WHOSE CUP IS IT, ANYWAY?

by Mark & Karla Jensen
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PRODUCTION NOTES

Whose Cup Is It, Anyway? focuses on the importance and meaning of the cup of Christ before and after Jesus’ death. Both literally and figuratively, this unfolding weekly series allows the audience to see the cup in its material form and hear about its supernatural significance. Throughout the drama, the JPS (Jerusalem Parcel Service) Man attempts to deliver a cup chosen by Jesus himself. At times Jesus seems grateful to hold and pass the cup. As the passion of Christ plays out, however, the JPS Man realizes that the cup holds pain and suffering for Christ and his followers. Who will hold and carry the cup of Christ when Jesus is crucified?

Staging for Whose Cup Is It, Anyway? is flexible enough for any congregation to utilize within any sanctuary configuration. Center and side aisles, balconies, and exit doors may all be maximized to allow the characters space to bring this story to life. An array of cups and chalices are set in the gift shop. One main chalice is carried by the JPS Man from week to week as he attempts to deliver the cup of Christ to its rightful owner. Simple set pieces, such as folding chairs or stools for the Last Supper plus a small side table, a basket, and a chalice, are easy props to use during the drama. A pulpit or lectern may serve as the restaurant entrance, while plastic plants or decorative trees can create the backdrop for the Garden of Gethsemane. The center aisle is also utilized by Jesus when he is contemplating his upcoming suffering. Much of the action is implied by the characters, so set and props are minimal.

Costuming carries both biblical and contemporary options. The JPS Man is typically dressed in a brown T-shirt or button-down shirt, matched by brown shorts or pants and walking shoes. He may wear a baseball cap with the JPS logo on it, have a pair of work gloves sticking out his back pocket, and carry a clipboard or lug his cart with packages. The biblical characters may wear robes, sandals, and other traditional garb, while the gift shop owner, restaurant hostess, and some of the twelve disciples may wear contemporary outfits to achieve that blend of contemporary and biblical familiarity (such as when John wears golfing attire).
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Week 1: The Gift Shop

CHARACTERS: JPS Man, Shopkeeper, Jesus, Customers (extras), Andrew, Peter

PROPS: Store merchandise, such as jewelry, bowls, plaques, etc.; glasses; chalice; cups; cash register; wrapping paper; bags; tickets; beeper for restaurant; boxes for delivery and dolly; pen and paper; two wallets; cash; watch.

SET: Inside a store. You will need a “Gift Shop” sign and a table to hold the store paraphernalia.

SYNOPSIS: The Jerusalem Parcel Service delivery guy, or JPS Man, finds himself attempting to deliver a cup to Jesus, but the cup returns to his possession, leading him to believe that a different person must be the recipient of this special cup.

JPS MAN: (Enters with his dolly and parcels, delivering boxes throughout the congregation as he makes his way toward the stage.) Serving the Holy Land at Jerusalem Parcel Service involves heavy lifting, long hours, unpleasant customers, and high gas prices. No job is easy, especially when all classes of people entrust their belongings and deliveries to me — the JPS Man. But, as is my sworn duty, I follow through with each and every job, no matter what the circumstances. My cup is pretty full on certain days, not so full on others. My anniversary is today, so I’m in a bit of a rush. I need to shop for a gift for my wife as soon as I finish my route. It’s getting late, and only the Schwans Man and I (JPS MAN waves to imaginary Schwans guy) plus a few stragglers are out and about. (JPS MAN sees sign for Gift Shop and enters.)

SHOPKEEPER: Welcome to our gift shop, JPS Man. Nice to see you, but we weren’t expecting any deliveries today that I know of. A mix-up at JPS Central, perhaps?

JPS MAN: No, not at all. I’m off duty. (Removes cap.) It’s my
anniversary, and I need a nice gift for my wife. Any suggestions?

SHOPKEEPER: (Unveils jewelry, bowls, and other gifts on a counter)
A nice set of pearls? A crystal bowl for nuts and grapes?
Or ... (Pulls out his wallet) how about two tickets to
*Phantom of the Opera*? My wife is sick, so we can't go.

JPS MAN: Opera? I'll have to think about that one.

SHOPKEEPER: They'd be perfect for you and the little missus.

JPS MAN: No thanks, my cup's pretty full this weekend. We just plan to stay home.

SHOPKEEPER: Speaking of cups, how about some of these lovely cups and goblets? (Gestures to an arrangement of various cups and goblets.)

JPS MAN: I don't know. (Pondering) Are they dishwasher-safe?

SHOPKEEPER: (Laughing) Oh, that's a good one. You've got some imagination! Wouldn't that be something ... not having to do dishes by hand! (*JESUS enters and begins to browse, picking up goblets and chalices. SHOPKEEPER speaks to JESUS.*) Oh, I'll be with you in a moment, sir.

JPS MAN: (One particular cup is set aside from the others. JPS MAN spots that one.) These look really nice. And whose cup is this one?

