hand, ready for a busy day of deliveries.)

JPS MAN: *(As if looking at his list of deliveries on his clipboard)*

OK. Next delivery. *(Looks around to pick up a box.)* **Oh, the cross. Looks a little plain. I wonder which of my customers ordered this.** *(Checks list, heads for someone's door, then knocks.)*

JOHN: *(Yells from Off-stage)* **Who is it?**

JPS MAN: **It's Rich, from Jerusalem Parcel Service. You know ... JPS. You've seen our brown vans around town. We offer prompt delivery service anywhere in Israel.**

JOHN: *(Opens door.)* **Do you have a package for me? I don't remember ordering anything except some CDs that my wife knows nothing about.**

JPS MAN: **Sir, I've got your name and address all over this. I've double-checked my roster.**

JOHN: **Actually, I ordered some cross pens once for Christmas presents, but just a regular old cross? I don't think so.**

JPS MAN: **You're welcome to take a look at my orders. You are John, disciple of Christ, and this is where you live, right?** *(ANDREW enters.)*

ANDREW: **Hey, guys. What's up? Did we get a package from QVC again? We've got to stop watching that so late at night.**

JOHN: **Andrew, I'm glad you're here. Maybe this package goes to you, because it's not exactly what I was expecting.**

1 **ANDREW:** What is it?

2 **JPS MAN & JOHN:** *(Together)* A cross.

3 **ANDREW:** Now, what would I want with a cross? It's not
4 even my size, guys.

5 **JOHN:** It's a mistake, sir. Just take it back to your
6 warehouse and try again.

7 **JPS MAN:** Listen, you two, I've got a lot of other deliveries
8 to make today, so if you'll simply commit to the price
9 and take it off my hands, I'll be forever grateful.

10 **ANDREW:** Cost? Price? Hey, nobody said anything about
11 money changing hands here.

12 **JPS MAN:** Sorry to mislead you, gentlemen. There's no
13 money changing hands here. Just a few simple
14 instructions, really.

15 **JOHN:** Like?

16 **JPS MAN:** Giving up your day job, following the Messiah,
17 worshiping in secrecy, preaching the Gospel, and
18 possibly even being despised and ridiculed by many.
19 That's the price.

20 **ANDREW:** That's the price?

21 **JPS MAN:** Will one of you please sign so I can be on the
22 road?

23 **JOHN:** Give me a minute to think about it ... *not!*

24 **ANDREW:** Not today, man. I guess I love my life the way it
25 is.

26 **JPS MAN:** Are you two saying what I think you're saying?

27 **JOHN & ANDREW:** *(Together)* Yes.

28 **JPS MAN:** I mean, are you refusing delivery? *(JOHN and*
29 *ANDREW nod their heads.)* **OK, but this cross is going to**
30 **have a mark on it.** *(JPS MAN leaves with cross and heads to*
31 *the church office. SECRETARY has entered and sits at a desk*
32 *or table.)*

33 **SECRETARY:** Yes, may I help you, sir?

34 **JPS MAN:** Certainly, ma'am. Is this _____? *(Insert*
35 *your own church name.)* **I have a delivery for you. A cross.**

- 1 **SECRETARY:** Across what, sir? Across town?
- 2 **JPS MAN:** No, just a cross. You know, for the church here.
3 Perfect place for a cross. You could put it in the
4 sanctuary, in one of the Sunday school rooms, the youth
5 room maybe. It ought to look fine.
- 6 **SECRETARY:** I have no record of ordering a cross.
- 7 **JPS MAN:** That's because records are outdated and CDs
8 are in.
- 9 **SECRETARY:** I mean that no one authorized the purchase
10 or delivery of a cross. Whose name is on it?
- 11 **JPS MAN:** This cross is intended for each and every member
12 of this parish, ma'am.
- 13 **SECRETARY:** You mean you have a cross that size for each
14 member of our parish? That sounds way too expensive!
15 Besides, we have too many other crosses around here
16 already.
- 17 **JPS MAN:** Well, ma'am, the cost of the cross was very high.
- 18 **SECRETARY:** I'm sorry, sir, these crosses aren't in our
19 budget right now. Perhaps you could come with
20 another delivery another time, like with roses for a
21 pretty lady.
- 22 **JPS MAN:** This order isn't going to leave that easily,
23 although it is making the rounds today.
- 24 **SECRETARY:** OK, come back in a little while and I'll see if I
25 can get clearance for this delivery.
- 26 **JPS MAN:** Tell you what — I'll leave the crosses at the
27 entrance of the church for everyone to use. That way,
28 all the members can carry the cross with them
29 wherever they go.
- 30 **SECRETARY:** Fine, but I'm not signing for anything until I
31 get the A-OK. (*SECRETARY exits. JPS MAN departs, looking*
32 *for yet another person.*)
- 33 **JPS MAN:** OK, I think we've finally got this order right. I'm
34 sure this is where the cross goes. (*Knocks on door.*
35 *Glamorous WOMAN answers.*)

