

THE SONS OF THUNDER REMEMBER

A Play for Easter by
Jewell Ellen Smith

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Churches may perform this play without payment; we request that if you do plan to perform it that you e-mail Jewell's older son David at DSmith1204@aol.com, particularly if you have questions or comments. All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene ...and she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.... It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

--Mark 16:9,10; Luke 24:10,11.

THE SCENE

The action of the play takes place in Jerusalem the weekend of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, and in memory, the three years of the Christ's public ministry--about 30 AD to 33 AD.

THE STORY TOLD

When Jesus the Christ was crucified, dead, and buried, his eleven disciples were so fearful for their own lives that they hid from the Jewish authorities in the home of a Jerusalem friend.

Late on Friday afternoon as the disciples mourned and wept, the women who had accompanied them from Galilee to Jerusalem asked James and John to hurry to the market place to buy burial spices so that they could anoint the body of their crucified Lord as soon as the Sabbath day had passed.

Simon Peter volunteered to go for the spices, hoping thus to blot out of his mind how the night before he had denied--three times--that he even knew Jesus of Nazareth. Some of the other disciples also slipped away from the hiding place to buy enough food to last the group for several days.

Left alone, James and John, the brothers whom Jesus had often affectionately called "The Sons of Thunder," talked sadly to each other. They recalled the miracle of Jesus' raising a little girl from the dead, the miracle of the woman with the plague who was healed when she touched the hem of Christ's garment, the parable

of the Good Samaritan, and Peter's great confession that Jesus is "The Christ, the Son of the living God."

Next, the brothers recalled having heard a Roman Centurion tell his soldiers (who were rolling dice to see who would get Jesus' robe) that surely the man from Nazareth whom they had put to death on the cross was "the Son of God."

Before daybreak on the day after the Sabbath, Salome, the mother of James and John, Mary Magdalene and the other women who had prepared the burial spices, rushed into the room where the disciples were sleeping, woke them up, and cried out how only minutes before they had seen the risen Lord. Most of the disciples refused to believe the women, even though Salome described the event in great detail.

That same evening, friends of the eleven, Cleopas and his wife of the village Emmaus, rushed to the hiding place, saying that they had seen the Christ and that he walked and talked with them. The disciples could not believe even this report.

Not until Christ himself stood before them and showed them his wounded hands and feet, and his pierced side, did the disciples realize that their Lord was indeed risen from the grave.

The disciples listened with great joy as the Christ commissioned them to be his witnesses to all nations. He cautioned them not to let doubt or fear arise in their hearts. To them the Lord promised: "Behold, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The Characters (in the order of their appearance):

Nine of the Disciples of Jesus of Nazareth:

Simon; Peter; Philip; Andrew, Simon Peter's brother; Matthew; Nathanael;
Thomas; James the Lesser; Judas (not Iscariot)

Simon the Canaanite

Two Other Disciples: "The Sons of Thunder:" James the son of Zebedee and
Salome, and John, the younger brother of James

Women from Galilee:

Salome, the mother of James and John

Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils

Joanna, Herod's steward's wife

The Other Mary, mother of James the Less

Susanna, a follower of Jesus

Residents of Capernaum, in Galilee:

CHRIST FIGURE

Crowd of People

Jairus, ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum

Woman with the Plague

Servant of Jairus
Six Women who are professional mourners
Madam Moriah, director of the troupe of mourners
Young Daughter of Jairus
Wife of Jairus
Two Friends of Jairus' Family
A Certain Lawyer
Persons Going to Jericho: Man from Jericho, The Levite, First Thief, The Samaritan, Second Thief, The Innkeeper
The Priest
Centurion, a Roman Army Officer
Three Soldiers
Two Angels
Servant Girl
Cleopas, a resident of Emmaus.
Wife of Cleopas
(Note: Obviously, the play is so constructed that a number of players can do two or three roles.)

SCRIPT

ACT I, Scene 1

Scene 1. It is late afternoon in Jerusalem, on the day of the Crucifixion. Nine of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth are together in the home of a friend, hiding from the authorities. They are sad, mournful. Most weep openly. Andrew and Simon Peter are in the forefront, seated at a low table. Andrew holds his head in his hands. Peter keeps capping his hands over his ears, as if to shut out all sound. Now and then he takes down his hands-only to put them back over his ears. The other disciples are clustered together in two or three groups, speaking to each other in muted tones. James and John approach, talking slowly and seriously as they walk through the audience toward their grieving companions.