SHOPKEEPER: Not sure, but any of them can be used for wine, champagne, whatever suits your fancy. Why don't you keep looking? I'll assist the other customers, then get back to you. (*SHOPKEEPER approaches JESUS and tries to be of assistance.*) May I help you?

JESUS: I'm just browsing, thanks. (*SHOPKEEPER goes to talk on phone. JESUS looks around, then talks to JPS MAN.*) That's a beautiful cup you've got there. You have excellent taste. Mind if I look here as well?

JPS MAN: Sure. All these cups are so different. I'm not sure what cup my wife would treasure the most. It's our anniversary.

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JESUS: (Touching JPS MAN’s shoulder) Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:21).

SHOPKEEPER: (Hangs up phone and tries to get Jesus’ attention.) Psst! Jesus ... over here. (JESUS and SHOPKEEPER step forward.) Look, Jesus, Stewardship Sunday has already come and gone. If we could keep the conversation focused on Lent, you might be able to get out of here on time today, huh? Go. (SHOPKEEPER gives JESUS a gentle shove back toward JPS MAN.)

JESUS: I’m searching for a particular cup myself this evening.

JPS MAN: I’m thinking I want something that will remind my wife of me, of us, and our relationship, every time she drinks from it. Hmmm. Maybe a cup isn’t the right gift after all.

JESUS: You took the words right out of my mouth, friend, except the cup I seek is meant to be shared with not only my disciples this very night, but a cup for all people. (JESUS moves around gift shop, with JPS MAN following.)

JPS MAN: That sounds like an order big enough for a JPS delivery man. I’d be glad to organize all those cups for you, once you choose which ones you want.

JESUS: I’ll make sure I let my disciples know your services are available. Tonight will be the Last Supper, and when we have broken bread together, then it will be their responsibility to pass on the knowledge that I have taught them.

JPS MAN: (Grabs matching goblets and crosses to SHOPKEEPER.) I’ll take these two. My wife will love them. Since the kids are in college, there’s no more toddlers around to break them. (SHOPKEEPER gets busy writing up a slip or getting a box and paper while JESUS and JPS MAN continue talking.)

JESUS: Sounds like you have a very happy and busy home life.
JPS MAN: Yes, sir. My cup truly overflows. I’m a very blessed man.

JESUS: So you’ll be celebrating this evening with family or friends then? (Looks at watch.) By my watch, it’s after hours. Your wife doesn’t mind your long hours?

JPS MAN: She understands that early mornings and late nights are part of my job. It comes with the territory as a JPS Man. I get weekends off and four weeks of vacation.

JESUS: And you still manage to get along without too many spats, I hope?

JPS MAN: Are you a marriage counselor or something?

JESUS: I happen to take quite an interest in marriage — try to get right at the center of it, actually.

JPS MAN: We have our ups and downs like everyone else. I try to look at life as if my cup is overflowing. How about you?

JESUS: I experience the cup overflowing with love and joy, and also the cup’s emptiness and loss.

JPS MAN: (Not recognizing JESUS) That reminds me of the guy who entered the city this week, riding on a donkey and being treated like a king. People were actually waving palms at his feet. He must have filled his cup with the right stuff to get a reception like that.

JESUS: All who fill their cup with earthly things continue to find frustration because their cup truly never seems full. (Other CUSTOMERS browsing in the store also listen to what JESUS is saying.)

JPS MAN: Yeah, I know what you’re saying. Most of us fill our lives with money, sports, activities, liquor, drugs, busyness, shopping ... (SHOPKEEPER clears his throat loudly and gives a dirty look to JPS MAN as he grabs goblets from him to wrap.) We try to pour it all in at once and get every drop we can.

JESUS: As I told the Samaritan woman at the well, man
needs living water. Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give will never be thirsty (John 4:13-14).

JPS MAN: I've switched to Sam's Club bottled water. Safer.

JESUS: Indeed, the water I give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life (John 4:14). (JESUS continues looking around store.)

SHOPKEEPER: (Other CUSTOMERS have added cups to the counter, confusing SHOPKEEPER.) Now whose cups are these? (JPS MAN raises hand.) Would you like these cups engraved, gift-wrapped, or shipped directly from our store?

JPS MAN: No, I'll just take them as is. (Whispers and leans in, motioning behind him to JESUS.) Jesus here might need your services, though. Sounds like he's going to drop a load of cash here. Needs a cup for all people! You'll get that Hawaiian vacation you always dreamed of! (Nudges SHOPKEEPER. PETER and ANDREW enter from Stage Left looking for JESUS, just as he has gotten in line to make a purchase of his own.)

ANDREW: Master, we found you! Everything is set for this evening.

PETER: We made reservations for thirteen, but the restaurant can't guarantee prompt seating if they get too busy or we're late.

ANDREW: (Holds up pager prop.) The waitress gave us a pager that will beep when it's our group's turn to be seated. I wonder if this will work.