- 1 **WOMAN:** I can never resist a man in uniform! What can I do
2 for you, blue eyes?
- 3 **JPS MAN:** That's brown eyes, miss, to match the outfit. I'm
4 from the Jerusalem Parcel Service, and I have a
5 delivery for you.
- 6 **WOMAN:** Oh, wonderful. I'm doing some redecorating and
7 can't wait to complete it. Here, let me invite you in and
8 you can assist me in setting this up.
- 9 **JPS MAN:** Ah, ma'am? That's not in my job description. I'm
10 just delivering the cross to you. Showing it to you;
11 making sure it gets to its rightful owner.
- 12 **WOMAN:** Did you say cross?
- 13 **JPS MAN:** Right here, miss. Has your name and address
14 written all over it. You seem like the kind of person who
15 might have just about everything else in her home. No
16 Christian's home would be complete without a cross.
- 17 **WOMAN:** That thing? Where in the world would I put that
18 ghastly albatross? It doesn't blend with any of my lovely
19 decorating schemes. I watch HGTV all the time. Why,
20 that thing is plain wood. It's not even painted! It's got
21 nails that might scratch something important. I could
22 break a nail of my own on it.
- 23 **JPS MAN:** Oh, that would be a shame, lady. Just give me a
24 break. This is my third try today to deliver this cross.
25 Nobody seems to want it.
- 26 **WOMAN:** If I had a cross, I naturally would have ordered
27 the most expensive, ornate, finely crafted cross
28 imaginable — not some simple cross made of wood. I
29 might consider wearing one on my lapel.
- 30 **JPS MAN:** Jesus wore the cross on his back. Nobody would
31 see it if it were on your shirt with all the gaudy stuff
32 you're used to wearing.
- 33 **WOMAN:** I wouldn't want the cross to overshadow my
34 money, my beauty, and my lovely home. I'd say this
35 cross belongs to someone else.

1 JPS MAN: That's what everyone is saying. "It's not my
2 cross," or "We have too many other crosses," and "I
3 wouldn't want the cross to be that important in my life."

4 WOMAN: Hey, I'm not accepting this cross. You might as
5 well load up the albatross, take it across town, and give
6 it to someone like Mary ... Mary Magdalene. She needs
7 a cross worse than I do. Besides, she knows Jesus, and
8 she'll know what to do with a cross. Good day. *(Exits.)*

9 JPS MAN: *(To audience)* Why is it that no one wants the
10 cross? *(Pauses and exits.)*

11

12

13

Second Sunday of Lent

14

15 **CHARACTERS:** JPS Man, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Mary,
16 Poor Woman

17 **PROPS:** Cross, clipboard, phone book.

18

19 *(JPS MAN enters with cross and clipboard.)*

20 JPS MAN: Whew! I don't believe this. Another day delivering
21 an unwanted parcel. In all my years as a JPS man, I've
22 never had a problem getting rid of a package. It's not
23 been a typical week. I have this cross that everyone
24 keeps denying. Nobody wants any part of it. They don't
25 even have to pay for it — in cash, that is. I can just give it
26 away, because it comes free and undeserved. Yet having
27 this cross means that your life is different. One's lifestyle
28 can't remain the same if the cross and its meaning
29 become a priority in your life. Money, possessions, all
30 must take second place to the cross. Well, I must press on
31 with my deliveries. Let's hope that today I'm more
32 successful with this burden — I mean, delivery. *(Talking*
33 *to himself)* OK, Mary Magdalene's address is this way.
34 Oooh, looks like a rough part of town. I may have to use
35 the cross to defend myself. *(Knocks on door.)*

1 MARY MAGDALENE: (*Answers door.*) Oh, do I have a package
2 today? I wonder who it's from? I never had many
3 friends until I started following Jesus.