JAMES: *In mournful tone.* John, I tell you, truly, this is a BLACK day. All is lost!
All is lost!

JOHN: Yes, a very black day. All is lost! The Master is crucified! Dead! Buried!
There is no hope now, James. No hope. No nothing!

JAMES: And we thought Jesus was the Son of God! The Messiah! We thought the Kingdom of God was at hand. I still halfway believe he was the Son of God.

JOHN: I believe it. But it doesn't matter now what we believe. Our Lord is dead.
Dead. Dead. *Wipes his eyes.*

JAMES: I wonder what Simon Peter and the others will say.

JOHN: I don't know, but now that we're here at the hiding place we--

The two stop as they are about to enter the room where Peter and the others are gathered.

Look at Simon Peter! He keeps pounding his ears!

JAMES: I wonder what he's doing that for?

JOHN: He is so stricken with grief he probably doesn't even know what he is doing.

James and John join Peter and Andrew. Peter continues pounding his ears. Andrew gets up, offers a seat to James and John.

ANDREW: Here, James, sit by Peter. You, too, John. Maybe you can comfort him.

JOHN: *In undertone to Andrew* Why does your brother keep covering his ears?

ANDREW: I think he is--

PETER: I'll tell you why. It's to stop that cock from crowing!

JOHN: Stop that cock from crowing? What're you talking about?

PETER: Can't you hear him?

Takes hands down from ears. Offstage there is the sound of a rooster crowing, once. Peter slaps hands back on ears.

Did you hear that?

Andrew shakes his head. Taps his forehead, to infer that Peter's mind is not right.

JOHN: *Putting his hand on Peter's shoulder* No, Simon Peter. We didn't hear a cock crowing. Your grief has made you imagine things. You must get hold of yourself.

PETER: *Pounding his ears* Listen! Listen! Hear him? *Cock crows, off stage, for the third time.* Every time I take my hands off my ears he crows! Andrew, you tell James and John why the cock crows! *Buries his head in his hands, covers head with his cloak.*

JOHN: What is poor Simon Peter thinking?

Andrew draws James and John aside.

ANDREW: It happened last night. You remember as we were having the Passover Supper with the Master, He told us He was going away and that we could not follow Him now, but that afterwards we would follow him?

JOHN: Yes, we heard the Master say that.

ANDREW: Well, you know how my brother, old bragging Peter, is. He said to Jesus, *Changes tone in imitation of Peter:* "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for your sake!"

The Master answered: "Will you lay down your life for my sake? Peter, Peter, I say to you, the cock shall not crow, until you have denied me three times!"

And it happened! Outside the high priest's house! In the courtyard. After the Master was arrested, my brother denied three times that he even knew Jesus of

Nazareth. And just then the high priest's cock began to crow. Since that hour, Simon Peter keeps hearing the cock crow over and over and over!

James and John murmur their regret, sympathy.

JOHN: That's too bad.

JAMES: Perhaps if he could get some sleep, he would--

James is interrupted by the entrance of Salome, Joanna, and Mary Magdalene, who with other women from Galilee are staying downstairs.

JOHN: *Hurrying to Salome* Ah, mother, I'm glad you and the others got here safely. We didn't see you after we talked to Joseph of Arimathea and the Honorable Nicodemus.

SALOME: We followed them to the garden, to see where they would bury our Lord.

MARY MAGDALENE: So we know where His tomb is.

SALOME: John, what I want you and James to do is run to the marketplace for us and buy burial spices.

JAMES: Sure, mother.

SALOME: Do hurry! For, as you know, in less than half an hour the Sabbath will be here and the markets will close.

JOHN: *In reassuring tone.* Of course, Mother. We'll hurry. *Starts to leave.*

JOANNA: *Handing John a purse of coins.* Here, John. Use this, and buy plenty of myrrh and other ointments. As soon as the Sabbath is over, we're going to His tomb and anoint His body.

JOHN: I'm surprised that Joseph of Arimathea and the Honorable Nicodemus didn't have any spices.

JOANNA: Oh, they did! We watched them wrap our Lord's body in fine linen--with at least a hundredweight of spices; but all the women downstairs--you know, the ones who came from Galilee--want to take more spices.

PETER: *Getting up.* I'll go buy the burial ointments. That's the least I can do. Maybe at the marketplace the cock won't crow. *John holds out Joanna's purse to Peter.* Never mind that. *Exits, his hands again over his ears.*

John gives purse back to Joanna as the women also leave.

