

THE GRASS WITHERETH

A Play for Easter
by
Jewell Ellen Smith

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"The grass withereth; the flower fadeth,
But the Word of our God shall stand for ever."

--Isaiah 40:8

TIME: 90 AD, and the years between 30 and 33 AD.

PLACE: Ephesus, a Greek city, capital of the Roman province of Asia.

PURPOSE, or theme: "...these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

--John 20:31

PLOT, and general structure:

The aged apostle John, chained to a Roman soldier, has been sentenced to exile on the island of Patmos in the Aegean.

While John waits for the ship to sail from Ephesus at sunset, he spends the hours having his pupil Polycarp write down some of the miracles he saw Jesus the Christ do and things he heard the Christ teach. Principal scenes depicted are:

- a. John the Baptist introducing the Christ
- b. Jesus healing the lame, the halt, the blind
- c. The Christ visiting in Bethany in the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, including the talk with Nicodemus.
- d. The Christ speaking with the Woman at the Well
- e. The illness and death of Lazarus
- f. Jesus raising Lazarus from the grave
- g. The Last Supper

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND: The Gospel according to John, with cross references to the other Gospels. Also: writings from Isaiah.

LENGTH: One hour and a few minutes.

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THE CHARACTERS, in the order of their appearance:

ACT I, Scenes 1 and 2

JOHN, "the beloved," the last of the twelve apostles of Jesus, who is now an old man--leader of the Christians at Ephesus and minister to the seven churches nearby.

ATTICUS, a Roman soldier stationed in Ephesus.

LINUS, a Roman soldier in the same unit as Atticus.

CASSIA, John's kinswoman, aunt and guardian of Zulah and Tabitha.

ZULAH. John's great niece, who is spending the summer in Ephesus.

ABITHA, Zulah's sister.

POLYCARP, A young Christian from Smyrna, who is John's pupil.

ACT I, Scene 3

YOUNG JOHN, the beloved apostle, when he was a young man.

ANDREW, one of the twelve apostles.

JOHN THE BAPTIST, the forerunner of the Christ, an ascetic prophet in the wilderness, to whom thousands, even Jesus of Nazareth, came to be baptized.

CHRIST FIGURE

ACT I, Scene 4

CROWD OF PEOPLE, including these:

Blind Beggar, named Kelitah

Beggar's Wife

A Father

Young Boy, with a withered hand

Four stretcher bearers

A Patient named Simon

Old Woman

Frail Woman

First Daughter

Second Daughter

Stooped Man with palsied hand

Old Man

Three other women

Two Children

ACT II, Scene 1

MARTHA, older sister of Lazarus of Bethany

MARY, younger sister of Lazarus

JAMES. one of the twelve apostles, brother of John.

NICODEMUS, a prominent man of Jerusalem who was a secret believer in Jesus the Christ.

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LAZARUS, a close friend of Jesus.

ACT II, Scene 2

WOMAN OF SAMARIA, a resident of Sy-char, who talked to Jesus at Jacob's Well.

A CROWD of Samaritans (Same players as in Crowd in ACT I)

SAMARITAN SPOKESMAN, a resident of Sy-char

ACT II, Scene 3

TWO FANNERS, servant girls in the home of Lazarus

FIRST NEIGHBOR, a neighbor and friend of Martha and Mary

SECOND NEIGHBOR, another friend of Martha and Mary

Act III, Scene 2

MESSENGER, a runner from Bethany

APOSTLES:

Simon Peter

Bartholomew (or Nathaniel)

Phillip

James, son of Alpheus

Judas Iscarot

Simon, the Caananite

Thomas

Judas, not Iscariot

Matthew

ACT III, Scene 3

THREE WOMEN FROM JERUSALEM, close friends of Martha and Mary

THREE MEN FROM JERUSALEM, friends of Lazarus

A SERVANT, in the home of Lazarus.

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Total number of roles: about 50

Speaking parts: about 40

Note: Many players may take two minor roles, and appear in Crowd scenes

SCRIPT:

ACT I, Scene 1

Scene 1: A street corner in the city of Ephesus. It is mid-morning. The aged apostle John stumbles over the cobblestones and almost falls as two Roman soldiers--one on either side and both holding their prisoner's arms--escort him toward his home. The venerable John has been sentenced to exile on the remote Aegean island Patmos because he refused to renounce Christianity and acknowledge the Roman Emperor Titus Flavius Domitianus Augustus to be "Lord and God." The soldiers carry spears. Atticus has a heavy chain thrown over his arm.

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JOHN: *much distressed and speaking to himself, not the soldiers* Exiled! Exiled!
Oh, that my God would deliver me! What shall I do! All my churches! All my work to spread the good news! What's to become of it all?

ATTICUS: *with no sympathy* Old Man, I never saw you before this morning in court--and I don't know you from the emperor's housecat--but you brought this exile on yourself!

LINUS: *roughly* Yeah! Atticus is right! All you had to do was make a little bow to the magistrate and say: "Yes! Yes! Domitian *pronounced Do-MEESH-an* is divine! Domitian is the Lord and God! The son of Minerva!" They would 'a let you go!

JOHN: No, Soldier! Never! Jesus is my Lord! God, his Father, is God--the only God!

ATTICUS: *ignoring John's assertion* You didn't use your head! But, even so, you're lucky. Very lucky! Exactly two months ago today, me and Linus here left Rome, and you know what they're doing there to these wretched "Christian" guys like you?

JOHN: Yes, I--

ATTICUS: *interrupting* Feeding 'em to the wild beasts! Burnin' 'em alive! Crucifying 'em!

LINUS: I saw 'em crucify one guy upside down!

ATTICUS: You're plenty lucky.

JOHN: *dejectedly* Yes, yes, I know. The persecution is dreadful.

LINUS: Old Man, how much farther is it to your house?

JOHN: Just around the corner. *straightens himself up* I think I'm able to walk by myself now. You can let go of my arms.

ATTICUS: We could. But we're not!

LINUS: If we let you escape they could throw us on that ship. Send us to Patmos!

ATTICUS: Yeah, and I'd sure hate to spend the rest of my life on that little rocky lump in the sea--ten miles long and six miles wide!

CURTAIN

As three reach entrance to John's garden, spotlight picks up Cassia, Polycarp, and girls in far corner.

Scene 2

Immediately after scene 1. In the courtyard of John's Ephesus home. John's sister Cassia is transplanting flowers into clay pots. His nieces Tabitha and Zulah are assisting their aunt. Polycarp sits at a table nearby, reading and copying material on several scrolls.

ZULAH: *idly holding the trowel in her hand* Aunt Cassie, you know what I like best about this summer here with you and Uncle John?

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CASSIA: *mildly amused* No. What do you like best? *holds up pot* Here, put a little more dirt in here.

ZULAH: *as she scoops up soil and dumps it into flower pot* I like it when we sit out here in the garden after supper, and Uncle John tells about when he was young, down in Galilee. And about his friend Jesus.

Cassia holds container over for Tabitha to pour in water.

TABITHA: *pouring water, generously* Me too! I like to hear about the miracles!

CASSIA: *reflective tone* Jesus performed many miracles. I saw some of them, but your Uncle John saw them all. He went with--

Cassia sees Polycarp hurrying to the gate. He rushes back to her.

POLYCARP: *much alarmed* Ma'am, something's wrong! Roman soldiers! *runs back to John*

Cassia sees soldiers entering with John

CASSIA: *drops flower pot, starts getting girls out of the garden* Roman Soldiers! Mercy! Quick, girls! Into the house! Those soldiers mustn't see you!

Girls dash away, Cassia hurries to John.

Soldiers let John--now exhausted and out of breath--slump down on the first garden bench. John, Cassia and Polycarp all speak at once.

JOHN: *to soldiers* You'll have to let me sit down. I--I-- This is where I live. *sweeps hand in gesture to include whole courtyard, turns to Cassia and Polycarp*

CASSIA: *much distressed* John! Are you all right?

POLYCARP: What's happened?

JOHN: Cassie, I-- Bad news-- I-- Ah, Polycarp, I'm glad you're here! You can help my sister.

POLYCARP: Sir, you look ill!

CASSIA: What're these soldiers doing here? Did you faint and fall in the street?

JOHN: *still panting* I'll explain. I--

CASSIA: John, you're pale as a sheep! *starts fanning John with her headpiece.* Quick, Polycarp! Run get some wine!

Polycarp wheels around to go, Linus grabs his arm

LINUS: Not so fast! You don't go anywhere unless we tell you!