4 JPS MAN: Oh, great, then you are the person to whom this
5 cross belongs! Here's the cross, here's the X. (*Indicates*
6 *place to sign on clipboard.*) Sign here, and I'm on my way.

7 MARY MAGDALENE: Hold on just a moment. I already have
8 a cross. In fact, the cross I have is the one Jesus gave to
9 all his followers. It's no secret that I used to be a
10 prostitute. When I met Jesus, I left that part of my most
11 sinful self behind.

12 JPS MAN: That's nice, ma'am, but I still have this particular
13 cross to get rid of, and your name is on it.

14 MARY MAGDALENE: I've already carried the cross, and I'm
15 still carrying the cross. I'm being faithful to Jesus even
16 if it means opposition from the world, even when the
17 love I show others is greeted with hatred.

18 JPS MAN: So, what you're saying to me in so many words is
19 you're not going to take this cross because you've
20 already got one?

21 MARY MAGDALENE: That's right. I don't need another one.
22 The cross is already a part of my life. When I first saw
23 Jesus in the home of a religious man, given my
24 background, it was the wrong place to go. I'd heard he
25 was a holy man, and I wanted to see how Jesus could
26 change my life. He did.

27 JPS MAN: So you're not exactly denying the cross. You
28 already have your own? OK, I'll let it go this once, but
29 since the name Mary is already stamped on this packing
30 slip, do you know any other Marys in town? Any that
31 might need a cross?

32 MARY MAGDALENE: There's Mary and Martha, across
33 town. Let me look in my phone book for their address.
34 (*MARY MAGDALENE flips through her phone book, then*
35 *points to an address. JPS MAN goes to another door. MARY*

1 MAGDALENE *exits.*)

2 JPS MAN: It's the JPS man. Anybody home?

3 MARY: Martha, we have company. A tall, dark, and
4 handsome UPS guy!

5 MARTHA: Don't you mean JPS guy? UPS won't be able to
6 deliver for another couple thousand years. I'll go put on
7 some coffee and set a quick snack out for him. You let
8 him in. (*MARTHA exits.*)

9 MARY: Welcome! Do you have a delivery for us? The
10 suspense is killing me. Come in, come in. What is it?
11 Who is it from?

12 JPS MAN: Actually, I just spoke to Mary Magdalene about
13 this package, and she recommended that I stop here,
14 but I really don't have time for coffee. I've got other
15 deliveries to make.

16 MARTHA: (*Calling from Off-stage*) Mary, Mary? Could you give
17 me a hand for a moment and we can get the dining room
18 table set? He can wait. Just offer him a seat.

19 JPS MAN: Actually, ladies, I just need your signature for
20 this cross. (*MARTHA enters.*) It's already given to you by
21 name. I can put it anywhere in the house that you want.
22 It's already yours, and if you have more than one cross,
23 you can still keep this one. Now, which one of you
24 would like to sign for it?

25 MARY: Oh, the cross sounds good, looks good, but I just need
26 some time to think about it for a while. I do this to all
27 the telemarketers too, so don't be offended. I just need
28 some time to weigh the pros and cons.

29 JPS MAN: (*Rolls eyes.*) I don't have much time, lady. How
30 about your sister? Martha, can you just give me your
31 John Hancock?

32 MARY & MARTHA: (*Together*) Who?

33 JPS MAN: Never mind. Long story.

34 MARTHA: Oh, I'm flattered by the offer, but I'd really
35 rather make my own cross. I enjoy crafts. The staining,

1 the carving ... It's really relaxing and delightful! It's a
2 good thing.

3 **JPS MAN:** I get the drift. Neither of you wants this cross. I
4 gotta go. I'll just start knocking on doors. (*MARY and*
5 *MARTHA exit. JPS MAN walks down the aisle through the*
6 *congregation, looking around at people.*) This is the second
7 full day of trying to get rid of this cross. (*Approaches*
8 *POOR WOMAN.*) Ma'am, I'm giving away this cross
9 today. All you have to do is sign for it.

10 **POOR WOMAN:** Son, I don't have any formal training in
11 sign language.

12 **JPS MAN:** No, I didn't mean sign for it, I just meant write
13 your name, your signature.

14 **POOR WOMAN:** I'd love to take this cross, but I'm too poor.
15 I don't have a place for it in my house.