ANDREW: *To eight disciples in back section of room.* Come, friends let's several of us go and buy bread and other provisions for the Sabbath.

NATHANIEL: We had better lay in enough food for several days. There is no telling when we dare leave for Galilee.

JAMES THE LESSER: You're right, Nathaniel. The chief priests have guards at every gate leading in and out of Jerusalem.

PHILLIP: Matthew and I heard that the priests and elders are going to ask Pontius Pilate to post guards at our Lord's tomb!

MATTHEW: I just hope Judas Iscariot doesn't know where we're all hiding. He could betray us to the priests and elders, and they would send their guards to get us!

THOMAS: If I knew where that Judas was, I would go and--

ANDREW: *With considerable surprise.* Thomas, didn't you know about Judas?

THOMAS: Know what? We haven't seen him, or heard a thing. Where is that devil?

ANDREW: Judas Iscariot hanged himself!

Men gasp, in disbelief.

ALL DISCIPLES *Except Andrew, James, and John:* Hanged himself?

ANDREW: I thought you had all heard. Right after Pontius Pilate condemned our Lord to the cross, Judas went running back to the temple with his bribe money-- his precious thirty pieces of silver--but the chief priests and elders wouldn't touch it. Said it was "blood money." So, Judas threw it down on the temple floor, and went out and hanged himself!

As eight disciples leave--still talking among themselves--James and John settle back down at the table. They are sad, discouraged, disheartened.

JOHN: James, what are you and I going to do, now that the Master is dead? Go back and be fishermen in Capernaum?

JAMES: I don't know, John. I still can't believe all this has happened. Our Father Zebedee would be glad if we did come back. And, fish again.

JOHN: Do you remember the day we were down by the seaside--at father's boats-- helping him mend the nets, and Jesus passed by and said: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!"

JAMES: *Sadly* Yes, I remember. And I remember the day Jesus started calling you and me "The Sons of Thunder." It was when we said we should call down fire from heaven on that village that wouldn't receive the Master.

JOHN: When He called us "Sons of Thunder," I knew He loved us. Oh, James, how...*Voice breaks in grief.* How He loved us all!

JAMES: *Wiping his own eyes.* And how we loved Him.

JOHN: I'll never forget when I first began to believe He was the Son of God. It was when we saw Him raise that little girl from the dead.

JAMES: Yes, in Capernaum. As I remember, her father was the ruler of the synagogue, the Honorable Jairus.

JOHN: You remember, Jairus came to Jesus when we were all some distance from Capernaum and begged the Master to come to his house because his only daughter was very ill. There was a large crowd of people there...And...

As John's voice trails off, spotlight picks up Scene 2. John and James leave their table and ease their way into the crowd of Scene 2.

Scene 2

Scene 2. Along a road leading into Capernaum. Jesus is being followed, and enveloped, by a large crowd of people and several of his disciples, including Peter, James, and John. Jairus meets the crowd, runs to Jesus and kneels at his feet.

Players would do well to see: Mark 5:22-42; Luke 8:41-56.

JAIRUS: Oh, Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy on me and mine! Come with me to my house! My little girl is dying!

CHRIST FIGURE: You are from Capernaum, for I have seen you in the synagogue there. Your name is Jairus, is it not?

JAIRUS: Yes, Master. Please come with me! My only daughter is at the point of death. I know you can heal her! Just lay your hand on her and she will be well!

CHRIST FIGURE: Yes. I will go with you.

Throng of people surges around Christ Figure. A woman who has been ill for twelve years comes up behind the Christ and reaches down and touches the hem of his garment, and then slips back into the crowd. Jesus turns around to see who had touched him.

CHRIST FIGURE *To Simon Peter*: Simon Peter, who touched my clothes?

PETER: Why, Master, in this crowd several people could have bumped against you.

CHRIST FIGURE: No, someone reached out and touched me. I felt great strength go out from me.

The woman who touched Christ's robe comes to him, trembling and fearful. She kneels at his feet.

WOMAN WITH PLAGUE: Master, I-- I-- I was the one who touched your robe just now. I have been ill for 12 years, and no physician could heal me. I've spent all my money seeking a cure for my plague. But it did no good. Then I heard of you. I knew if I could but touch the hem of your garment, I would be made well. And I was! Please forgive me!

CHRIST FIGURE: Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Go in peace and be healed of your plague. *Helps woman to her feet.*

As Woman backs away, a servant of Jairus comes running to Jairus.

