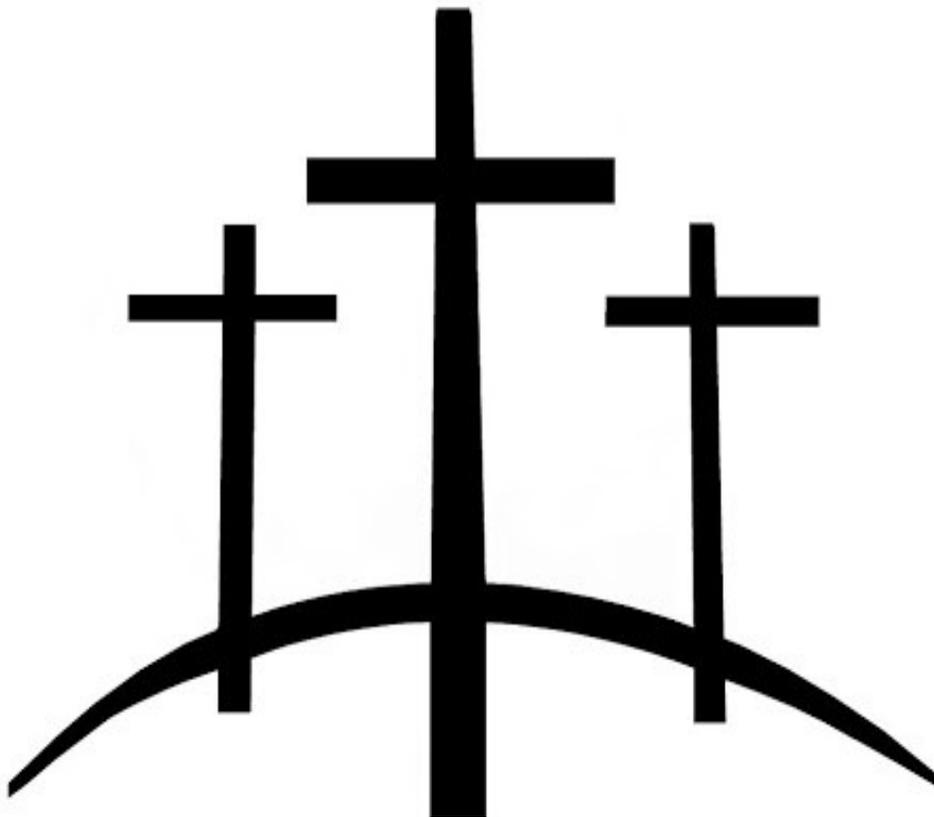


A Passion Play Story

A story about the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



The story in scripture can be found in John 11:1-46, John 12:1-19, Luke 22, John 13, Luke 23, John 18 -20:18

The Raising of Lazarus

OUR STORY BEGINS... the same way it will end, with a Resurrection, God's victory over death. The place is the town of Bethany, the home of 3 special friends of Jesus...Lazarus, Mary and Martha. But tonight the town is filled with sadness because Lazarus had died four days ago. Many Jews had come to comfort Mary and Martha. When a messenger told Martha that Jesus was coming she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed behind.

Looking into His eyes, Martha said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Jesus replied, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Martha said, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ."

She returned to tell her sister, Mary, that Jesus was here. Hearing the news, Mary quickly went out to meet Jesus. She fell at his feet and said the same words Martha had said, "Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died."

Jesus asked, "Where have you laid him?"

Mary and Martha replied together, "Come and see, Lord."

Jesus commanded, "Take away the stone!"

Mary and Martha gasped and said, "But Lord, by this time there is a bad smell, for he has been laid there four days."

Jesus again commanded, "Take away the stone!"

The women rolled away the stone. Jesus gave thanks to God. Then He commanded in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"

Just then, Lazarus emerged from the tomb still wrapped in his burial cloths. Jesus directs Mary and Martha, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Mary and Martha rush to Lazarus and take off his burial cloths and embrace him as the other women look on in astonishment and disbelief! Lazarus then goes to Jesus and falls at his feet. The raising of Lazarus from the dead was an incredible moment! This miracle shows us that Jesus is who he said he was: "The Resurrection and the Life!" But this incredible miracle also reveals something else to us. It shows us the "tears of God." And what is more incredible?? A man who raises the dead OR a God who weeps!