Pulls Polycarp over to one side

ATTICUS: *matter of fact tone* Lady, the Old Man is all right. He didn't faint and fall in the street. He's under house arrest.

CASSIA: *outraged* House arrest?

ATTICUS: That's right. We're here to guard him. That wine, though-- Uh-- Uh-- we all need a little wine, now and then!

CASSIA: *ignoring A.'s hint about the wine* He-- He-- He's an old man! Nearly ninety years old!

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ATTICUS: *starts fastening chain around one of John's ankles* He's being exiled to Patmos. Orders of the emperor. Emperor Domitian, himself!

CASSIA: *dismayed* Exiled! O, merciful heavens! *bends over John* John! John!
Atticus fastens free end of chain around a tree or shrub or post.

POLYCARP: How dreadful! I'll go get help!

LINUS: *grabbing Polycarp's arm again* You won't go anywhere. And you'd better be glad it's not you!

Atticus saunters over to Linus and Polycarp.

JOHN: *lowering his voice so that Atticus does not hear* Cassie, take the girls and leave! Go to Smyrna!

CASSIA *whispering* This morning?

JOHN: Right now! As soon as you see those soldiers looking the other way.

CASSIA: That emperor in Rome is quite mad! No Christian is safe anywhere!

JOHN. You'll be safe in Smyrna.

CASSIA: *half to herself* That tallest soldier wanted some wine. I know what I'll do! I'll bring out some wine, and while they're drinking, the girls and I can slip out!

Spotlight shifts to Polycarp and two soldiers.

LINUS: to Polycarp I take it that you must be Polycarp?

POLYCARP: Yes, I'm Polycarp. I'm from Smyrna.

ATTICUS: The Old Man *gestures toward John* told us about you. Said you're his pupil.

POLYCARP: I've been studying with him several years now.

ATTICUS: We're gonna let you stay here with him the rest of the day, but you'd better not try anything funny!

LINUS: Nothing! Understand? We'd as soon run you through with a spear as to look at you! *raises spear in threatening motion*

POLYCARP: *taking a deep breath and backing away from spear* Yes, I know!

ATTICUS: Linus, you want to take the morning watch or the afternoon watch?

LINUS: Makes no difference to me. It's gonna be pure boredom, morning or afternoon.

ATTICUS: Let's cast lots.

LINUS: Sure! High man gets the morning. *takes dice from his pocket, hands them to Atticus* You roll the bones first.

ATTICUS: *shakes dice, looks up and holds up dice* Now, all you gods of Mount Olympus, if you're up there, gim'me a high number! *squats and rolls dice on ground* Six! Not bad! Not bad! *hands dice to Linus*

Polycarp eases his way over to John.

LINUS: *laughing* Atticus, you don't know anything about the gods! Listen to my prayer! *holds out dice in his fist* You brand new, self-made Roman Emperor

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Lord God Domitian, gim'me a higher number! *squats, rolls dice* Rats! You win, Atticus. *pockets dice* Oh well, never mind.

ATTICUS: *walking with Linus to courtyard gate* I'll see you then at high noon?

LINUS: I'll be back with bells on. *leaves*

Atticus goes back to John and Polycarp, begins fastening John's chain to his own ankle.

ATTICUS: *to John* You'll have to remember, Old Man, that I don't like this any better than you do.

Cassia hurries in with barley loaves, wine, and three glasses. She goes first to Atticus.

CASSIA: *with a tinge of sarcasm* Our sacred Law of Moses says that we are to be kind to "the stranger that is within our gates." You're a stranger; so I'm offering you a glass of our best wine, and barley bread.

ATTICUS: *openly pleased* Well! Lady, you surprise me! I am a stranger, and I haven't had a decent glass of wine since I left Rome! *pours himself a glass, begins gulping it even before he sits down on bench not far from John*

Cassia takes tray to John and Polycarp, sets it down and goes back into house. Polycarp pours for John and takes small amount for himself.

JOHN: Not much for me. *takes a sip, breaks off and eats crust of bread* Polycarp, as soon as you can, get word to the seven churches. Ask them to pray that some good will come out of this tragedy.

POLYCARP: I will. I will. I'll start tomorrow.

Atticus brings his cup over for a refill.

ATTICUS: This is good stuff! *takes another gulp* You'd better drink up, Old Man. You won't have anything like this on the i-land of Pat-mos. *drains glass, starts to his seat, swaying back and forth. Turns around, staggers as he goes to get wine pitcher. Tongue thickens and speech slows.*

Does your Law of uh-- *eases himself down on the ground, leans back against bench.* Does your law of What's-his-name say how much a stranger in the gates can drink?

Pours and drinks another big gulp, wipes his sleeve across his mouth.

What's-his-name sure made you Jews a firs' class law!

Slumps over asleep, the handle of the pitcher still clutched in one hand. He moves one leg just enough to cause his spear to fall to the ground.

POLYCARP: He's asleep!

JOHN: *getting up cautiously so as not to rattle chain.* Good! Run tell Cassia! Ah, I'll get to tell the girls good bye, after all! *Polycarp starts to leave.* Warn 'em to be quiet!

POLYCARP: *whispering* I will.

Polycarp meets Cassia and two girls.

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CASSIA: *stage whisper* We were watching! *turns to shush girls* Sh-h, girls! We'll say goodbye real quiet and slip out the gate!

Girls run to their uncle, in tears. John gathers girls and Cassia in his arms. The farewells are whispered.

JOHN: My little girls! My sweet girls! Goodbye! Goodbye, Cassie!

CASSIA: Goodbye, John. God be with you!

TABITHA: *between sobs* Uncle John, we don't want you to go to that terrible island!

ZULAH: We may never see you again!

JOHN: *trying to reassure group* Sure you will! It may be a few years, but God will see me through all this. You girls go with your Aunt Cassie up to Smyrna. And-- And-- And don't forget the things I've told you about Jesus the Christ!

ZULAH: Uncle John, you won't get to tell us about the miracles, anymore!

TABITHA: And we wanted to hear all his miracles! And what Jesus said, too!

JOHN: *somewhat surprised*. Well, I-- I-- *becomes suddenly inspired* The Lord be praised! I just had a wonderful idea! I'll write down the miracles! I'll write down what he said! What Jesus did! Everything! Well, no, not everything. The world couldn't hold all the books that should be written! But I'll write down all I can remember!

CASSIA: John, that will be wonderful!

POLYCARP: *enthusiastically* I'll help you!

JOHN: *still talking fast and excitedly* Yes, Polycarp, you can help me! Yes! You can write it all down as I tell it! And make copies for the girls! And copies for the seven churches! *Tone becomes more serious, contemplative*

I'll record it in such a way that whoever reads it-- or hears it-- will BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, AND BELIEVING, MIGHT HAVE LIFE THROUGH HIS NAME!

CASSIA: Oh, John, that will be a marvelous thing for you to do!

JOHN: I'm beginning to see the hand of God in my exile!

Atticus groans, stirs in his sleep.

All whisper "Goodbye" to each other, wave. Cassia and girls hurry out. Polycarp accompanies group to gate, returns to John, who is pacing back and forth as best he can with one foot chained. John is highly elated.

JOHN: *rubbing hands together* Polycarp, get your paper and ink and let's get started.

POLYCARP: It's right over here. *brings over his scroll and writing materials* What title do you want me to put on it?

JOHN: *sitting back down* Never mind the title, or heading, just yet. Polycarp, do you remember that line the great prophet Isaiah wrote that said something about how the grass withers and the flowers fade, but God's word is forever?

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POLYCARP: *quoting* "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever!"

JOHN: That's it. Now the first thing I want to show in this record of what I saw Jesus do and what I heard him say is that man is like grass, while God is eternal.

I want to show that Jesus is like God's "Word"--His promise to man--and that all who believe will have life forever.

pauses, leans forward

So, begin this way: *dictates slowly, deliberately.* "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth. *From John 1:1, 14*

pauses

Next, write: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

ATTICUS wakes abruptly, sits up, looks around as if in a daze.

ATTICUS: Hey, what's going on? Old Man, what're you up to?

JOHN: We're writing down things about Jesus the Christ. I hope you don't mind.

ATTICUS: getting up off the ground I don't know the first thing about your Jesus the Christ, and I could care less; So far as I'm concerned you can write till the sun goes down.

JOHN: Thank you.