SERVANT OF JAIRUS: *Panting for breath.* Oh, Honorable Jairus! She's dead! Your little girl just died! And we've sent for the mourners! The best mourners in Capernaum, Sir.

JAIRUS: *Much shocked and grieved.* Oh, no! No! No! Don't tell me my baby girl is dead! *Turns to Christ Figure.* Master, I-- You-- You heard what my servant just said! There's no need for you to come now.

CHRIST FIGURE: *Placing His hand on Jairus' shoulder.* Jairus, be not dismayed. Nor, afraid. Only believe.

Christ Figure turns to crowd.

I ask all of you to return to your homes now. Simon Peter, you and James and John come with me. We will go to the home of Jairus, where even now there is already great weeping and lamentation.

Crowd disperses, some individuals going one way, some another. Christ Figure exits with Jairus, the three disciples, and the servant.

Scene 3

Scene 3: Less than an hour later. At the home of Jairus, in Capernaum. A large group of professional mourners (at least six women) clad in sackcloth, with black veils draped over their heads, weep and wail loudly just at the entrance to the house. Madam Moriah, the director, carries a large pan of ashes and a see-through sack of big yellow onions. One mourner holds a primitive stringed instrument.

The couch on which the little girl lies is visible through the entranceway. The grieving mother weeps beside the corpse. Two friends seek to comfort her.

MADAM MORIAH: *In loud, authoritative tone.* All right, girls, you can rest a minute.

Group becomes quiet. All sigh, in relief.

And while you're resting, listen to me! We are the best mourners in all Capernaum. And we want to keep it that way! I've brought the usual onions--starts passing out same--so you can shed real tears.

Mourners frown, make faces.

People who hire us deserve to get their money's worth. Now, I brought more ashes than usual. *Holds up pan.* And I want the air to be thick with ashes and soot the minute we see the Honorable Jairus coming home. He is an important man in this town. Rich, too!

1ST MOURNER: Madam Moriah, I hate ashes! They make me cough and sneeze!

Does some exaggerated coughing

2ND MOURNER: Ashes are so gritty, too!

MADAM MORIAH: If you girls don't like ashes, you should never have become professional mourners. You can't mourn properly without wearing sack cloth and pouring ashes on your head! That's our tradition-as old as the Sea of Galilee. Sack cloth and ashes!

MUSICIAN MOURNER: *Coming to M. with her instrument.* Madam Moriah, what tune do you want me to play next?

MADAM MORIAH: Play the saddest, most plaintive thing you can think of. Try to imagine that little girl lying dead in there is your child. Think how sad you would be.

3RD MOURNER: *As she holds up her onion, with much disgust.* Madam Moriah, my husband says I come home every night smelling like an onion patch! Could I please--

MADAM MORIAH: I am not the least bit concerned about what your husband says! We are being paid to shed tears, and we will shed tears!

Jairus, Christ Figure and companions approach.

MADAM MORIAH: Here he is! Here comes the Honorable Jairus! And strangers! Get with it, girls! Weep and wail!

M. Moriah leads troupe as they set up a loud wailing. They wave their arms. They pass the pan of ashes. Each tosses ashes into the air above her head. The musician strums slowly on her strings. There is no letup in their carrying on.

JAIRUS: *Ignoring mourners as he speaks to the Christ.* Come this way, Master. *Christ Figure, disciples follow Jairus. Servant steps aside. The Christ Figure stops in front of mourners, lifts his hand. The mourners get quiet.*

CHRIST FIGURE: Why are you mourners making such a to do? You don't need to be weeping and wailing. The little girl in the house is not dead, only asleep.

Mourners burst out laughing, some bending double so great is this joke to them.

MADAM MORIAH: *Still laughing, speaks to mourners.* Girls, this stranger thinks the child is just asleep! *Suppresses amusement and turns to Christ Figure.* Sir, I don't know who you are, but you've made a big mistake. You must not know anything about death! Or, mourners. We, the best mourners in Capernaum, do not weep and wail for sleeping children! That twelve-year-old girl in there is dead!

CHRIST FIGURE: *With kindness.* Please take your mourners away. You are not needed today in the house of Jairus.

Astonished troupe moves back.

Christ Figure, Jairus and disciples enter room where the little girl lies.

MADAM MORIAH: *Still stunned.* Well, I declare! This beats all I ever heard of!