Thank you God for weeping with us when we cry.

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

Many people who had seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead became believers and put their faith in Jesus. But when Caiaphas and the chief priests heard about the resurrection of Lazarus they became worried. They thought that Jesus and his miracles were a threat to them. They asked themselves, 'What are we going to do? What will happen to us if we let Jesus go on?' So the chief priests began to plot a way to kill both Jesus and Lazarus. For it was because of this miracle that many of the Jews changed their minds and now believed in Jesus.

Later, Jesus arrived again in the town of Bethany, where Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha lived. Jesus and His disciples were served a dinner, which was given to honor Jesus. Martha, the older sister, who always was busy in the kitchen, served the meal to those reclining at the table with Jesus. Then, something very unusual happened! Mary was overcome with her love for Jesus and took the opportunity to worship him. She took a container of expensive perfume, poured it on Jesus feet and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, did not like what Mary did. He thought Mary was wasteful and told her so. But Jesus understood Mary's deep devotion. Jesus told Judas, "Leave her alone! You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me."

Dear Jesus, help us to remember to always take time to listen to your word.

Palm Sunday

The time came for Jesus to go to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover with His disciples. When they were near the city, Jesus sent two of His disciples ahead, to the village of Bethpage. He told them, "In the village you will find a colt. Untie it and bring it to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell them, "The Master needs it. He will send it back soon." So the two disciples hurried off to the village, and brought back the colt.

Many people in Jerusalem had heard about Jesus and his miracle with Lazarus. They wanted to see him! When they heard He was on His way, they were excited and rushed out to greet Him. They shouted, "Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming!"

They threw their cloaks on the road. Others cut palm branches from the trees. Crowds went in front of Jesus and crowds followed behind Him. All of them were rejoicing, praising Him and shouting: "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest!"

But there were some people in the city, who did not praise Jesus. They feared him! They were priests, politicians, and men of the power. During the celebration, they stopped Jesus. One of the chief priests named Caiaphus said, "Teacher, command your disciples to be quiet!"

Jesus responded, "I tell you if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out!"

The crowds continued to shout their praises by saying "Hosanna, Hosanna!" Seeing this, the chief priests and religious leaders, who did not like Jesus, said to one another, "Look how the whole world has gone after him!" They began to plot an unfair way to arrest Jesus and kill Him.

Just then, Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, went to Jesus' enemies and asked, "How much will you pay me to get Jesus into your hands?" They were delighted and answered, "We will give you 30 silver coins."

It was agreed that Judas would betray Jesus with a kiss. Judas took the coins and from that time on watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them.

Dear Jesus, thank you for always loving us even when we are unfair to you.

Feet Washing

When the day came to eat the Jewish Passover meal, Jesus sent Peter and John in to Jerusalem to get ready for it. There they met someone carrying a pitcher of water. They followed her and talked to the owner of a house. They told her that the Master wanted to know where the guest room was so that He may celebrate the Passover with His disciples. The man showed them a large room with couches. Just as Jesus said he would. It was the first evening of the Passover festival. Quietly, Jesus and His disciples climbed the steps to the room where they would eat their last Passover meal together.

Jesus knew that His work on earth was nearly complete. But before He went back to his Father in heaven, Jesus himself, wanted to demonstrate what it means to be a servant of God. So He got up from the dinner table and wrapped a towel around His waist. Then He poured some water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet. When He got to Peter, Peter said, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet?"

Jesus said, "You don't know exactly what I'm doing now Peter, but you will understand later."

Peter argued, "I will never let you wash my feet, Lord!"

Jesus calmly responded, "If you don't let me wash your feet, I can't be a part of you."

"Then wash my hands, and head too!" Peter pleaded.