ATTICUS: Just don't be dictating stuff that will bore me to distraction. *Picks up wine pitcher, tries to drain out a few drops.* Rats! Empty! Just my luck!

JOHN: to Polycarp, *in musing, reflective tone* Let me see, Polycarp, what should come next. Hmm-mm-m. *rubs beard, tries to think*

POLYCARP: You plan to include something about John the Baptist, don't you?

JOHN: glad for the suggestion Of course. John, the forerunner. I think I've told you that, at first, I was a follower of John the Baptist. He was truly a man sent from God.

Write that down. Say: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John...."

changes tone as if just giving additional information

John looked like one of the prophets of old. He roamed the wilderness country near the Jordan, preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins. His clothes were rough--camel's hair and leather--and his food was little besides locusts and wild honey.

Many people came to him to be baptized. Some even thought he was the Messiah... *voice trails off*

Spotlight shifts audience attention to another part of stage for the beginning of

Scene 3

Scene 3

A wilderness road, near the Jordan River. John the Baptist walks along, accompanied by two men, the disciple John when he was young and Andrew — both early followers of John the Baptist and later apostles of Jesus of Nazareth.

YOUNG JOHN: Sir, people are saying that you must be the Messiah!

ANDREW: Some think you might be Elijah come back, but most say you are the Christ.

JOHN THE BAPTIST. No, no. I am not the Christ. I am only the voice of one crying in the wilderness. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.... Make a highway for our God!... Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill be made low.

"And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed!"

--Isaiah 40: 3-5a

YOUNG JOHN: But you baptize. And--

JOHN THE BAPTIST: Indeed, I do baptize in the Jordan. I preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. I baptize with water. But there cometh one mightier than I. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and fire!

YOUNG JOHN: *repeating, as an echo* The Holy Spirit!

ANDREW: *repeating, as an echo* Fire!

JOHN THE BAPTIST: *as if he did not hear comments* I'm not so much as worthy to stoop down and unloose the latchet of his shoes! He is in the world, and the world was made by him, yet the world knows him not. *See John 1:10*

He has come unto his own, and his own receive him not.

ANDREW: What will happen to those who do receive this mighty man?

JOHN THE BAPTIST: As many as receive him, to them he gives the power to become the sons of God--even to them that believe on his name.

YOUNG JOHN: with much amazement, eagerness Believe on his name? And become the sons of God? Who is he?

ANDREW: *eagerly* And where is he?

JOHN THE BAPTIST: I bear witness that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God! Some days ago--when he came to the River Jordan, to be baptized of me--we saw the heavens opened. And the Spirit of God, like a dove, descended upon him. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

--Cf. Mark 1:9-11

John the Baptist and his companions see the Christ Figure and a crowd of people come into view, in the distance. The group stops.

JOHN THE BAPTIST: *with a wave of the hand toward C.F.* Behold, there he is-- the Lamb of God, who will take away the sins of the world.

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Go, both of you, and follow him, for he has the words of eternal life!

Young John and Andrew hesitate and then step away from John the Baptist. John the Baptist changes his tone and begins talking to himself.

The time has come when he must increase and I must decrease. And, so, my joy is complete.

John the Baptist slips away, while his companions hurry on toward the Christ Figure and the crowd. There is no break between Scenes 3 and 4.

Scene 4

At a roadside not far from the Jordan River. A crowd of some 15 people has gathered around the Christ Figure as he heals the sick. A badly stooped man with a palsied hand that trembles constantly is in the forefront, on the left. Near him is a woman with her head bandaged. On the right forefront is a frail wisp of a woman who is able to stand only because her two young daughters stand on either side and support her. Her hands and arms are wrapped in conspicuous white bandages. Some distance from the crowd sits a blind beggar, accompanied by his wife. Each time anyone passes by going toward the crowd both call out for alms.

Young John and Andrew are in such a hurry and so intent on reaching the Christ Figure that at first, they do not notice the beggar.

BLIND BEGGAR: *as he hears Andrew and John approach* Alms for the blind!

Give alms to the blind!

Young John and Andrew pause. John tosses a coin to the beggar.

BEGGAR'S WIFE: *shaking her finger at Andrew* You, too, rich man! Give a pittance to this poor beggar!

BEGGAR: *without enthusiasm* Have mercy on the blind.

ANDREW: *tossing a coin* Oh, I'm sorry! We're in such a hurry I didn't notice you.

Young John and Andrew hurry on the find a place at the edge of the crowd.

Spotlight remains with beggars.

Immediately following Young John and Andrew comes a large man carrying his crippled son in his arms. The boy holds a crutch in his hands. The father drops a coin into the beggar's cup and hurries on.

BEGGAR: *to his wife* Where do you suppose these people are going in such a hurry?

WIFE: *impatiently* How would I know?

BEGGAR: Well, there seems to be a lot of people passing by here this morning. And I just wondered where they're all going.

WIFE: You quit wondering, and concentrate on looking dejected! Slump down some! The more pitiful you look, the more strangers will give. I've told you that a thousand times!

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BEGGAR: Yes, I know. *cups hand behind one ear* It seems to me I can hear people talking--way down the road somewhere.

WIFE: *shading her eyes with one hand and looking toward crowd.* Well, there is a crowd of people gathering--farther down the road.

BEGGAR: Let's go where the crowd is!

WIFE: No. We'll stay right here. Plenty of people come by here every day. It's a good spot.

glances in opposite direction from crowd and sees four men approaching with a sick person on a stretcher

Ah, here comes four men carrying a fellow on a litter. pauses Hm-mm-m, he looks half dead.

BEGGAR: Let's ask 'em where they're taking him!

WIFE: Simpleton! You're here to ask for money! Not where four men are taking some poor wretch. Start begging!

BEGGAR: *with resignation* Alms for the blind! Give alms to the blind.

WIFE: *approaching men with litter* Give a pittance to the poor blind man! *heightens pitch of voice to sound desperate* For fourteen long years, he doesn't know day from night!

BEGGAR: Alms for the blind. Give alms to the blind. *holds out cup*

Men ease stretcher to the ground. Patient groans and moans. Each of four men gives a coin. Wife quickly stuffs coins into her moneybag.

PATIENT: *with much effort* Are we there? *tries to raise up, falls back.*

STRETCHER SPOKESMAN: No, Simon, but we're almost there. We just stopped to give a few mites to a blind man.

Men pick up patient and go on toward the crowd. Beggar and Wife remain behind. Spotlight follows the stretcher bearers. The Christ Figure is blessing an old woman kneeling at his feet.

CHRIST FIGURE: placing his hand on old woman's head Daughter, thy faith has made thee whole. Go in peace.

OLD WOMAN: Master, thank you! Thank you! *rises and moves to background* Father with crippled boy in his arms moves to C.F. Little Boy is wide-eyed, holds on to his crutch, and looks intently at C.F.

FATHER: Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy on my son! Heal him!

CHRIST FIGURE: *moving closer to two* What is wrong with your son?

FATHER: It's his leg. And foot. See? *starts unwrapping boy's foot.* He was born this way. His left foot is all right. But the other one is withered.

CHRIST FIGURE: *taking bandage from father* Yes, I see. *continues unwinding cloth.* Do you believe I have the power to make your child well?

FATHER: Yes, Master! I believe you come from God. *hesitates* I-- I-- I know you can heal my son!

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CHRIST FIGURE: *smiling at boy and holding his lame foot in both hands* Little

Boy, do you think I can make your lame foot into a good foot?

LITTLE BOY: Sir, if my father says you can do it, you can do it!

CHRIST FIGURE: *continuing to hold boy's foot* Ah, my child, it is my Father in Heaven who has given me all power.

looks up, gently rubs foot, and prays

Father, glorify your name through this little boy.

takes crutch, helps child to slide from his father's arms to the ground

You won't need this crutch anymore.

BOY: *beginning to walk about slowly at first; and then he begins to run* Look, Father! I can walk! I can run!

FATHER: *kneeling before C.F.* My Lord, how we do thank you!

CHRIST FIGURE: Go in peace.

Crowd murmurs its astonishment and approval of the miracle, with all individuals speaking at once, as follows:

Frail Woman: Some say he's a carpenter from Nazareth. I say he's from heaven!

1st Daughter: Such a miracle!

2nd Daughter: Mother, I know he can heal you!

Stooped Man: Surely God has visited us this day!

Old Man: This is a sign from heaven! He's the Messiah!

Others: He has the power of God! Never have we seen such as this!

YOUNG JOHN: It's true! He is the Messiah!