MUSICIAN MOURNER: Are we going to leave, Madam Moriah?

MADAM MORIAH: Yes. I suppose so. But not right now. I want to see what happens. That man! He speaks as one who has authority, but with such kindness.

I wonder about him. Where he came from. Who he is.

Spotlight shifts to room where the little girl lies. Friends of mother quietly withdraw as Christ Figure enters. Parents and three disciples stand aside as Christ Figure goes to couch and looks down at the child.

CHRIST FIGURE: *Looking upward, to pray.* Father, glorify your name through this child. *Takes the child's hand in his own.* Little girl, I say to you, "Arise!"

Little Girl sits up. Amazed parents rush to the child.

Disciples show great amazement. Christ Figure joins disciples.

MOTHER: *Crying out with joy.* She's alive! Alive! Look, Jairus! *Mother hugs child to herself.* My precious baby! My little one! God has given you back to us!

JAIRUS: My child! She lives! She lives again! Jehovah be praised! *Turns quickly to the Christ.* Oh, Master! Master! What can we do! What can we say! You have wrought a miracle! I will tell all the world! I will shout it from the housetop!

CHRIST FIGURE: No, no, Jairus. At this time, it is best not to tell anyone.

JAIRUS: Then, what can we do?

CHRIST FIGURE: The thing to do is to bring this little girl something to eat. Some meat. So that she will regain her strength.

Jairus, highly elated, rushes out, calling his servants-with great joy.

JAIRUS: Servants! Servants! Come, come! Where are you? Bring meat to my child! She is alive again! Alive, I tell you! Bring food!

Servant, mourners, Mother's friends rush in to see the child, who is now sitting on the side of the couch beside her mother. Curtain closes on this set.

Christ Figure, three disciples start to leave. Peter, James, and John are excited, and, perplexed. They talk fast.

JOHN: Master! What a glorious miracle! You have power over death!

JAMES: You amaze us, Master!

PETER: We didn't know you could raise people from the dead!

JOHN: You told Jairus not to tell any one what you did! Why, Lord?

CHRIST FIGURE: *Placing one hand on the shoulder of James, the other on John's shoulder, as they move along.* Ah, dear "Sons of Thunder," my hour has not yet come. The time will come when I shall be revealed. Then you will know that those who have seen me have seen the Father.

Turns to Simon Peter

Simon Peter, go and tell the other disciples to meet us in the next village. There I must preach the kingdom of God and heal all manner of diseases.

All leave stage. James and John ease their way back to the set of ACT I, Scene 1.

They resume their talk, their remembering, and ACT II unfolds.

ACT II

JOHN: Our Lord is gone, forever. But I know I will never forget what he taught us.

JAMES: It was the parables he told that I will always remember.

JOHN: Ah, the parables. Remember the one he told about the Good Samaritan? He was teaching about the Commandments of God, when a certain lawyer in the crowd began asking questions. And the Master told him a story... *Voice trails off. Scene 1 opens.*

Scene 1

Scene 1. Christ Figure, seated in an outdoor area and surrounded by a crowd of people and his disciples, is teaching. A lawyer stands up out of the crowd to ask a question. When Jesus begins telling the lawyer the parable of the man who fell among thieves as he was en route from Jerusalem to Jericho, seven actors will do the parable in pantomime on another part of the stage. The pantomime characters are: The Man from Jericho, A Levite, Two, or more, Thieves, A Samaritan, A Priest, An Innkeeper

These players act out their little drama as the Christ Figure speaks.

LAWYER: *Standing up.* Great Teacher, I want to ask you a question. What shall I do to inherit eternal life?

CHRIST FIGURE: You are a lawyer. You know the law, the commandments. What do the commandments say?

LAWYER: Why, the commandments say "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

CHRIST FIGURE: You have answered right. This do, and you shall live.

LAWYER: But, Great Teacher, just who is my neighbor?

CHRIST FIGURE: Once there was a certain man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among thieves. They stripped him of his raiment. And wounded him. And departed, leaving him half-dead.

Thieves seize Jericho Man, jerk off his cloak, beat him over the head, knock him down, grab his purse and make off with it, laughing as they go. Jericho Man remains sprawled on the ground, looking half dead.

CHRIST FIGURE: And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

Priest sees wounded man. Stops momentarily, then goes out of his way not to pass near the bloody victim.

CHRIST FIGURE: And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked at him, and passed by on the other side.

Levite stops, stoops over the man to look at him carefully, then shakes his head and hurries on his way.