PETER: No, Andrew, she said it will light up. But remember, we can't sit on our donkey way outside, nor go farther than a mile. We should have stayed in the lobby, actually.

JESUS: Sounds as if most of our plans are in place, then. (Looks over at JPS MAN.) Might there be room for two more? I'm thinking of inviting someone else. (Another
CUSTOMER enters. PETER and ANDREW move up to the
counter where SHOPKEEPER is. JESUS places two cups on
the counter and asks SHOPKEEPER for a price check.)

JESUS: Price check, please.
PETER: But Lord, we were looking forward to having you
all to ourselves — but you’ve taught us there’s always
room for more at the Lord’s table.
ANDREW: Sharing you with the world has been difficult
this week.
PETER: How many place settings should we add, Lord?
JESUS: Just two, Peter. (Looks around to see where JPS MAN
has gone. JPS MAN is chatting with a CUSTOMER he knows.)
I’ll invite the guests after I purchase my cup.
SHOPKEEPER: One hundred (Refers to first cup) and three
hundred fifty. (Refers to second cup. JESUS points to one
and SHOPKEEPER takes other back to shelf.)
ANDREW: Whose cup is it anyway, Jesus?
JESUS: It’s my cup, Andrew, but it may soon become yours.
ANDREW: But Lord, why must you buy another cup? There
are plenty in the Upper Room, and there’s a full-time
dishwasher on duty.
JESUS: This cup will symbolize a new covenant I make with
all people.
PETER: (A little perturbed, sighs.) Fine, Jesus, fine. You’re the
host.
JESUS: You hit the nail on the head, my disciple. I am the
host.
ANDREW: (Leading JESUS near the door) Master, come with
us now and let us show you what has been prepared.
JESUS: Just a moment. (Goes to JPS MAN, leaving cup on
counter.) JPS Man, I’d like to invite you and your wife to
my table. Come to supper tonight at the Upper Room,
just past the olive garden.
ANDREW: I love that restaurant! Why didn’t we eat there
tonight?
JESUS: The real olive garden. In one hour. *(PETER and ANDREW escort JESUS out.)*

JPS MAN: That’s so generous! Is the dress formal? Should I tell my wife to wear black?

JESUS: Tell her to save that outfit for ... *(Pause) Friday.* *(JESUS, ANDREW, and PETER exit, leaving cup.)*

SHOPKEEPER: Goodness. That gentleman inadvertently forgot his cup on our counter.

JPS MAN: Oh, I'll handle it for him. I know what part of town he’s going to, and I'll be seeing him tonight.

SHOPKEEPER: I thought you were getting home early due to your anniversary. Won’t your wife be upset if you make another delivery tonight?

JPS MAN: I’m not seeing Jesus for work. The guy invited me to dinner, strangely enough. He looks very familiar, but I barely know him. He acts as if he’s known me for years.

SHOPKEEPER: I had the same familiar feeling.

JPS MAN: Here. *(JPS MAN takes out wallet to pay.)* I’ll pay for that in his place.

SHOPKEEPER: No need. Jesus paid the bill in full.

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**Week 2: The Upper Room**

**CHARACTERS:** JPS Man, Wife, Jesus, Andrew, Peter, Waiter/Host, Judas, John, James, other Disciples

**PROPS:** Paper for list; bread; wine or grape juice; cloth napkins; candles; trays; menus; chalice; oil; bowls; basin of water, apron, and towel for foot washing; bottle of honey; golf clubs; perfume; mint or breath spray; purse.

**COSTUME NOTE:** John should be dressed for a round of golf, with a golf shirt and cleats.

**SET:** A restaurant. The action begins in the foyer, where there are...
four chairs set up, then moves to the larger dining area, where
the Last Supper takes place. You will need chairs for all the
Disciples and the JPS Man and his Wife. You will also need
one small table to hold the bread and wine or grape juice.
Jesus stands in the center with equal number of chairs on
either side of him, with JPS Man and wife are seated at far two
chairs Stage Right and Judas at farthest chair on Stage Left.
Jesus moves behind the seated Disciples during the scene.

SYNOPSIS: JPS Man believes Jesus has forgotten his cup and
delivers it while attending the Last Supper as a guest of Jesus.

JPS MAN: (Enters restaurant with WIFE.) Here we are!

HOST/HOSTESS: Reservations?

WIFE: (Flighty) I did have reservations at first, when my
husband came home and told me we would be coming to
dinner here with Jesus. I don’t know him from Adam,
but now that we’re here, I’m fine about it. Do you think
I’m underdressed a tad? I just didn’t know what to
wear.

HOST/HOSTESS: Dinner reservations, ma’am. Which party
did you say you were with? The Shepherds party, the
Jesus of Nazareth party, or the birthday party?

JPS MAN: The Jesus of Nazareth party.

HOST/HOSTESS: (Checking the list) Right-o. Here you are,
and I see there’s only one party remaining. It’s
apparently the last supper, since everyone else has
disappeared.

