

The Fourth Cross

The Original Stageplay



Cleveland O. McLeish

The Fourth Cross by 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.

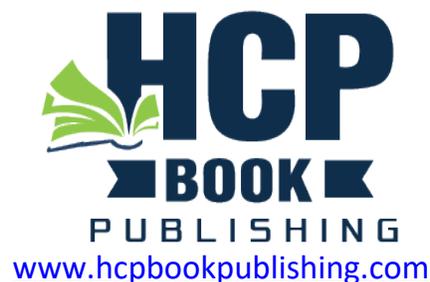
You have ONE free license to do ONE free Performance with the purchase of this book. You are NOT ALLOWED to make copies of this book, but you can purchase additional copies from Amazon, or you can purchase a digital version from the Website (www.christianplaywright.org) to make printed copies. For multiple 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: 978-1979769914 (paperback available on amazon.com)

ISBN-10: 1979769915

Published by:



The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Characters 4
Setting 5
The Story 6
Play Details..... 7
The Script 8
SCENE 1 9
SCENE 2 13
SCENE 3 19
From the Author’s Desk..... 24

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

Characters

JOHN - Carpenter (Male – Mid 30s)

MIRIAM - Housewife. Johns wife (Female – Early 30s)

PAUL - Drapery Maker (Male – Late 40s)

SARAH - Vendor (Female – Late 20s)

MICHAEL - Priest (Male – Mid 30s)

MARY - Widow (Female – Late 40s)

SAM - Babysitter (Female/Male – Early 30s)

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

Setting

There is only one setting. It is a house in Jerusalem with antique furniture and amenities.

There should be a window somewhere looking offstage and a door that can be bolted from inside. There should be a bowl of bread, and a cup of wine/juice on the small table throughout.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

The Story

There were three crosses on the hill of Calvary. Jesus was crucified in the middle, with two thieves on either side.

This play will remind us of a fourth cross not visible to the human eye, which can only be seen through the eyes of faith. This fourth cross was within Jesus, and we were on it. For Paul says, "We died with Him, so we can live with Him." Through the cross, God restored His relationship to man that was lost in the Garden of Eden.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

Play Details

Length: 45 Minutes

Cast: 4 Males, 3 Females, 1 Male/Female

Audience: Teens & Adults

Genre: Biblical Drama

The Script



The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP

Miriam is setting the table. She places a bowl of bread and a cup of wine/juice on it.

She momentarily walks to a window and looks out with a concerned expression on her face. There is a loud and disturbing commotion outside.

There is a LOUD KNOCK at the door. Miriam is shaken initially, then quickly recovers. She quickly goes to the door.

MIRIAM: *(a little timid)* Who is it?

JOHN: *(O.S.)* It's me.

Miriam quickly opens the door.

John enters, shaken, concerned. He quickly closes and bolts the door behind him.

MIRIAM: John, what's going on?

JOHN: The world has gone crazy, that's what.

MIRIAM: There's a large crowd outside — causing quite a stir.

JOHN: It's that man from Galilee. The one claiming to be the son of God. They arrested Him last night, and now they have sentenced Him to death.

MIRIAM: Is He one of the men I see carrying a cross up the hillside?

JOHN: Yes.

MIRIAM: Which one?

JOHN: The worst looking one.

MIRIAM: He looks terrible...covered in blood as if the skin has been stripped from his body.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

JOHN: That's exactly how He looks. It was terrible. I am glad you were not there to see all that. If not for His form, you would think He was a pile of dead flesh.

MIRIAM: Why are they doing this to Him?

JOHN: Nobody knows. It was a private trial, it seems, and then when they brought Him out to the people, the people wanted Him dead.

MIRIAM: Aren't these the people who welcomed Him into Jerusalem?

JOHN: The hypocrisy of it all is intolerable.

MIRIAM: But He did so much good.

JOHN: He did. But people forget very easily.

Miriam walks to the window and looks out. She covers her mouth, gasping.

MIRIAM: Oh my, He just fell.

John joins her at the window.

JOHN: I don't think He can go any further. I have no idea where He even found the strength to get this far.

MIRIAM: They are whipping Him. How cruel.

JOHN: He can't take much more of this.

Pause.

MIRIAM: Look. They are forcing that man to carry the cross.