16 **JPS MAN:** You don't even have to own a house to have a
17 cross in your life. You just have to be willing to take this
18 cross along with you wherever you go.

19 **POOR WOMAN:** But I'm too frail to carry such a thing. I'd
20 never even make it a block. It's too burdensome, young
21 man.

22 **JPS MAN:** That's the beauty of the cross. This is a cross that
23 could actually carry you through your poverty, your
24 loneliness, your health problems. The cross could be
25 present with you at all times during your life. Other
26 people who hold the cross are also responsible for you,
27 to help you, to be your family of believers. Go ahead,
28 take it! (*Pushes it into her hands.*)

29 **POOR WOMAN:** Really, I have nothing to give in return for
30 the cross. I have no resources. Try someone rich, like
31 the governor or the president. (*Exits.*)

32 **JPS MAN:** (*Turns to leave.*) I feel sorry for her. I know too
33 many people like that. Their finances are maxed out,
34 stretched to the limit; they couldn't possibly afford to
35 respond monetarily to the cross. Yet most of us aren't

1 like this lady. We know where we're sleeping tonight,
 2 we know where our next meal is coming from. The thing
 3 about the cross is that it calls us to give only as we are
 4 able. The cross calls us to be good stewards. So tell me,
 5 Lord, why is it that everyone keeps denying the cross?
 6 *(Pauses and exits.)*

7

8

9

Third Sunday of Lent

10

11 **CHARACTERS:** JPS Man, Pontius Pilate, Peter, Judas

12 **PROPS:** Cross, clipboard.

13 **SOUND EFFECT:** Rooster crowing.

14

15 *(JPS MAN enters with cross and clipboard.)*

16 **JPS MAN:** I spend my life delivering packages for the
 17 Jerusalem Parcel Service. However, this week has been
 18 unlike any other. There's a cross that nobody wants,
 19 even though it's free. I can place it in their lives, but
 20 they refuse it. I'm shocked and surprised that person
 21 after person continues to deny the cross of Jesus. You
 22 wouldn't believe what I hear: "It's too expensive." "It's
 23 too plain." "I have too many other crosses." "I'm not
 24 ready for the cross." Today I'm going to try a different
 25 approach. Come on, let's see who I'll run into.

26 **PILATE:** *(Approaching JPS MAN)* Ah, young man, you're just
 27 in time. How I do adore these deliveries. Have my new
 28 sandals arrived? How about my instruction manual for
 29 governing the Roman Empire? Oh, and I also ordered
 30 *How to Avoid the Fall of the Roman Empire* as well.

31 **JPS MAN:** No, I think that one is on back order. Should be
 32 coming out in a couple millennia.

33 **PILATE:** Maybe it's my *Chicken Soup for the Pilot's Soul*.

34 **JPS MAN:** No, guess again.

35 **PILATE:** Is it the new governor's ring?

- 1 JPS MAN: Wrong again. I have a cross for you.
- 2 PILATE: Oh, you must have missed the new instructions. All
3 crosses are to be taken directly to the death row section
4 of the prison in Jerusalem.
- 5 JPS MAN: Then it's yours and you'll sign for it, right?
- 6 PILATE: I'm afraid not. I mean, I'm not afraid or scared,
7 don't misunderstand. What I mean to say is, I can't take
8 this myself. The cross is meant only for non-citizens of
9 the Roman Empire. As the governor of this area, it
10 should be obvious to you that I am a Roman citizen.
- 11 JPS MAN: So Roman citizens don't need the cross?
- 12 PILATE: If a Roman citizen were condemned to death, most
13 likely he would be beheaded. Death would come quickly.
- 14 JPS MAN: Death does not come quickly by the cross.
- 15 PILATE: You are correct. It could take up to three days to
16 die on a cross.
- 17 JPS MAN: Yet the place called "The Skull" is filled with
18 crosses. How can you say this isn't yours? You've sent
19 many people to the cross.
- 20 PILATE: That is my job. Those who hang on the cross are
21 simply being punished for their wrongdoing. I wash my
22 hands of being responsible for their deaths. Those who
23 die on the cross get what they deserve.
- 24 JPS MAN: Governor, if you're not going to sign for this, then
25 who will?
- 26 PILATE: Why don't you try some of Jesus' disciples? I hear
27 they are in town right now. You may have to search
28 diligently for them, though. They've gone into hiding
29 recently.
- 30 JPS MAN: Thank you, sir. I'll try to find them. By the way,
31 *Chicken Soup for the Pilot's Soul* is for airplane pilots,
32 so there. (PILATE exits. PETER enters and acts as if he's
33 warming himself by a fire. JPS MAN sees PETER by the fire.)
34 Hey, that looks like one of Jesus' followers. (Addresses
35 PETER.) Sir, are you one of Jesus followers?

