

THE FISH AND THE HONEYCOMB

A Biblical Play for Easter
by
Jewell Ellen Smith

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Time: The summer of 58 AD.

Place: The city of Antioch, Syria. Also, the Hill Country of Judaea, Jerusalem, and Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee.

What the Play Tells:

This is the story of how a physician and skilled artist named Lucanus, of Antioch, Syria, makes a long journey to interview as many people as he can find who knew Jesus of Nazareth and then writes a book about him for his friend, the “Most Excellent Theophilus.” (His book is now that section of the Holy Bible called The Gospel According to Luke.)

The physician-artist, turned writer, presents Jesus as the Holy Child, as the Christ, Son of God, Saviour. He emphasizes how “there went a fame abroad of him! And great multitudes came to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.... And they glorified God, saying ‘A great prophet is risen among us! God has visited his people!’”

Lucanus further shows the risen Lord and tells how he appeared to his close followers on the evening of his resurrection and commissioned them to proclaim the good news of Salvation to all nations.

The Title:

The title, THE FISH AND THE HONEYCOMB, is woven into and is an intricate part of the drama’s action and theme. When Theophilus asks Lucanus to design the marble mosaics for his grand new villa, they decide to feature pictures of fish. This, because First Century Christians were using the fish--and the Greek word for fish, ICTHYS--as a secret symbol. Its letters were the initials for the words. “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.”

At the climax of the play Lucanus and Theophilus conclude that in God’s promise to send his Holy Spirit to be with man, and in Jesus’ saying “Lo, I am with you, always,” man has a gift “as sweet as honey and the honeycomb.” Theophilus then asserts that he will give the book Lucanus has written a name: “The Fish and the Honey Comb” Because, the book shows Jesus as “Jesus Christ, Son of God,

Saviour” and because of his gift that is “sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.” Also, after his resurrection, Jesus ate “fish, and of an honeycomb.”

Description of Play:

A musical, in four acts. It includes two original hymns, one to be sung by angels who appear to Lucanus in a dream, the other to be presented by the angels and the entire cast as the grand finale.

Number of Characters: some 76.

Number of Players required: 35, plus 15 to 20 extras for multitude scene. At least 24 players will do two, three, even four roles! This, because many of the parts are so simple, with only one or two lines. See list of roles on separate page.

Number of trained singers: 6 women

Special players needed: one woman dancer, one woman harp player, and one very young infant

Length of presentation: about an hour.

The Characters, in the order of their appearance:

ACT I

Woman Patient, a resident of Antioch with a burned hand.

Lucanus, a well-known Antioch physician, skilled painter, and evangelist, who is a close associate of the Apostle Paul.

Elzabad, the mother of Lucanus.

Theophilus, a Greek shipping magnate and friend of Lucanus.

Six Angels

ACT II

Iscah, a cousin to Elizabeth, who serves as her nurse.

Elizabeth, the aged mother of John the Baptist, a cousin of Mary of Nazareth

Simeon, a devout Jew to whom the Holy Spirit had revealed that he should not die until he had seen the Messiah.

Joseph, the husband of Mary.

Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The Infant Jesus

Anna, a very old prophetess in Jerusalem.

ACT III

Old Jairus, a semi-retired ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum, the father of Madam Kelitah.

Madam Kelitah, a young matron in Capernaum, whom Jesus raised from the dead when she was 12 years old.

Little Kelitah, daughter of Jairus and Jethlah.

Jethlah, Kelitah's mother, wife of Jairus.

Migdol, a servant girl in the borne of Jairus and Jethlah.

Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum.

Shera, Jethlah's sister.

Bela, owner and manager of The Capernaum Mourners.

The Capernaum Mourners, a company of 14 professional mourners:

Bela's Assistant

Second Assistant

Sarah

Giggling Mourner

Giggling Mourner's Pal

Dancer

Harpist

Seven other mourners

CHRIST FIGURE

A Bystander, a resident of Capernaum.

Crowd of People: a multitude of men, women, and youths, gathered to hear the prophet from Nazareth.

Man in the Crowd

Ailing Woman, a Jewish woman who had been ill for 12 years.

Simon Peter, James, and John, disciples of the Christ.

Three Neighbors of Jairus

ACT IV

Cleopas, a resident of the village of Emmaus, near Jerusalem Wife of Cleopas

Mary the Mother of James

Joanna, a follower of the Christ.

Seven Disciples of the Christ.

Outline of Action, Scene by Scene:

ACT I

Scene 1: While Doctor Lucanus is seeing patients in Antioch, Theophilus, his prosperous Greek friend who owns a fleet of ships that regularly haul grain from Egypt to Rome, arrives. Theophilus asks Lucanus to design the marble mosaics for a grand villa he plans to build. Lucanus is flattered and suggests the FISH design because of its Christian symbolism. Theophilus likes the idea because he, too, is a Christian. Before he leaves, he tells Lucanus he wishes he knew "All of the truth about Jesus of Galilee."

Scene 2: In his dreams that night Lucanus has a vision of angels who tell him to do more for his friend than to design the name of the Christ in stone. "Make a journey through the land Jesus the Christ made holy. Talk to his kinsmen, his friends, the people he blessed.... Then write what you learn in a book," they urge.

ACT II

Scene 1: Lucanus begins his travels and the writing of the book with an interview of old Elizabeth, the aged mother of John the Baptist and cousin of Mary, mother of Jesus.

Scene 2: As Elizabeth tells the story, and Lucanus writes it down, Mary and Joseph take the Holy Babe and two turtledoves to the temple in Jerusalem--to take the sacrifice for the firstborn. They encounter old Simeon and Anna the Prophetess, who recognize the infant as the Messiah.

ACT III

Scene 1: Later in the summer when Lucanus arrives in Capernaum, he is the houseguest of an elderly ruler of the synagogue, Jairus. The daughter of the honorable Jairus, Madam Kelitah, comes for the interview Lucanus has requested and tells him how Jesus raised her from the dead when she was 12 years old.

Scene 2: Little Kelitah lies dying. In desperation, Jairus goes in search of the prophet from Nazareth, who—people say—has the power to heal all manner of diseases. A few minutes after Jairus leaves, Kelitah dies. (Offstage, her mother sends for the professional mourners.)

Scene 3: The Capernaum Mourners assemble at the home of Bela, their manager, to put on their costumes and makeup. To their disgust, the ill-tempered Bela presents them with onions so that they can produce some real tears and passes out individual sacks of ashes for them to sprinkle on their heads. Bela goes into something of a rage when the harp player starts a lively piece and one of the young mourners begins to dance. Finally, they set off for the home of Jairus.

Scene 4: At a fishing boat down beside the Sea of Galilee, Jesus the Christ sits, teaching a multitude of people. He tells two parables, and is ready to leave when Jairus arrives and begs him to come heal his young daughter. As they start toward Jairus' home, an ailing woman darts out of the crowd and touches the hem of the Christ's garment. She is healed, and is still kneeling at the feet of Jesus when a servant arrives to tell Jairus that his daughter has died. The Christ, Peter, James and John accompany the distraught Jairus home.

Scene 5: When Jairus and his companions arrive, there are the mourners beside the child's bier, wailing loudly. The Christ tells Bela and her employees that little Kelitah is asleep, not dead, and they "Laugh him to scorn." The mourners are sent away, and Jesus raises the child Kelitah from death.

ACT IV

Scene 1: In the early fall, when Theophilus again comes to Antioch. Lucanus has the book ready and presents it to his friend as a surprise. Almost overwhelmed, Theophilus asks Lucanus to read a part of the book.

Scene 2: Lucanus reads (and the players dramatize) the account of Jesus appearing to his disciples on the evening of his resurrection, as they are gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem.

The Denouement: Theophilus, overjoyed with the book and its message, gives the book a title: THE FISH AND THE HONEYCOMB! Lucanus agrees that that is a perfect name for his work, because the book is about “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.” And, because it contains God’s promise to send to man his Holy Spirit--a promise, a gift, “sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.”

Grand Finale: The angels return to sing a hymn and are joined by the entire cast.

Roles to be Played & Second and Third Parts:

Act I

Woman Patient: Iscah in Act II, Ailing Woman in Act III, and Joanna in Act IV

Elzabad: Anna the Prophetess in Act II, one in crowd in Act III, and Elzabad again in Act IV.

Lucanus: one role. Appears in all four acts. (Not too many lines!)

Theophilus: one role, in Acts I and IV. Also one in Crowd, Act III.

Six Angels: talk, sing in Act I, be Mourners with lines in III, sing finale hymn.

Act II

Elizabeth: Shera in Act III; Mary the Mother of James, Act IV.

Simeon: Old Jairus, in Act III; also, one in Crowd, Act III.