JOHN: You know what, we shouldn't be watching this.

John pulls Miriam from the window, closes it.

JOHN: Let's have lunch.

They sit at the table.

John helps himself to some bread.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

MIRIAM: I don't have much of an appetite. None of this feels right.

JOHN: It doesn't concern us.

MIRIAM: This has everything to do with us. You said it yourself. We are the ones who condemned this man to die. After all He did for this city. Do you remember my Aunt? She had that issue of blood for twelve years. We watched her suffer through that ordeal, and there was no help or relief for her, until this man Jesus came along. He was her only hope.

JOHN: I remember.

MIRIAM: Remember that mother who lost her only son? She was on her way to bury him when they ran into Jesus. Do you remember the unmeasurable joy on her face when she saw her son...alive?

JOHN: Yes, it was...incredible.

MIRIAM: The blind was able to see again. Can you imagine what that must feel like? To be born blind and to receive your sight? What would the world look like for someone seeing it for the first time?

JOHN: So why do they want Him dead? He has done nothing but good.

MIRIAM: The better question is, why would someone who has authority over death subject Himself to it?

Pause.

John eats more bread.

JOHN: None of this is making sense, but there must be a reason for it. Something we're not seeing...a purpose, somehow. A sinister plot to rid this world of all the good there is.

MIRIAM: I have heard stories from those close to His Disciples. He prophesied His death, but also claimed that He will rise again on the third day.

JOHN: That would be a divine miracle, but why go through all that?

MIRIAM: To establish His kingdom.

JOHN: I don't get all this kingdom stuff.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

MIRIAM: It is connected to all the good that He did. It is a spiritual kingdom, one of faith, hope, and love.

JOHN: Yeah, exactly what is missing in today's society. Do you remember what the world was like before Jesus came?

MIRIAM: Chaotic...every other person was either sick or depressed. People would go to church and leave the same way they came. There was no help, no hope, and the Romans threatened to destroy the very fabric of what was left of our humanity.

JOHN: Jesus was like an antidote.

MIRIAM: Yes. He was the epiphany of divine love, and that is exactly what is getting Him killed. All He ever did was demonstrate faith in His Father, hope of a better world to come, and love for all men.

JOHN: Is all that worth dying for?

Miriam gets up and goes to the window. She opens it and looks out.

MIRIAM: Jesus thinks it is.

Pause.

LIGHTS FADE

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

SCENE 2

LIGHTS UP

John, Miriam, Sam, Mary, Paul, and Sarah are gathered around the small table. The ladies seem a bit shaken up. The guys are trying to be macho, and calm.

JOHN: The world is changing.

PAUL: Time seems to stand still. These last three days have been the longest days of my life.

JOHN: But what of our future? What can we expect to happen now? It almost feels like the light has been turned off in the world.

SARAH: So sad.

SAM: Friday night was the worst. There was so much noise...so much confusion. Everyone feared for their lives. I have never seen such rage on people's faces...all for one man.

MARY: I heard it. I locked all my doors. I was so scared.

SARAH: I was in the kitchen. There was a tremendous earthquake. It almost threw me to the ground.

MARY: I felt it too. I have never felt an earthquake like that before.

MIRIAM: We watched the whole thing. The Romans were performing another crucifixion. Three crucifixions.

PAUL: Who was it?

JOHN: Jesus, from Nazareth. He was crucified between two thieves.

SAM: You mean the Messiah?

JOHN: Yep. It was Him.

MARY: I can't believe they killed Him.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

PAUL: Who would think that would be possible...after all the good He did.

MIRIAM: These are strange times. We have seen a lot of not possible in the last few years.

Pause to reflect.

JOHN: We watched Him carry His cross. He was so badly beaten, you would not recognize Him as a man.

PAUL: I heard that they beat Him all night. There is no way He had the strength to carry a cross.

JOHN: We saw Him do it, with our own eyes.

SAM: They tried Him all night?

MARY: Isn't that illegal?

PAUL: Do you think they care? They do whatever pleases them.

JOHN: The law says there should be no trial during the night.

PAUL: Who made those laws, if not the very same people who have the responsibility to uphold them? Unfortunately, that means they also have the right to break those laws.

SARAH: I've heard Jesus say that those who do their deeds in the night have something to hide.

