

The Final Journey

The Original Stageplay



Cleveland O. McLeish

Copyright © 2017. The Heart of a Christian Playwright.

All Rights Reserved.

Cleveland O. McLeish/The Heart of a Christian Playwright have asserted the right to be identified as the Author of this work.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without the expressed permission of Cleveland O. McLeish. Professional Rights, Amateur Rights, Fringe Rights, and Education Rights are all available through the Heart of a Christian Playwright. Please request permission in writing to cleveland.mcleish@gmail.com. The Author can be reached at cleveland@christianplaywright.org

All rights whatsoever in the play are strictly reserved. Requests to reproduce the text in whole or in part should be addressed to the Publisher/Author.

You have ONE free license to do ONE free Performance with the purchase of this book. You are NOT ALLOWED to make copies of this book, but you can purchase additional copies from Amazon, or you can purchase a digital version from the Website (www.christianplaywright.org) to make printed copies. For multiple performance and/or performances where tickets are sold, or there is an admission cost, please contact us to discuss royalties.

Publication of this play indicates its availability for performance.

ISBN-13: 978-1981951772 (paperback available on amazon.com)
ISBN-10: 1981951776

Published by:

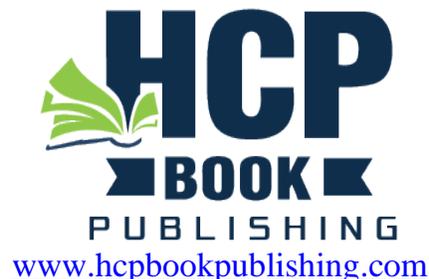


Table of Contents

Characters.....	4
Setting	5
SCENE 1	9
SCENE 2	13
SCENE 3	17
SCENE 4	19
SCENE 5	21
SCENE 6	24
SCENE 7	28
SCENE 8	30
SCENE 9	34
SCENE 10	37
From the Author’s Desk.....	40

Characters

Jesus	-	33-year-old Male
Pharisee	-	45-year-old Male
Scribe	-	38-year-old Male
Matthew	-	31-year-old Male, Disciple of Jesus
Peter	-	36-year-old Male, Disciple of Jesus
James-		31-year-old Male, Disciple of Jesus
Judas	-	38-year-old Male, Disciple of Jesus Treasurer Betrayer
Young Man	-	29-year-old rich Male. (small speaking role)
Mother	-	50+ year old Female Wife of Zebedee Mother of James & John
Zacchaeus	-	40+ year old Male Called out of a tree
Blind Beggar	-	30+ year old Male Blind from birth Healed by Jesus
Mary	-	31-year-old Female Sister to Martha & Lazarus Friend of Jesus
Martha	-	34-year-old Female Sister to Mary & Lazarus Friend of Jesus
Simon	-	39-year-old Male Jesus had a meal at his house.
Lazarus	-	36-year-old Male Brother to Mary and Martha Friend of Jesus
Chief Priest	-	44-year-old Male Highest Spiritual authority of the day
Caiaphas	-	55-year-old Male
Thomas	-	42-year-old Male Disciple of Jesus Doubtful
Phillip	-	33-year-old Male Disciple of Jesus
Soldier	-	26-year-old Male
Salome	-	27-year-old Female One of the woman who went to Jesus tomb
Extras (Some with speaking roles)		
Children (Some with speaking roles)		

Setting

The stage is bare except for a few palm trees and rocks. This is the typical biblical outdoor setting, which will represent many different areas where Jesus walked or stopped on his final journey.

Stage right could depict a mountainside.

Stage left could represent the inner or outer courts of a temple.

The Story

“The Final Journey” follows the biblical account of Jesus’ final days on earth in chronological order. We see glimpses of his love and fellowship with his disciples, his heart towards the people who followed him and the conflict that existed between him and the religious leaders of the day.

The Final Journey should never be forgotten, and we should never cease to tell it.