Joseph: Simon Peter in Acts III and IV (few lines)

Mary: Migdol in Act III. (Mary has one line; Migdol has several.)

Infant Jesus: real baby, appears in only one scene.

Act III

Madam Kelitah: Wife of Cleopas in Act IV.

Little Kelitah: One role, Act III, Scene 2 and Scene 5.

Jethlah: A Disciple (with no lines) in Act IV

Jairus: A Disciple (with no lines) in Act IV

Bela: prominent role, Act III

Harpist: plays for Mourners in Act III

Seven Other Mourners: Seven Other Disciples, Act IV (no lines), Sing in finale.

Three Neighbors: weep and lament child’s death, no lines. Sing in finale.

CHRIST FIGURE: one role. Appears in Act III, Act IV. (Many lines)

A Bystander: Cleopas in Act IV.

Man in the Crowd: Andrew in Act IV

List of props and Other Materials

ACT I

Scene 1--In the doctor's office

Bandage for patient's hand.

Water bowl, Jars of ointments, roll of bandage material, and cloth for supplies.

Water pitcher

Two stools, table, low bed, bedside stand, three scrolls, ink, pen, cloak rack.

Folding screen to mark off waiting room.

Tray of cheese and bread.

Slate with piece of chalk

Scene 2--A second candle and holder.

ACT II

Scene 1--In the courtyard of Elizabeth's home. Chair, Bench, outdoor table, two stools, flowers, palms. Small platter of grapes. Lap robe for Elizabeth's feet.

Writing materials for Lucanus, (same as in Act I)

Scene 2--At the Temple steps in Jerusalem.

Bird cage containing two turtledoves. (Pigeons or stuffed birds can be used.)

Walking cane for Anna the Prophetess

Staff for old Simeon

Large doll to use in rehearsal. (Real baby necessary for performance.)

ACT III

Scene 1--In the garden of Jairus' home at Capernaum.

Use same furniture as in Elizabeth's Courtyard. Re-arrange and add more potted plants, flowers.

Staff for Old Jairus.

Large ink container, different from one used in previous scenes.

Scene 2--Kelitah's room.

Narrow, cot-like bed, with covers that reach the floor.

Low bench beside bed, a stool, a second bench.

Bowl of water, white cloth

Palm branches to use as fan.

Light blue sheet to spread over Kelitah.

Scene 3--At steps of Bela's house.

Box with makeup. (Material to make black lines on faces)

See-through bag of onions.

Bag containing 14 small black bags with drawstrings at top. (These may be filled with real ashes or a mixture of sand and ashes.)

Black veils

Scene 4--Fishing boat, sail, fishing nets, platform for boat. Much background greenery.

Scene 5--Kelitah's room, same as Scene 2. Fresh flowers to strew on bier.

ACT IV

Scene 1--Around supper table in Antioch.

Low table, three stools, bowls and dishes, fruit, bread.

Bench holding water jars; candles for table.

Small table where the book is lying, covered.

Cloth to cover book.

Enormous scroll to serve as book.

Scene 2--The upper room in Jerusalem.

Low dining table, dishes and water pitcher

Some five or six stools, chairs

Platter with fish

Dish of honey, with honeycomb in it.

Several candles and holders

SCRIPT

ACT I, Scene 1

Time: 58 AD. It is mid-afternoon on the first day of Tammuz (July) in Antioch, Syria. Doctor Lucanus, who is seeing patients at his temporary office in his mother's home, is exhausted.

The room, which doubles as sleeping quarters for Lucanus, is sparsely furnished, with a table for medical supplies and water jars, a stool for the doctor, one for the patient, and over in the corner a low bed. Near the bed is a stand holding scrolls, an ink container, a pen, a slate, and candle. Beside the door which leads into the waiting room is a rack for cloaks.

As the play opens a woman patient with a burned hand is just leaving. Elzabad, who acts as her son's receptionist, is bringing in a pitcher of water.

WOMAN PATIENT: *moving toward door and holding bandaged hand carefully.*

Thank you very much, Doctor. My hand feels better already.

LUCANUS: *still seated on stool* Keep the bandage on at least three days. Deep burns like that don't heal very fast.

WOMAN PATIENT: Yes, Sir, I will. *leaves*

LUCANUS: *leaning back, stretching both arms, speaking to himself* Ah me! I've about had it! If I've seen one patient today, I've seen forty! Sometimes I wish I hadn't come back to Antioch, even for the summer!

Notices Elzabad coming in with fresh water

Mother, you know where I ought to be right now? I ought to be down in Caesarea, trying to get Paul out of that prison!

ELZABAD: *water pitcher still in her hand* But Son, you've already been down to Caesarea twice! And there's nothing you can do to get your friend Paul set free! That Roman governor Felix is a fox! He won't listen to anybody! Besides, we need good physicians like you in Antioch. Try to see things as they are, not as you wish they were, Lucanus.

LUCANUS: *trying to calm his mother* Yes, Mother, I know. *Gets up, washes and dries hands.*

ELZABAD: You've spent years traveling and spreading the good news about Jesus of Nazareth. That's wonderful. But now I think you ought to stay here in Antioch a while, build up your practice. *Brightens tone* And who knows, maybe you can find time for your painting! You'd like that, wouldn't you?

LUCANUS: *with tinge of regret* Oh, yes. Painting--my first love, even before medicine. But there's no time for that now. Physicians can't be artists. *changing voice to business-like tone* How many more patients are out there in the waiting room? *gestures toward waiting room door*

ELZABAD: Just one man. He's a Roman, or a Greek, I can't tell which. But I can tell by looking at his face that he is not sick. I'll show him in, though. I think he's the one I heard telling another patient that he's an old friend of yours. *starts toward door*

LUCANUS: *surprised* An old friend? In that case, I'd better see who it is! *hurries past his mother and pokes head into waiting room* Why, Theophilus! *loudly, with keen delight.* It's you! Come in here, you old sea serpent!

Theophilus rushes in, both men clasp arms--much pleased to see each other. There is no pause in their rapid conversation.

THEOPHILUS: Luke! Luke!

LUCANUS: I didn't know you were waiting out there, Theo! Why didn't you say something?

THEOPHILUS: That's all right!

LUCANUS: *turning to Elzabad* Mother, this is the most excellent Theophilus! My friend of many years!

THEOPHILUS: How do you do, Ma'am! Lucanus has often mentioned you to me.

ELZABAD: *murmuring and nodding to Theophilus* It's a pleasure to have you here.

LUCANUS: *still to his mother* Theophilus is one of us! He is a believer in the Christ! And has been--since that first sermon Paul preached in Ephesus!

THEOPHILUS: Ah, Ma'am, I'll never forget that day! Or Paul's sermon. My way of looking at things--my whole life--was changed! Changed completely! Speaking of Paul, is he here in Antioch this summer?

LUCANUS: You haven't heard?

THEOPHILUS: What?

LUCANUS: Paul's been in prison down in Caesarea for some time now.

THEOPHILUS: I'm sorry to hear that. Is there any chance of his being released?

LUCANUS: We keep hoping. But that Governor Felix is impossible! Just between you and me, I think he is waiting for a bribe! He pretends to Paul that he is interested in THE WAY, that is, in the Faith in Jesus the Christ. But I doubt that he is serious.

THEOPHILUS: *earnestly* Lucanus, I don't mind telling you, and your mother, that I am still much interested in THE WAY! And, serious.

Some days, when I'm sailing along, bucking the waves—my ship heavy with wheat from Egypt--I find myself thinking of all you and Paul taught me concerning the Christ.

I forget the sea! I forget the wheat! Rome! Emperor Nero and my father's contract with him!

I forget everything except what I know about Jesus of Galilee. And I begin to wish I knew all of the truth about Him--even more than you taught me in Ephesus!

LUCANUS: *pleased at his friend's words* Stay then, Theo! Stay here in Antioch this summer, and I'll teach you all that I know! I saw the Christ! And, as I've told you before, I was one of the Seventy He sent out to proclaim that the kingdom of God is near!

THEOPHILUS: Luke, I just can't! My father has our convoy of ships docked down at Selucia, and we're to sail for Egypt at dawn.

ELZABAD: While the two of you talk, I'm going to fix you a bite of supper.

THEOPHILUS: No, no, Ma'am! Please don't. I'll have to be going in a few minutes.

ELZABAD: Then I'll just get a little something. *leaves room*

THEOPHILUS: Luke, I have a favor to ask of you.

LUCANUS: Anything!

THEOPHILUS: I've promised my wife to build her a villa, a fine, spacious place-- either in Rome or in Alexandria, maybe even Ephesus, anywhere she decides-- and I want you to design the mosaics for the floors.

LUCANUS: *much surprised*. Me? Me design mosaics? Why--Why-- Why, I'd be honored to try it, Theo, but I've never worked with marble. I'm a painter! Or was, before I got so deep into medicine.

