

April 5, 2020 Mt. 27: 11-54 (Short Form)

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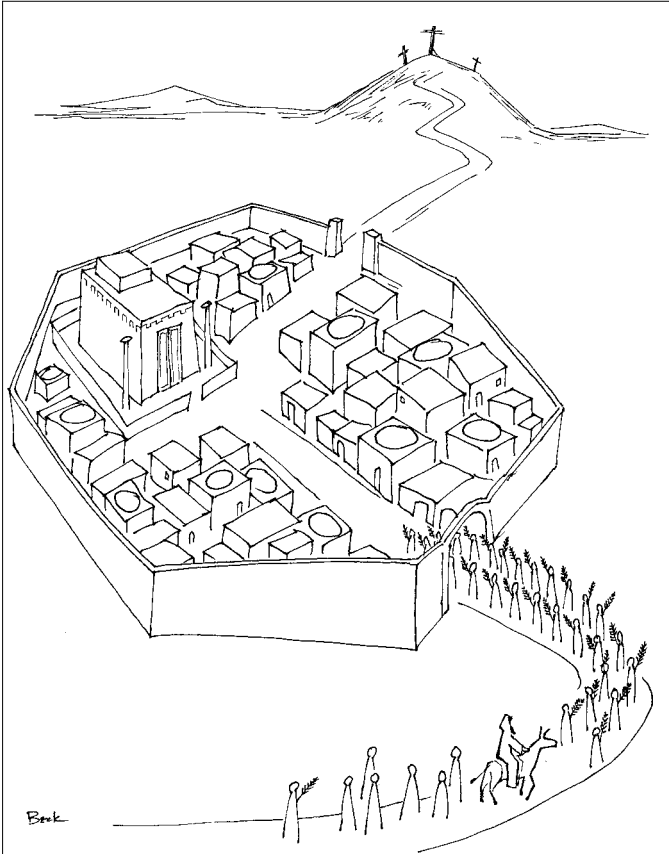
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### ENTERING THE SCENE:

We begin by parading in singing our Hosanna's (which means "save, we ask"), and shortly find ourselves yelling with the crowd "crucify him"! Something goes terribly wrong. Eventually, most of us scatter for our very lives, leaving just a few that loved the man Jesus, *hanging there* under the angry sky. It seems like those who just love the man, are able to hang in there with him: those who *hang their hopes* on what the man could do for them; abandon him. All their projections died on the cross with Jesus, leaving them without earthly hopes. But the story isn't over yet. Death does not always have the last word. This is not the end of the story. Something too wonder filled is about to break into space and time. RESURRECTION!!!

**Palm Sunday:** Short Form Mt. 27:11-54

11 Meanwhile **Jesus** stood before the **governor**, and the **governor** asked him, "Are you the **king of the Jews**?" "Yes, it is as you say," **Jesus** replied. 12 When he was accused by the **chief priests** and the **elders**, he gave no answer. 13 Then **Pilate** asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" 14 But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge--to the great amazement of the

**governor**. 15 Now it was the **governor's** custom at the Feast to release a notorious **prisoner**, called **Barabbas**. 17 So when the crowd had gathered, **Pilate** asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: **Barabbas**, or Jesus who is called **Christ**?" 18 For he knew it was out of envy that they handed **Jesus** over to him. 19 While **Pilate** was sitting on the judge's seat, his **wife** sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that **innocent man**, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."



CHRIST BEFORE PILATE above, is from the Vatican Collection. It was painted by Pietro Lorenzetti (Siena c. 1280-1348). It is tempera on panel.

The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art, NY. Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Pub. 1982. Page 138. [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

20 But the **chief priests** and the **elders** persuaded the **crowd** to ask for **Barabbas** and to have **Jesus** executed. 21 Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the **governor**. "**Barabbas**," they answered. 22 What shall I do, then, with **Jesus** who is called **Christ**?" **Pilate** asked. They all answered, "**Crucify him!**" 23 Why? What **crime** has he committed?" asked **Pilate**. But they shouted all the louder, "**Crucify him!**" 24 When **Pilate** saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and **washed his hands** in front of the **crowd**. "I am **innocent of this man's blood**," he said. "It is your responsibility!" 25 All the **people** answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our **children!**"

26. Then he released **Barabbas** to them. But he had **Jesus** flogged, and handed him over to be **crucified**.

27. Then the **governor's** **soldiers** took **Jesus** into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of **soldiers** around him. 28 They **stripped** him and put a scarlet **robe** on him, 29 and then **twisted** together a **crown** of thorns and set it on his head. They put a **staff** in his right hand and knelt in front

of him and **mocked** him. "Hail, **king of the Jews!**" they said. 30 They **spit** on him, and took the **staff** and **struck** him on the head again and again. 31 After they had **mocked** him, they took off the **robe** and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to **crucify** him.