CHRIST FIGURE: But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.

Samaritan kneels beside wounded man, feels his brow, hurriedly takes off the pack on his back and grabs out bandages, oil and wine. He wraps a bandage on the man's head, one on each hand, one on his foot. Samaritan helps wounded fellow to his feet, supports him as they go to the Innkeeper. Samaritan gives money to the Innkeeper, and the two take the wounded man off stage.

CHRIST FIGURE: And he went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine And brought him to an inn and took out two pence and gave them to the innkeeper and said unto him, "Take care of him; and whatever you have to spend, when I come again, I will repay you."

Christ Figure turns to Lawyer.

Now which of these three--the Priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan--was neighbor to him that fell among the thieves?

LAWYER: The one who showed mercy on the poor wounded man!

CHRIST FIGURE: Go, then, and do likewise.

Lawyer exits. Christ Figure stands up.

CHRIST FIGURE. The time has come to leave this place and go to the City of Caesarea Philippi to tell men there that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. As I have said to you before, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me." He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind. To set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Cf. Luke 4:18,19

Crowd leaves stage. Disciples, except James and John, gather around the Christ. They all start moving on, but Jesus stops to speak again. Simon Peter, Thomas and Philip are in the forefront. Players would do well to read: Matthew 16:14-17; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21; John 6:68,69.

CHRIST FIGURE: You, my chosen ones, have been with me a long time. Now tell me, whom do the people say that I the Son of Man am?

THOMAS: Master, some say that you are John the Baptist come back to life.

PHILIP: Others say that you are Elijah, or Jeremiah, or one of the other old prophets, come back.

CHRIST FIGURE: But whom say you that I am?

PETER: Lord, you have the words of eternal life! You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!

CHRIST FIGURE: Blessed are you, Simon, the son of Jonah. No man of flesh and blood has revealed this to you. It was my Father, who is in heaven.

Group leaves stage slowly. Spotlight shifts back to James and John, who continue their conversation on what they remember about the Christ.

JOHN: We disciples were not the only ones who believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Many people said he was God's son, sent down to earth to save all men.

JAMES: That's true. Even some Roman soldiers thought he was the Son of God--like that Centurion we overheard this afternoon, when he was talking to his soldiers. Those soldiers didn't care who had been crucified. All they were

interested in was the Master's robe. I can almost hear them rolling their dice...
Voice trails off, Scene 2 opens.

Scene 2

Scene 2. The hillside where Christ and the two thieves were crucified earlier in the day. All three bodies have been removed. Three crosses stand side by side. The middle cross has a sign: "INRI" fastened on it. Three Roman soldiers who have been detailed to take down the crosses are huddled on the ground, casting dice to see who will get the seamless robe which had belonged to Jesus of Nazareth. The Centurion who commands the soldiers strides in.

CENTURION: Just what are you soldiers doing? You're supposed to be taking down these crosses! And here you are rolling the dice!
Soldiers jump to their feet, snap to attention. The robe, which First Soldier was holding, falls to the ground.

1ST SOLDIER: Sir, we were just casting lots-to see who will get the nice robe that belonged to the poor man from Nazareth.

2ND SOLDIER: *After he has looked down at the robe.* You see, Sir, it is no ordinary cloak. It doesn't have any seams in it.

3RD SOLDIER: We've been told that Nazareth is the only place in Galilee where they make such robes. If I win it, I'm going to send it back to Rome, to my father.

Centurion picks up seamless robe.

CENTURION: *In serious, softened tone.* Ah, Soldiers, I truly believe the man who wore this robe was the Son of God!

Changes tone to one of command.

Come now, take down the crosses. I'll carry the robe to the orderly room, and you three can finish casting lots there. When you're not on duty!

ALL SOLDIERS: *In unison.* Yes, Sir!

Centurion strides off stage, the robe on his arm. Soldiers drag three crosses away.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT II

ACT III Scene 1

Scene 1: In Jerusalem, early in the morning on the first day of the week. The eleven disciples--still hiding from the Jewish authorities--are asleep in the house where they have been staying since the Crucifixion on Friday. James, John, and Peter are in the forefront, resting their heads on a table. Salome, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the other Mary, and Susanna rush in to tell the disciples that Christ is risen. Salome leads the way and begins shaking her sons James and John, to awaken them. Other women bend over the other disciples, rouse them by shaking

their shoulders. The excited women all talk at once--Salome in a tone the audience can understand--as follows:

Salome: Wake up! Wake up! James and John, wake up! He is alive! We saw him! The Christ is alive! Get up! Get up!