Jesus washed Peter's feet. When He finished washing each of the disciple's feet, He returned to his place at the table. Then Jesus said, "Do you understand what I have done? You call me Master and Lord and you are right. But if your Master and Lord has washed your feet, then you should wash each other's feet too. No servant is greater than the Master. I have shown you what to do so that you will do the same."

Dear Jesus, Help us to follow your example and be servants to others.

The Betrayal of Judas

After Jesus washed His disciple's feet, He was deeply troubled, because He knew that one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, was going to turn Him over to his enemies. Jesus spoke, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." The disciples were saddened, and looked at one another. They couldn't believe what they had heard. Which one of them would turn Jesus over to His enemies? How could any one of them, not be loyal and faithful, to their friend Jesus? One by one, they said to Jesus: "Is it I?"

Jesus said, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." He then handed the bread to Judas. Judas accepted the bread, and left at once.

Then, Jesus and his disciples put on their prayer shawls. Jesus picked up a loaf of bread, gave thanks, and broke it. He then picked up a cup, gave thanks, and offered it to them. As He did this He said, "A new command I give you: 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. I command you love one another."

Jesus then said, "Tonight all of you will run away and leave me."

Peter protested, "Not I! Never! I will never leave you!"

Jesus explained, "Tonight, Peter, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you don't know me."

Peter again protested, "I will never say that, even if I have to die with you!"

As they left the Upper Room all the disciples said the same thing, that they would never leave Jesus and that they would be loyal, but Jesus knew what they would do.

Dear Jesus, you knew what was in your disciples' hearts, and you know what is in my heart. Help me to grow stronger in my faith so I can be faithful to you.

Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus and his disciples went to Gethsemane, a quiet garden with many beautiful trees. He told his disciples to wait for him and pray. He went off a little distance, to be by Himself and pray.

At last He got up, and went back to His disciples, but they had fallen asleep. "Can't you stay awake for just one hour?" He asked.

Jesus was still talking to His disciples, when a group of men with swords, clubs, and torches arrived. These men were sent from Caiphus and the priests. In front of them, came the disciple Judas Iscariot. Jesus asked, "Who are you looking for?"

The guards answered, "Jesus of Nazareth".
"I am He." Jesus responded.

The guards drew back when Jesus announced who He was. Judas Iscariot went to Jesus and kissed Him, just like he said he would do.

Jesus asked, "Judas, are you betraying me with a kiss?" At that moment, Peter drew his sword and slashed off the ear of one of the guards.

Jesus shouted, "STOP! Put your swords away! No more of this!" Jesus touched the man's ear and healed him. Jesus asked, "Am I leading a rebellion that you have come with swords and clubs?"

Immediately, the men stepped forward, seized Jesus, and arrested him. They tied his hands and led him away, like a criminal. Then all the disciples ran away in fear. Everything was happening, just like Jesus said it would.

Those who had arrested Jesus, took him to Caiphas, and the council of priests. The disciple John followed closely, while the disciple Peter followed him at a distance, staying outside in the courtyard, and warming himself by the fire. The chief priests were looking for lies against Jesus, so they could put him to death. Caiphus asked Jesus, "Aren't you going to answer the charges against you? I charge you under oath by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God!"

Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say."

Caiphus shouted, "UH! He has spoken blasphemy!" Other priests yelled too saying, "He should die!"

Another priest, Annas, demanded, "Take him to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. By Roman law he must condemn him"

Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Then they blindfolded him and led him away. All the time making fun of him and beating him.

Dear Jesus, let your calm in the face of injustice be an example for us.

Peter's Denial

At this same time, Peter was standing in the courtyard, warming himself by the fire, a servant girl came by. Looking closely at him, she said "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." But Peter denied it saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." A little later, another servant girl looked at Peter closely, and said, "You are one of them." Again Peter said, "I am not." After a while, a third person came by saying, "You are one of them I saw you in the garden with Jesus." Peter again denied knowing Jesus and said, "I tell you, I do not know the man."

Peter remembered the words of Jesus, 'before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will say 3 times, that you do not know me.' Peter ran away and cried and cried, for he had denied his Lord.