ANDREW: Let's do follow him! I can't wait to tell my brother we've found the Christ!

Father with Young Boy lingers on fringe of crowd. Others move to allow Stretcher Bearers to bring litter patient to C.F.

STRETCHER SPOKESMAN: Master, we heard that you go about teaching and doing good and healing all manner of diseases. So we brought our friend.

2nd STRETCHER BEARER: *points to patient* Simon, here, has been afflicted a long time. Please help him.

3rd BEARER: None of the physicians can do him any good.

4th BEARER: Not even the physicians in Jerusalem. Simon went down to Jerusalem three times. But they didn't help him a bit.

SPOKESMAN: *to C.F.* Please heal him, if it's possible.

CHRIST FIGURE. With God, all things are possible *takes Simon by the hand* Simon, rise, take up your bed and walk.

Crowd reaction as Simon gets up is even louder than when the boy was healed. There is much confusion and milling about as all talk at once. Daughters get their

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mother to C.F. after he has spoken again to Simon. Exclamations of various individuals in crowd--to be said all at once--are as follows:

Frail Woman: Now I know he can make me well!

1st Daughter: Let our mother be next!

Stooped Man: God is in our midst! Such a miracle!

S. Spokesman: Simon, you're well! Master, how we thank you!

2nd Stretcher Bearer: Look at Simon!

3rd Bearer: *to his friends* Oh, aren't you glad we brought Simon to Jesus!

4th Bearer: Jesus is a great physician! God is with him!

OLD MAN: *as tumult subsides* once I was young, and now I am old, but never have I seen the power of God in this fashion.

SIMON: *holding the folded stretcher in his arms* Lord, let me be one of your followers and go with you everywhere.

CHRIST FIGURE: Simon, go back to your home. And there, tell what great things God has done for you.

SIMON: Yes, Lord! I will! I'll tell everybody!

Crowd again closes in around C. F. and talking gradually subsides. Father and Little Boy leave, and spotlight follows them back to Blind Beggar and his wife. They stop to talk to the beggar.

BLIND BEGGAR: *when he hears father and boy approaching* Alms for the blind! Give alms to the blind!

WIFE: Be quiet! This man gave you two farthings less than an hour *to herself* Hmm-mm-m, that child looks different, some how or other. I would have sworn he was crippled.

BOY: *hurrying to beggar, taps him on shoulder* Blind Man, go get Jesus to fix your eyes, like he fixed my foot!

BEGGAR: Child? You sound like a child. *reaches out to touch boy* Yes, you're a child. What did you say?

LITTLE BOY: Jesus fixed my foot! He could fix your eyes!

BEGGAR: *appealing to wife or father* What's the child talking about?

WIFE: *angrily, to Father* Man, is this some sort of a joke? Or maybe a lie? Tell this-- This-- This son of yours, I guess, that he ought not to be saying such things to a poor blind man!

FATHER: Ma'am, he meant no harm! Besides, it's true. Jesus of Nazareth is up the road there, performing many miracles! He healed my son's withered foot. He can make the blind to see!

BEGGAR: *excitedly* Let's go to him!

WIFE: *still antagonistic* No! We're not going anywhere. *turns to Father* I don't believe a word of what you're saying. My husband's been blind for fourteen years! He will go to his grave blind! Nobody can change that.

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BEGGAR: *pleading tone* Maybe the miracle man could help me! *turns to Father*
What'd you say his name is?

FATHER: He's Jesus of Nazareth. Some people call him "the Son of David." He--
stops abruptly as C.F. and crowd start moving toward them Why, he's coming
this way! The whole crowd is coming!

BEGGAR: Then I'll ask him! I'll call out to him as he passes by!

WIFE: *curtly* You'll do no such thing! You'll beg for alms. Get started right now!
Crowd comes closer. Wife runs to meet them.

WIFE: *trotting back and forth in front of crowd* Have pity on the blind! Give alms!

BEGGAR: *calling out loudly* Son of David! Have mercy on me!

Wife runs back to bang husband on the head because he is not begging.

WIFE: *swatting husband with moneybag* You fool! Beg for alms!

BEGGAR: *loudly, as he tries to protect his head with his arms* Jesus! Son of
David! Heal me! Put light in my eyes!

WIFE: *gives husband final bang* You are out of your mind! *runs back toward*
crowd Alms for the blind! Give alms! Give a mite! Give a farthing! Give
anything! *goes from person to person, holding out her open bag*

BEGGAR: *crying out* Jesus, Son of David, where are you? Have mercy!

Christ Figure comes to Beggar. Wife stays with crowd.

CHRIST FIGURE: *calmly* You are Keilah. And you're blind.

BEGGAR: *eagerly* Yes, Sir. I have to beg! And I don't like to beg!

CHRIST FIGURE: I'm sorry you have to beg.

BEGGAR: Sir, a man just told me that there's a wonderful man called Jesus who
can make the blind to see! And that he's here in the crowd! Do you know which
one he is?

CHRIST FIGURE: Yes, Keilah. I am Jesus. Stand up.

Beggar scrambles to his feet, with assistance of C.F. The C.F. then places the tips
of his fingers on the beggar's closed eyes and prays. Wife quietly creeps up to
watch.

CHRIST FIGURE: *looking up and praying* Father, you have sent me into the
world to be the Light of the World, the true Light.

Give this man back his eyes so that he may see.

Let him see, and let him know--let all men know--that he who follows me shall
not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life!

--Cf. John 8:12; 1:9

C.F. lets his hands fall to his sides and again looks at Beggar. Beggar opens his
eyes.

BEGGAR: *virtually screaming* I can see! I can see! *to C.F.* I can see you! *looks*
around at crowd I can see everybody! All praises to God!

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Beggar falls down before C.F. in kneeling position. Wife bows herself down in front of C.F.

WIFE: *contritely* My Lord! And my God!

BEGGAR: Master, what can we do? Let us go with you! Let us be your servants! Let us serve you day and night!

CHRIST FIGURE: Keilah, if any man would serve me, let him follow me. Yea, if any man serves me, him will my Father honor. *Cf. John 12:26*
steps away from Beggar and Wife and speaks to Crowd

Come, let us all go into the next village.

Entire group follows C.F. off stage.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Introduction: Apostle John, Polycarp and Roman Soldier Atticus are still in the garden of John's home in Ephesus, as in Act I. John is still dictating as Polycarp writes. Atticus has become much interested in John's dictation. He still has John chained to him. As ACT II opens, Polycarp is taking out a fresh roll of paper.

ATTICUS: *with genuine interest* Say, Old Man, those things you're telling Mister Polycarp to write down are plain interesting! I thought I'd be bored to death, but I'm not.

JOHN: I'm glad you're listening.

ATTICUS: This Jesus of Nazareth was some guy! Was there always a crowd of people following him around?

JOHN: Much of the time, yes. But not always. There were twelve of us disciples who went with him on most of his journeys. And he had other dear friends--like Lazarus of Bethany and his two sisters.

The older sister was named Martha. I can remember her because she was always bustling about, cooking and fixing. But the younger one, Mary, was always sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to every word he said.

Jesus has secret followers too, like Nicodemus.

I remember one time my brother James and I were with Jesus in the home of Lazarus. It was close to festival time. Jesus always stayed in Bethany during Passover--not in Jerusalem, for it was too crowded in the city. Lazarus brought Nicodemus home with him that night, and-- *voice trails off*

Lights come up for Scene I of ACT II

Scene 1: It is dusk at the home of Lazarus in Bethany. The Christ Figure and disciples James and Young John are seated at a small table on right stage. Mary sits on the floor at the feet of Jesus, listening to him. As the action gets underway, Martha bustles in and out, placing much food on a larger table on left stage.

MARTHA: *calling from behind stage* Ma-ry! I need you, to help me!

MARY: *calling back, without moving* Coming, Martha! In just a minute.

YOUNG JOHN: Mary, you should have been in Jerusalem this morning and heard Jesus teaching!

MARY: to C.F. Were you at the temple?

CHRIST FIGURE: Yes. And, as usual, many people came.

JAMES: There was a huge crowd!

MARY: Master, what did you teach today?

CHRIST FIGURE: I tried to make the people realize that I am like a good shepherd who will give his life for his sheep.

I said this to the crowd: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

"My Father, which gave them to me, is greater than all.... I and my Father are one."

See John 10:11, 27-30

changes tone to simple conversation

When I said those things, some believed on me. But some wanted to stone me for saying I am the Son of God!