Mary Magdalene: *Shaking Thomas and then Philip.* We saw the Christ! He is alive! The Master is risen from the grave! He told us to come tell you! Wake up! I was the first one to see him!

Joanna: Simon Peter! Wake up! Jesus the Christ lives! We saw him! And we saw angels! He said to come tell you, Peter, and all the others!

Other Mary: Christ is risen! We saw him! He is not in the tomb! Angels are at his tomb!

Susanna: Christ is alive! Wake up! We saw him in the garden! And there were angels there!

The sleepy, bewildered disciples jump to their feet. There is much confusion. The disciples do not believe the women.

JOHN: *To Salome.* Mother, what are you talking about?

Noise in room subsides.

SALOME: Just what I told you! Christ our Lord is risen from the grave!

JOHN: That is hard to believe!

MARY MAGDALENE: It's true! We went to the tomb to take spices, to anoint his body. But the tomb was empty! And then we saw him! At first I thought he was the gardener.

SIMON PETER: Mary Magdalene, I'm sorry but I cannot believe what you women are saying. It sounds like an idle tale. Something a child might imagine.

ALL WOMEN: *In unison.* It's true!

JOHN: Mother, I know you are a woman with a sound mind. So, please tell us--in detail--exactly what has happened. I believe you and the other women from Galilee had planned to take spices to the Lord's tomb this morning.

As Salome recounts what has occurred at the tomb, the other women, two angels, and the Christ Figure enact Scene 2. The disciples listen with wonder as Salome speaks.

Scene 2

Scene 2: Early in the morning, at the tomb in the garden where the Christ was buried. Two angels sit beside the open tomb. The stone which had sealed the door of the tomb has been rolled aside. The women of Galilee approach cautiously. One carries a lantern; the other three, the burial ointments.

MARY MAGDALENE: *As the group enters* Rolling the stone away is going to be a problem. It is a big, heavy stone.

SUSANNA: Surely, if we all push at the same time, we can move it.

JOANNA: Look! Angels!

OTHER MARY: The stone has been moved! The tomb is empty!

JOANNA: I don't think we should stay here! Let's go!

Frightened women turn to leave.

1ST ANGEL: Do not be afraid. I know that you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. But He is not here.

MARY MAGDALENE: Wh-- Where-- Where have you lain Him?

SUSANNA: We brought sweet spices for His body.

2ND ANGEL: He is risen!

Women are stunned.

1ST ANGEL: Go your way, and tell his disciples, and Peter, that their Lord lives!

Women start running away. They stop abruptly when the Christ appears.

SALOME: *Continuing the story.* We were so frightened! We started running, and when we were almost out of the garden, we saw the Master!

Four women kneel at the feet of the risen Christ

CHRIST FIGURE: *To women of Galilee* All hail!

ALL WOMEN: *In unison.* Master!

CHRIST FIGURE: Be not afraid. Go tell my brethren that they shall see me. I have not yet ascended unto my Father and to their Father.

Women hurry away. Christ Figure disappears. Spotlight shifts back to Salome, who continues her story.

SALOME: We ran as fast as we could-back here-to tell you! Our Lord is alive! We saw him with our own eyes! He spoke to us!

JOHN: I'm going to the tomb!

PETER: So am I! Come on, John!

John and Peter literally run out.

SALOME: *To remaining disciples.* I know it is hard for you to believe that our Lord is alive. But he told us, while we were still in Galilee, that this would happen. Don't you remember that?

JAMES: *Speaking slowly.* Yes! Now I remember! And now that I think about it, his very words come back to me.

The Master said: "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

THOMAS: Yes, the Master said that. But I didn't understand it then and I don't understand it now. I won't believe our Lord is really alive until I see him-with the nail prints in his hands and in his feet. And that wound in his side; too!

JAMES: Ah, Thomas, you've always been one to doubt everything.

THOMAS: Your mother and the others saw a Spirit. That's all.

John and Peter rush back into the room, Peter holding the Christ's shroud, John the linen cloth that was bound about his head.

PETER: Look, everybody! His grave clothes! What the women said could be true!

JOHN: We didn't see the Master. And we didn't see any angels. But the tomb was empty. And we found the linens. This headband was folded separately from the other part of the shroud!

As disciples gather around Peter and John to look at the grave clothes, a servant girl enters.