THEOPHILUS: You are an artist! And I know you can design mosaics that will be beautiful! Do birds. Or flowers. Or ships. Or fish--just make the designs like you want!

LUCANUS: *suddenly* very interested Fish! *grabs his friend's arm* Do you know what the secret symbol for followers of the Christ is? Since the persecution is so bad?

THEOPHILUS: No!

LUCANUS: It's the fish! I'll use that! *begins striding back and forth, elated over the idea that has come to him* I'll design the most beautiful marble floors ever laid down in the Roman Empire! In every room I'll put the Fish! *starts waving arm* On the floors! On the walls! And why not the ceilings! It will be magnificent!

THEOPHILUS: *hesitating* Fish? I-- I-- Luke, I don't understand!

LUCANUS: Maybe I'd better explain the symbolism of the Fish.

THEOPHILUS: Please do.

LUCANUS: It is this! You know your Greek word for fish?

THEOPHILUS: Yes. Ichthys. We spell it I-C-T-H-Y-S. But what has that to do with Jesus, the Son of the most high God?

LUCANUS: That's just it: "The Fish" says he is the Son of God! The letters I-C-T-H-Y-S are the initials for the words "Jesus, Christ, Son of God, Saviour." See? *Grabs up slate by the bed and hurriedly dashes off outline of fish, with the ICTHYS inside the outline*

THEOPHILUS: Luke, you're a genius! See what you can do with the Fish design. I'll stop back by on the next voyage, *gets up to leave*

LUCANUS: How soon will that be?

THEOPHILUS: Oh, possibly three months, depends on the weather. After late summer, it's not safe to be on the Great Sea, as you well know.

Enter Elzabad, with tray of cheese and bread

ELZABAD: All right, gentlemen, here's a taste of cheese and bread!

THEOPHILUS: Oh, Ma'am, it looks delicious; and I could gobble down all of it, but I must go. It's almost dusk, and I can't miss the last boat going down to Selucia.

ELZABAD: *bundling up some bread and cheese in napkin* Well, then, just take this with you!

THEOPHILUS: You're too kind! But I'll take it! *takes roll* Thank you, very much. Good-bye, Ma'am!

ELZABAD: Do come back!

LUCANUS: I'll walk with you down to the river. *Both men turn to leave. Lucanus takes his cloak from rack, but does not put it on.* Mother, I won't be gone long. *turns to friend Theo,* there's one interesting development here in Antioch that I haven't told you about.

THEOPHILUS: *at doorway* What's that?

LUCANUS: The people of Antioch have coined a name for all of us who believe in the Christ!

THEOPHILUS: A name? What is it?

LUCANUS: They call us CIIRIS-TI-ANS! They say it with contempt, but we rather like it!

THEOPHILUS: *in reflective tone, as if savoring the taste of the word as it rolls over the tongue* CHRIS-TI-ANS! I like that very much! *Pauses* Just think, I am a CHRIS-TI-AN!

Men leave. Elzabad spreads light cloth over medical supplies. Then, unrolls blanket on the bed. She picks up the slate and looks at the fish sketch.

ELZABAD: *to herself* I wonder why Lucanus has a fish sketched here? Maybe he will get interested in his painting again.

Elzabad leaves, taking cheese tray and water pitcher. Curtain remains open for Scene 2

--End of Scene 1--

Scene 2

Same as Scene 1. That same evening, at bedtime. Lucanus enters his combination office-bedroom in his nightshirt and cap, carrying a lighted candle. With it he lights the candle beside the bed, sits down on the bed, and picks up the sketch of the Fish.

LUCANUS: Ah, yes! The Fish! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Saviour, His name will be magnificent in mosaics! *lays aside sketch, deliberately looks at his hands.* May God, the Father, guide these hands!

Blows out flame of both candles, lies down, draws up blanket, and sighs loudly. There is a slight pause. Lucanus begins to snore, not too loudly. And he begins to dream, of angels. There is a faint sound of singing, back stage. It grows louder as six angels enter, singing. Their singing subsides as they encircle Lucanus. He remains asleep, as one by one they bend near him, speak, and then make way for the next angel. This amounts to circling the bed slowly, gracefully.

1ST ANGEL: *with the slate in hand* Do more for your friend than this Fish! Do more than show him God's name, in stone!

2ND ANGEL: Write Theophilus a book! Tell him all that you know of the Christ!

3RD ANGEL: Tell of His birth!

4TH ANGEL: Tell of His mighty deeds among men!

5TH ANGEL: Write down His teachings! Gather together his parables!

6TH ANGEL: Record His miracles!

2ND ANGEL: Show His humility! His love!

3RD ANGEL: His sorrow! His anguish!

4TH ANGEL: His glory! His triumph!

5TH ANGEL: Write out his commission to man!

6TH ANGEL: Tell of His promise to send God's Spirit!

1ST ANGEL: Yes, Lucanus, physician and artist, become now the writer! Make a journey through the land Jesus the Christ made holy. Talk to his kinsmen, his friends, the people he blessed. Seek out every man you can find who knew him. Then, write what you learn in a book!

Angels close ranks behind couch and sing hymn. As they turn to leave, FIRST ANGEL lingers to speak once more to Lucanus. Lightly, gently she brushes her hand across his brow.

Editor's note: Mrs. Smith's hymn is missing; a suitable one may be substituted from any source.--Ed.

1ST ANGEL: Lucanus, your journey will be pleasant! Your book will be beautiful! *Angels slip away. Lucanus remains asleep. Light goes out, to indicate the passing of the night.*

End of Scene 2 and ACT I

ACT II, Scene 1

Two weeks later, in the Hill Country of Judea at the home of Elizabeth. The aged widow, frail yet still alert, sits in the courtyard of her home, enjoying the morning sun and a bunch of fresh grapes. Near her are a bench, a small outdoor table, and stools. Flowers and palms make for a pleasant surrounding. Elizabeth's kinswoman Iscah, who serves as her nurse and attendant, hurries in, pleased and excited to announce the arrival of Lucanus.

ISCAH: Cousin Elizabeth, there is a visitor at your gate! A physician from Antioch!

ELIZABETH: Physician? I didn't send for a physician! I'm as old as these Hills of Judea. *waves arm* But I'm surely not in need of a physician!

ISCAH: He hasn't come with medicines. He just wants to talk with you and ask questions.

ELIZ.: How strange! Did he say what kind of questions he wants to ask me?

ISCAH: No, Ma'am. Ail he said was that if it wouldn't bother you he wanted to talk to you about your Cousin Mary, the one who married the carpenter from Nazareth. I never saw her myself, but I've heard you speak of her many times.

ELIZ.: *looking far away* Ah, yes. Mary! One of my dearest kinsmen! *voice takes on tenderness* The one who bore the Holy Child! *pauses* She named him Jesus. I remember he was exactly six months younger than my John.

Voice becomes tinged with sadness. Iscah listens attentively.

My John! My John! A gift to Zacharias and me from God! John the Baptist. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness ... the prophet of the Highest!" My John was sent before Mary's Son, to prepare His way! *looks again at Iscah, brightens tone* Yes, Iscah, tell the good doctor from Antioch to come in. *Iscah*

brings in Lucanus. He carries several scrolls, a container of ink, a pen, and a small knapsack.

ISCAH: Cousin Elizabeth, this is the physician Lucanus, from Antioch.

ELIZ.: God's peace to you.

LUCANUS: God's peace to you, Ma'am. It's kind of you to receive me.

ELIZ.: Won't you sit down? *waves toward bench* Put your scrolls and things there on the table. *turns to Iscah* Iscah, maybe you could bring some grapes for our visitor. *to Lucanus* Our grapes are ripening early this year, and they're especially sweet.

Lucanus gets settled

ISCAH: Should I gather some of the big ones, from the far vineyard? They're the best!

ELIZ.: Yes, pick the best. *turning to Lucanus* You wanted to ask me about Mary of Nazareth?

Iscah leaves

LUCANUS: Yes, Ma'am. It's my plan to write in a book all that I can learn about Jesus the Christ. And I thought since his mother was your kinswoman perhaps you could tell me things others don't know. That is, if you can recall things that happened almost 60 years ago.

ELIZ.: Doctor Lucanus, if I live to be a hundred--and that won't be too many years off--I'll never forget my beloved Cousin Mary, and, the unusual visit Mary made to me. Here in the Hill Country.

LUCANUS: *getting scroll unrolled, pen ready* Unusual visit?

ELIZ.: I remember that day so well--it was some three months before my son John was born--I was inside the house there, and I heard the sound of Mary's voice out here in the courtyard. She was calling my name "Elizabeth, Elizabeth! Cousin Elizabeth!"