1 PETER: I don't know the man.

2 JPS MAN: I'm sure I've seen you with him a time or two on
3 CNN. I have cable. Actually, your secret is safe with me
4 about being a Christian. All I want you to do is sign for
5 this cross and I'll be out of your hair. And I won't tell
6 any snoopy reporters.

7 PETER: I tell you again, I do not know the man. I've never
8 seen him before.

9 JPS MAN: But Peter, I'm sure I read somewhere that you
10 acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God. In fact, you even
11 walked on water with Jesus by your side. I saw it in
12 black and white.

13 PETER: Wherever did you see such a thing? It's all lies,
14 hearsay, conjecture.

15 JPS MAN: I read it in the Bible.

16 PETER: Oh yeah, I keep forgetting about that book. It'll only
17 be on the best-seller list for a few years, and then I
18 won't have to worry about these distractions. Anyway,
19 I'll tell you once more: I don't know the man.

20 JPS MAN: OK, Pete. But I bowl with Thomas, who's one of
21 the other disciples. And your accent is a dead giveaway.
22 All I need is your signature, then you take the cross and
23 I can go home.

24 PETER: The only person going home is me. I don't know
25 Jesus. *(PETER exits.)*

26 JPS MAN: *(Calling after him)* Peter, Peter ... *(Rooster crows.)*
27 Come back! Man, at this point, I'd trade this cross for
28 just about anything. Maybe I can find some traders
29 down at the city market. *(JUDAS enters and walks by.)*
30 Hey, here comes Judas Iscariot. I know he's a disciple of
31 Jesus. Maybe he'll take the cross. Judas, wait up!

32 JUDAS: What can I do for you, sir?

33 JPS MAN: I'm looking for a trader so I can trade this cross.

34 JUDAS: I feel like the biggest traitor of them all.

35 JPS MAN: Wonderful! Then I'll bet you'd be interested in

- 1 making a deal.
- 2 **JUDAS:** I've already made a deal that cost my Master his
3 life. I betrayed him with a kiss.
- 4 **JPS MAN:** That sounds like an expensive deal.
- 5 **JUDAS:** The religious authorities asked me to betray my
6 Master for thirty pieces of silver. You're welcome to take
7 the money from me, and I don't need anything in return.
- 8 **JPS MAN:** The rules say I have to trade you for something,
9 and this cross is perfect.
- 10 **JUDAS:** It's much too little a punishment for what I've done.
- 11 **JPS MAN:** Well, did you kiss the wrong guy or what?
- 12 **JUDAS:** No, I kissed my Master in order to identify him.
- 13 **JPS MAN:** Hey, we all make mistakes. Take the cross and I
14 bet you'll feel a lot better.
- 15 **JUDAS:** I don't deserve the cross. What I deserve is
16 immediate punishment. (*JUDAS throws money at JPS*
17 *MAN's feet, then exits, running.*)
- 18 **JPS MAN:** Amazing. Nobody but nobody will take this cross.
19 I was certain that Pilate would take the cross. After all,
20 he puts people to death on it daily. But now his hands
21 are washed of it. And Peter, he was a shoe-in. I thought
22 he was a faithful disciple, but he acts as if he doesn't
23 know who Jesus is. And now Judas says he doesn't
24 deserve the cross. Just who deserves the cross, and why
25 is it that everyone keeps denying it? (*Pauses and exits.*)

26
27

Fourth Sunday of Lent

28
29

- 30 **CHARACTERS:** JPS Man, Barabbas, Jesus, Man 1 and 2
- 31 **PROPS:** Poster with "Free Cross — Will Deliver" written on it,
32 cross, clipboard.