32 As they were going out, they met a man from **Cyrene**, named **Simon**, and they forced him to carry the cross. 33 They came to a place called **Golgotha** (which means The Place of the Skull). 34 There they offered **Jesus** wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. 35 When they had **crucified** him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. 36 And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. 37 Above his head they placed the written charge against him: **THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS**. 38 Two **robbers** were **crucified** with him, one on his right and one on his left. 39 Those who passed by hurled **insults** at him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! **Come down** from the cross, if you are the **Son of God!**"

41 In the same way the **chief priests**, the **teachers of the law** and the **elders mocked** him. 42 He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the **King of Israel!** Let him **come down** now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in **God**. Let **God** rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the **Son of God.**'" 44 In the same way the **robbers** who were **crucified** with him also heaped **insults** on him. 45 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. 46 About the ninth hour **Jesus** cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" 47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling **Elijah.**" 48



Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to **Jesus** to drink. 49 The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if **Elijah** comesto save him." 50 And when **Jesus** had cried out again in a loud voice, he **gave up his spirit**. 51 At that moment the curtain of the **temple** was torn in two from top to bottom. The **earth** shook and the rocks split. 52 The **tombs** broke open and the bodies of many holy **people who had died** were **raised** to life. 53 They came out of the **tombs**, and after **Jesus' resurrection** they went into the **holy city** and appeared to many **people**. 54 When the **centurion** and those with him who were guarding **Jesus** saw the **earthquake** and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the **Son of God!**"

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Even Jesus felt abandoned by God as he hung on the cross. Have you ever felt that same abandonment while “hanging on your cross”? If so, how does this awareness help you?

**PRAYER:** Lord, for a while you felt the abandonment of any felt presence of the father. I find something strangely comforting in knowing this. You truly shared my human condition to the fullest. But you “hung in there” and God’s presence enabled you to hand over your spirit in the trust of God’s promise of resurrection. Help me to also hang in there, trusting that same promise. Amen.

**CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS & DENIAL OF ST. PETER:** (1303-5) Duccio: Siena; Museo dell' opera del Duomo. Brown, Stephanie. *Religious Painting*. NY: Mayflower Books. 1979. Page 23.

**WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:**

**JESUS / CHRIST / SON OF GOD / KING OF THE JEWS / KING OF ISRAEL:** All these names and titles describe what humanity was longing for on this fateful day.

*What are you longing for as you struggle with the challenges of your life now? Which of these best describes your hopes?*

**GOVERNOR / PILATE:** Pilate could govern only as long as he managed to keep the status quo in place. In fact, shortly after the resurrection, Pilate was demoted to a remote outpost because he failed to do so.

*Have you ever had to compromise your integrity in order to placate an oppressive system that was beyond your control? If so, how did it turn out?*

**CHIEF PRIEST / ELDERS / TEACHERS OF THE LAW:** These people were the local leaders of the people. They also had come to a compromise with Rome in order to keep their power.

*Do you think that these people thought of themselves as protecting the people for their own good?*

**BARABBAS:** This man’s name means “son of the father”. He was probably a “freedom fighter” of his day, which made him a real problem for all those who were straining to keep things the same.

*Does this information help you make sense of why the people wanted him released instead of Jesus?*

**PILATE’S WIFE:** This woman was listening to her inner wisdom, which if listened to, could have turned the event into something very different.

*Have you ever stifled your inner wisdom? What do you think might have happened if Pilate had listened?*

**PRISONER / ROBBERS:** We cage up those who steal from us what we feel is ours.

*How did it work then? How is this system working now?*

**INNOCENT MAN / INNOCENT:** Pilate calls Jesus innocent. He then claims himself innocent. The word can mean, naïve, ignorant, guileless, guiltless, unworldly, or harmless.