At that moment I had such a strange feeling come over me: It was as if my very soul was filled with God's Holy Spirit! The babe in my womb leaped for joy!

I ran out here crying, "Mary, Mary, blessed art thou among women! And blessed is the fruit of thy womb! How is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Cf. *Luke 1:39-45*

Speaks more slowly

Until that moment I had not known that Mary was with child--the Holy Child! The Son of God!

LUCANUS: *fascinated with what Eliz. is saying* Most unusual! What did Mary think of all this?

ELIZ.: She treasured it up in her heart. Always, Mary pondered over things and treasured them up in her heart. Once she told me exactly--word for word--what an old man at the temple said about the Holy Babe!

LUCANUS: When was this?

ELIZ.: When Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem to take the Baby to the temple to make the sacrifice--the one the Law of Moses requires for the firstborn. That old man at the temple called little Jesus "Salvation!"

LUCANUS: *writing hurriedly, without looking up* Do you remember the old man's name?

ELIZ.: Now let me think, *pauses* Simeon! That was it! Simeon! And there was an old prophetess there too. Mary told me about her. Her name was Anna.

Light shifts to Temple steps, where Old Simeon is praying. Elizabeth talks on, even as Mary and Joseph enter and Scene 2 unfolds.

Old Simeon was just and devout, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him years before that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ!

Mary and Joseph were poor, so they couldn't offer a lamb. The best they could do was to bring a pair of turtledoves.... Cf. *Leviticus 12:8; Luke 2:22-35*

Scene 2

At the entrance to the Temple in Jerusalem. Old Simeon stands, looking heavenward, moving his lips, praying silently. Joseph and Mary approach, Mary carries the Babe. Joseph carries a cage in which there are two turtledoves. These, to be handed to the priest. Simeon finishes his prayer and raises his hand in salute to Joseph as he and Mary approach.

SIMEON: My son, can I help you?

JOSEPH: *rather unsure of himself* Sir, we've brought the Babe named Jesus, and, *lifting up cage* these turtledoves--as is the custom of the law. Could you tell us which way to go to find the priest?

SIMEON: Yes, my son. Usually at this hour of the day the priest is in the inner courtyard, which is back this way. *gestures toward back* But, let me look at your firstborn!

Mary comes closer, uncovers the Baby's face

SIMEON: *gasping, almost reeling in astonishment* The MESSIAH! Blessed be the God of Israel! At last! At last! Here is the Lord's CHRIST!

Reaches for Child

Let me hold this Holy Child in my arms!

Mary hands Babe to Simeon. He looks down at the Babe and addresses him.

Little Holy Babe, the Lord promised me that I should not see death before I had seen YOU! You Blessed child! Promised from of old!

Looking up toward heaven, and still holding the Baby. See Luke 2:29-32

“Lord, now let me, thy servant, depart in peace, according to thy word! For mine eyes have seen thy Salvation, Which thou has prepared before the face of all peoples A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God’s people Israel!”

Keeps looking up, in prayer, until Joseph and Mary have spoken.

JOSEPH: *aside to Mary* What marvelous things this devout man is saying!

MARY: *almost unbelieving* He called little Jesus “Salvation ... prepared before the face of all people!”

SIMEON: *handing Babe back to Mary* May the Lord bless you both! *looks at Joseph* And make his face to shine upon you! *turns to Mary* Young mother, behold this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against. Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also...”

Prophetess Anna enters, walking slowly and with great effort.

SIMEON: *seeing old prophetess Anna!* Anna! Come and see! Look at this Child! *goes to help Anna walk faster toward Mary and the Babe.* He is the MESSIAH! The PROMISED ONE!

Anna gently folds back edge of Child’s blanket, the better to see his face. She gazes at Him with awe.

ANNA: *gazes heavenward, folds hands in prayer* “Bless the Lord, O my Soul! And all that is within me bless His holy name!” The Christ is here! Redemption is come!

Turns to Mary and Joseph

I am Anna, the prophetess, the daughter of Pha-nu-el, of the tribe of Asher. Never do I depart from this temple! Night and day I serve God with fastings and prayers. And now the Lord has blessed me! I have seen my Redeemer!

SIMEON: *to Joseph* Come, my son, I will take you to the priest.

Simeon exits through curtained doorway. Joseph and Mary follow Simeon. Anna follows the group.

--End of Act II--

ACT III, Scene 1

In Capernaum, during the month of Elul (August). It is afternoon at the home of the honorable Jairus, where Lucanus has been welcomed as a houseguest. The tottering Jairus leads Lucanus into his garden, where they will wait for Jairus’ daughter, Kelitah, to come for an interview. Jairus carries a staff, Lucanus his writing materials. In the garden are several chairs, a bench, a table, potted flowers, and other plants.

OLD JAIRUS: *creeping along* My daughter Kelitah should be coming any minute now. She is usually very prompt.

LUCANUS: No hurry, Honorable Jairus. I have to get my writing materials ready.
Puts scrolls, ink container and pen on table, looks carefully into ink jar My, I didn't realize it, but I'm just about out of ink! I'll have to buy some more before I leave Capernaum.

OLD JAIRUS: *easing himself into his chair* I'll get you some ink. Later this afternoon I have to walk over to the synagogue, and I'll stop in one of the shops and get you some.

LUCANUS: Why, thank you, I'd appreciate it. *sits down near his host, scroll and pen in hand* Honorable Jairus, while we wait for your daughter maybe you could tell me some things about the Christ that should be put in the book.

OLD JAIRUS: *thoughtfully, rubbing his hand across his beard* I can tell you what I'd put in if I were writing it: I'd put in the great things Jesus did here in Capernaum! And along the shores of the Galilee. He came to Capernaum many times. Performed many miracles.

LUCANUS: That's what I understand.

OLD JAIRUS *leaning forward and speaking with emotion* Say this, Doctor Lucanus: "The people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him!" *Cf. Luke 13:17*

LUCANUS: *writing and reading aloud--word by word--as the writing progresses,* "The people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him!"

OLD JAIRUS: *warming to his subject* People came from far and near! Hundreds of them! You see, his fame began to spread. Through all Syria, all Galilee, to Decapolis, throughout Judea, down to Jerusalem, even beyond Jordan!

Multitudes of people would walk for miles just to see him. They--and I include myself--could sense that he was no ordinary man! No ordinary prophet! In him, we saw "that God had visited his people!"

LUCANUS: *writing, and reading aloud* "...God had visited his people."

OLD JAIRUS: *talking on, paying no attention to Lucanus' writing* As he taught of the kingdom of God and began to perform miracles and to heal all manner of diseases, we were amazed! "Amazed at the mighty power of God!" *Cf. Luke 9:43*

Sometimes, "there came a fear on the people, and they glorified God!" *Cf. Luke 7:16. pause* Ah, it all comes back to me.

LUCANUS: *holding scroll in reading position.* Sir, see how you think this sounds? *reads* "There went a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.... And they glorified God, saying 'A great prophet is risen among us! God has visited his people.'" *Cf. Luke 5.15, 7:16*

OLD JAIRUS: That's well put. Well put! *brightening* That's how it was! *Sees daughter approaching* Ah, here you are, my dear! We've been waiting for you!

Kelitah bends over her father, kisses him. Lucanus rises to offer his chair. Old Jairus gets to his feet.

KELITAH: How are you, Father! *turns to Lucanus* Good afternoon, Doctor Lucanus.

LUCANUS. Good afternoon, Ma'am.

OLD JAIRUS: Is all well at your house?

KELITAH: All is well. I'm sorry to be late.

LUCANUS: *offering chair* Would you like to sit here, Madam Kelitah?

KELITAH: It doesn't matter.

OLD JAIRUS: Take my chair, Kelitah. I have to walk over to the synagogue on a little matter of business. And, I've premised the doctor here that I'll find him some more ink. *turns to leave, then comes back as an afterthought*

Now, Kelitah, I want you to tell Doctor Lucanus how it was that day when Jesus literally raised you from the dead. I don't know if he wants to put it in his book or not, but you might even tell him of old Bela and her mourners and about Jesus telling us to give you something to eat! *hobbles away, murmuring to himself* That was a wonderful day! A wonderful day! *exits*

LUCANUS: *to Kelitah* I've been anxious to talk with you, Madam Kelitah. And to ask you about the miracle.

KELITAH: It *was* a miraculous thing! Do you-- *hesitates* Do you want me to start telling you right now?

LUCANUS: Please do. And I'll take notes. Tell me all you can remember!

KELITAH: *enthusiastically* Well, I had just turned twelve years old. And Father and my dear mother lived here in this same house.--My mother's name was Jethlah. And I was their only daughter.--The courtyard here looked then much as it looks now. The house, too. My room was over there. *gestures toward stage* It was in the middle of the summer when I became ill--with a strange fever, or something.