Play Details

Length: 70-90 Minutes

Cast: 17 males, 4 females, plus extras (some with speaking roles | some children).

Audience: Teens & Adults

Genre: Biblical Drama

The Script



SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP

ENTER Jesus. He wears his usual smile and emulates with love. Some of his Disciples are with him, and a small gathering begins to grow as he makes his way across the stage.

A Pharisee enters from the opposite direction and meets him at Center Stage.

PHARISEE: Rabbi, I have a question for you.

JESUS: Go ahead.

PHARISEE: Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?

Jesus looks around at those gathered around him.

JESUS: Haven't you read, that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female and said 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.

PHARISEE: Why then, did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?

JESUS: Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.

The Pharisee is dumb folded. He sinks back into the small crowd.

MATTHEW whispers to Jesus.

MATTHEW: If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.

JESUS: Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.

A woman brings her children towards Jesus. Peter and John stand between her and Jesus. Jesus raises his hand for them to allow her to bring the children to him.

Jesus sits on a rock and takes each child on each leg.

JESUS: Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like this little child will never enter it.

Jesus lays his hand on their little heads, blesses them, and gives them back to their mother.

A Young Man dressed in fine purple runs up to Jesus, and bows at his feet.

YOUNG MAN: Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

JESUS: Why do you call me good? No one is good — except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’

YOUNG MAN: Teacher, all these I have kept since I was a boy.

JESUS: One thing you lack. Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

YOUNG MAN: Sell everything?

JESUS: Yes.

The countenance of the young man fell. He slowly gets to his feet. He gazes into the eyes of Jesus whose countenance reveals his love, but the young man is sad. He reluctantly walks away.

JESUS: How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

JOHN: Who then can be saved?

JESUS: With man this is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God.

PETER: We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?

JESUS: I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

PETER: Where do we go from here?

The crowd is slowly beginning to disperse. Jesus leads his disciples to a far side of the stage.

JESUS: We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn me to death and will hand me over to the Gentiles, who will mock me, spit on me, flog me, and kill me. But three days later, I will rise.

PETER: What is the meaning of all this?

THE MOTHER OF ZEBEDEE'S sons, James and John enter.

They see her and run to her hugging her tightly.

MOTHER: I am glad I got to see you one more time before you left. I packed some unleavened bread for your journey.

JAMES: *(takes the bag and straps it on his shoulder)* Thank you, Mother. Come and meet Jesus.

James leads his mother to Jesus. James is holding her left hand, John her right.

MOTHER: My Lord.

She kneels before him.

JESUS: What is it you want?

MOTHER: Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right hand and the other at your left in your kingdom.

Pause. Jesus doesn't respond.

JOHN: Teacher, would you do for us whatever we ask?

JESUS: What do you want me to do for you?

JAMES: Exactly as our mother as requested. Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.

JESUS: You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?

JAMES & JOHN: We can.

JESUS: You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared before the beginning of time.

PETER: Why would you two ask for such a thing? What about the rest of us?

MATTHEW: We all deserve a place by the master's side.

Jesus lifts his hand and the bickering stops.

JESUS: You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many.

Jesus looks up towards the heaven...

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE 2

LIGHTS UP

A tree erected somewhere on the stage that is strong enough for someone to climb.

A small crowd is already gathered on the stage. There are young, old, middle aged from all race, classes, and genders.

PHARISEE and SCRIBE stand to the side watching the proceedings.

PHARISEE: This could easily turn into a rebellion against the Roman Government.

SCRIBE: But can we convince the officials?

PHARISEE: How subtle this false prophet is to be able to incite rebellion with such perfect precision. He has not made one mistake. His character is consistent. All we have are lies and heresies.

SCRIBE: He is consistent. The people love him.

PHARISEE: Well, love can turn to hate in a single moment.

SCRIBE: And with the right motivation.

PHARISEE: We need to put a stop to this. He is bound to make a mistake at some point or the other. When he does, we will make our move against him.

SCRIBE: Here he comes.