Forgive us Lord when we also deny you, like Peter did.

The Trial Before Pilate

Very early in the morning on the next day, the guards took Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. "What charge are you bringing against this man? Of what do you accuse him?" Pilate inquired.

Caiphus claimed, "He says he is the king of the Jews."

Pilate asked, "Are you king of the Jews?"

Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say."

Pilate was puzzled. He didn't think Jesus did anything wrong. But Jesus' enemies', the priests, insisted that He must be punished. They accused Him of many things. They shouted things like. 'The things He teaches are stirring up the people.' 'He's causing riots' and 'He's a threat to our nation'.

Pilate asked Jesus, "Don't you hear the charges they are bringing against you? Aren't you going to answer?" Jesus remained silent. Pilate was amazed. Then Pilate is told that Jesus is from Galilee, the region ruled by Herod. He sends Jesus to Herod, who will deal with this problem. "Roman soldiers! Come get Jesus and take Him to Herod. Let Herod decide what to do with Jesus, the man from Galilee."

Herod was very pleased when he saw Jesus, because he had heard about Him and had been wanting to see Him for a long time. Herod asked Jesus many questions. "Tell me, Jesus, r-e-a-l-l-y, who are you? I have heard that you perform m-i-r-a-c-l-e-s. Won't you perform a miracle for me now?" Again, the priests stepped forward, and made strong accusations against Jesus. Herod continued to mock Jesus laughing and saying, "If you are KING, don't you need a royal ROBE? Here's an elegant ROBE for you!" He threw his own robe at Jesus. Then he directed the soldiers, "Take Him back to Pilate! Let Governor Pilate decide what to do with this man Jesus!"

Upon returning to Pilate he said, "You brought this man to me and said that he was misleading the people by starting a rebellion. I have examined him and have found Jesus NOT GUILTY of any of the crimes you accuse him of ...neither did Herod for he has sent him back to me. There is nothing this man has done to deserve death." Pilate wanted to set Jesus free. He remembered the custom that every year at the Passover Festival, he would allow one prisoner, chosen by the crowd of people, to go free. He knew very well that the Jewish leaders had handed Jesus over to him because they were jealous of Jesus. At that time there was a well-known prisoner named Barabbas, who had been put in prison for

murder and for starting a riot. Pilate told the soldiers, "Bring me the prisoner Barabbas!"

While Pilate was waiting, his wife sent him a message based on a dream. This message said, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man because in a dream last night, I suffered much on account of him."

When the soldiers returned with Barabbas in chains Pilate asked the crowd, "Which of these two men do you want me to release to you? Barabbas or Jesus, who is called the Christ?" Now, the chief priests had persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas, and they answered, "Barabbas, Barabbas...We want Barabbas!"

Pilate then asked, "What shall I do then with Jesus, who is called the Christ?" To this the crowd chanted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Confused Pilate asked, "Why?? What crime has he committed? I cannot find anything he has done to deserve death! I will have him whipped and set him free!" But the crowd kept on shouting at the top of their voices that Jesus should be crucified, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Finally their shouting succeeded and an uproar was starting. When Pilate saw he was getting nowhere, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. Then defeated, Pilate claimed, "I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility. Let Barabbas go as they want. Take Jesus away from me. Leave now!" So Pilate set Barabbas free and handed Jesus over to be crucified.

Then Pilate's soldiers began to make fun of Jesus. They pushed a crown of thorns on His head. They put a staff in His right hand and spit on Him. Then they knelt down in front of Him and laughed at Him saying, "Hail King of the Jews... Hail King of the Jews." They took a staff and struck Him on the head again and again. Then they went away.

Dear Jesus, help us to remember to always choose you.

The Crucifixion

On the same day that Jesus was crucified, there were two other men, both criminals, who were also put to death. Jesus began that lonely walk down the Via Dolorosa. On the way, He met a man named Simon, who was from the land of Cyrene. The soldiers made Simon carry Jesus' cross and walk behind Him. Large numbers of people followed Jesus, including some women who were crying. Jesus said to these women, "Don't cry for Me. Cry for yourselves instead."