Curtain opens for death scene, light shifts to Scene 2 set. Kelitah continues her narrative.

Each day I grew worse and worse. Mother and Father were grieving and anxious. They didn't think I could live. And I remember that our servant girl Migdol fanned me day and night.... *voice trails off*

Scene 2

Little Kelitah lies in bed, partially covered with a light blanket. She is restless. Migdol stands behind the bed, fanning Kelitah with palm branches. Jethlah wrings out a white cloth in a water basin and spreads it on her daughter's forehead. This, to try to lower her fever.

JETHLAH: *turning to servant girl* Migdol, go call Master Jairus! Tell him little Kelitah has become very restless!

MIGDOL: Yes, Ma'am. *starts out, meets Jairus coming in, hurries back to Jethlah* He's already coming, Ma'am!

JETHLAH: *wringing her hands together in anguish* Oh, Jairus, if we could only do something! Our little Kelitah is going to die! I just know she's going to die! *buries head on husband's shoulder*

JAIRUS: *stroking his wife's head and trying to comfort her* No, Jethlah, don't say that! *goes with Jethlah to look down at child, who is now still.*

JETHLAH: *bending over bed and taking child's hand in her own.* Even her little hand is burning with fever! *pause* She's hardly breathing! *straightens up* Oh, Jairus, we may as well start preparations for the funeral--even send for the mourners! *voice breaks* I want-- I want to hire the best-- The best mourners in *sobs ...* in Capernaum! *weeps on husband's shoulder*

JAIRUS: No! No! Not the mourners! Not that! *grasps wife's shoulders, speaks excitedly* Jethlah, I know what I'll do! I'll go find that man called Jesus, from Nazareth: He has the power to heal all manner of diseases! I heard the other day that he even cured a leper!

JETHLAH: *much interested* But do you know where he is?

JAIRUS: No, But he can't be far away. He spoke in our synagogue just two Sabbaths ago! I'll go down to the fishing docks and ask old Zebedee. He'll know where to find him. Both Zebedee's sons are following after him! They've just quit fishing!

JETHLAH: Do hurry, Jairus! *calls after Jairus as he is almost out the door* Jairus, what must I do if--if death comes *voice trembles* while you're gone?

JAIRUS: Send one of the servants to bring me word. And, *with reluctance* I suppose it would be only proper that you send for some mourners. *leaves*

JETHLAH: *sadly* All right, Jairus. *turns to servant girl.* Here, Migdol, let me fan her, and you go get some cool water. Maybe that will help bring the fever down. *Jethlah's sister She-ra tiptoes in as servant girl goes out.*

SHERA: *in hushed tone* Is she any better?

JETHLAH: *fanning child, and without looking up* No, Sister. If anything, Kelitah is worse. Jairus has gone to see if he can find that prophet of Nazareth everybody's talking about. But even if he finds him, it may be too late.

Migdol returns with water, places it near bed, and takes palms back from her mistress.

SHERA: *leading her sister to a chair* Jethlah, you've been up all night! Sit here and rest. I'll take your place, bathe Little Kelitah's face, and everything, *gets Jethlah settled, returns to bedside and begins to bathe child's face.*

MIGDOL: *to her mistress* Ma'am, you haven't had any breakfast, or lunch. Don't you want me to bring you something?

JETHLAH: *sighing and placing her hand on her forehead as if she has a splitting headache.* No, Migdol, I can't eat!

SHERA: *crying out in dismay* Oh, God of Abraham! She's not breathing! Sister, little Kelitah is not breathing! *frantically places hand over child's chest to check heartbeat, lets face take on agonized look*

Jethlah runs to bed, kneels beside child, and grabs up her limp hand. Servant girl, wide-eyed and frightened, fans faster and faster.

JETHLAH: *wailing* Oh! Oh! Oh! My baby girl! *buries her head on side of bed*
Lord! Lord, have mercy! *sobs, uncontrollably*

SHERA: *kneeling beside her sister, and placing her arm about Jethlah's shoulders*
Oh, my sister, I grieve with you! *begins wailing, not too loud* Oh! Oh! Oh!

Migdol fans slower and slower, finally stops, and draws up blanket to cover face of child. Curtain comes down.

--End of Scene 2--

Scene 3

A short time after Kelitah's death. At the steps of Madam Bela's home, where her company of Capernaum Mourners have assembled to put on their costumes and makeup and to receive instructions from Bela. The company has been engaged to go to the home of Jairus, to bewail—for a fee—the death of little Kelitah.

All the mourners except the ill-tempered Bela are laughing and talking, exchanging pleasantries. They stand, or sit, in clusters of twos and threes.

Bela carries a fishnet sack of big yellow onions and a second sack containing small black cloth bags of ashes--one for each mourner. She trots back and forth, impatient with her employees.

Bela's Assistant has a makeup box, which contains charcoal-like material. With this, she is painting lines on the mourners' faces. The Second Assistant has over her arm a stack of sackcloth cloaks and long black veils. These, the Mourners put on, on top of their gray uniform dresses.

BELA: Hurry up! Hurry up! Get your robes on! Get the lines on your faces!

ASSISTANT: *putting lines on face of HARPIST* I hope this won't smear!

Mourners A, B, C, D line up to have lines painted A then helps Assistant

SECOND ASSISTANT: *waving veil* Who else needs a veil?

SARAH: I do! I do!

GIGGLING MOURNER: *pulling on costume* If I get any fatter, I can't get in this thing anymore! *laughs*

GIGGLING MOURNER'S PAL: *helping her friend adjust veil* You ought to see the pretty shawl Father brought me from Jerusalem!

GIGGLING M.: From Jerusalem?

PAL: Yes! And it's so pretty! Every time I put on these old mourning rags, I make myself think of something pretty--like my new shawl! *turns to ASSISTANT* This veil has a hole in it! Give me a good one! *goes to get veil, returns to friend*

HARPIST tunes and plucks harp strings.

GIGGLING M.: You promised to tell me what your new admirer said!

PAL: *giggling* Oh, you'd be surprised! *laughs again* I think Father's going to go ahead and speak to a marriage broker!

GIGGLING M.: A marriage broker! How exciting!

BELA: *counting, as she circles group* One, two, three, four, ... *etc., up to 14.*
Raises voice Somebody's missing! Every time, somebody's late! Who's not here?

DANCER runs in, out of breath.

DANCER: It's me, Madam Bela! I'm sorry to be late! *hurries to get costume and veil, then goes to be near HARPIST*

BELA: Well don't let it happen again. When people hire mourners, they want them to come--not next week! *goes to check on charcoal makeup* You're not making those lines wide enough!

ASSISTANT: *doing lines on Sarah's face* Sarah, let me put a bit more black under your eyes--to make your cheeks look sunken in!

SARAH: Whatever you say!

BELA: I want every one of you to look old, and very sad!

Harpist, still happily plucking at her strings, makes playing louder and begins singing a jazzed-up version of the prescribed mourning tune Bela customarily requires.

HARPIST: *patting her foot* La-d-di-da! La-la-la!

La-d-di-da! La-la-la!

La-di-da! La-di-da!

Harpist continues, repeating measure. Dancer first claps her hands to keep time and then breaks into an impromptu jig! At these merry antics Bela goes into a near rage!

BELA: *waving arms and shrieking at Harpist and Dancer* Quiet! Quiet! *To Harpist* Put down that harp! And get on your robe! *wheels around, points finger at Dancer and speaks in slow, measured tones* If I ever, ever see you dance another step, I'll fire you! So help me, I'll fire you!

What will people think--passing along the street here! I'll tell you what they'll say! They'll say: "Well, well, Bela's Mourners have turned to Dancers!"

HARPIST and DANCER scurry away to escape Bela's wrath. Bela keeps talking, this time to the entire group. All are now quiet.

Now listen to me! All of you! We're not on our way to dance at a wedding! We're on our way to a house where there's been a death! And you are hired mourners, So act like it!

When we get to the home of the honorable Jairus, I want to see some real tears! To make sure you can produce said tears, I've brought onions today! *holds up sack* One for each of you.

ALL MOURNERS: *frown, murmur under their breath, but don't dare say anything*

BELA: *handing onion sack to Assistant* Here, pass these out. I hate to waste money on onions, but I've noticed lately very few of you actually weep! You say "boo-hoo-hoo" with not one tear!

GIGGLING MOURNER: *holding up onion* But, Madam Bela, these onions will make us smell bad!

BELA: You're not being paid for how you smell! You're being paid for how you weep!

One more thing: All of you listen now! Today we are going to use ashes! *holds up miniature bags*

ALL MOURNERS: *in disgust* Ashes? Oh, no!

PAL: Madam Bela, ashes are so dirty and gritty!

BELA: Just hush! It's an old Jewish custom! Sprinkling ashes on the head is one of our oldest ways to show sorrow!