JPS MAN: (Unwrapping JESUS’ chalice, talking to WIFE)
Remind me to give this cup back to Jesus. I’d hate to
forget an important delivery such as this one.

WIFE: I simply adored the goblets you bought me, dear,
although Jesus’ looks quite expensive. (They admire the
cup.) Did it cost more or less than mine?

HOST/HOSTESS: Excuse the intrusion, sir, but whose cup is
that? The Upper Room Restaurant supplies plenty of
crystal goblets, silver dinnerware, china, and the like. Guests are not required to arrive with their own stemware. You can deposit that at the coat check along with your wraps.

JPS MAN: It's Jesus' cup. He needs this cup for tonight's dinner.

HOST/HOSTESS: Fine, then. We'll go ahead and seat you here in the foyer, and a servant will be with you shortly to assist you in washing your feet. (Leads them to two of the four chairs in foyer area.)

WIFE: (Looks at her pantyhose as they are seated.) Oh, darling! I knew it was a bad night to wear stockings. Why do we need to have our feet washed anyway? The road wasn't that bad.

JPS MAN: We did walk right behind that fertilizer truck, dear. (Grimaces and waves hand in front of nose.) I hope we won't have to leave a bigger tip for this.

JESUS: (Enters with a pan of water, apron, and towel.) Welcome, friends. Glad to see you've arrived.

JPS MAN: (Jumps to feet.) Um, the host said a servant might wash our feet, Jesus. What are you doing here?

JESUS: What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward, you will understand. (JESUS motions for them to allow him to wash their feet. He begins washing.)

WIFE: (Aside to JPS MAN) You didn't mention anything about my bunion, did you?

JPS MAN: It wasn't me. Now, shhh. Jesus must be proving a point. (PETER enters from one direction, JUDAS from another, and JOHN from another.)

JOHN: (Rushes in with golf clubs.) Whew! Just running a little late, Jesus. The greens were calling my name all afternoon.

JUDAS: (Taking off his sandals to prepare his feet to be washed) That was probably Peter, who does sound like the wind now and then with so much hot air. (PETER gives JUDAS
a playful little nudge. JESUS has washed JPS MAN, WIFE, JOHN, and now moves to JUDAS and PETER. Those whose feet are washed stand behind seats while others have feet washed.)

JOHN: What’s for dinner? I’m starving!

JUDAS: I heard that fish is really healthy for the heart and you should eat it four times a week. Is that true?

JOHN: Sure. You guys should also change to skim milk and cut out the fat. Judas, why are you late?

JUDAS: Drive-thru banking takes forever on a Thursday. People preparing for the Passover, I imagine.

JESUS: It’s your turn, Peter.

PETER: (Approaches JESUS.) Oh, Master. Jesus ... you shall never wash my feet.

WIFE: (To JPS MAN) Oh, good answer.

JPS MAN: Why didn’t we think of that?

JESUS: If I do not wash you, then you have no part in me (John 13:8).

PETER: Master, why isn’t a servant doing this job?

JESUS: Peter, you know I have come to serve and not be served.

PETER: Very well then, Jesus. Proceed. (JESUS washes his feet.)

JESUS: A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you (John 13:10). (All CHARACTERS look at one another. JPS MAN and WIFE think JESUS is speaking about them, so they try to be inconspicuous as they smell armpits, WIFE takes perfume out of purse and sprays it, and JPS MAN pops a breath mint or sprays breath spray.)

JUDAS: (Rising) Well, the meal is prepared. I’ll pay the innkeeper during the meal, and we can all enjoy eating together now. (He gestures toward the dining room.) Shall we? (They proceed to the Upper Room dining area. DISCIPLES mingle, then sit down after they greet each other.)
JPS MAN: (Unveils cup.) Oh, Jesus. Before the meal begins, I have a delivery for you, even though I’m off duty. It’s the cup you bought from the gift shop today. You paid for it, but you left the cup behind. Your mind must have been elsewhere.

JESUS: Thank you, friend. This is the cup of hope that will bring everlasting life. (JESUS takes the cup to his place at the table.)

JPS MAN: (To WIFE) Wow! I thought it was a just a glass from ________. (Insert name of local department store.) Amazing. (They find their seats at the end of the table.)

WIFE: (Picking up a menu as everyone else is murmuring) So, what sounds good? Steak, shrimp, pork chops? (Entire table is silenced and all stare at WIFE when she suggests pork.)

What?

JESUS: I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me — one who is eating with me (Mark 14:18).

JAMES: (Aside to JESUS — all others remain seated while both move Downstage.) Jesus, can I have a word with you? Take a look around. There are more than twelve people eating with you. Count ’em. That’s far more than one, but you just said one person was eating with you. That makes no sense to a smart congregation like this. You’ll never be cast in any other parts if you don’t get it right here in church. Let’s try again. (They return to their seats.)

JESUS: Let me rephrase that. The one who dips the bread into the dish when I do is the one who betrays me.