JESUS enters being closely followed by his disciples and a small crowd. Some are reaching through the crowd to touch his garment.

Jesus stops at the tree and looks up. ZACCHAEUS is in the tree looking down at him.

JESUS: Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.

Zacchaeus is shocked, People grumble among themselves. He jumps from the tree and leads Jesus to the far side of the stage where there is a small table. He gives water to Jesus and the disciples.

A Blind Beggar enters and sits at the other side of the stage.

PHARISEE: He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.

ZACCHAEUS: Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.

JESUS: Today salvation has come to your house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

Jesus embraces Zacchaeus who begins to weep. Jesus releases him. Zacchaeus moves about the stage pulling things of value from his bag and giving it away.

BEGGAR: *(begins to shout)* JESUS, Son of David. Have mercy on me.

Jesus turns to see who is calling him.

BEGGAR: *(shouts even more)* JESUS, Son of David. Have mercy on me.

PETER: Master, it is only a beggar. Someone should silence him.

Jesus silences Peter.

BEGGAR: JESUS, Son of David. Have mercy on me.

A man jabs the beggar with a stick to silence him.

BEGGAR: *(shouts even more)* Jesus, Son of David. Have mercy on me.

JESUS: Bring him to me.

Peter and John go for the beggar. They help him to his feet.

BEGGAR: Where are you taking me?

PETER: Relax and cheer up. On your feet. He's calling you.

The Beggar cast his cloak aside and stand firmly on his feet. They bring him to Jesus.

JESUS: I am Jesus. What do you want me to do for you?

BEGGAR: Rabbi, I want to see.

Pause.

JESUS: Go! Your faith has healed you.

The Beggar's eyes begun to flutter wildly, until they are once again settled. This time the world around him is full of light. He begins to laugh and celebrate. Others celebrate with him. Jesus embraces him, and he leaves filled with jubilee and touching everyone he passes.

PHARISEE: How is he able to do these things?

Jesus exits. The Disciples and crowd follow.

The Pharisee and Scribe move to the center of the stage.

PHARISEE: We must put a stop to this now.

SCRIBE: What do you have in mind?

PHARISEE: Whatever we do, must be done quickly. It is almost time for the Passover. Many will be going to Jerusalem to for ceremonial cleansing. Post a notice. Anyone seeing Jesus must report it. I want him arrested.

SCRIBE: On what charge?

PHARISEE: Does it matter? If we don't put a stop to this, it will spiral out of control. Is that what you want?

SCRIBE: John's influence did not wither behind prison walls.

Pause.

PHARISEE: Then we need to find a way to kill this Jesus of Nazareth.

Pause.

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS UP

Jesus stands alone at Center stage.

MARY, the sister of Lazarus runs to meet him. She falls at his feet. Martha enters but stays a short distance away.

MARY: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

A small crowd begins to gather closer to Martha.

JESUS: Where have you laid him?

MARY: Come and see.

Jesus begins to weep.

MEMBER OF THE CROWD: See how he loved him. Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?

Mary takes his hand and leads him a little way from the crowd pointing offstage.

MARY: There.

JESUS: Get someone to roll away the stone.

Martha comes closer.

MARTHA: But, Lord, by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.

JESUS: Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

Martha nods and exits the stage for a beat. She comes back pulling her head covering across her mouth.

Jesus looks up towards heaven.

JESUS: Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.

Jesus looks offstage in the direction of the tomb.

JESUS: *(in a loud voice)* Lazarus, come out!

Everyone waits in silent anticipation to see what would happen. No one expected a man who could cause the blind to see, to also be able to raise a man from the dead.

Lazarus steps out.

His feet and hands are wrapped with strips of linen, and he has a cloth around his face.

Martha and Mary's hand cover their mouth in awe and shock.

JESUS: Take off the grave clothes and let him go.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE 3

LIGHTS UP

There should be a dinner table at Center Stage.

Jesus sits at the head of the table with Simeon, their host. Some of his disciples sit around the table with him. They are having a meal.

