

# Monologues – A Good Friday Service of Lament

*Based on Luke 22:46, 55-62, 63-71; Luke 23:1-25, 26-49*

*A video of the premier performance is also available.*

## 1. Entering the Garden

**Key Text:** Luke 22:46

**Characters:** Jesus, Satan

**Length:** 3:40 min

*Jesus entering the Garden.*

Will you guys wake up! A bunch of drowsy disciples! C'mon, get up! Why don't you stay with me? Stand beside a friend? Comfort a distressed colleague? You rather sleep than witness the coming turn of events that will irreversibly shape the tenuous foundations of your... fragile ... Boy, what I would do for a pillow right now too. The Son of Man, and no where to lay my head.

*A one-voice "dialogue" between Jesus and Satan.*

Satan It's all over, isn't it, Jesus? Your little saga, brief blip in history, finished?

Jesus How did I know the devil would be here?

Satan I appear at opportune times. The time now is, how shall I say, especially grave. Have you any last words? *Silence*. Need I remind you that, at this very moment, the instruments for your execution are being prepared? You will die the painful, humiliating death of crucifixion.

Jesus I am ready to die.

Satan Die? All people die. That's not in question. It's whether you ought to have been born. Have you accomplished anything? Messiah? King of the Jews? In a few hours you will be flogged, whipped, pierced. By the very people you sought to save. Hang as a criminal. Naked, exposed. Every fibre and ligament stretching

until it snaps or rips.

Jesus Oh God, does my life demand such a pathetic end? Must martyrdom be inevitable? Must there be a noose around my neck?

Satan Some choose more dignified departures. Your body will rot. Vultures will take you as prey.

Jesus Why am I willing to die? Without an army of friends. No legion of angels. Is this really the way of God?

Satan Has even God forsaken you?

Jesus I am alone. I am alone. Why am I alone?

## 2. Denying Jesus

**Key Text: Luke 22:61b**

**Characters: Peter, Crowd**

**Length: 2:50 min**

*A fire is centre stage. A teapot is heating. A mug is at the side. Peter walks in with a bundle of fire-wood. He is dressed, in part, in disguise - wearing sun glasses and hat. While tending the fire, Peter is startled by the crowd that is gathering.*

Oh, hi. Um, sure, join me at the fire. Oh, there's others too? More the merrier, I guess. It is cold tonight. As my mother always said, "low temperatures mean ... ah, cold weather." My name? No, I don't have a name ..., I mean, Frank. Funny you ask, no, I don't often wear sunglasses ... just at night. Ah, something about moon shadows or firelight ... my optometrist wasn't really sure ...

Pardon me? Who? No, ma'am. I don't know him.

*Pours water into mug and drinks. Suddenly spits out water.*

Galilee? No, I'm not from there. South. I'm from the south. Judea. Hill country. Here for Passover. I don't know what you're talking about.

*The following dialogue overlaps. The crowd's accusations are layered and prerecorded. Peter, increasingly agitated, responds to the crowd.*

Crowd He was with him. He was with Jesus. You're a disciple. You're one of them. He's a Galilean. His accent. A fisherman from the north. You know him. Quit lying. Scared, eh? Hang them all! Blasphemers!

Peter Look, you've got it all wrong. I'm not with him. I don't know him. I really don't know him. What are you inferring? Please, I have nothing to do with the man. I don't know what you are talking about! Leave me alone! Just leave me alone!

*At the height of this "dialogue," a rooster crows (prerecorded). Peter is crying.*

Oh my God. Oh, Jesus. I've left you alone ...

### 3. Interrogating Jesus

**Key Text:** Luke 22:67b-68

**Character:** Nicodemus

**Length:** 3:50 min

*Placards set up in the background. E.g., Rome Go Home! Stop state killing! For the love of God. Nicodemus, dressed in a priestly robe, meets Joseph of Arimathea after the court proceedings. Adequate pauses in the "dialogue" are necessary.*

Joseph. Arimathea. It's Nicodemus. Sorry for our surreptitious meeting tonight but given the circumstances, I'm sure you understand ...

Pardon me? No. No, I'm afraid it's over. I'm so sorry.