33

- 34 (*JPS MAN enters with cross and clipboard.*)

- 35 **JPS MAN:** Days have passed and my normal, simple job of

1 delivering packages has transformed into a quest to
2 deposit a single cross into the hands of its rightful
3 owner. However, person upon person continues to
4 refuse and deny the cross for a variety of reasons —
5 none of which I can comprehend, because the cross is
6 free for the taking. I've heard everything from "The
7 cross is too plain" to "I'm not prepared for the cross"
8 and "I'm too busy for the cross." I hope I'll be successful
9 delivering it today. *(Pause)* You know, I haven't tried
10 advertising this cross. Maybe that's how someone will
11 take it off my hands. I'll place a classified ad that says,
12 "Free Cross — Will Deliver." *(Pulls out poster with those*
13 *words on it. BARABBAS enters and walks by.)*

14 **BARABBAS:** Hey, I saw your sign. What's the catch with the
15 free cross, man? If you're gonna give me the cross only
16 to let me walk away with it and have me arrested, forget
17 it. I've done my time in the big house.

18 **JPS MAN:** I know for a fact you don't have a house, big or
19 small, Barabbas. You have a tent. But don't worry. The
20 cross is yours free of charge anyway. I've been dragging
21 this thing around for days. It's a crime no one will take
22 it.

23 **BARABBAS:** Sssshhh. Ya don't have to broadcast that I'm a
24 common thief. There's no way I'm touching this cross if
25 it's hot. The vote of the people just released me.

26 **JPS MAN:** I hear with the crazy ballots in the past that the
27 other guy is going to demand a recount. I'd take the
28 cross now while you're still ahead.

29 **BARABBAS:** The vote wasn't televised, so no pre-calculated
30 estimates were given ahead of time, but I would say
31 that most of the countryside was there.

32 **JPS MAN:** Wow, the whole countryside came to see you? You
33 must have a lot of supporters. Maybe this cross should
34 go to you.

35 **BARABBAS:** Actually, they didn't all come to see me. They

1 came to see the one who called himself the King of
2 the Jews.

3 **JPS MAN:** They came to see Jesus?

4 **BARABBAS:** The one and only.

5 **JPS MAN:** I heard you were about to be hanged with other
6 criminals, but I was surprised to hear that Jesus had
7 been arrested. How did you escape crucifixion?

8 **BARABBAS:** The crowd voted that I be released as I stood
9 alongside Jesus of Nazareth ... the King of the Jews.
10 One of us deserved to go free, and Pilate gave the crowd
11 the choice of who to release. You can take your cross
12 elsewhere. You're too late.

13 **JPS MAN:** But Jesus was not a criminal, and he never said
14 that he was the King of the Jews.

15 **BARABBAS:** You are correct. It was a charge that the
16 religious authorities and the governor put upon him.
17 Pilate really wanted to release Jesus, but the crowd
18 disagreed.

19 **JPS MAN:** I can't believe it. I started out today believing
20 that a common criminal like you deserved the cross
21 most of all. If I couldn't find people who wanted the
22 cross in their lives because of money or business or
23 other crosses, I believed that surely you could use it at
24 death's doorstep to repent and save your soul.

25 **BARABBAS:** I'm going back to the life I had before this mess.
26 Take your cross to some other criminal. Take your cross
27 to Jesus.

28 **JPS MAN:** Even though you came this close to dying on the
29 cross, you'd rather forget about it? Is that what you're
30 saying? Didn't this change your life at all?

31 **BARABBAS:** I don't follow.

32 **JPS MAN:** Obviously not, but perhaps you should.
33 Christians worldwide believe that Jesus died in their
34 place. In your case, he most certainly died for you.