JUDAS: Oh, I love this bread. It’s just like Olive Garden. Do you think we have to ask them to bring another basket, or will they do that automatically? (JUDAS and JESUS begin on opposite sides of stage behind chairs set up for disciples. They move ever closer and when JUDAS says “automatically,” they dip the bread in the bowl together and hold a stare with each other.)

WIFE: Betrayal? Did Jesus mention someone here is going
to betray him?

JPS MAN: Portray. I think he said “portray him.” You know actors. They think it’s great fun to impersonate other people. I myself do a great impression of Jimmy Stewart and Cary Grant.

JESUS: (Standing at the center of the DISCIPLES) I’m not sure how to begin this. Perhaps I’ll begin with the bread. I want all of you to eat of this bread. This bread is my body.

WIFE: Did he just say this bread was his body? What kind of a supper is this?

JPS MAN: Shhh! We’re guests here, honey. (Person beside him hands him a bottle of honey, but he declines.) I think Jesus intends to tell us about how to focus on what we fill our lives with ... what’s in our cup.

JESUS: This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me (Luke 22:19). (He passes a portion of bread in each direction.)

WIFE: Believe me, I don’t think I’ll ever forget Jesus or a night like this. He’s acting like it’s his last supper.

JPS MAN: Maybe Jesus knows something about living and dying that we don’t. Just eat the bread. Looks like he’s ready for that cup. I did give that to him, didn’t I? (Looks under the table and around his seat.)

WIFE: (Looks at JPS MAN.) He took the cup.

JPS MAN: (Looks at DISCIPLE beside him.) He took the cup.

PETER: (Looks at DISCIPLE beside him.) He took the cup.

JOHN: (Looks at DISCIPLE beside him.) He took the cup.

ANDREW: (Looks at JESUS.) You took the cup.

JESUS: I take this cup, which is the blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me. (He passes the wine or juice.) I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God (Mark 14:24-25).
JPS MAN: I don’t think the disciples understand what Jesus is saying any more than we do. Look at their faces.

WIFE: Well, what are we supposed to do? You delivered the cup to him! You’ve gotten us into this.

JPS MAN: This is his meal. We need to do what our host has asked of us. Drink from the cup.

WIFE: I wouldn’t be surprised if any of these guys gets up right now from this strange meal and just hightails it out of here. Maybe I’ll go with him.

JESUS: (Said to no one in particular) What you are going to do, do quickly (John 13:27). (JUDAS gets up to leave and rushes down center aisle.)

WIFE: See what I mean? He looked pale. Didn’t he look pale to you?

JPS MAN: Something tells me Judas wasn’t just stepping out to get some air. I believe we’ve just witnessed a very important meal here. No wonder Jesus required a special cup.

JESUS: Let’s clear away the dishes before we continue our evening. (JPS MAN and WIFE approach JESUS while DISCIPLES change scene and move chairs.)

JPS MAN: Jesus, we’re not entirely sure what we just experienced in the bread and the wine, but we’re honored nonetheless.

JESUS: The supper with bread and the cup will always, for all time, hold a mystical ingredient many will not understand. Just believe and remember when you come to the table again in the future.

WIFE: We hope we didn’t do anything to offend Judas. He left in such a hurry.

JESUS: Judas has chosen to fill his cup with ambition and greed. Sadly, he won’t realize his mistake until it’s too late.

PETER: The dishes are cleared away, Jesus. May we continue?
JESUS: Yes, let’s sing a hymn together and then go to the Garden of Gethsemane.

WIFE: (Raises her hand, suggesting a song.) How about “Kum Ba Yah”? I know that one.

JPS MAN: (Putting WIFE’s hand down) That’s ridiculous, dear. These men are way beyond that. How about “Now the Silence” on page 205? (Suggesting that WIFE remain quiet for once. All gather in a circle and hum a verse of a Communion song.)

JAMES: Jesus, we’re booked at the Garden for nine p.m. We should probably get going.

JESUS: Thank you, disciples and friends, for sharing this evening. (All exit except JPS MAN and WIFE.)

WIFE: This restaurant is OK, dear, but I wouldn’t want to come here every year on special occasions. In fact, I’m not that full.

JPS MAN: I don’t think this meal was meant to fill your stomach, but perhaps to feed the soul instead. Jesus is an amazing, magnetic fellow. I want to get to know him better.

WIFE: Let’s go, dear. It’s getting late. Oh, look! (She spots the cup the JPS MAN delivered.) Jesus left the cup here. Do you think he might have wanted that with him? It’s very valuable.

JPS MAN: I’m sure of it. He would never have left this cup behind on purpose. Why don’t I make this one last delivery to the Garden and meet you at home? (Grabs the cup to take with him.)

WIFE: (Beginning to leave, but noticing table) The servants didn’t do a very tidy job of cleaning up. There’s bread crumbs, napkins, and wine stains everywhere. Shouldn’t we tidy up before we go?