"Sackcloth and ashes!" That was the old way!

Starts passing out bags. Assistants help

What I'm trying to get through your heads is this: This man Jairus, whose child has died, is one of the most important--and richest--men in all Capernaum. He will pay a handsome fee if I can just get you to mourn the death of his child properly!

Let's go! *leads the way, walking briskly* No more talk. When we get there, we'll go in a side door. And, as usual, I'll give the signal when you're to start wailing! *exits*

All Mourners follow Bela, with GIGGLING MOURNER and her PAL bringing up the rear.

GIGGLING MOURNER: *cupping hand to side of mouth so that Bela can't hear, and speaking to PAL* Onions! And ashes! Ugh!

PAL: *holding her onions and ashes at arm's length* I say: "Double Ugh!"

--End of Scene 3--

Light directs audience attention to Scene 4 and fishing boat set.

Scene 4

At a fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee, about half an hour before Kelitah's death. Jesus the Christ is seated in the end of a fishing boat. A multitude of people has gathered to hear him teach. On the fringe of the crowd Peter, James, and John stand, their fishing nets in hand They listen intently as the Christ teaches. An ailing woman is trying to get to touch the hem of the Christ's garment. But the crowd is so thick she cannot get through.

CHRIST FIGURE: *addressing whole multitude* Those of you who have ears to hear, listen to my words.

Crowd moves in closer, Jesus continues, and the ailing woman gives up her efforts for the time being--to listen.

Whosoever comes to me and hears my sayings, and does them, I will show you to whom he is like:

He is like a man who built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock. And when a flood came and the water and winds beat vehemently upon that house, the house was not even shaken: for it was founded upon a rock.

But the man who hears my sayings and does not do them, is like a man who built his house on the sands--without a foundation--and when the flood came and the water and wind beat vehemently, the house fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

A BYSTANDER: Master, teach us what to do.

CHRIST FIGURE: Do unto others as you would have them do to you. Love your enemies!

CROWD: *general murmur, grumbling*

BYSTANDER: *in disbelief* Love our enemies?

CHRIST FIGURE: Yes. Love your enemies. Do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which spitefully use you!

BYSTANDER: This is indeed a strange, hard teaching!

CROWD: *murmuring under their breath, some individuals mutter "Strange!" Others shake their heads and almost whisper "Very hard!"*

CHRIST FIGURE: Love and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great. And you shall be THE CHILDREN OF THE HIGHEST! For God is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil!

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful.

Judge not, and you shall not be Judged.

Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.

Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.

Give, and it shall be given unto your good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over... For with the same measure that you measure, it shall be measured to you again! *Cf. Luke 6:27-38*

MAN IN THE CROWD: *waving hand to get attention* Master, speak to my brother and make him divide his inheritance with me! When our father died, he got everything! And I got nothing! Make him divide!

CHRIST FIGURE. Man, no one has made me a judge or divider over you! But let all of you take heed, and beware of greediness. A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses! *Cf. Luke 11:13-21*

I will tell you a story.

Crowd remains very attentive.

The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"

Then he said, "I know what I will do! I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods."

And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease. Eat, drink, and be merry!"

But God said unto him, "Thou Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which you have provided?"

So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God!

Christ Figure steps down from boat into crowd Jairus rushes up, out of breath. As he tries to get near the boat and the Christ Figure, the ailing woman renews her efforts to touch the robe of Jesus.

JAIRUS: Make way, please! I must speak to Jesus! *tries to weave way into middle of crowd* Excuse me, please. *keeps going*

AILING WOMAN: *coming right behind Jairus* Let me get through, too! Just let me get close enough to touch his robe!

JAIRUS: *pleading with people* This is a matter of life and death! My little girl is dying!

AILING WOMAN: *wailing* For twelve years I've been ill! Let me touch his cloak!
Crowd parts to let Jairus through; Ailing Woman squeezes in also.

JAIRUS *falling on his knees before C. F.* Master! I beg you to come to my house! My child is dying! Come, lay your hand on her, and she will live!

CHRIST FIGURE: *With utmost kindness* You are Jairus, ruler of the synagogue, aren't you?

JAIRUS: Yes, Master. I'm Jairus. Please help me! I fear the worst for the child! When I left, she was at the point of death!

CHRIST FIGURE: Do not be troubled, Jairus. Come, lead the way to your house.

Jairus rises. Crowd surges around him and C. F.; then the two come out from the group so that audience can see both. Ailing Woman runs up from behind, stoops, touches the hem of the Christ's robe, and darts back behind crowd

CHRIST FIGURE: *stopping to look around* Who touched my robe?

SIMON PETER: *in chiding tone* Why, Master! In this crowd, it could have been anybody!

CHRIST FIGURE: No, it wasn't by chance. I felt the healing power of God go out from me, to someone! *looks at group carefully* Who was it? Who was healed?

Crowd individuals look at each other, several shake their heads and murmur 'Not me'

AILING WOMAN: *frightened, coming forward slowly, head bowed* Master? *kneels*

CHRIST FIGURE: Yes, my daughter?

AILING WOMAN: *trembling* It-- It-- It-- It-- It was me! I put my hand on your robe! *looks up* Like this! *reaches out and barely brushes fingertips against the hem of C. F.'s robe* I have had a plague for 12 years, and I knew I would be healed if I could just touch your cloak! I meant no harm!

CHRIST FIGURE: Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Go in peace, and be well!

CROWD shows astonishment, All individuals murmur approval. Several exclaim--at the same time--as follows: (1) It's a miracle! She's well! (2) We never saw such things before! (3) He's a prophet! A mighty prophet!

CROWD SPOKESMAN: *speaking to Crowd* Surely God has visited his people! *Before Ailing Woman has had time to get up, Migdol the servant girl comes running to Jairus.*

MIGDOL: *panting* Oh, Master Jairus, little Kelitah died! *breaks into sob*

JAIRUS: *very distraught* Oh! No! *turns to Christ* Master! It's too late! My little girl has died! What am I to do? *beats on chest* My only child! My little Kelitah! Dead! *looks again to Christ* Now, there's no need for you to come!

CHRIST FIGURE: *placing hand on Jairus' arm* You believe in God. Believe also in me. We will go to your house. Your child sleeps. Let us go that I may awake her out of sleep--for the Glory of God.

See raising of Lazarus, John 11:4 and 11:11

C. F. turns to Simon Peter, James, and John

Simon Peter? James? John? Come with us.

Jairus, Christ Figure, three disciples start toward home of Jairus, walking at moderate pace. Migdol runs on ahead Multitude remains near boat and exits after Scene 5 is under way. Light shifts to direct audience attention to deathbed set.

--End of Scene 4--

Scene 5

In Kelitah's room, about two hours after her death. Kelitah lies as a corpse, flowers strewn over her bed The Capernaum Mourners are assembled on right stage and are wailing softly, to the accompaniment of the harpist. A cluster of neighbors stands silently on left stage. The grieving mother stands looking down at the child, her sister at her side. Both are weeping, wiping their eyes. Migdol runs on stage, goes straight to her mistress. She is excited, sure that all is not lost.

MIGDOL: *out of breath* Madam Jethlah, they're coming! I found Master Jairus and told him! They'll be here in a minute!

JETHLAH: *scarcely looking up* Thank you, Migdol.

MIGDOL: *cheerfully* That Miracle Man is with him! I saw him heal a poor sick lady, and all she did was reach out and touch his robe! I just know he can heal Kelitah!

JETHLAH: No, Migdol. It's too late now for anybody to heal Kelitah! She's dead.

BELA: *hurrying to Migdol* Girl, did I hear you say your Master Jairus will be here in a minute?

MIGDOL: Yes, Ma'am. He's coming. And that Miracle Man! And three of his friends.

BELA: Never mind who's with him. *wheels around and waves arm in signal to Capernaum Mourners* All right! All right! The master of the house is coming, Get with it, Harp, Ashes, Everything!

Mourners set up very loud wailing. Harpist plays slow plaintive notes--the same ones she was using earlier for the dancing, mourners sprinkling ashes on their heads. Bela runs to watch Jairus and his companions approaching She darts back to her employees.

BELA: *beating herself on her chest* Beat on your breasts. *group complies, still wailing* More ashes! *group tosses ashes up in the air, rather profusely* That's good! Now, not quite so loud, *gives toning down sign, much as choir director would use*

Wailing continues. Jairus and Christ Figure come on stage. Disciples stand to one side. Jethlah runs to Jairus, clings to him. Christ Figure goes straight to the Mourners.

JETHLAH: *much distraught* Jairus, it's too late! Too late!

CHRIST FIGURE: *to Mourners* Why are you making all this mournful noise?

BELA: Because of death, Sir! Death!