SIMON: I have received word that there are some in the temple looking for you.

JESUS: In time they will find what they are looking for. Now, I am enjoying this fine meal with good friends.

Martha comes on with a pot and pours them some water.

MARTHA: How is the meal?

JESUS: You have outdone yourself again, Martha.

Lazarus enters.

Jesus immediately goes to greet him.

JESUS: Lazarus, my friend.

They embrace.

JESUS: How have you been doing?

LAZARUS: It's been challenging avoiding all the eyes, questions, and attention surrounding my present existence.

JESUS: People will always question what they don't understand. But live your life to the glory of God. That is what matters.

Jesus offers Lazarus a seat at the table.

Mary appears. The room seems to quiet down and the focus changes as she walks towards Jesus with a pint of pure nard.

She kneels at Jesus' feet. He readjusts himself to face her.

Mary pours the perfume on his feet and then wipes them with her hair. The smell of the perfume engulfs the room. Some of the disciples look discontented.

JUDAS: Such waste!

JESUS: Pardon!

JUDAS: Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.

JESUS: Leave her alone, Judas. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.

Jesus smiles at Mary.

JESUS: You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.

Jesus lifts Mary to her feet. He hugs her.

Pharisee and Scribe appear at the far corner of the stage.

PHARISEE: So this man Lazarus was really dead?

SCRIBE: Four days in the tomb.

PHARISEE: Then how is he here now....talking, eating, drinking, living as if he was never dead.

SCRIBE: Jesus raised him from the dead.

PHARISEE: Allegedly. Something impossible for any man to do.

SCRIBE: He is claiming to be more than a man.

PHARISEE: I know what he claims to be.

Pause.

PHARISEE: We must find a way to put that man Lazarus back in his tomb. His presence is not helping our cause.

SCRIBE: We may have found a weak link among his followers. One they call Judas Iscariot.

Pause.

PHARISEE: Find out all you can about this Judas. Then set up a meeting.

A smile appears on the face of the Pharisee.

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE 4

LIGHTS UP

Small clusters of crowd begin to gather on stage. Some holding cloaks in their hands, others have palm leaves. They wait in earnest anticipation.

Scribe and Pharisee walk on and remain away from the crowd.

Jesus comes walking up the aisle. He is greeted by loud shouts and proclamations.

CAPTION: "Sunday"

CROWD: Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Some spread their cloaks for him to walk on. Others put their palm leaves before him.

CROWD: Blessed is the King of Israel!

PHARISEE: They call him King!

CROWD: Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord.

Even the children are shouting.

CROWD: Peace in heaven and glory to the highest.

Jesus reaches the stage. A few children hug him.

CROWD: Blessed is the king of Israel.

PHARISEE: Teacher, rebuke your disciples.

JESUS: I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.

Jesus moves away from the Pharisee and Scribe. The crowds move with him.

PHARISEE: A carpenter getting a king's welcome.

SCRIBE: He has won the hearts of the people.

PHARISEE: These people don't know what they want. They are flattered by his magic, but his time will come. Let him have his day of glory. We will regain stability and peace from this chaos.

JESUS: If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.

MEMBER FROM CROWD: Who is this man?

MAN: This is Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. He is the one who raised Lazarus from the dead.

SCRIBE: This is going nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him.

Pause.

Jesus exits. The crowd follows after him.

SCRIBE: They follow him wherever he goes. He teaches freely in our temples, and then speaks openly to even larger crowds at the Mount of Olives.

PHARISEE: All good things must come to an end.

SCRIBE: We're days away from the Passover.

PHARISEE: Then we have very little time. No use wasting it here.

They exit.

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE 5

LIGHTS UP

Some small tables are set up. Merchants are busy selling stuff from their carts.

Jesus enters. He looks around at the activity going on in the temple. His face shines with righteous anger.

The CHIEF PRIEST is also standing in the temple. Pharisee and Scribe join him.