JPS MAN: Nah, the Altar Guild will do it.
Week 3: The Garden

CHARACTERS: JPS Man, Jesus, Peter, James, John, Guards 1 and 2

PROPS: Watch

SET: The Garden of Gethsemane.

SYNOPSIS: After the Last Supper, the JPS Man realized that Jesus left the cup in the Upper Room. Surely, thinks the JPS Man, Jesus will need this cup for the remainder of the evening. He sends his wife home and goes to the Garden to make sure the cup of Christ is in Jesus’ hands. Jesus surprises the JPS Man by not wholeheartedly wanting the cup in his presence. Ultimately, then, Jesus does accept the cup, which is a symbol of Christ’s decision to move forward with God’s plan.

JPS MAN: (Begins Center Stage.) Well, that was a very interesting supper with Jesus and his disciples. While we were eating, Jesus took the cup and filled it with something that we never expected. This cup, filled with wine, would forever be his blood to us. To Jews, the blood of a living thing or a human being is its life. I don’t fully understand it all. None of us at the supper did, but Jesus was giving us, in this cup, his very life. I have filled my cup with many things: work, family, Super Bowl Sunday, and my classic cart collection, but I’ve never filled it with the life blood of another. This is why the cup I now hold is so important. I’ve made it to Gethsemane, where Jesus and his disciples are meeting. (JPS MAN exits Off-stage momentarily with cup. PETER, JAMES, and JOHN enter.)

JAMES: OK, just for the sake of argument, let’s say the Sea of Galilee did freeze over. Nobody in his right mind would build a little shack and try to go fishing.

JOHN: I swear I’ve read it in magazines. Ice fishing is really big up North.
PETER: But how would you actually get out onto the ice?

JOHN: Well, they could have some kind of snow cart with wheels.

JPS MAN: (Enters from Stage Left.) Hey, guys. I'm glad I caught up with you. I've got Jesus' cup from supper tonight. He forgot it there. I had to fight the altar guild for it, but I've got it for him.

JAMES: Those ladies are a lot stronger than they look, believe me.

JPS MAN: Where is Jesus, anyway?

PETER: Jesus said he was looking for a place to pray.

JPS MAN: Wow — the _______ (Insert name of your church) sanctuary would have been a great place, but this garden is nice, too. I hope I'm not disturbing him. (JESUS enters.)

JESUS: Friends, I have found a quiet place to pray.

JPS MAN: (Approaching JESUS) Jesus, I'm so glad I found you. When you left the Upper Room, you didn't take the cup with you. Knowing how important the cup has become after tonight's meal, I thought surely you had left it there by accident. Here. (Hands cup to Jesus.) Take it. It's yours.

JESUS: (Backs away from the cup.) I'm not certain I wish to keep the cup right now. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death (Mark 14:34). (PETER, JAMES, and JOHN look at each other, confused.) Why don't you hang on to it for me and keep watch while I pray?

PETER: Fine, Master. We will stay here and keep watch. (JESUS exits from stage and moves to center aisle, stopping midway to meditate among congregation. JESUS stretches his arms before God to pray, facing away from stage, with his back to DISCIPLES. DISCIPLES move to one side of stage.)

JOHN: Why doesn't the Master want us to be with him now?

JAMES: Have we done something to offend him?

PETER: No, don't worry. He's just an introvert.

JOHN and JAMES: (Together) A what?

PETER: Never mind. He just needs to be alone.
JPS MAN: I guess I'll keep watch here with you guys for a while. (Checks watch.) *The Tonight Show* isn't on for another hour. My wife is probably just watching HGTV anyway.

JAMES: She's not talking about redoing your thatched roof again, is she?

JPS MAN: Always. She also wants to rearrange our mats.

PETER: We appreciate you coming all the way out here to the Garden to give Jesus the cup.

JOHN: I'm sure he'll take it after he has a little break.

JAMES: Just sit with us and pray. (*DISCIPLES arrange themselves by twos to meditate. If available, train a spotlight on JESUS in the center aisle.*)

JESUS: (Crying out) Abba, Father! Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet, not what I will, but what you will (Mark 14:36). (Bows head again in silence. Focus returns to DISCIPLES On-stage.)

JAMES: It's been a long day. (All are getting sleepy, yawning, etc.)

JOHN: My eyes are getting heavy. I'm finding it difficult to stay awake.

JPS MAN: Come on, guys. We should really stay awake for Jesus' sake. We can do it. (Yawning)

PETER: Sure, we can ... stay ... awake. (Growing weary)

JAMES: Stay ... awake. (*JESUS returns to sleeping DISCIPLES and taps PETER's shoulder.*)

JESUS: Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? (*PETER wakes up.*) Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak (Mark 14:37-38). (*JESUS retreats back down center aisle to meditate again*)

PETER: Guys, wake up! (*Tries to wake others.*) We must have dozed off. Let's try to stay awake for Jesus' sake.