CHRIST FIGURE: *motioning toward child on bed* The child there is not dead.

BELA: Not dead? Ha! *turning to Mourners* Did you all hear that? This man says the daughter of Jairus is not dead! Ha! Ha! Ha!

MOURNERS: *laughing loudly, and all speaking at same time but not in unison*
Ha! Ha! Ha! Not dead? Oh, yes she's dead! Ha! Ha! Ha! She's dead as can be!
Ha! Ha! Ha!

Note to players: The Scriptures say, literally, "They laughed him to scorn."

BELA: *still laughing* I never heard of anything so ridiculous! *turns directly to C. F.* Do you think I'd be here with my trained mourners if that child were alive?
We know she's dead!

CHRIST FIGURE: *firmly* There will be no more weeping. The little maid is asleep! *walks away from stunned Mourners, addresses Jairus* Jairus, send these wailing women away. And ask your kind neighbors to leave the room.

JAIRUS: Yes, Lord. Of course.

Jairus goes to Mourners. Jethlah steps over to cluster of neighbors and motions for them to go outside. They leave, silently. Migdol and Shera go with them. Christ Figure goes to child's bedside, looks down at her, and then gazes up as in prayer.

JAIRUS: *to Bela* You heard what Jesus of Nazareth said! Please go.

BELA: *irate, with hands on hips* What about my pay?

JAIRUS: You'll get your pay! Before the sun goes down, I'll send it. Just go now, quietly.

BELA: *to Mourners* Come on, let's go! *group turns, begins leaving* I've been in the mourning business forty years! And this beats anything I ever saw! *pauses, turns around to gaze back at Christ Figure, speaks in a more gentle tone, to herself* I'd like to know more about this man! There is something strangely wonderful about him! *Exits*

CHRIST FIGURE: *to Jairus as Jairus and his wife come near bed* Jairus, tell Simon Peter, James, and John to come on in. No one else, just those three. They shall witness the power of God!

JAIRUS: *as he approaches three disciples* The Master calls for you three to come. Walk this way. *leads three in, joins wife at foot of bed*

As disciples enter, Migdol slips in and hides herself so that she is visible to the audience but not to the other players.

CHRIST FIGURE: *now seated beside bed, takes up child's hand, and gently holds it in both his own* Little maid, arise!

Child opens eyes, moves head slightly

JETHLAH: *incredulously* Jairus, look! Look! She opened her eyes!

JAIRUS: *astounded* She is alive!

Christ Figure takes both of child's hands.

CHRIST FIGURE: Little maid, your Spirit has returned to you. You can get up now.

Little Kelitah looks around, smiles, and Christ Figure helps her to sit up. She jumps up, runs toward parents, arms outstretched.

KELIAH: Mother! Father!

JAIRUS: The Lord be praised!

Parents rush to meet child. Christ Figure moves slowly aside, towards disciples.

JETHLAH: Kelitah! Kelitah! *Hugging child*

JAIRUS *putting arms around child and wife*: My child!

Jairus turns quickly to Christ Figure, leaving Jethlah to caress Kelitah. Jairus kneels before C. F.. Migdol runs up to Kelitah.

KELITAH: Oh, Mig, you're here too! *Migdol hugs Kelitah*

JAIRUS: *humbly, with emotion* Oh, Master! How can we ever thank you!

CHRIST FIGURE: Let all thanks and all glory be to the Father in heaven!

JAIRUS: What can I do? What can I say?

CHRIST FIGURE: The thing for you or someone to do is to bring some food for your little girl! I'm sure she's hungry!

Jairus gets up, starts to turn to his wife.

MIGDOL: *Hurrying to Christ Figure* Sir, I'll get Kelitah something to eat! *Starts to leave, then turns back* But what should I bring her?

CHRIST FIGURE: *very kindly, as if speaking to a small child* Perhaps some broiled fish. *Pauses* And honeycomb!

MIGDOL: *happily* She likes fish and honeycomb! *Turns to Kelitah* Don't you, Kelitah?

KELITAH: *still in her mother's arms* Yes! Mig, bring me lots and lots of fish! And lots and lots of honeycomb! I'm hungry!

Migdol runs out.

JAIRUS: *to C. F.* Oh, Master, I must tell all Capernaum what you have done this day in my house! I'll go up and down the streets! I'll tell it in the marketplace! In the synagogue! And--

SIMON PETER: *enthusiastically* We'll help you, Jairus!

JAMES: We sure will!

JOHN: It should be shouted from the housetops!

CHRIST FIGURE: No, my friends, Tell no man.

JAIRUS: But, Master!

CHRIST FIGURE: Capernaum would not understand. But to you, Jairus, and your household, and to Simon Peter and James and John here *waves hand in gesture to include all* I say this:

Blessed are your eyes for you have seen what prophets and kings would like to see--the power of God! *See Luke 10:23-24*

CURTAIN

--End of ACT III--

ACT IV Scene 1

At Antioch. An evening in Tishri (September), at the home of Lucanus' mother. Lucanus, Elzabad, and Theophilus are just finishing supper. The room is simply furnished, with the dining table, chairs, a bench holding water jars, and a small table where the finished book--an enormous scroll--lies covered with a cloth.

THEOPHILUS: *to Elzabad* A fine supper, Madam Elzabad!

ELZABAD: We're glad you're here to enjoy it with us.

THEOPHILUS: *leaning back* Now, my friends, I've used up the whole evening with talk of sailing on the Great Sea, taking grain from Egypt to Rome. Now, suppose you two tell me how you passed the time since I was last here! Madam Elzabad, was it a pleasant summer for you?

ELZABAD: I fared well enough, thank you. But, I was a bit lonely while Lucanus was gone.

THEOPHILUS: *turning to Lucanus* Gone? Luke, I thought you were going to spend the whole summer here in Antioch! Where did you go? Down to Caesarea to help Paul get out of prison?

LUCANUS: No. I'm going down there next week. But it looks like Paul will never be freed! *Brightens tone* I made a long and wonderful journey, Theo. I went to Judaea, up into the Hill Country, to Jerusalem, to Galilee, to Bethlehem, Capernaum! To-- Oh, but I won't tell you any more--until after the surprise!

ELZABAD: Lucanus has something special for you! He spent all summer--

LUCANUS: *laughingly* Quiet, Mother! Don't tell him!

ELZABAD: I won't!

THEOPHILUS: I can guess! It's the mosaic designs! You've finished them already! Ah, I can't wait to see how your idea about the Fish turned out!

LUCANUS: I do have the sketches finished, but that's not the surprise! *gets up to go for scroll* Just a minute, I'll show you.

ELZABAD: Let me take all these things out of the way. *hurriedly takes dishes away*

Lucanus uncovers and brings over the enormous scroll

LUCANUS: Here it is! I wrote this book for you!

THEOPHILUS: *greatly surprised* A book! *takes scroll* You wrote this? For me?

LUCANUS: Yes, it's for you.

THEOPHILUS: What's it about?

LUCANUS: It's about the MESSIAH! I did it because-- Well, because God told me to do it! He told me in a dream! Angels spoke to me in a dream!

THEOPHILUS: Remarkable!

LUCANUS: You have now a true account of how Jesus the Christ was born. What he did! What he said! What he taught! How he was crucified! How he rose from the grave! Everything I could find out about him!

THEOPHILUS: Why, Lucanus, my friend! I'm overwhelmed! I don't know what to say! Let me look at this wonderful book! *unrolls scroll, begins reading* "There was in the days of Herod the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias... and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth...." *voice trails off, keeps reading silently to himself as Lucanus talks*

LUCANUS: *with joy, recalling the pleasure he had doing the interviews* The aged Elizabeth was the finest person I interviewed. Then, I left the hill country and went on from city to city, from village to village, talking to eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. It was all a great pleasure!

THEOPHILUS: *looking up from scroll* I imagine so! Here, read it to me, Luke! At least part of it!

LUCANUS: All right. *takes scroll and sits down* I'm anxious to know what you're going to think of it! *unrolls scroll, carefully, lays it down on the table* I'll read enough for you to get some idea of what it's like, *looks for place to begin, talks half to himself half to his friend*

Let me see, I won't go into this part about how Jesus suffered on the cross--it was too dreadful! *pause* Ah, here's his resurrection! That was glorious! But I'll save the resurrection for you to read when you get back to Rome.

Here it is! Here's what I'd like you to hear. *changes tone* Now, Theo, this is what occurred in Jerusalem on the evening of the day Jesus rose from the grave. One of his disciples--Simon Peter, to be exact--had seen him alive! And the women who went to the tomb to take spices saw him, even talked to him!

Still, his disciples and many of Jesus' close friends found it very hard to believe that he was actually alive again.