CAPTION: "Monday"

Jesus grabs merchandise from those who had purchased. He begins to overturn tables and benches and pushes the merchants towards the exit.

JESUS: Is it not written: My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of robbers.

The Chief Priest watches Jesus with narrowed eyes.

CHIEF PRIEST: Who is this man?

PHARISEE: Jesus of Nazareth. A carpenter and self-appointed Prophet.

CHIEF PRIEST: I have heard of this man. Why is he here?

A blind man is brought to Jesus. He heals him and sends him away rejoicing. Others who are sick are brought to Jesus. He heals them all.

A man who has never walked is jumping around and rejoicing in the temple.

CHILDREN: Hosanna to the Son of David.

The Chief Priest is indignant. He comes over to Jesus.

CHIEF PRIEST: Do you hear what these children are saying?

JESUS: Yes. Have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?

Jesus steps away from him.

JESUS: The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep

it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

CHIEF PRIEST: Are you claiming to be the Messiah? The chosen one of Israel?

JESUS: Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ No, it is for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.

VOICE: I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.

Some are shocked at the sound of the voice. They look around trying to identify who has spoken. Some knew it came from above.

JESUS: This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world.

Jesus looks directly at the Pharisee and Scribe.

JESUS: Now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.

MAN FROM CROWD: We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, “The Son of Man must be lifted up?” Who is this ‘Son of Man?’

JESUS: You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark places does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.

Jesus looks at the Pharisee

JESUS: As you so rightly said, all good things must come to an end.

Jesus leaves the stage. His disciples and the crowd follow him.

PHARISEE: He knows he is going to die.

CHIEF PRIEST: Why is he here? In Jerusalem.

PHARISEE: Who knows why he does the things he does...or goes the places he goes? He is a threat to the sanctity of our Laws.

SCRIBES: He is not a keeper of the law.

CHIEF PRIEST: Who claims to be a prophet and not keep the holy laws?

SCRIBES: He says he has come to fulfill them.

CHIEF PRIEST: How?

SCRIBES: He claims to be the Son of God.

PHARISEE: He is a false prophet who has won the affection of the people....a bright light burning on the top of a hill.

Pause.

CHIEF PRIEST: I want to know more. I want to test him myself.

Chief Priest exits.

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE 6

LIGHTS UP

Jesus sits on a rock. His disciples sit at his feet.

The crowd gathers around him.

The CHIEF PRIEST, Pharisee, and Scribe join in.

CAPTION: "Tuesday"

PETER: Rabbi! The fig tree you cursed has withered! How did the fig tree wither so quickly?

JESUS: I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Jesus looks in the direction of the Chief Priests.

JESUS: But when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

CHIEF PRIEST: By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you the authority to do this?

JESUS: I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism — was it from heaven, or from me? Tell me!

Chief Priest huddles with the Pharisee and Scribe.

CHIEF PRIEST: If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't we believe him?'

PHARISEE: If we say, 'From men'...the people will come against us, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.

They turn back to Jesus.

CHIEF PRIEST: We don't know.

JESUS: Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

Pause.

JESUS: There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' The son answered, 'I will not.' But he later changed his mind. Then the Father went to

the other son and said the same thing. That son said he would go, but didn't. Which of the two did what his father wanted?

MAN: The first.

JESUS: I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

PHARISEE: He's talking about us!

JESUS: The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone, the Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Jesus stands to directly address the Pharisee and Scribe.

JESUS: The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken in pieces, but he whom it falls will be crushed.

CHIEF PRIEST: I see that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?

Pause.

Jesus sees right through the Chief Priest.

JESUS: Show me a denarius.

The Chief Priest is handed a coin. He holds it up.

JESUS: Whose portrait and inscription are on it?

CHIEF PRIEST: Caesar's.

JESUS: Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.

Pause.

PHARISEE: Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children with him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?

JESUS: You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given to marriage; they will be like the angels in

heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead — have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ He is not the God of the dead but the living.