It was 9 o'clock in the morning when they reached a place called Golgotha, a low hill outside Jerusalem. Then they crucified Jesus, they nailed Him to a cross. Jesus wearily said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing." The soldiers offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh, but He did not take it. Then the soldiers played a game, to see who would get Jesus' clothing. All the while the Jewish leaders made fun of Him. Above His head they placed a sign saying: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

One of the other criminals asked Jesus, "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

The second criminal replied, "Don't you fear God? We are getting what we deserve for what we did. He has done no wrong. Remember me Jesus, when you come into your Kingdom."

Jesus assured them, "I promise you that today you will be in paradise with me." At about noon, darkness covered the earth and stayed until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Jesus spoke, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me? Father, into your hands, I give My spirit. It is finished." Just then the earth shook, the rocks split and graves were opened! At the moment Jesus died, the great curtain in the temple was torn in half, from top to bottom. Then one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear. Then many people went away.

Why did this curtain tear?? God showed us that each one of us is invited to go directly to God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Burial of Jesus

As evening came, Joseph of Arimathea, an important member of the council, who disagreed with the other religious leaders, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus secretly at night. Surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead, Pilate ordered that Jesus' body be given to the men for burial. They took Jesus down from the cross and wrapped him in a clean linen cloth. A mother's love brought Mary to the cross. She was there when Jesus came into the world, in the town of Bethlehem. And 33 years later, she came to Jerusalem, where with anguish she watched her son being crucified. What pain and sorrow filled Mary's heart as she looked at the boy she had raised. They took Jesus' body to Joseph of Arimathea's tomb in a nearby garden and buried him there. No one had ever been laid in this tomb. A large stone was rolled in front of the entrance to the tomb. The people who did not like Jesus were afraid that someone would come at night and take away His body. So they went to Pilate and demanded that soldiers guard the tomb. Across the stone the soldiers put a rope with a Roman seal.

Dear Jesus, help us to always be bold when speaking about you.

Easter Morning

Sunday, as soon as dawn had broken, the women hurried back to the tomb with salves and spices they had prepared to anoint Jesus' body. As they ran they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" They thought the stone would be a big problem but still they went on their way. Suddenly, there was a violent earthquake. The angels of the Lord came from heaven and going to the tomb, rolled back the stone. The guards were so afraid that they shook and became like dead men. God looked upon His Son and said, "Arise, My Love! The grave no longer has a hold on you. Arise, My Love!"

When the women arrived at the tomb, they saw that it was open! The stone had been rolled away. Mary Magdalene hurried to look inside. But Jesus was gone! His body was not there! What had happened? She didn't wait to discuss it with the other women. She hurried away to tell Peter and John what she had found. After she had gone, the other women saw the angels who said to them, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here! He is risen, just as He said. COME and SEE the place where He lay, then go and tell his disciples." The women did as the angel told them. They scurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy. They ran to tell the disciples the good news!

Meanwhile, Peter and John started for the tomb. Both were running, but John outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in, but did not go in. Then, Peter arrived and went into the tomb. John followed him. Inside the tomb they found the burial cloth, which had been around Jesus. They went back to their homes, while Mary Magdalene stayed outside the tomb crying. As she cried, she again looked towards the tomb, and angels in white appeared. The angels asked her, "Woman why are you crying?"

Mary answered, "They have taken my Lord, and I don't know where they have put him."

As she turned around she saw someone in back of her, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus then asked, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

With tears swelling her eyes and thinking this man was the gardener, Mary answered, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him and I will get Him."

Jesus simply said, "Mary."

Suddenly Mary's eyes were opened and she cried, "My Master!" Then she fell at Jesus' feet.

Jesus told Mary, "Go to my followers and tell them I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." She went immediately to tell the disciples the good news, that she had seen Jesus. Jesus is alive!

The Bible says that one day people from every tribe and nation will bow on their knees and confess with their tongues that, Jesus Christ is Lord! Jesus, through His life, death and resurrection has given each of us an example to live by. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ~Amen