JOHN: Is Jesus back yet?

PETER: Yes, and he's very disappointed that we were...
sleeping.

JAMES: We need to try harder to keep vigil for our Master.

JESUS: (From center aisle) Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me (Mark 14:36).

(Returns a second time to sleeping disciples.) Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! (Angry and commanding) The hour has come. I will take the cup that has been given to me. (Grabs chalice out of JPS MAN’s hands.)

JPS MAN: (Awkwardly) Oh, good. Finally. I’m glad to have the cup back into the hands of its rightful owner. (JUDAS enters from back of sanctuary with GUARDS 1 and 2. JESUS watches them enter, pulls JPS MAN aside, and gestures to JUDAS as he speaks with JPS MAN.)

JESUS: Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners (Mark 14:41). (All DISCIPLES wake up, dust themselves off, sit up on knees, and wonder what is happening.)

JPS MAN: Isn’t that Judas, one of your own?

JAMES: Why, Lord? What is Judas here to do?

JOHN: Why is Judas with the temple guards?

JESUS: I will be accepting a cup, friends, but this cup (Holds chalice high) is one I must leave with my followers. You will find whom the cup shall remain with after I am gone.

JPS MAN: I don’t understand, Jesus.

JESUS: You will, you will. Rise, let us go. Here comes my betrayer. (DISCIPLES all move to front pew area blocking JESUS, protecting him from JUDAS.)

JUDAS: (Stops mid-aisle and turns to congregation.) The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard. (JUDAS parts the DISCIPLES in order to get to JESUS, who is the last man in sequence.)

JUDAS: Rabbi! (JUDAS kisses him.)

GUARD 1: Seize him! Arrest that man. (GUARD 2 arrests him.)

JESUS: Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was
with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not
arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled (Mark
14:48-49).

GUARD 2: Arrest them all! (DISCIPLES flee, but JPS MAN
stands still, unable to decide what to do.)

PETER: (Grabs JPS Man’s arm.) Come on, man, don’t just
stand there! (All disperse as JESUS is taken away by
GUARD 1. DISCIPLES have hidden, then slowly, after a
pause, one by one they return to Center Stage.)

JAMES: What has happened to our Master?

JOHN: Lord, what are we to do now?

PETER: We should follow the guards to see what happens.

JOHN: I’m going to find Mary, Jesus’ mother. (Heads down
one of the aisles.) She must hear of what has happened
here.

JAMES: Our lives are in danger. We should hide in the
Upper Room until we figure out what it is we are going
to do.

JPS MAN: (Flustered) I can’t go hide. My wife is waiting for
me. It’s our anniversary.

JAMES: We’re very sorry. I’m afraid the tragic events of this
evening will always overshadow your anniversary now.

JOHN: (Taps JAMES on shoulder.) Of course, that all depends
on what week of the calendar Holy Week falls. It’s
different every year, you know. Maundy Thursday may
not even touch your anniversary for another few years
if you’re lucky.

PETER: I wouldn’t worry, friend. We must go now, before
someone else sees us. (All rush out.)

JPS MAN: (Rushes out with others, but stops partway.) Oh, wait.

I can’t just leave the cup. Just a minute. (Returns to
Garden area and picks up cup.) I never bargained for such
a strange delivery as this sacred cup. Earlier tonight, it
seemed so important to Jesus. Then, when I delivered it
to him, he acted like he wanted nothing to do with it.
Yet, prior to his arrest, Jesus told me how he accepted one cup, but has left his followers with another.

Jesus has now charged me with delivering the cup to one of his followers, I think. But which one? How will I ever discover who this cup goes to if not Jesus? Whose cup is it, anyway? Who among us is deserving of such a sacred cup? Is it you? (JPS MAN goes into congregation, searching.) Is it you? It certainly isn’t me. Like the others, I couldn’t even stay awake and pray with him. (Throws cap on ground in anger.) I must deliver this cup! (Runs out.)

Week 4: The Trial

CHARACTERS: JPS Man, John, Mary Magdalene, James, extras (people milling about)

PROPS: Chalice, clipboard, pen, paper for message, box or wrapping for chalice, pictorial church directory, a fish.

SET: Outdoors. A bare stage is fine.

SYNOPSIS: Jesus has been betrayed by Judas and arrested by guards. A trial will take place as the backdrop, during which the JPS Man attempts to understand the one cup that Jesus accepts and the other cup, which is left for him to deliver to the faithful followers instead.

JPS MAN: (Enters with dolly from side.) As a Jerusalem Parcel delivery man, it’s been my custom not to become personally involved in most of my deliveries. It’s part of our training, in fact, when we become JPS Men. JPS Men have a long history of prompt deliveries. Who do you think made sure the gold, frankincense, and myrrh got delivered to those wise men on time? (Points to JPS logo.) And what about all the water and wine for that wedding in Canaa? (Lifts eyebrows, shaking head.) Who do you think
delivered all that wood to Noah long before the flood?