*Examine how each of these words fits these two men. Which fits each person best?*

**WASHED HIS HANDS:** Pilate tries to demonstrate his separation from this “out of control” mob.

*Was this event truly out of his control? What could he have done that might have changed things?*

**CROWD / PEOPLE:** These are the nameless masses that are representing all of us that day.

*How do you feel each year when you cry out “crucify him” as the gospel is read? Do you imagine that you would have been able to resist the pressure?*

**EXECUTED / CRUCIFY HIM:** Jesus frustrated those who projected their hopes on him, so they wanted him dead.

*What is it about projections, that when frustrated, turns deadly? How might it have been different if people could have accepted Jesus as he truly was, instead of how they wanted him to be?*

**FLOGGED / STRIPPED / TWISTED / MOCKED / SPIT / STRUCK / INSULTS:** These are power filled words that all express contempt and rage.

*How do these words help you to see what God is willing to endure in order to prove God's love for you?*

**SOLDIERS / CENTURION:** A centurion is the leader of a hundred soldiers. We move from unrestrained brutality to a confession of faith in one afternoon.

*What did the Centurion see? What made this radical shift possible?*



**CROWN / ROBE / STAFF / ELIJAH:** In the people's effort to destroy the one who frustrated their hopes, they employed all the symbols of the role that they wished Jesus would claim for him and them as well.

*How did this help them to see what God was doing as they experienced the risen Christ?*

PARTITION OF CHRIST'S ROBES: Athens, Byzantine Museum Taylor, John. [Icon Painting](#). NY. Mayflower Books. 1979. Page 74.

**CYRENE / GOLGOTHA / HOLY CITY:** Cyrene is a city in Africa; Golgotha is traditionally located outside the walls of Jerusalem the holy city. So a person from far away, who was probably a Jew coming to spend the high feast in the holy city, plays a pivotal role in God's plan of salvation that day.

*Do you think you could have done what Simon did? Would you rather be him than one of the crowd yelling, "Crucify him"?*

**SIMON:** In Mk. 15:21 we learn that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus who were two very important men in the early church.

*What does this tell you about the effect of Simon's deed that day on his family? Are you aware of how your deeds affect those who look to you for an example?*

**MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU ABANDONED ME?:** Even Jesus felt the absence of God as he died? But he "hung in there" and God's presence came back to him.

*Could this be an important insight for anyone who is facing his or her own death?*

**COME DOWN / GAVE UP HIS SPIRIT:** Jesus did not come floating down from the cross, but instead, offered up his spirit to God.

*How would your understanding of God be affected if Jesus would have come down from the cross?*

**TEMPLE / EARTH / TOMBS / EARTHQUAKE:** All of space and time were radically affected by Jesus' free gift of non-violent resistance to evil that day. God's very being was revealed as unconditional love.

*How has your Lenten meditations helped you to open yourself to this unconditional love?*

**RESURRECTION / RAISED:** None of what happened would matter without the Resurrection.

*Has your confidence in your Resurrection been strengthened this past year? If so, how?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mt. 27:11 f // Mk. 15:2-5; Lk. 23:2f; Jn. 18: 29-39; Mt. 27:12 // Wis. 2:19; Mt. 27:15-26 // Mk. 15:6-15; Lk. 23:17-25; Jn. 18:39f; Mt. 27:20 // Acts 3:14; Mt. 27:25 // Acts 18:6; Mt. 27:27-31 // Mk. 15:16-20; Jn. 19:2f; Mt. 27:30 // Mt. 27:11; Mt. 27:30 // Is. 50:6; Mt. 27:33 // Mk. 15:21; Lk. 23:36; Mt. 27:34-50 // Mk. 15:22-34; Lk. 23:32-38, 44f; Jn. 19:17f; Mt. 27:35 // Ps. 22:19; Mt. 27:38 // Lk. 22:37; Mt. 27:39 // Lk. 22:37; Mt. 27:39 // Ps. 22:8; Mt. 27:40 // Jn. 2:19; Mt. 27:43 // Ps. 22: 9;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Is. 50: 4-7; Ps. 22: 8-9, 17-24; Phil. 2: 6-11; Mt. 26:14 - 27: 66;

Revised Common Lectionary: Is. 50:4-9; Ps. 31:9-16; Phil. 2:5-11; Mt. 26: 14 - 27: 66;

Compare Mt. 27: 52-54 with Ezekiel 37: 10-13.

#### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

Paul reports the earliest form of the Christian tradition: Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve (1 Cor. 15:3-5). As the first generation of Christians began to die, a short narrative of Jesus' passion developed. Mark and Matthew give us fulfillment themes. Luke and John give us a more complete account of the words of Jesus. The early church, working back from their experience of the risen Christ, bring us what we need to be able to share in their experience of God's love revealed in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Each gospel let us see through their unique lens, thereby giving us what we need to come to faith and persevere in that faith.

John Shea tells it like this:

Astride a borrowed donkey / whose hooves trampled the royal palms / and cheered by the poor who have no voice / and rocks that have recently learned to shout, / Jesus arrived at the feast of a liberation long gone / with the hope of a liberation yet to come. / The Son whose hands never left the plow / and who pushed past fields of the dead / burying their own / moved with the anger of a long lost heir / into the traffic of the temple. / The priest of the whip and the dream / shouted over the clatter of coins / at the fleeing priests of smoke and magic. / "not for the people, but for you! / Not for the law, but for you! / Not for the faith, but for you! / Not for the children, but for you! / I must die!"

So Annas whispered in the ear of Caiaphas / and Caiaphas whispered in the ear of Herod / and Herod whispered in the ear of Pilate / and the thin man hunted the midnight streets / till he found him awake in the garden of sleep / and whispered in the ear of Jesus / who screamed at the night. / "Send twelve legions of angels / and I will crush them." / But the voice was not his own. / It had no ring to it, / like someone had ripped / the tongue from a great bell. / Jesus prayed again, / "Your will is my blood. / Your wish is my breath." / And the music of the water returned / and with it the name the Jordan gave him.

Then a tree without leaves / and nails against the carpenter / and cracked lips of gall / and the thin man turned legion, / his voice splintered into a 1000 thorns, / each one piercing the darkness of noon. / "If you are the son of God, / climb down from that cross; / and dance in the temple air / or bake rocks into bread / or step on the neck of the world / or escape into the desert / and starve yourself into heaven." / But Jesus held fast / to the life he was losing. / It was the centurion of many crucifixions / who saw in the man of the edge of the world / the Son of the God of everlasting embrace. / "Truly, this was the Son of Love. / then he ran a lance into the side / of the man who would not come down. / The blood of Jesus and the water of the Jordan / flowed as one stream down the cross, / soaking through the earth / with the determination of a journey, / carrying the Son / to the unmoving center of the universe. Pages 197-199.

Shea, John. [Stories of Faith](#). Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1980,



An Ossuary (bone box) thought to contain the [Simon of Cyrene](#) was part of a massive exhibit last year that toured 3 major US cities. [Biblical Archaeology Review](#)- 3-4/07



remains of from Israel

Pg. 20.

Jesus was condemned by the Roman authorities for Rome, not by the Sanhedrin (Jewish council) for Jewish law. The Romans used crucifixion to maintain peace and order and punish rebellious provincials for incitement to rebellion and acts of treason. Although victims of crucifixion

were sometimes left on their crosses for days, this was not usually the case? According to the Gospel accounts, Pontius Pilate approved Joseph of Arimathea's request to remove Jesus' body from the cross for burial. Presumably Joseph had to make this special request because he wanted to ensure that Jesus received a proper burial before the beginning of the Sabbath.

Magness, Jodi. What Did Jesus' Tomb Look Like? [Biblical Archaeology Review](#). 1-2/06

Dt. 21: 22-23: If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his corpse hung on a tree, it shall not remain on the tree overnight. You shall bury it the same day; otherwise, since God's curse rests on him who hangs on a tree, you will defile the land which the Lord, your God is giving you as an inheritance. When Christianity takes its place in the movement towards the development of world-wide community it will be able to express, in and for that great community, its understanding of a solidarity that is free from violence and hatred.

Johann Metz. -Faith in History and Society

The night before he was assassinated on April 3, 1968, King repeated his warning: "It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence. It's nonviolence or nonexistence."

Only in Matthean redaction at Matthew 12: 38- 40 have the authorities heard Jesus' three-day resurrection prophecy-a development that allows a quite different logic. There a three-day watch is necessary lest the disciples steal the corpse and "tell the people" a lie about resurrection. In Gospel of Peter 8:30 the problem is quite different. Only after three days-that is, on the fourth day, as with Lazarus in John 11:17-is someone surely and certainly dead. Guards are

-- needed until that point of possible resuscitation is securely past. If the disciples were to resuscitate Jesus (or so it goes in the minds of the authorities), the people, in their present state of mind, might assume resurrection. They would not even need to be told by the disciples! Because of the repenting people, then, the Jewish authorities enlist Roman help in guarding the tomb.

