

Passion play script

Scene 1 – PALM SUNDAY (Reedham Primary School playground)

Matt 21:1-27 Mark 11:1-33 Luke 19:28-20:8 John 12:12-36

Synopsis

Jesus enters Jerusalem and is greeted by cheering crowds. The priests and elders plot to kill Jesus. Judas, one of his disciples, takes money and agrees to betray him.

Script

Narrator: Two thousand years ago, a young man called Jesus of Nazareth walked around the land of Israel with a small band of followers, teaching the people about the Kingdom of God and performing miracles of healing which amazed everyone. His fame spread rapidly, and soon there were rumours circulating that he was the Messiah, or saviour, for whom the country had been waiting since the days of the prophets.

Jesus wasn't popular with everyone. He criticised the ruling classes – the scribes and Pharisees, the priests and elders of the land – for hypocrisy. They felt threatened by Jesus, and they hated him.

Our story begins when Jesus had been teaching for three years, and the time of the Jewish Passover feast was approaching. He had decided to spend Passover in Jerusalem, much to the dismay of his disciples, since they knew he would be more vulnerable there. Now Jesus is entering Jerusalem through the famous Golden Gate, accompanied by his disciples, and he is being greeted by cheering crowds

Crowd: *(various people shouting a mixture of things)* "Hurrah!" "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord!" "Welcome Jesus!" *(Flags or other symbols of welcome are waved)*

Jesus: *(Smiles, waves and nods to the crowd (as do the disciples, slightly overcome by the welcome). (Caiaphas and other priests are in a small group to the side, watching Jesus but saying nothing).*

Caiaphas: *(to the small group of priests around him)* "That man has got to be stopped! We are losing the respect of the people! There will be a riot soon, and we will have the Romans on our backs as well! Do you know what he did today?"

Priest 1: "What did he do, Caiaphas?"

Caiaphas: "He stormed into the temple courtyard, turned over the tables of the money changers and called the temple of God a den of thieves! Then he went straight into the temple and started teaching the people – and he's not one of us!"

Priest 2: "No! He didn't! What did you say to him?"

Caiaphas: "I asked him by whose authority he had done all that, but he wouldn't say – he just asked me a question about that other troublemaker, John the Baptist, trying to trick me. When I wouldn't answer, neither would he."

Priest 1: "He wouldn't answer you, the High Priest? What insolence!"

Priest 2: "We could arrest him. He has said some terrible things about us, and he encourages the mob to break the law. He even walks about and does his strange tricks on the Sabbath."

Priest 3: "Yes, and I heard him threatening to destroy our sacred temple – and then rebuild it in just three days! Sacrilegious rubbish – he definitely should be locked up!"

Passion play script

Caiaphas: “Locking up is no good – the people are on his side. No, we have to convict him of blasphemy against God, so that we can have him executed. That’s the only way to stop this nonsense.”

Priest1: “But how do we arrest him? His followers will resist. If only we knew where he went off to at night! Then we could catch him on his own”

Judas: *(coming up to Caiaphas)* “I think I may be able to help”

Caiaphas: “Judas Iscariot! One of his own close band of renegades! How could you possibly help us?”

Judas: “I know where he goes at night, and I can lead you to him”

Caiaphas: “Why would you do that? Are you the only peasant who doesn’t believe in him?”

Judas: “What has belief got to do with it? This is a financial affair, if you get my meaning”

Caiaphas: *(sneering)* “Yes, I understand you perfectly. How much do you want?”

Judas: “Thirty silver pieces. I think he’s worth that much to you”

(Caiaphas gets into a huddle with the other priests and produces a bag of money)

Caiaphas: “Here you are. Thirty pieces of silver. Come and find me at the temple when an opportune moment arrives. But make it soon, and don’t go back on this deal or there won’t be any hiding place for you in Israel”

(Judas nods and disappears, following Jesus and the others. The priests also exit)

Narrator: A week goes past uneventfully, and eventually Judas gets his chance. Jesus and his twelve disciples need a quiet room to celebrate the first day of Passover, and Jesus tells them of a place which is willing to house them. Judas slips away to notify Caiaphas. Jesus knows that Judas will betray him, but does nothing to stop him leaving, on his own, before the rest of them.

Jesus and the remaining eleven disciples go off as planned to the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, a quiet and lonely place outside the city of Jerusalem. Our story continues from there . . .

Scene 2 – GETHSEMANE (Reedham Primary School playing field)

Matt 26:30-56 Mark 14:26-52 Luke 22:31-53 John 18:1-11

Synopsis

Jesus goes to a quiet place with some of his disciples and prays about the terrible day to come. He believes that they will kill him. Judas, accompanied by soldiers, comes to find him and Jesus is arrested.

Script

Narrator: Following the Passover meal, Jesus and his disciples walk out of the city to the Mount of Olives, and into the Garden of Gethsemane, which is where we join them. Jesus knows what is going to happen to him, and he is worried and afraid . . .

Peter: “What’s the matter, Jesus? You look sad – that’s not like you”

Jesus: “Ah, my friend, this will be a hard night for me and for all of you. I will be betrayed into the hands of the priests, and you will all desert me”

Peter: “Not me, Lord! I will never desert you. Even if I have to die for it I will stand by your side!”