MARY: *astonished* Stone You? Why, I never heard of such a thing! They must have--

CHRIST FIGURE: Mary, my child, it is just as the prophets foretold. People watch my miracles and listen as I teach. But they have eyes that don't see, ears that don't hear.

Martha hurries in, hands on hips, much exasperated that Mary is not helping her with the supper preparations.

MARTHA: *to Mary, quite firmly* Sister, you've just got to come help me! Lazarus will be here any minute, and I want the supper to be on the table!

turns to C.F.

Master, I suppose I'll have to get you to send Mary in to help me!

CHRIST FIGURE: *gently* Ah, Martha, don't be troubled over so much serving.

MARTHA: I'm not troubled. It's just that all Mary wants to do is sit at your feet and learn about the kingdom of God! That's fine, but...

CHRIST FIGURE: *patiently* Martha, Martha. I believe Mary has chosen the better part. Wouldn't you agree that we should be more concerned about "the Bread of Life" that God has sent than we are about the bread on the table!

The words I speak--they are Spirit. And they are Life.

--John 6:63b

MARTHA: O, Master, I'm sorry! You're right. I've just been so worried about the supper. As you know, Lazarus is bringing his friend Nicodemus to meet you.

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And he's one of the richest, most powerful men in Jerusalem, so-- *there is a noise at the door* This must be Lazarus now! *goes to open door*
Lazarus strides in, followed by Nicodemus. Christ Figure, James and Young John stand for the introduction. Martha and Mary ease themselves out of the room.

LAZARUS: *as he is entering* Come on in, Nicodemus. Jesus is here, already. *going closer to C.F.* Ah, Master, I want you to know my good friend Nicodemus, who is much interested in your teachings.

Nicodemus bows

NICODEMUS: I am honored.

CHRIST FIGURE: It is good that you have come.

LAZARUS: Nicodemus, you already know James and John, here.

NICODEMUS: Ah, yes. Brothers from the Capernaum area, I believe.

YOUNG JOHN: Good evening, Sir. We are from that section.

JAMES: Good evening, Sir.

NICODEMUS: I believe I recall that you're the sons of Zebedee, the master fisherman.

JOHN: We are, Sir.

JAMES: Yes, Sir.

CHRIST FIGURE: *lightly, pleasantly* These two used to be fishermen, but I've made them into "fishers of men." I call them "Sons of Thunder." But I love them just the same!

During this light talk Martha comes and whispers to Lazarus that supper is ready.

NICODEMUS *pleasantly to J. & J.* That speaks something of your personalities?

YOUNG JOHN: I'm afraid so!

JAMES: It does, unfortunately.

NICODEMUS *turns to C.F.* His tone becomes serious.

NICODEMUS: Jesus of Nazareth, I must call you "Rabbi" for I know that you are a teacher come from God!

CHRIST FIGURE: Of this you are certain?

NICODEMUS: No man could do the miracles that you do, except God be with him. I came tonight to hear--

LAZARUS: *interrupting* Excuse me for interrupting, but my sister says that all is in readiness for us to eat. Let's sit down at the supper table.

Lazarus shows four men to their places: C.F. at the left end of the table, Nicodemus to his right, then J. and J. Lazarus sits at the end opposite C.F. Just after they're seated, Martha brings in a big round loaf of bread and places it in front of C.F. and Mary sets a platter of fruit near the center of table. Mary and Martha slip out.

LAZARUS: Master, if you will, bless our bread.

C.F. picks up bread and prays, looking up.

CHRIST FIGURE: Our Father, Lord of the universe, bless this, our daily bread.
Amen.

Breaks bread, passes it to others--not ceremoniously, but informally. All serve themselves, reaching--all at same time--to get food in center of table.

LAZARUS: Nicodemus, you were about to say a few minutes ago when I interrupted you...

NICODEMUS: I was about to say that I came tonight, especially to learn more about the kingdom of God. *turning to C.F.*

Rabbi, I am a ruler of the Jews, a member of the powerful Sanhedrin. But still I do not know how to enter the kingdom of God! And I so much wish to know.

CHRIST FIGURE: Nicodemus, to see the kingdom of God, a man must be born again.

NICODEMUS: *rather shocked* Born again? Rabbi! What're you saying? How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

CHRIST FIGURE: Truly, truly, I say unto you, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

NICODEMUS: This-- This-- This comes as something of a surprise to me. I don't quite understand it.

CHRIST FIGURE: Don't be so amazed when I say to you that you must be born of the Spirit of God.

Think of the wind. The wind blows where it will, and you hear the sound thereof. But you can't tell from whence it comes or where it goes.

So it is with God's Spirit, and every one that is born of the Spirit.

See John 3:3-8

NICODEMUS: I believe I'm beginning to understand.

CHRIST FIGURE: Nicodemus, I speak to you of heavenly things. I came down from heaven as the Son of God and the Son of Man. Those who believe in me shall have eternal life.

NICODEMUS: *marveling* Eternal life! Ah, Rabbi! *leans closer, to hear more*

CHRIST FIGURE: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!

John 3:16

CURTAIN

Spotlight returns to John, Polycarp and Atticus.

ATTICUS: *jumping up and speaking with much excitement* In all my days I've never heard anything like this! Eternal life? I'd like to have eternal life!

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turns to J. and P.

Keep writing! Keep writing! I want to hear more!

Linus comes striding in, talking loudly as he enters.

LINUS: Here I am, Atticus! Ready to relieve you. Sorry to be a little late.

ATTICUS: *displeased that Linus has interrupted what he is hearing* Late? I hadn't noticed. *steps closer to Linus and speaks under his breath*

Linus, if you don't mind, I'll just stay with the old man. You go ahead and do whatever you want to and I'll guard him. When it's time to leave, you can come back and help me get him down to the ship.

LINUS: *rather bewildered* What's come over you?

ATTICUS: Oh, nothing. Nothing. *pauses*

LINUS: Yeah?

ATTICUS: Linus, I may as well tell you the truth. The old man is dictating some stuff about this Jesus the Christ. And this other fellow, Polycarp, is writing it all down.

LINUS: So?

ATTICUS: I want to hear what happens next! It's fascinating!

LINUS: Atticus, sometimes I wonder about you! But have it your way. I'll be glad to spend the afternoon in town.

turns to leave, pauses at gate and calls back

I'll let you know how many pretty girls I see! *exits*

Atticus turns back to John and Polycarp.

POLYCARP: *enthusiastically* Once you told me about the time Jesus and you twelve disciples went through Samaria. And you stopped at Jacob's well. Do you want to put that journey in the record?

JOHN: Yes. Not because of the trip through Samaria but because of what Jesus taught the woman at the well. And, Polycarp, don't let me forget to tell the whole story of how Lazarus died.

Now, back to the well-- Jacob's well is near the city of Sy-char. We stopped there to rest, and Jesus stayed at the well while the rest of us walked into Sy-char to buy something to eat. It was about the sixth hour...

Voice trails off. Lights come up on Scene 2

Scene 2. Woman at the Well

At Jacob's Well, near the city of Sy-char in Samaria. The Christ Figure is seated beside the well, resting and waiting for his disciples to return from the city, where they've gone to buy food. A gaudily dressed Samaritan woman carrying a water jar comes sauntering up to the well to draw water. When the woman sees the C.F., she hesitates. Then, she goes to the well, lowers her jar, and draws up water. She

pretends to ignore the C.F. until he speaks to her. Players would do well to see John 4:1-45.

CHRIST FIGURE: Woman of Samaria, please give me a drink of water.

WOMAN: *gasps, in surprise* Why-- Uh-- Uh-- Sure! I'll pour you some water! *takes small earthen cup, from a pouch tied to her waist, pours water and hands it to C.F., and, keeps talking.*

You surprise me! You're a Jew. And Jews don't have any dealings with us Samaritans.

CHRIST FIGURE: *accepting the cup* Thank you.

WOMAN: *rattling on, half to C.F., half to herself* This is really something! Wait 'till I tell my friends in town that a real live Jew spoke to me. Me, a woman of Samaria! Even asked for a drink of water! They won't believe it!

CHRIST FIGURE: Ah, Woman, if you knew the gift of God, and who it is asking you for water from Jacob's well, you would have asked me for a drink. And I would have given you living water.

WOMAN: Why, Sir, you don't have anything to draw water with! And this well's deep. Where're you going to get this living water?

Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well? He dug the well, and drank of it himself. And his children. And his cattle. Are you greater than Jacob?