SAM: That must be true, if they had approval to murder an innocent man by the next day.

PAUL: A few days ago, they were spreading palm leaves and welcoming Him into the city. Then later, these same people were shouting. "Crucify Him."

SARAH: They even begged for a criminal to be released in His place.

MARY: What does all this mean?

JOHN: We have been trying to figure that out too. Apparently, Jesus came to die.

SARAH: I have heard that, but it doesn't make sense. Why would He do that?

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

MIRIAM: For our sins.

Pause.

Longer pause.

SARAH: He is dying for our sins?

SAM: I have heard something to that effect. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. That whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

PAUL: Are you saying the world was perishing?

MARY: Look how far we have wandered from the original man.

JOHN: The stories of Adam and Even are just bedtime stories.

SAM: Not according to the Torah. It was God's intention to make man in His image and likeness. We fell from His original design.

JOHN: And you think He's trying to make it right?

PAUL: Why would He be the one to make it right if we are the ones who messed up?

MIRIAM: We can't fix anything. We never could. If God made all things, then He sits at the foundation. If anything goes wrong, He's the only one who can rectify it.

PAUL: I see you have done your homework.

MIRIAM: Don't you all feel different? As if a new season has begun?

SARAH: There is a dark cloud hanging over Jerusalem. The Disciples of Jesus have gone into hiding. The fear and uncertainty in the air is almost tangible — as if you can touch it. You walk into your house, and by sheer reflexes alone, you bolt the door. If a new season has begun, it's not a good one.

There is a LOUD knock at the door, startling everyone.

JOHN: *(recovering)* Who could that be?

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

SAM: (*nervous*) Don't open the door. There is a rumour that the Romans are going around trying to find the Disciples of Jesus...to kill them.

PAUL: Do they even know who they are looking for?

JOHN: Anyone who remotely looks or smells like Jesus will be taken and tried.

PAUL: I don't think any of us qualifies.

Pause.

The KNOCK continues.

JOHN: We're not criminals. I refuse to act like one.

John goes to the door. Everyone is signalling for him not to. He ignores them.

JOHN: Who is it?

MICHAEL: (*O.S.*) It's me. Michael.

JOHN: (*turns to the others*) See. Nothing to worry about.

John unbolts the door and lets Michael in. He is dressed as a priest.

John closes the door and bolts it.

PAUL: Maybe now we can get some real answers.

Pause.

MICHAEL: I'm afraid we are living in the days when there are more questions than answers, my friend.

JOHN: You serve as a priest in the temple. If anyone has the answers, it is you. What is going on?

MICHAEL: You all know that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified three days ago?

JOHN: Yes, we have not left this house since that cloak of darkness fell over Jerusalem.

MARY: Oh my God, it was like midnight in the middle of the day.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

MICHAEL: And you felt the earthquake?

PAUL: We all did.

MICHAEL: But did you know that the veil in the temple was torn in two, right down the middle?

MIRIAM: What?

PAUL: That veil was like 5 inches thick.

MICHAEL: And thirty feet wide and high. It looked like an invisible hand just took hold of it and tore it like a sheet of papyrus.

JOHN: That's impossible.

MIRIAM: These are strange times. We have seen a lot of impossible in the last few years.

JOHN: Will you stop saying that?

MARY: What does it all mean?

MICHAEL: The sacred temple has been desecrated. What is even more astonishing, is that anyone can now enter what used to be the holy of holies. It was looted. Nobody died.

SARAH: And all this has to do with this Jesus who was crucified?

MICHAEL: Which is absolutely strange. We have crucified so many over the years, but nothing like this. Secretly, there are now people who believe His claim to be the son of God.

JOHN: But if He is, then what He prophesied was true.

MICHAEL: Yes.

MIRIAM: And this is the third day?

MICHAEL: Yes.

MIRIAM: So if everything He said is true, then raising from the dead on the third day is also true.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

MICHAEL: Yes, and strangely enough, the authorities visited His tomb this morning. The tomb is empty.

Gasps and shocked expressions.

LIGHTS OUT

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

SCENE 3

LIGHTS UP

Michael is with John and Miriam.

JOHN: We seem to have been the center of some divine intervention, as if, God is intervening in the affairs of men.