Please don't cry. We can't be heard meeting like this.

I'm sorry. I don't know why we weren't ready for him.

Yeah, even though he checked all the boxes, right, and then some.

I suppose it's easier to *anticipate* a Messiah than to *embrace* one.

I know it's hard not to be cynical. It's easy for institutions, by their very nature, to be lost in self-interest. And pushed to the legal limit can manufacture any charge, even one against the truth. As we saw tonight. And I know you know all that.

Yeah, he'll be sent to Pilate, possibly Herod. Sure, bring your placards, but I don't know what we can expect from them.

But Joseph, don't lose hope. Legal experts and priests can call him a threat, they can, my God, kill him, but we know something different, right?

New birth. Remember? New birth. For you. Me.

I just wish I knew how a religious system might be born again.

#### 4. Condemning Jesus

**Key Text: Luke 23:15b**

**Character: Pilate or Herod's Press Secretary**

**Length: 3:10 min**

*Dressed formally behind a podium. Adequate pauses in the "dialogue" are necessary. The Secretary's attention needs to be divided between the respective reporters.*

Quiet please. Can I please have your attention. There's a question over here.

The state security department has full confidence in the court, and in the court's ruling, yes. Thank you.

Another question. No, sorry I don't know that psychology. But I can assure you that personal biases about religion, race, or gender did not play a part, whatsoever, in this outcome. As I said, we have full confidence in the court's ruling.

Yes, go ahead. No, frankly that's ridiculous. Offensive, really. I would not call Herod or Pilate's actions a, what, "kangaroo court." Is that what you said? That's a deliberate and gross misrepresentation. They properly sought the counsel of each other's office, however unprecedented, for an assessment and critical judgment on the matter.

Please, the proceedings were not a sham. A verdict of execution only happens after due process, full considerations, and ....

No, personal biases, as I've said, did not play any role in the final judgment.

Well, public pressure is a qualification of the judicial proceedings. If warranted, change can be exercised ...

Excuse me, ah, Pilate did not cave. Frankly, I'm finding your insinuations insulting.

Um, that's not the opinion of the court. Pilate's earlier official statement of innocence was retracted, as you know, upon hearing further evidence ...

Well public sentiment, as I said, is a factor.

Look, this is our system. We honour the local court processes, the jurisdictions of both Herod and Pilate, however complicated, and ultimately the voice of the people. At the end of the day, we live with the outcome after all judiciary arms have been engaged.

Yes, we stand by this decision. We are not killing the wrong person. And to quote him, your Messiah, we have also set the prisoner free.

Thank you. No more questions.

## 5. Crucifying Jesus

**Key Text: Luke 23:28b**

**Character: Roman centurion**

**Length: 2:45 min**

*The centurion is dressed in military fatigue and is speaking to other soldiers in his circle. He is drawing lots for Jesus' clothing. The clothing is "hung" on a cross from which it will be torn. Again, adequate pauses in the "dialogue" are necessary.*

OK, pick one already! Need to see who starts. No, just one, you twit! His clothes aren't worth much. Nothing, eh?

How about you? Nope!

My turn. Got it! The short straw! I'm taking his shirt! I know there's a hole in the side, but I can mend that.

*Rips fabric from the cross.*

C'mon, who's next? Let's keep this moving. Don't want him soiling the fabric.

You want his head piece – I'll help you!

*Rips fabric from the cross.*

And his pants? Sure!

*Rips fabric from the cross.*

That leaves his undergarments for Cicero. Don't worry, they can be cleaned.

*Rips fabric from the cross.*

Look at him – the fool! Disgusting. Pathetic. Pitiful. Aren't you the Messiah? You saved others, but you can't save yourself.

*Grabs long stick with sour wine.*

Take a sip, you idiot. Take what you can get – you’re a dead man, hanging. Are you going to die and leave the rest of us to, what, save the world?

*A pre-recording, includes the audio line: “Father, forgive them. They have no idea what they’re doing,” followed by thunder claps and finally the ripping of the curtain. The soldier is left, hugging the cross in fear, saying:*

Oh my God, we just killed the Christ.

Arlyn Friesen Epp (Canada), 2023.

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