SCRIBE: Of all the commandments, which is the most important?

JESUS: The most important one is this, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.

MAN: You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

JESUS: You are not far from the kingdom of God.

Jesus faces the Pharisee.

JESUS: What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?

PHARISEE: The son of David?

JESUS: How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord?’ For he says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’ If David calls him Lord, how can he be his son?

Pause.

No one replies.

JESUS: *(to the crowd)* The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. *(points to the Pharisee & Scribe)* But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach...

PHARISEE: How dare you —

JESUS: Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

CHIEF PRIEST: You are out of line —

JESUS: Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. Blind fools!

CHIEF PRIEST: Why do you people listen to this man?

JESUS: Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

CHIEF PRIEST: (*explodes*) And who will show you mercy?

The scene quiets down...Chief Priest looks around embarrassingly, but red in the face.

JESUS: You brood of vipers. How will you escape being condemned to hell?

Chief Priest exits quickly. Pharisee and Scribe follow behind him.

JESUS: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.

Jesus sits on the rock.

JESUS: You will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Pause.

JESUS: The Passover is in two days — In two days, the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.

Pause.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE 7

LIGHTS UP

The CHIEF PRIEST, Pharisee, and Scribe meet at center stage.

CAPTION: "Tuesday Afternoon"

CHIEF PRIEST: I have seen and heard enough. We need to fix this problem now.

Caiphas enters.

CAIPHAS: How do you propose we do that?

They bow to him.

PHARISEE: Lord Caiphas, he has a consistent following. We cannot arrest him without drawing attention to ourselves.

CAIPHAS: It must be done privately. But not during the feast or there may be a riot among the people.

SCRIBE: When he is not with the people, no one knows where he is.

CAIPHAS: Someone must know.

JUDAS: *(Offstage)* Only those close to him know.

Judas enters.

CAIPHAS: You are?

JUDAS: Judas Iscariot. One of Jesus's disciples — one of those closest to him. *(smiles)*

Pause.

CAIPHAS: What can we do for you, Judas Iscariot?

JUDAS: What can you do for me?

CAIPHAS: What do you want?

JUDAS: What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?

CAIPHAS: By him...you mean Jesus?

JUDAS: Yes, the one they call Christ.

Pause.

CAIPHAS: Name your price.

Pause.

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS UP

Jesus meets privately with Peter and John.

CAPTION: *“Wednesday”*

PETER: There are people here who believe in you, but are afraid to confess it for fear of the Pharisees. They don't want to be put out of the temple.

JESUS: The Pharisees love to be praised of men, more than to be praised from God.

PETER: Maybe you can speak to their fear.

JESUS: Maybe —

Jesus speaks directly to the audience.

JESUS: This is my final public appeal. When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.

Jesus goes back to Peter and John.

JESUS: You must go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.

JOHN: Where do you want us to prepare for it?

JESUS: As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.

Peter and John leave. Jesus is alone. He looks up to heaven, almost in tears. He knows what is coming.

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE 8

LIGHTS UP

UPPER ROOM – All the potted plants have been moved to the back. A large table is set up at center stage with accompanying chairs/stools.

All the disciples are present. Jesus sits at the center of the table. He has a tray with unleavened bread in front of him, and a jar with wine.

JESUS: I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.

Jesus takes the cup in his hand and lifts it towards heaven.

JESUS: Thank you for this wine, Father...and what it will represent today.

Jesus passes the jar to Peter, who is sitting on his right.

JESUS: Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

They pass the jar around and pour some into their small cups.

Jesus takes the bread and holds it up.

JESUS: Thank you for this bread, Father...and what it represents today.

He passes the bread around in like manner. Each disciple breaks a piece and eats.

JESUS: This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

The jar reaches back to Jesus.

JESUS: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Jesus drinks. The disciples drink in like manner.

JESUS: The hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table.

The Disciples begin to grumble among themselves.

PETER: Surely it is not I. Am I not destined to be the greatest among us?