A crucial distinction is now established between Jewish authorities and Jewish people, and this distinction reaches a climax in Act 3. Both Roman and Jewish authorities are actually at the tomb and witness the resurrection of Jesus. The Roman authorities confess Jesus, but the Jewish authorities conspire with Pilate to deceive their own people:

They all came to him, beseeching him (Pilate) and urgently calling upon him to command the centurion and the soldiers to tell no one what they had seen. "For it is better for us," they said, "to make ourselves guilty of the greatest sin before God than to fall into the

hands of the people of the Jews and be stoned.” Pilate therefore commanded the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing. (*Gospel of Peter 11: 47-49*)

Crossan, John Dominic. [The Birth of Christianity](#)—NY. HarperSanFrancisco. 1998. Pg. 497.

[Gospel of Peter](#): 1: 5. And it was noon, and darkness came over all Judaea. And they were troubled and distressed for fear the sun had set while he was yet alive, for it is written for them that the sun must not set on him that has been put to death. And one of them said, Give him gall with vinegar to drink. And they mixed and gave it to him to drink, and fulfilled all things, and accomplished their sins against their own head. And many went about with lamps, supposing that it was night, and fell down. And the Lord cried out, saying, My power, my power, you have forsaken me. And when he had said it, he was taken up. And in that hour the veil of the temple of Jerusalem was rent in two.

6. And then they drew out the nails from the hands of the Lord and laid him upon the earth, the whole earth quaked, and great fear arose. Then the sun shone, and it was found to be the ninth hour. Then the Jews rejoiced and gave his body to Joseph so he might bury it, since he had seen what good things he had done. And he took the Lord, washed him, rolled him in a linen cloth, and brought him to his own tomb, which was called the Garden of Joseph.



Note: The author(of this gospel) is trying to pass himself off as Jesus’own disciple. The good Christians of Rhossus notwithstanding, modern scholars have not been much fooled. This account was probably written after the canonical Gospels, long after Peter had died. (Click on this link to read the [short gospel of Peter](#).) Ehrman, Bart D. [Lost Christianities](#). NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 2003

Perhaps Christians need to say something different to their children. “My child, the world is always a dangerous and threatening place where death surrounds us. When I brought you for baptism I acknowledged that I could not possibly guarantee your future. I handed you over to the God who loves you and with whom you are safe in both life and death. There is no security to be found elsewhere, certainly not from me or those like me. Live with courage, therefore, and, if it must be, do not be afraid to die in the service of what is good and just.” Meilaender, Gilbert. [After September 11](#). Christian Century 9/36-10/3, 2001 Pg. 8.

My hope is that this holy week will be one that brings you to a new depth in the understanding of the God of Jesus. A God who loves without condition, a God who will do whatever it takes to get you and me to realize what being loved like that means. Every person has to come to the God experience on their own. Conversion is a foundational change in life position and perspective and, finally, one’s very identity. **After the transformation God is not out there any more. You don’t look at God as a separate identity; you look out from God who lives in you and through you and with you.** That is a major shift, probably the most major shift possible for humans. Like Paul, a converted

person becomes convinced that they are participating in something bigger than themselves. After conversion you know you are being used, you know you are being led, and above all you realize your life is not all about you! You are about life! It is happening inside of you and all God needs is your “yes” and your participation. It is likely the hardest yes you will ever utter, because your years of habit will all shout “not possible,” “not me,” and “not worthy.”

Richard Rohr: [The Great Themes of Paul: Life as Participation](#) (CD)

Repentance is not remorse nor is it regret. Those refer to specific acts that a person wishes they hadn't done. No, repentance is something much deeper and thus more pervasive in a person's life. It is sorrow that one set his heart on something as "ultimate" that has been found through experience to be an illusion. Thus, one cannot truly repent unless one has an experience of what is truly ultimate. [Fr. Jonah Wharff](#)

#### SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Shea, John. [Stories of Faith](#). Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1980, Pages 197-199.

Sumwalt, John E. [Forty Tellable Tales for Cycle A](#). C.S.S. Pub. Co. Inc. Lima, Ohio. 1992. **PALM SUNDAY**: Pages 61-61.