CHRIST FIGURE: Whosoever drinks of this water lifts cup slightly shall thirst again. But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

WOMAN: *with enthusiasm* Oh, I'd like to have some of that water if I wouldn't ever get thirsty again! And just think! I wouldn't have to walk way out here every day to draw water. That would be wonderful! So, please, Sir, give me this water.

CHRIST FIGURE: Go and call your husband to come.

WOMAN: *hesitating* Uh-- Uh-- I have no husband.

CHRIST FIGURE: You've said it very well: "I have no husband." You have had five husbands. And the man you now have is not your husband. You've spoken truly.

WOMAN: *gasps, somewhat set back* Sir, I see that you must be a prophet!

If you are, tell me this: Where should we worship? We Samaritans go to the mountain of Ger-i-zim. You Jews go to the temple in Jerusalem. So, where should we worship?

CHRIST FIGURE: In the mountain? In Jerusalem? Woman, the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to

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worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

WOMAN: I know that one day the Messiah, who is called Christ, will come. And when he comes, he will tell us all things.

CHRIST FIGURE: I, who speak to you, am the Messiah.

WOMAN: *gasps* The MESSIAH! *looks at C.F. in utter amazement, hesitates a few seconds.* I'll go tell everybody! I'll tell everybody in Sy-char! I'll tell 'em I've found the MESSIAH! *runs off, forgetting her water jar*

Woman has to dodge around Young John, James, and Andrew, who are arriving with food. They ignore her. C.F. remains seated, does not look up. Disciples begin talking even before they get close to the well.

YOUNG JOHN: Master, Simon and Thomas and the others will be along in a minute. They said for us to go ahead and eat.

Men begin spreading out bread, meat, cheese, grapes on edge of well. Christ Figure shows no interest in food. He is almost oblivious to the disciples.

ANDREW: spreading out grapes These grapes sure look good. The old man who sold 'em to me claimed he picked 'em this morning.

JAMES: The meat is what looks good to me. And am I ever hungry! There's nothing better than lamb, cooked just right. Master? *C.F. does not answer. James steps closer to his companions and speaks under his breath*

Does the Master look sort of strange to you?

YOUNG JOHN: in low tones Well, yes, he does. And he hasn't said a word since we got back. raises voice Master, come on. Let's eat. We bought a lot of real good meat.

CHRIST FIGURE: I have had meat to eat that you know not of.

Disciples look from one to another, in surprise.

YOUNG JOHN: *aside, to others* Do you suppose somebody brought him something to eat while we were gone?

CHRIST FIGURE: My meat is to do the will of the Father who sent me, and to finish his work.

Crowd of Samaritans come hurrying in. Woman of Samaria is in forefront.

WOMAN: *pointing to C.F.* There he is! The one sitting down. He's the Messiah! Like I told you.

SAMARITAN SPOKESMAN: *coming to C.F.* Sir, we're citizens of Sy-char, and this woman here has convinced us that you're the Messiah, the Christ, sent from God!

CHRIST FIGURE: I am.

SPOKESMAN: We want you to come to our city. And stay. As long as you will.

CHRIST FIGURE: I will come. And I will stay in your city two days.

SPOKESMAN: Oh, we're glad!

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A murmur of approval sweeps through crowd. Comment of OLD MAN is loud enough for audience to hear. C.F. gets up.

OLD MAN: My, my, today God is smiling on us! Blessing us!

SPOKESMAN: *to C.F.* Come, let's be on our way.

Christ Figure walks with Spokesman. Others follow. All leave, the disciples last. As they quickly gather up the food, they talk among themselves.

YOUNG JOHN: This is incredible--the Master going to teach the Samaritans!

ANDREW: Come to think of it, he has been saying that God sent him to be the Saviour of the world.

JAMES: Yeah.

YOUNG JOHN: *contemplative tone* Yeah, he has. The world. Everybody. Not just us Jews.

Three hurry to catch up with crowd.

End of Scene and ACT II

Note: This time, there is no break by going back to John, Polycarp, and Atticus. The lights simply come up on the set depicting the place where Lazarus lies dying.

ACT III, Scene 1

Scene 1: In the garden, at the home of Lazarus and Mary and Martha in Bethany. One morning, some weeks, or months, before the Christ was crucified. Lazarus lies on a couch, gravely ill. Two servant girls fan him, constantly. Martha bathes his forehead with wet towels which she occasionally dips into a basin of cool water. Martha paces the floor, worrying, praying, weeping, trying to decide what's to be done to save Lazarus.

MARTHA: *pacing, and talking to herself* Oh, me! What to do. What to do. *looks up to utter prayer* Lord, don't let our brother Lazarus die! *turns to Mary* Mary, do you think his fever is down any this morning?

MARY: *laying her hand on Lazarus' brow* No, Martha. I'm afraid not. sadly He's burning up with fever. *rinses towel in basin of water, folds it and puts it back on her brother's forehead*

Two Neighbor Women come in quietly.

FIRST NEIGHBOR: *to Mary* Is he any better this morning?

MARY: *shaking her head and sobbing* He seems worse instead of better.

SECOND NEIGHBOR: Martha, we've come to help. What can we do?

MARTHA: *wringing her hands* I don't know what to do. But we've got to do something!

We can't just sit here and let Lazarus die. gets rather hysterical

He's not old enough to die!

He doesn't deserve to die! *Sobs*

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He must not die! *sobs again, wipes her eyes*

MARY: *excitedly, as if the idea has just come to her* Martha, let's send for Jesus! He can make blind people see and lame people walk! He can even cleanse lepers! He could keep Lazarus from dying!

1ST NEIGHBOR: Do send for him!

2ND NEIGHBOR: He can work miracles!

MARTHA: I had thought of sending for Jesus. The only problem is: where is he? Several weeks ago, we had word that he was way up beyond Jordan. He may still be up there--two days journey from here. Or, he could be over in Galilee now.

MARY: Let's try to find him. Let's send a messenger--a fast messenger.

MARTHA: *drying her eyes and speaking in calm, resolute tone* All right. I'll go see to it. *hurries out of room*

CURTAIN

End of Scene 1

Scene 2 Two days later. Along a road, not far from the River Jordan. The Christ Figure and his twelve disciples are walking along, when they are overtaken by a messenger sent from Bethany. The Messenger begins calling out, back stage, and is quite out of breath when he catches up with the group.

MESSENGER: *still back stage and calling as if far away* Jesus of Nazareth! Jesus of Nazareth!

YOUNG JOHN: *motioning C.F. and others to halt* Master, I think I hear somebody calling you.

All pause

JAMES: I didn't hear anything.

ANDREW: Me neither.

MESSENGER: *still off stage, calling a bit more loudly than before* Jesus of Nazareth! Wait up! Wait!

CHRIST FIGURE: Somebody is calling.

All turn around. Messenger runs to them.

MESSENGER: *panting* Which one of you is called Jesus?

CHRIST FIGURE: I'm Jesus of Nazareth.

MESSENGER: *still hardly able to catch his breath* Sir, I'm sure glad I finally found you! Your friend Lazarus is bad sick! About to die! His sisters sent me and they said please come! Quick as you can!

Young John hands Messenger flask of water. He takes big gulps.

CHRIST FIGURE: I'm sorry to hear about Lazarus. *steps aside; several disciples cluster around him*

JAMES: This is Lazarus of Bethany?

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MESSENGER: *still holding flask* That's the one. I just hope the poor man's not already dead. It took me two whole days to get here. *gulps more water*

Thanks very much. *hands flask back to Young John*

Well, I've got to get going. Coming up here, I ran nearly every step of the way. But going back, I'm taking it easy!

YOUNG JOHN: Yeah, you do that. Take it easy.

MESSENGER: I'll see you.

Messenger waves, turns and trots off stage, going back the same way he came on. Young John and James join C.F. and others.

YOUNG JOHN: Master, I guess we'll be leaving for Bethany, right away?

CHRIST FIGURE. No, John. We will wait. Two days.

All disciples gasp, astonished.

ALL: *murmuring and mumbling* Two days?

YOUNG JOHN: *speaking fast and excitedly* Master! Wait two days? The-- The-- The messenger said Lazarus is about to die! And he's our friend! I've heard you say, yourself, that he's one of your best friends!

CHRIST FIGURE: Our friend Lazarus sleeps. And I will awaken him.

YOUNG JOHN: Oh, well then, that's all right.

All others murmur their agreement.

Sleep's good for sick people.