Today I'll deliver a cup that I thought was of utmost
importance to Jesus, but instead, it's apparently meant
for one of his beloved followers. I was invited by Jesus to
supper with him, then to pray in the Garden. Since Jesus’
arrest with me there to witness it, it’s been difficult for
me to remain an innocent bystander. Let's go find this
cup's rightful owner. (MARY MAGDALENE runs frantically
down aisle through congregation, then stops JPS MAN as he
looks through his list.)

MARY MAGDALENE: You there, JPS Man. I know you deliver
boxes and packages and maybe even babies, but can you
help me? I must get a message across town to Mary, the
mother of Jesus. I beg you, won't you take a message and
deliver it for me?

JPS MAN: Well, what kind of urgent message is it? What has
happened to Jesus? I witnessed his arrest in the Garden.

MARY MAGDALENE: Jesus now stands trial before the
Sanhedrin. It doesn’t look good. I must get a message to
John to bring Mary, mother of our Lord, immediately.

John must reach her before ... before it's too late.

JPS MAN: Too late for what?

MARY MAGDALENE: Rumor has it Jesus will be sent to
Pilate, and Pilate will condemn our Master to death.

JPS MAN: But who are you? How do you know all this?

MARY MAGDALENE: I'm Mary. Mary Magdalene. One of
Jesus’ closest of friends.

JPS MAN: (Realizing she might be the new owner of the cup) Wait
a minute. I may have a delivery for you from Jesus
himself. (Pulls out the cup.)

MARY MAGDALENE: What is it?

JPS MAN: A cup.

MARY MAGDALENE: A cup?

JPS MAN: Not just any cup, Mary, but the one Jesus shared
with his disciples at the supper. The cup he offered to
us for the forgiveness of sins.

MARY MAGDALENE: (Turns away in shame.) If you had known me before, you would have seen that my own cup overflowed with sin. But Jesus forgave me, and now my cup has been made clean because of him.

JPS MAN: Then it must be yours. Here. (Tries to hand her the cup.)

MARY MAGDALENE: (Refusing the cup) Although Jesus forgave me of my sinful past, I don’t think this cup is meant for me. He’d surely want one of his disciples to have it.

JPS MAN: Perhaps I should just find Peter. The cup most certainly could be his.

MARY MAGDALENE: Oh, I wouldn’t talk to Peter right now. I just saw him, and he’s in total denial. Just take the message about finding Mary to John. The cup could be John’s as well. He’s a most beloved disciple.

JPS MAN: OK, I’ll deliver the message. Let me just grab one of my forms. (Gets out clipboard and pen.) You know all the paperwork these days. There’s just a few simple questions. OK. Full name.

MARY MAGDALENE: Mary Magdalene.

JPS MAN: Occupation of last six months and employer?

MARY MAGDALENE: Oh, I’d rather not go there. Let’s just say I’ve had many employers and I recently left that career field. What else?

JPS MAN: To whom should the message be addressed?

MARY MAGDALENE: John, the son of Zebedee.

JPS MAN: Social Security Number?

MARY MAGDALENE: Oh, I don’t give that out anymore. Identity theft.

JPS MAN: How about some form of ID? Drivers license? Credit card?

MARY MAGDALENE: Not on me.

JPS MAN: Fine. We’ll skip that. What’s the exact content of
the message?

MARY MAGDALENE: Jesus on trial with the Sanhedrin. Soon going before Pilate. Bring Jesus' mother, Mary, quickly. Anything else?

JPS MAN: Oh, yeah. Method of payment?

MARY MAGDALENE: How about C.O.D.? Do you accept C.O.D.?

JPS MAN: I love cod. (MARY draws out a fish to give to JPS MAN.) I'll get this delivered right away. By the way, grilled or pan-fried?

MARY MAGDALENE: Just tell John I'll be staying close to monitor the rest of the trial. I'll be here to follow Jesus wherever they take him. (MARY exits.)

JPS MAN: OK, so the cup isn't Mary Magdalene's, and I won't be trying Peter 'til later. But it could belong to John, James, or even Jesus' mother, Mary. Mary Magdalene's cup seemed to be filled with regret, but Jesus has filled it with acceptance and love.

She's found a nurturing community among Jesus and his followers. Isn't that what we all look for? (He moves among people to see who else could be owner of the cup.)

Each of the persons I come in contact with seem to have something filling their own cups. Unfortunately, it's not always as life-giving as what Mary Magdalene has discovered. (Spots JOHN and JAMES approaching.)

Oh, I think that's John now! John, John! Do you remember me?

JOHN: (Entering from back of sanctuary) Your face looks familiar, but I haven't had much time to glance through our pictorial directory. It sure is handy, though. (Unveils church directory.) Here, let me look you up. J ... J ... where are the Js?

JPS MAN: (Moves directory away from JOHN's face.) Unfortunately, I'm not in the directory. Camera shy. I was, however, at the supper in the Upper Room and at
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