SERVANT GIRL: My mistress says that all of you will please come downstairs now. She has breakfast ready for you.

All follow Servant Girl off stage.

End of Scene 2

Scene 3

Scene 3. That same evening, in the hiding room. The eleven disciples are seated at a long table, having their supper. This includes fruit, bread, fish, and honey still in the comb. Servant girl enters, goes to John.

SERVANT GIRL: Sir, there is a man at the door who says his name is Cleopas. Shall I tell him and his wife to go away?

JOHN: No, no! He is one of us. Let him in!

Gets up to greet Cleopas and his wife. Servant Girl exits. Cleopas and his wife burst into the room, so breathless and excited they can scarcely talk.

CLEOPAS: We saw him! I tell you, John, we saw him!

WIFE: He talked to us!

CLEOPAS: He walked with us all the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus!

James and Thomas come to Cleopas and his wife.

JOHN: Cleopas, catch your breath. Are you talking about the Master?

CLEOPAS: *Still panting.* Yes! Jesus our Lord! We saw Him. He is alive!

THOMAS: I can't believe it!

JOHN: This is the truth? You're sure you didn't see a vision?

WIFE: No, John, He ate supper with us! Less than an hour ago!

CLEOPAS: At first we didn't recognize Him. I don't know what was wrong with our eyes. We thought we had just invited a stranger to eat with us. But when He took the bread and blessed it and broke it, then we knew who He was!

WIFE: A minute after that, He just disappeared! Vanished!

THOMAS: You must have seen his Spirit! Not our Lord!

JOHN: Oh, we hope it's true! My mother, Salome, and some of the other women went to his tomb this morning. And they say they saw him. Then, Peter and I went to the tomb and found his grave clothes. Still, it seems impossible that our Lord is alive. We all saw him die on the cross! Just three days ago!

THOMAS: Well, like I've said all along, I will not believe our Master is alive—unless I see him myself, and touch the wounds in his hands and his feet! And, that gash where the soldiers pierced his side!

Christ Figure enters, slowly. A gasp of amazement sweeps through the room. This is followed by cries of joy.

CHRIST FIGURE: *Spreading out his arms and coming closer to group.* Peace be unto you. Do not doubt that I have risen from the grave. Come, Thomas, touch me. See where the nails pierced my hands, and my feet. Thrust your hand into my side. *Pulls cloak aside, reveals blood stains.*

THOMAS: *Crying out.* My Lord! And my God! *Falls down at the feet of the Christ.*

At the next instant, the other disciples speak to each other in rapid succession, so much so that much of their talk overlaps. James and John embrace with joy. All are literally overwhelmed.

John: It's true! It's true! All is not lost!

James: No, no! There is no loss! All is gain! This is the beginning, not the end!

Peter: *Running to kneel at the Christ's feet.* Lord it is you! You must forgive me, Master!

Philip: This is a glorious day! Jesus our Lord lives!

Andrew: Jehovah be praised! I never dreamed we would see the Master again!

James the Less: Our Lord has conquered death!

Judas (not Iscariot): What a blessed thing has come to pass!

Nathaniel: Oh, our Lord is with us! We can see Him!

Matthew: God in heaven be praised! Our Lord has overcome death!

Simon the Canaanite: He is here! He is alive! He is our Lord!

John leaves James, comes to Christ Figure.

JOHN: Master, forgive us. We thought at first you were a Spirit!

CHRIST FIGURE: Spirits do not have flesh and bones, as you see me have. Do you have anything here to eat?

JOHN: Yes, Lord. There's plenty to eat. *Hurries to table.* Here is fish and honeycomb. And lots of bread. Fruits.

CHRIST FIGURE: The fish and honeycomb will be enough.

JOHN: Sit here, Master.

Christ Figure sits down and eats, as other disciples again take their places at the table.

CHRIST FIGURE: *Leaning back at the table.* Ah, my beloved ones, how could you doubt that I would rise again on the third day? Remember, I told you. It was necessary that I should suffer and die. Moses and the Prophets--and the Psalms--foretold it. All of you still look troubled. Do not let doubt or fear arise in your hearts. After I ascend unto the Father, my Father will send the Comforter to you.

You are to go into all lands, and take the gospel to every creature. Baptize men who believe. Baptize in my name, in my Father's name, and in the name of the Father's Holy Spirit.

As the Father sent me, even so send I you. You are my witnesses. And, behold, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world.

CURTAIN

The End