JESUS: The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors. You are not to be like that. The greatest among you should be the youngest,

and the one who rules like the one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus gets up from around the table. He reaches for a basin of water and a towel and places them in front of the table. He removes his outer clothing and pulls up a chair.

He wraps the towel around his waist and puts John to sit in the chair.

He washes John's feet and dries it with the towel.

He does the same to Judas and Matthew.

He calls for Peter. Peter is reluctant to come. Jesus goes to him with the basin of water.

PETER: Lord, are you going to wash my feet?

JESUS: You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.

PETER: No! You shall never wash my feet.

JESUS: Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.

PETER: Then Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well.

JESUS: A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.

Jesus continues to wash the other disciple's feet.

JESUS: You do not yet understand what I am doing for you. You call me Teacher and Lord and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. No servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know this, you will be blessed if you do them.

Jesus finishes and removes the towel from his waist, and returns to his seat.

JESUS: I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.

DISCIPLES: Surely not I, Lord.

JESUS: Woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.

JUDAS: Lord, who is it?

JESUS: *(breaks a piece of bread)* It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it into the dish.

Jesus dips the bread and hands it to Judas. Judas takes the bread.

JUDAS: Surely not I, Rabbi.

JESUS: Yes, it is you. What you are about to do, do quickly.

Judas leaves the table. Everyone looks confused.

JESUS: Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. My children, I will be with you only a little longer.

PETER: Where are you going?

JESUS: Where I am going, you cannot come. But I give you a new command. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

PETER: Lord, where are you going?

JESUS: Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.

PETER: Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.

JESUS: Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

PETER: Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.

JESUS: This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.

PETER: Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.

JESUS: I tell you Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.

PETER: Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.

All the other Disciples nod in agreement.

JESUS: Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. You know the way to the place I am going.

THOMAS: Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?

JESUS: I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

PHILLIP: Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.

JESUS: Don't you know me, Phillip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

Pause.

JESUS: When I sent you out without purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?

PHILLIP: Nothing.

JESUS: But now if you have a purse, take it. If you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. What is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.

Peter puts two swords on the table.

PETER: See, Lord, here are two swords.

JESUS: That is enough.

Pause.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE 9

LIGHTS UP

Garden of Gethsemane:

The stage is bare except for a few palm trees and rocks.

Jesus enters with Peter, James, and John.

JESUS: My brothers. Our journey ends here...tonight.

PETER: We don't understand when you say these things. There is no end to your kingdom, Lord.

JESUS: Sit here while I pray.

The disciples take a seat on the ground.

JESUS: My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch.

Jesus goes a little further and falls to his face in prayer. The disciples watch in helpless anguish.

JESUS: Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.

A Woman dressed in full white appears. She places her hands on Jesus' shoulder.

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS UP

Jesus gets up from his knees. The woman is gone. The disciples are spread out on the ground sleeping.

Jesus goes over and jolts them awake.

JESUS: Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.

PETER: It will not happen again, Lord.

Jesus returns to his praying spot.

JESUS: My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS UP

Jesus is standing over the sleeping disciples. He jolts them awake again.

JESUS: Are you still sleeping and resting?

PETER: We're sorry Lord, it won't happen again —

JESUS: Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer.

Judas enters with a detachment of soldiers following close behind him carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons.

He approaches Jesus to kiss him.

JESUS: Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?

JUDAS: (*kisses Jesus*) Rabbi!

The soldiers draw closer, weapons ready.

PETER: Lord, should we strike with the sword?

Jesus holds up his hand. Peter backs off. Jesus makes a step towards the soldiers.

JESUS: Who is it you want?

SOLDIER: Jesus of Nazareth.

JESUS: I am he.

The soldiers step back, falling over each other to the ground. They quickly get back to their feet.

JESUS: Who is it you want?

SOLDIER: Jesus of Nazareth.

JESUS: I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these other men go.

Two soldiers seize Jesus.