35 **BARABBAS:** What's so wrong with returning to the life I

- 1 had? The cross isn't going to change the world, is it?
- 2 JPS MAN: The cross is all about changing the world with
3 love, even to the point of death. Isn't God more
4 important than Rome?
- 5 BARABBAS: Forget it. Go talk to Jesus about love. I'm not
6 the right person. (*Exits.*)
- 7 JPS MAN: (*Addresses the crowd, shouting.*) Excuse me.
8 Attention! Attention! Does anyone know the
9 whereabouts of a man named Jesus?
- 10 MAN 1: (*From his place in the congregation*) He was here
11 yesterday, but he's moved on.
- 12 JPS MAN: How many times do we have to tell people to
13 notify the sender of a new address? You know, if I
14 wasn't such a nice guy, I'd return this cross in two
15 seconds and let the sender find this guy's new address.
16 Guess I'll try near the sea.
- 17 MAN 2: (*Enters and walks by.*) Say, I wouldn't get that cross
18 wet if I were you. The wood will crack and warp.
- 19 JPS MAN: Are you a fisherman? I'm trying to locate a Jesus
20 Christ so I can get his signature for this cross I've been
21 carting around for days.
- 22 JESUS: (*Comes up from behind MAN 2, who exits.*) Ah, there you
23 are. I've been searching for you. I believe you have in
24 your possession something that belongs to me.
- 25 JPS MAN: Why yes, Lord. Word of my search for the rightful
26 owner of this delivery must have reached you before I
27 found you. That's amazing. How did you hear about it so
28 quickly in these days of no technology and limited
29 communication?
- 30 JESUS: Through the grapevine, of course.
- 31 JPS MAN: I have a delivery for you, if indeed you are the
32 Son of Man.
- 33 JESUS: Who do you say that I am?
- 34 JPS MAN: Doesn't matter who I say that you are. I just need
35 a name and signature on the X. Do you have any

1 identification with you?
2 JESUS: I'm the branch of Jesse, Star of David, Prince of
3 Peace. The Light of the World.
4 JPS MAN: I'm going to have to call this in. Do I already
5 know you from somewhere?
6 JESUS: Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I
7 am not here on my own, but by him who sent me.
8 JPS MAN: *(Confused)* Yes, well, whatever. I just have this
9 cross that Barabbas said might be yours.
10 JESUS: I take the cross in order to cleanse the sins of the
11 world.
12 JPS MAN: Hey, I'm just delivering the cross. If you need any
13 cleaning products, you should have ordered them
14 separately.
15 JESUS: The shedding of my blood will be what takes away
16 the sins of the world and brings forgiveness to the
17 world. I'll take the cross.
18 JPS MAN: Wow. That was way too easy. I should have
19 started with Jesus.
20 JESUS: On the contrary, taking the cross is never easy. I've
21 already been betrayed by one of my own, denied by
22 another, placed on trial, and beaten. I'll be accused of
23 being the King of the Jews and wear a crown of thorns.
24 JPS MAN: *(Trying to reach for the cross to take it back)* Maybe
25 you don't really want the cross then.
26 JESUS: No, it's God's plan. It's what I've come into the world
27 to do, what I was born to do. It's not my will, but my
28 Father's will. This cup is not passed from me, but
29 accepted, knowing this is what God wants me to do.
30 *(JPS MAN hands JESUS the cross and JESUS departs.)*
31 JPS MAN: *(Addressing congregation)* For days, I've been
32 determined to give this cross to its rightful owner. Now
33 that it is finished, why do I feel so terrible? *(Exits.)*
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Fifth Sunday of Lent

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CHARACTERS: JPS Man, Nicodemus, Joseph 1, 2, and 3

PROPS: Small cross, clipboard, 3 name tags saying “Joseph.”

(JPS MAN enters with clipboard.)

JPS MAN: So, I finally got rid of the cross after days of trying to find someone to take it off my hands. I’m looking forward to getting back to my normal routine of delivering books, office supplies, and clothing. Let’s see, what else is in my truck for today? *(Pantomimes looking.)* Oh, no ... not again. You won’t believe this, but it’s another cross. *(Picks up cross.)* It’s much smaller. Maybe a person could carry this with them every day or set it on a shelf or put it on a wall in their kitchen. This should be much easier to deliver than the last cross. Let’s see who it belongs to. *(Consults clipboard, then knocks on NICODEMUS’s door.)*

NICODEMUS: *(Answering the door)* Oh, the JPS man. Always a pleasure. Are you bearing my newly ordered Hebrew Old Testament or perhaps my Bible trivia game?

JPS MAN: Sorry to disappoint you. I’m just delivering this small cross.

NICODEMUS: Oh, no. I must refuse it. The cross is a difficult reminder of the tragic events that have occurred these past few days.

JPS MAN: Yeah, my team didn’t do so well this year either.

NICODEMUS: Not that. I’m referring to the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus was a good teacher and performed many signs and miracles among our people. As a Pharisee, I was impressed by his teaching of love and support to all the oppressed. Like many, I was confused about his eating with sinners and tax collectors.

JPS MAN: I gather you were a good friend and supporter of Jesus. I bet Jesus appreciated that.



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