Well, that evening, the eleven, and some of the others, were all together in Jerusalem--hiding from the authorities--when a man named Cleopas and his wife came rushing in from Emmaus, saying they had walked and talked with Jesus. And... *voice trails off, light shifts audience attention to Scene 2*

Scene 2

An upper room in Jerusalem, the evening of the day of the Resurrection. The eleven disciples and several friends of Jesus are gathered around a low table, talking excitedly. Cleopas of Emmaus and his wife have just rushed back from Emmaus to tell that they have seen JESUS. Both are out of breath, highly elated. They speak rapidly.

CLEOPAS: I tell you, I know that Jesus the Christ lives!

WIFE: He talked to us! He walked along with us! All the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus!

CLEOPAS: It hasn't been two hours since he was at my house!

WIFE: At first, we didn't know him! We thought he was just a stranger! Then Cleopas invited him to eat supper, and--

CLEOPAS: We were sitting there at the supper table, 'and he took the bread and blessed it. The minute he did that, we knew who he was! Then, all of a sudden, he vanished out of our sight!

ANDREW: *soothingly* Cleopas, you and your wife must have seen a ghost! My brother Simon Peter here *slaps Simon Peter on shoulder* says Jesus appeared to him today, too. I don't doubt the word of my own brother--or, your word either, don't get me wrong--but it's hard to believe! Death is death! The grave is the grave! We saw the Christ crucified and buried just three days ago!

Christ Figure appears and walks to the center of group.

CHRIST FIGURE. Peace be unto you!

Many in group jump up from table, shrink back in terror, thinking they are seeing a ghost.

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JAMES: *Shrieking* Oh! The ghost of our Lord!

ANDREW: *much shaken* Now we're all seeing his spirit!

JAMES: *clutching John's arm* It's impossible! It can't be the Master!

JOHN: *to James* It looks like him! But it must be his ghost!

SIMON PETER: Lord? We know it's you! But we're afraid!

CHRIST FIGURE: *with patience, kindness* Why are you afraid? It is I myself! Jesus! Your friend! *looking about at group* Don't be troubled! Come closer, touch me! A ghost doesn't have flesh and bones as I have.

Several move toward C. F., but do not touch him

ANDREW: We-- We didn't-- We didn't think we would ever see you again! Are you really alive?

CHRIST FIGURE: *showing hands* See my hands? Where the nails went through? And my feet! *lifts robe slightly to show scars on feet*

ALL: *The group gasps as one, in disbelief and joy. Quickly, some say one thing, some another--at the same time, or almost at the same time. Director will assign five players as follows:*

- (1) It is our Lord! Praise be to God!
- (2) Master! Master!
- (3) Lord, it's really you!
- (4) You are risen indeed!
- (5) Oh, Master! We could weep for Joy!

Group moves closer to C. F., forming something of a semicircle around him.

CHRIST FIGURE: *glancing at table* Do you have anything here to eat?

JOANNA: *excitedly* Yes, Master! We have much food! Right here on the table!
picks up fish platter and moves it toward head of table Here's some fish!

C. F. *sits down at head of table. Mary, the Mother of James brings container of honey and honeycomb to him, and pours a portion from the large jar into a smaller dish--so that audience can see the honey dripping from the honeycomb.*

MARY, MOTHER OF JAMES: Master, here's honey, with the honeycomb!

CHRIST FIGURE: Thank you. What more could one ask, than fish and honeycomb! *eats bite or two of fish, and bread dipped into the honey*

JOHN: *standing beside C. F.* Lord, help us to understand what happened!

CHRIST FIGURE: *still holding bread in hand, addresses group.* Remember, I told you when I was with you in Galilee that I would be put to death and that I would rise again the third day? As the Scriptures foretold?

JOHN: Master, you told us, but we didn't want to believe you would die! So, we just wouldn't think about it! We never dreamed you would die on the cross!

CHRIST FIGURE: *puts down bread, beckons to group* Come, all of you, and listen.

Group gels closer, some sit at the table. Joanna and Mary sit at C. F.'s feet. All gaze at him with rapt attention.

CHRIST FIGURE: Open your minds to understand the Scriptures and what is written of me. *pauses to let group get settled and quiet*

It is written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms that the Christ should suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.

These things have come to pass. You have seen it.

ALL: *entire group nods and murmurs in agreement*

JOHN: Yes, Master, we have!

CHRIST FIGURE: My friends, it is also written in the Scriptures that repentance for the forgiveness of sins shall be proclaimed in my name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

You are my witnesses! You will bear the Good News to all nations! Proclaim it to all men!

For this task, my Father will clothe you with power from on high, His Holy Spirit!

This is His promise. And I will send forth the promise of my Father upon you!

It will be as if I AM WITH YOU. ALWAYS!

--Curtain--

Light directs audience attention back to Lucanus and Theophilus.

THEOPHILUS: *with much feeling* Marvelous! Absolutely marvelous, Luke! But what comes next? That's not the ending is it?

LUCANUS: No, Theo. You might say that is only the beginning. The ending will be how we carry out the task our Lord assigned!

THEOPHILUS: *earnestly* Luke, truly you have written a beautiful book! *pauses* Did you give it a name?

LUCANUS: Why no. I just inscribed it to you. *looks in scroll* Let me see how I did put it. *reads* "To the Most Excellent Theophilus." That's all.

THEOPHILUS. It should have a name! A title!

LUCANUS: What could you call it?

THEOPHILUS: I will call this book "THE FISH, AND THE HONEYCOMB."

LUCANUS: *repeating, using Theo's same tone* "The Fish, and the Honeycomb." The Fish part I understand, of course. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Saviour. But "Honeycomb"? *turns to Theo for explanation*

THEOPHILUS: Can't you see, Luke? In telling of the Christ, you also recorded God's Promise: His Holy Spirit with us!

What a Promise! What a gift to man! It is "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb!" *Cf. Psalm 19:10b, 119:103*

LUCANUS: *nodding his head, speaking in a reflective tone* Perfect, Theo. A perfect title! "The Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God, With Us!"

THE FISH, AND THE HONEYCOMB!" *hands scroll to Theophilus*

First the Angels, then all members of the cast converge on stage--singing as they come--and join Theophilus and Lucanus in a hymn of praise. (See below)

THE END

[Click here to go to the Jewell Ellen Smith Homepage](#)

God Has Made a Promise

Jewell Ellen Smith

Grand Finale Hymn for "The Fish and the Honeycomb"

Piano

Refrain joyfully

Re - joice! Re - joice! Let your heart be

4

glad! Let de - light fill your soul! For,

9

God has made you a prom - ise, a

14

prom - ise great - er than gold! Yes, great - er than

Detailed description: This system contains measures 14 through 18. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody in the treble clef has accents (>) over the first notes of measures 14, 15, and 16. The lyrics are: "prom - ise great - er than gold! Yes, great - er than".

19

much fine gold! Sweet - er, al - so, than

cresc. *dec.*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 19 through 23. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody in the treble clef has an accent (>) over the first note of measure 19. Dynamics include *cresc.* (crescendo) from measure 19 to 21 and *dec.* (decrescendo) from measure 22 to 23. The lyrics are: "much fine gold! Sweet - er, al - so, than".

24

hon - ey, Sweet - er th - an the hon - ey -

f *dec.*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 24 through 27. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody in the treble clef has an accent (>) over the first note of measure 24 and a fermata over the final note of measure 27. Dynamics include *f* (forte) in measure 24 and *dec.* (decrescendo) from measure 25 to 27. The lyrics are: "hon - ey, Sweet - er th - an the hon - ey -".

28

p comb! The prom - ise sweet, the hon - ey

In unison *smoothly*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 28 through 31. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody in the treble clef has a fermata over the final note of measure 31. Dynamics include *p* (piano) in measure 28. Performance directions include *In unison* above measures 28-30 and *smoothly* above measures 30-31. The lyrics are: "*p* comb! The prom - ise sweet, the hon - ey".

32 *cresc.*

comb, is this: God will come

36 Verses: with feeling

to you!

1. God has will made a pro - m -
 2. God has will let his spi - r -

41

ise it that he in will your come heart to - you; He will
 it be in your heart to - day; He will

46

send his Spi - r - it! His word is true.
 be your com - fo - rt, com - fort and stay.

51

What the Lord has promised, that will he
Let your heart re-cieve him, to be your

56

p *rit.* *p*

do - - - o. God will send his and Spi - r -
gui - - - de. Je - sus Lord and Sav - io -

61

cresc. *f*

it, to be with you.
ur, close by your side.

NOTE TO CAST: All players will present this Grand Finale hymn. Use this pattern:

1. Pianist play refrain as Angels come on center stage and Cast follows.
2. Angel soloist sing refrain.
3. Angels and Cast sing verse 1.
4. Angels repeat refrain.
5. All sing verse 2, and all repeat refrain.