MICHAEL: It's causing a great stir among the temple officials. There are some who believe secretly, but others are fighting this with all they have.

MIRIAM: They are fighting against God.

MICHAEL: So, you two believe all this...Messiah, prophets, end of the world?

JOHN: It's not the end of the world.

MIRIAM: This could only be the beginning. Our hearts are being stirred for greater things.

MICHAEL: What could be greater than this?

There's a knock at the door.

John opens it.

A very excited Mary runs in.

MARY: You guys are not going to believe what happened to me.

JOHN: If we were ever in a frame of mind for weird and outworldly, this is it.

MARY: I saw my father.

Miriam gasps.

MARY: I sat with him. Ate with him. Talked with him. He opened my eyes to some of what is happening.

MIRIAM: (*shocked*) You saw your father? In a dream?

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

MARY: No. Just like I'm looking at you now.

JOHN: Unbelievable. (*turns to Michael*) This is greater.

MICHAEL: I don't understand. Was her father away on a trip?

JOHN: No, her father was dead. He died five years ago.

MICHAEL: (*stunned*) What?!? So, how could she have seen him and talked to him?

MARY: When Jesus died...graves were opened. Many who had died believing in God was raised from the dead. People are seeing them all over Jerusalem.

MICHAEL: That's impossible.

MARY: Is there really anything impossible with God, Priest? You serve in the temple. How has all this caught you by surprise when you so boldly declare that God can do anything? He parted the Red Sea, didn't He?

MICHAEL: Well, yes.

MARY: So He can do that but not raise His dead saints up?

MICHAEL: It just doesn't make sense that God would do that.

MARY: Maybe God never created us to try and figure Him out, and make sense of Him. Maybe all He needs us to do is believe and walk with Him, as Moses did.

MICHAEL: That's a tall order.

MARY: If it is, then your service in the temple and as a priest is pointless.

MICHAEL: (*offended*) I need to go.

Michael quickly exits.

MIRIAM: I think you hurt his feelings.

MARY: Maybe it's time they start living what they talk.

JOHN: Anyway, what did your father talk with you about?

MARY: The significance of the cross...particularly the fourth cross.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

MIRIAM: The fourth cross?

JOHN: We only saw three men, carrying three crosses.

MARY: The fourth cross was not visible to the naked eye.

JOHN: Mary, you are not making much sense.

MARY: It was us. We were on the fourth cross. We died with Christ so we can be raised up with Him. That's what happened to all the dead saints. They died believing, and now they are risen to share in His glory.

JOHN: We died with Christ?

MARY: He took our sins within Himself...He took us...He became all human beings...and paid the price to remove the record of sin from our lives, so we may become righteous.

MIRIAM: How? Why?

MARY: He loves us. He always has. God will do anything to save us. We are that important to Him. That day, when Jesus died on the cross, there was a fourth cross and we were on it...in Him. But you can only see it through the eyes of faith. Do you see it?

John and Miriam close their eyes.

MIRIAM: We can see it.

JOHN: Vaguely.

MARY: On the third day, we rose with Him, so we can now walk in the newness of life.

JOHN: So, He's really not dead?

MARY: Is that so hard to believe?

JESUS: (O.S.) Death has no power over me.

Jesus appears in their midst.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

John, Miriam, and Mary fall to their knees. Jesus smiles.

He walks over to the table and takes up a piece of bread.

JESUS: Father, thank You for giving humanity the true bread.

Jesus breaks the bread.

He takes the cup in His right hand.

JESUS: Father, thank You for now establishing a new covenant with my blood.

Jesus walks over to the others and kneels with them. He gives them bread and the cup.

JESUS: Take and eat. This is my body which was broken for you.

They eat.

He hands them the cup.

JESUS: Drink. This is my blood. Shed for you.

They drink.

JESUS: As often as you do this, you do it in remembrance of me.

Jesus hugs them one at a time, then gets up and exits.

MIRIAM: Oh my God, was I just with the man they crucified four days ago?

JOHN: We all were.

MIRIAM: Unbelievable!

MIRIAM: Wow. What do we do now?

Pause.

MARY: Now we tell everybody the good news.

Pause.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

LIGHTS OUT.

The Fourth Cross by Cleveland O. McLeish

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.