CHRIST FIGURE: No, John, not that kind of sleep. Lazarus is dead.

turns to others

And I'm glad, for your sakes, that I was not there. Because, I want you to believe.

pauses

When we reach Bethany, Lazarus will have been in the grave four days already. *Disciples quietly follow C.F. off stage. Young John and James linger behind and whisper to each other.*

JAMES: John, what do you think the Master wants us to believe?

JOHN: I don't know, any more than you do. I don't know what he's talking about.

But I sure hate it about Lazarus. He was a good man.

Two hurry to catch up with others

END OF SCENE 2

Scene 3: In Bethany, at the home of Lazarus, four days after his burial. Numerous neighbors and friends from Jerusalem have gathered to comfort the sisters over the death of Lazarus. Martha and Mary sit near each other. Three Jerusalem Friends sit nearby. In the corner three men from Jerusalem stand talking, their backs to the women. The same two servant girls who fanned Lazarus now fan the sisters and

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their guests. Two Bethany Neighbors enter, carrying large bowl of steaming soup, other food.

1ST NEIGHBOR: *placing soup on table near sisters* Martha, we've fixed you and Mary some hot soup. Please try to take a little of it.

2ND NEIGHBOR: And here's fresh barley bread. You must try to eat a little something, to keep your strength up.

1ST JERUSALEM FRIEND: *getting up to help neighbors.* Your brother has been gone four days and you've not eaten in four days!

MARTHA: *when cup of soup is offered to her* I'm sorry, but I can't eat. I just can't. But I do thank you. You've all been so kind to us.

MARY: *looking at her cup of soup and shaking her head* I can't eat either. But we do appreciate all you've done for us.

2ND JERUSALEM FRIEND: We understand. And we know your hearts are broken. *A servant enters, whispers to Martha. She gets up, abruptly, and leaves without saying anything. Servant follows her out. At the doorway, one of the men from Jerusalem places his hand on the servant's shoulder to speak to him.*

MAN FROM JERUSALEM: *quietly, to servant* What's happened?

SERVANT: Sir, Jesus of Nazareth is coming. He's on the outskirts of Bethany now.

Man releases servant's arm; he goes on. Man turns to his companions, and they converse in low tones. Women in the room remain unaware that C.F. has almost reached Bethany. They continue their talk.

3RD JERUSALEM FRIEND: *picking up a bouquet of flowers to show to Mary* Mary, did you notice these lovely flowers the wife of the honorable Nicodemus sent?

MARY: *wiping away tears* No, I'm sorry, but I hadn't noticed them. When tears are in your eyes, it's hard to see even beautiful things!

Lights go out. Players remain in place. Spotlight picks up Martha as she and servant arrive on the outskirts of Bethany, where the Christ Figure and the disciples are walking.

Scene 4: A few minutes later. On the outskirts of Bethany. The Christ Figure and his disciples have been traveling for two days and are enroute to the home of Martha and Mary. Martha hurries to the group. The servant trails behind. The C.F. steps forward to greet Martha. She kneels at his feet.

MARTHA: *much distraught* Master! Master! If you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died!

CHRIST FIGURE: Yes, Martha, I know. *helps her to her feet*

MARTHA: Oh, if you had only been here!

CHRIST FIGURE: Don't grieve.

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MARTHA: I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, God will grant to you.

CHRIST FIGURE: Your brother shall rise again. You shall see the glory of God.

MARTHA: Lord, I know he will rise again--in the resurrection on the last day.

CHRIST FIGURE: Martha, I am the resurrection, and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. *Pauses*

Do you believe this, Martha? If you believe, you shall see the glory of God.

MARTHA: Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.

All disciples murmur their agreement and move slightly closer in.

MARTHA: Oh, Master, I must run and tell Mary that you're here!

CHRIST FIGURE: Yes, I want to talk to Mary.

Spotlight follows Martha back to Scene 3 set, where Mary still sits with friends.

MARTHA: *whispering to Mary* Mary, Jesus is here! And he wants to talk to you!

MARY: *getting up quickly* I'm glad!

Martha and Mary hurry out.

1st JERUSALEM FRIEND: Oh, those poor sisters! They must be going to their brother's tomb again.

MAN FROM JERUSALEM: We'd better all follow them, and see what we can do. *Entire group leaves hurriedly. Servant girls put down their fans and accompany the neighbors and friends off stage. These players should arrive at the hillside cave where Lazarus is buried--Scene 5--shortly after the Christ Figure, Martha and Mary, and the disciples arrive.*

Continuation of Scene 4: Spotlight picks up Mary and Martha and Servant as they reach the outskirts of Bethany where the Christ Figure and disciples are waiting. Mary runs forward and kneels, weeping, at feet of C.F. He steps forward to meet her.

MARY: *sobbing* Lord-- If-- If-- If you had been here, Lazarus wouldn't have died!

CHRIST FIGURE: Yes, Mary, I know. *helps Mary to stand* And I know it's a sad time for you. Sad for all of us. *wipes own eyes* But sadness shall be turned to joy!

Where did you lay him? *wipes eyes again, for this is the occasion--as recorded in the Bible--that "Jesus wept."*

JERUSALEM FRIEND: Come, and we'll show you. The grave's in a cave. And we rolled a big stone across the door. It's not far from here.

Entire group walks slowly to set where tomb is.

END OF Scenes 3 & 4

Scene 5

A few minutes later. At the door of the cave where Lazarus is buried. As the Christ Figure, the sisters, the disciples and the Servant and Man from Jerusalem arrive, the Bethany Neighbors and Jerusalem Friends and two Servant Girls gather there also. The C.F., Martha and Mary, and Young John and James, and the Servant and Man from Jerusalem assemble close to the cave entrance.

MAN FROM JERUSALEM: *to C.F.* Master, Lazarus is buried here.

CHRIST FIGURE: *to Man from Jerusalem and Servant* Roll away the stone. *Young John, James, Man from Jerusalem and Servant begin to try to move the stone. Entire crowd gasps in surprise. All murmur that this should not be done, shake their heads. Martha runs to C.F.*

MARTHA: *much distraught* No, Lord! No! You mustn't open the grave! Lazarus has been dead four days! His body-- It will be-- You-- Lord--

CHRIST FIGURE: *putting his arm around Martha's shoulders* Martha, don't you remember? Don't you remember I told you that if you would believe, you should see the glory of God!

MARTHA: *nodding her head* Yes-- Yes, Lord. I remember what you said. *pauses* I do believe.

C.F. leaves Martha; Mary comes to her side, and Martha puts her arm around Mary. Christ Figure walks closer to cave and motions for men to move the stone.

CHRIST FIGURE: Roll it away.

Men push stone away from the door of the cave, step back. Christ Figure prays, his eyes lifted up. A hush comes over the crowd.

CHRIST FIGURE: *praying* Father, I thank you that you've already heard my prayer for Lazarus. You hear me always.

Now, I pray again, so that all these people who stand by may BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE SENT ME.

Father, give life to Lazarus!

Christ Figure moves closer to door of cave and calls out, loudly

Lazarus, come forth! *steps back, waits*

Lazarus walks out, bound hand and foot with graveclothes and with a napkin bound about his face. All onlookers gasp, loudly, and show utter amazement.

CHRIST FIGURE: *to Young John and James* Loosen the graveclothes.

Martha and Mary run to C.F., bow down. Mary clasps her arms around feet of C.F. Lazarus--his face and hands free--hurries to kneel before the Christ. C.F. lays his hand on Lazarus' shoulder.

LAZARUS: *looking up at C.F.* Lord, my Lord, you are Life! Eternal Life!

CURTAIN

END OF ACT III

Begin ACT IV

Introduction: Lights come up on set where Apostle John, Polycarp, and Roman soldier Atticus are seated in John's garden. Polycarp is rolling up the scroll on which he has been writing. John is handing him a fresh scroll. Atticus is much excited over what he has just heard.

ATTICUS: What you two are writing down is incredible! It's-- I-- Old Man, were you there and actually saw this Jesus raise that man from the dead?

JOHN: Yes, Soldier, I saw the Christ bring Lazarus back to life!

ATTICUS: Then, what happened? What did this Jesus do next?

JOHN: Well some weeks, or months, after that there was a conspiracy among the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem to have Jesus put to death.

We twelve disciples heard about it. Jesus knew about it. But when festival time came again, he insisted on going to Jerusalem to observe the Passover-- even though we begged him not to go.