Peter grabs his sword and attacks one of the soldiers cutting off his ear.

JESUS: Peter, put your sword back in its place. All who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

Jesus touches the ear of the soldier, healing it.

Caiphas steps out smiling. Jesus goes before him.

JESUS: Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour — when darkness reigns.

CAIPHAS: One hour is all we need.

Caiphas signals for the soldiers to take Jesus away.

The detachment of soldiers arrests Jesus. Peter, James, and John quickly flee the scene.

The soldier with the healed ears remains onstage, looking up into heaven.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE 10

LIGHTS UP

The stage is bare except for a few palm trees and rocks.

Judas comes on stage holding a rope. He is weeping like a broken cistern pipe, unable to come to terms with what he has done. He exits searching for a tree.

A beat.

Clusters of crowds begin to gather at Center Stage. Peter is among them. A small group of women sits by a cluster of small stones as if warming by the fire. Peter sits with them. All watching some proceedings taking place offstage.

PETER: What is happening?

SERVANT GIRL: Jesus is on trial.

A SERVANT GIRL turns to Peter.

SERVANT GIRL: I know you. You were with Jesus?

PETER: Woman, I don't know him.

Peter gets up from that spot and moves to another cluster. Another WOMAN points at him.

WOMAN: This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.

PETER: I don't know the man.

Peter moves to another cluster, closer to the exit.

A MAN grabs him and pulls him from the crowd.

MAN: You also are one of them.

PETER: Man, I am not.

A Rooster begins to crow. Peter looks offstage....he then begins to weep. He pulls himself free from the man's grip and exits.

The attention of the crowd is now drawn to a point behind the audience. They draw near to the edge of the stage, watching...waiting....anticipating....

WOMAN: I think the trial is over.

SONG: Ten Thousand Angels Cried: Leann Rimes (<http://youtu.be/ivUhn12xYQ8>)

This scene should be choreographed with the song.

Jesus comes up the aisle carrying the cross. His clothes are torn; his body is bruised. Soldiers walk behind him whipping him along, towards the stage.

Jesus is led up the aisle, and offstage by the end of the song. The crowd follows.

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS UP

CAPTION: “3”

Pharisee meets the Scribe at Center Stage.

PHARISEE: We need to go see Pilate.

SCRIBE: Why? It’s over. The man is dead.

PHARISEE: When he was alive, he said ‘After three days I will rise again.’ His disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. The last deception will be worse than the first. I want the tomb sealed and guarded.

They quickly exit.

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS UP

Caption: “2”

Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary, the Mother of James prepare spices on a small table at Center Stage.

LIGHTS OUT

LIGHTS UP

Caption: “1”

Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary, the Mother of James approach the tomb (which is somewhere offstage) with spices.

MARY: Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb? — Wait — There is no stone!

A MAN dressed in white comes up behind them.

MAN: Who are you looking for?

The women turn around but are too fearful to speak.

MAN: Don't be alarmed, you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified.

SALOME: This is where they buried him.

MAN: He is not here. He has risen. Go, tell his disciples and Peter that He is going ahead of them into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.

MARY MAGDALENE: Risen? Jesus is alive?

MAN: You are looking for the living among the dead. Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' Now go.

Trembling and bewildered, the women leave.

Pause.

The man exits in another direction.

Pause.

Jesus walks out. He looks up to heaven smiling.

JESUS: Father, it is done.

He looks out at the audience.

JESUS: Now we can save them all.

Jesus exits.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

From the Author's Desk

We hope this play has been a blessing to you.

We would love to get feedback from you. Please consider leaving a review on our Amazon page. You can also send comments, questions, feedback, and testimonials to cleveland@christianplaywright.org or cleveland.mcleish@gmail.com.

Please visit www.christianplaywright.org for more Contemporary/Biblical, anointed Play Scripts for Christmas, Easter, and General Productions.

If you are a playwright and have written several plays, you may want to consider getting them published. Visit www.hcpbookpublishing.com for more info.