For that last Passover supper with him we met in a large upper room. I remember I was sitting next to the Master-- I always sat by him when I could, to hear every word he said. He loved all twelve of us, but he loved me more than the others, I think. Possibly because I was the youngest.

My brother James was sitting next to me. Judas Iscariot, the one who was to betray him, was on the Master's right hand. Next to him was Andrew. Simon Peter was way down at the end. And I forget just where the others sat.

But, anyway, all twelve of us were there.

And what an evening that was! Jesus even washed our feet to teach us a lesson in humility. He talked to us a long time. Yet, we noticed that as the evening progressed, the Master became unusually quiet, even sad. So, I asked him why...

voice trails off. Lights come up on Last Supper set.

Scene 2: (Last Supper)

An upper room in Jerusalem, on the eve of the Crucifixion of the Christ. The Christ Figure and the twelve sit at a long table--as depicted in the famous Leonardo da Vinci painting.

As the lights come up, the scene comes to life. The participants talk among themselves. They eat, each reaching over to dip his bread into common bowls. On the table are bread, meat with broth, green herbs, wine. The first talk that the audience hears plainly is young John's question.

YOUNG JOHN: Master, you seem troubled tonight. And this is a celebration! It's the feast of the Passover! Shouldn't we be joyful?

CHRIST FIGURE: Ah, John, I am troubled in spirit. Exceeding sorrowful.

YOUNG JOHN: But, why, Lord? I know you've been saying "My hour is come.... My hour is come." We don't understand what you mean by that, but we hate to see you so downcast.

CHRIST FIGURE: My hour is at hand. And this is the joyous feast of the deliverance from bondage in Egypt.

We have had the traditional Passover supper. We've eaten the unleavened bread, the lamb, the bitter herbs. We have taken the cups of wine.

I blessed the bread, gave thanks for the wine. You heard me.

Now, I say unto you that my body will be broken like bread. *takes up loaf, breaks it in half, passes it to disciples*

My blood will be poured out like wine. *pours wine from large pitcher into goblet, passes it to disciples*

Little Children, eat the bread. Drink the wine. All of it. It is for you a new testament, a new covenant with God.

I sorrow not because my hour is at hand. I weep within me because one of you shall betray me!

All the disciples, except Judas Iscariot, gasp in dismay and disbelief. There is something of an uproar and confusion as all talk at once. Simon Peter gets up and beckons for Young John to come aside to speak to him. The exclamations of the eleven are as follows:

Young John: Betray you? Never, Lord, never!

Simon Peter: We wouldn't do that, Master! We wouldn't betray you!

Philip: Master, don't say such a thing!

Andrew: Betray you? Oh, no, Lord! Not us!

Judas not Iscariot: The heavens forbid! Master, none of us would betray you!

Thomas: No, Lord! We are your disciples!

Matthew: Never, Master! Never would we do such a thing!

Bartholomew called Nathanael: Betray you? We wouldn't do that!

James son of Alphaeus: We're your twelve chosen ones!

James son of Zebedee: We wouldn't betray you, Lord!

Simon the Canaanite: Betray you? Oh, never that, Lord! We couldn't!

All except Judas Iscariot, John and Simon Peter turn and begin speaking in low undertones to persons seated on either side. John hurries to confer with Peter. Talk among group must be so low that audience can hear the private conversation between the Christ Figure and Judas.

Christ Figure turns to Judas, dips a piece of bread into the bowl of broth and hands it to Judas.--See John 13:26b

JUDAS: *for only C.F. to hear* Master, is it I? *takes bread, or "sop" from C.F., eats it.*

CHRIST FIGURE: *to Judas only* Judas, you have said it. I didn't. Now, what you have to do--do quickly.

Judas gets up quickly and hurries out, moneybag in hand. Spotlight shifts audience attention to Simon Peter and Young John.

YOUNG JOHN: *in stage whisper* What is it, Simon Peter?

PETER: *with hand cupped so that others won't hear* Find out who it is! Ask the Master who's going to betray him! He'll tell you anything!

YOUNG JOHN: *still whispering* All right! I'll sure ask. This is a terrible thing! *As Young John and Simon Peter are returning to their places, the other disciples ask, one by one: "Lord, is it I?"*

YOUNG JOHN: *leaning over to C.F., after the questions end* Who is it, Lord?

CHRIST FIGURE: It is one of the twelve. He has dipped into the dish with me this night. Woe unto that man. Better for him that he had never been born. *changes tone*

Now, Little Children, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you.

In a little while I will go away, and where I go, you cannot come.

SIMON PETER: Lord, where are you going?

CHRIST FIGURE: Where I go, you cannot follow me, now. But you shall follow me, afterwards.

SIMON PETER: Lord, I will follow you anywhere! I would lay down my life for you!

CHRIST FIGURE: Ah, Peter, this night, before the cock crows twice, you will have denied me three times!

SIMON PETER: Master!

YOUNG JOHN: Lord, we would all lay down our lives for you!

CHRIST FIGURE: All of you will deny me this night, for it is written: "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

Murmur of uneasiness sweeps through group

YOUNG JOHN: *in serious, sad tone* Lord, now all our hearts are troubled. You say you're going away. We don't want you to leave us!

CHRIST FIGURE. Let not your hearts be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

And where I go, you know. And the way you know.

THOMAS: No, Lord, we don't know where you're going. So how can we know the way?

CHRIST FIGURE: Thomas, I am the Way. The Truth. And the Life. No man comes to the Father, except by me.

... I go to the Father.... But he will send you a Comforter, the Holy Spirit of truth....

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.

So let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.... Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Christ Figure stands up.

Come, let us go.

CURTAIN

Spotlight directs audience attention back to set where John is dictating to Polycarp. Atticus is absorbed in listening. Polycarp stops writing, picks up empty ink container and gets up.

ATTICUS: *excitedly* Don't stop now! Keep writing! Old Man, Sir, keep talking!

JOHN: I'm not going to stop, but Polycarp's got to go in the house and get some more ink.

Polycarp goes for ink.

ATTICUS: *eagerly* Couldn't you just go ahead and tell me what happened next? Then you can re-tell it when he gets back with the ink.

JOHN: Why, sure, Soldier. That same night--after we had the Last Supper--we all went on over to the Garden. of Gethsemane. And Judas Iscariot betrayed the Christ. He was arrested. Next day, he was sentenced to death. He was crucified.

But he arose! The third day, he arose! We saw him, and-- *Linus comes sauntering in, talking loudly*

LINUS: Time to go! Time to go! The ship sails within the hour! *Linus comes on over to Atticus and John.*

ATTICUS: *displeased* Linus, what're you doing here? And what are you talking about? It's not time to leave!

LINUS: Yes it is!

ATTICUS: That captain told me, plain as day, that he wasn't going to sail till sunset.

LINUS: The good captain has changed his mind. So come on, and let's get the prisoner on board and forget about it. *turns to John* Old Man, have you got your stuff packed?

JOHN: *getting up.* Why, no. I haven't packed anything. I--

ATTICUS. He hasn't had time to get his things together.

LINUS: Well, you'd better get something together. Clothes. A blanket. Whatever you've got. 'Cause, like we told you, that Island of Patmos is nothing but a pile of rocks.

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ATTICUS: *as he unchains John* Old Man, Sir, you stay here with Linus, and I'll go help Mister Polycarp pack your clothes and things. *hurries toward house*

JOHN: *calling after Atticus* Get lots of paper!

LINUS: What you think you'll need the paper for?

JOHN: Soldier, I'll finish writing this book about Jesus the Christ. *picks up scroll*
And, who knows, God may reveal many more things for me to record during this exile.

LINUS: *calling loudly* Atticus, hurry up in there!

Atticus and Polycarp return with several sacks, bundles, and scrolls. All four start moving toward gate. Linus carries the chain. Atticus helps John to walk. Polycarp carries the bundles, but John holds the unfinished scroll.

ATTICUS: *earnestly* Old Man, Sir, I'd give my right arm to hear the rest of what you're going to write.

JOHN: I wish you could hear it.

ATTICUS: Now the things this Jesus said about eternal life, and believing! *pauses*
I-- believe 'em!

JOHN: I'm glad, Soldier. Glad you believe. Jesus the Christ is God's promise--his Word, come down to earth.

God is forever.

Jesus the Christ is forever.

All who believe on him shall have life forever. The old prophet Isaiah said the same thing, in another way:

"The grass withereth, The flower fadeth; But the Word of our God shall stand for ever"

All exit

END OF PLAY