Jesus: “Oh, Peter, Peter, so impetuous! But I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows in the morning, you will deny three times that you know me!”

Peter: “No, no, not possible. I will never, never disown you”

Other disciples: “Neither will I” “Not me – I’ll stay with you” “We won’t leave you, Jesus” etc

Passion play script

Peter: "I've got a sword here. They'll never take you while I am alive!"

John: "I've got one too. Jesus, do you think two swords is enough?"

Jesus: *(wearily)* "Yes, I'm sure that's all we will need. But you need to pray earnestly that you won't lose courage and fall victims to temptation. Wait here, watch and pray while I go over there by myself for a while."

(Jesus moves off to the side and kneels down.)

John: "What did he mean about being betrayed? Nobody knows we are here"

Peter: "Anyway, they've tried to get hold of him several times before and they haven't succeeded. But I've never seen him so worried and unhappy"

John: "I can't make sense of it at all. 'Watch and pray' he said. But I'm so tired – it's been a very long day. I think I'll just rest for a while first" *(lies down and immediately falls asleep)*

Peter: "Good idea – I'm not sure what to pray for, anyway" *(lies down and soon nods off)*
(the other disciples all relax and fall asleep)

Jesus: "Oh, my Father, is there any way out of this terrible ordeal? I am afraid of what is going to happen." *(pauses with his face in his hands)* "But this is why I was sent, so not my will, but yours, be done."

(Jesus comes back to his disciples and finds them all sleep)

Jesus: "Wake up! Is it too much to ask you to pray for a few minutes?" *(the disciples sit up sheepishly, and Jesus goes off again to kneel where he was before)*

(The disciples start on their knees, but shortly afterwards one by one fall asleep again)

Jesus: "Father, give me the strength to endure the suffering that is coming, if it is really your will that I should go through with it" *(once again, puts his face into his hands and prays quietly)*
(comes back and once again finds them sleeping)

Jesus: "Thomas! Andrew! Peter! Why are you not praying? Don't you understand what is happening? The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Pray for strength to endure what is coming"

(Jesus goes off for the third time and prays again)

Peter: "Why is he so upset? It is quiet and lonely up here. Who is going to disturb us?"

John: "He often talks in riddles, and I don't always understand. Maybe something is going to happen tomorrow."

Peter: "Well, he told us to pray, so let's do that. I wish I wasn't so tired"
(they kneel and start praying, but soon fall asleep again)

Jesus: "My Father, I now understand and fully accept that all this is according to your will. They are coming for me now, and I will go with them"
(goes back to the disciples, again finds them sleeping)

Jesus: "Wake up, all of you! This is no time for sleeping – my betrayer is close at hand!"
(they scramble to their feet as Judas, some soldiers and temple guards approach)

Judas: *(to the soldiers and guards)* "The one I greet with a kiss is Jesus. Seize him."

Judas: *(goes up to Jesus and greets him)* "Greetings, master"

Jesus: "Is that how you betray me, my friend, with a kiss?"

(Judas falls back, while the soldiers grab Jesus. Peter tugs out his sword and rushes towards one of the temple guards. The guard draw his own sword and Jesus holds up his hand to stop them)

Jesus: "Peter! Put your sword away!"

Peter: *(very dismayed)* "Why, Lord? I will fight to save you or die trying!"

Jesus: "This is not the time for fighting. Are you trying to stop me from following my Father's will?"
(Peter falls back, confused and upset)

(The soldiers bind Jesus's hands and lead him away)

Passion play script

John: *(panicking)* “What’s going on? Why is he going with them? If that’s what he wants, we can’t help him – let’s get out of here.”

(Peter puts his sword back and they run to a safe distance and watch as Jesus is hustled away.)

Peter: “Where are they taking him? Let’s follow and see what happens” *(Several disciples also follow, at a safe distance)*

Narrator: The soldiers are taking Jesus to the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where he will be tried for blasphemy. Judas is with the group of soldiers, keeping well away from Jesus. Peter and a couple of other disciples follow at a safe distance. Let us follow them and watch what happens there . . .

Scene 3 – CAIAPHAS’S HOUSE (2 Station Road, junction with The Hills)

Matt 26:57-75 Mark 14:53-72 Luke 22:54-71 John 18:12-27

Synopsis

In a sham trial, Jesus is condemned for blasphemy. Judas repents and tries to give the money back.

Script

Narrator: Here we are, at the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest, the most important religious leader in Israel. The house is very big and grand, as befits Caiaphas’s status, and the household includes many servants, both inside and in the courtyard surrounding it.

At last Caiaphas has Jesus where he wants him – captured, bound and on his own. Accompanied by the Scribes and the Elders, he can now interrogate Jesus and prove that he is a blasphemer. To that end, Caiaphas has engaged the services of several people who have been paid to give evidence against Jesus.

Peter has followed Jesus at a distance, and is now waiting anxiously to see what will happen. Judas is also there, hovering in the background. As Jesus’s trial before Caiaphas begins, Judas is beginning to realise just what he has done . . .

Caiaphas: *(to Jesus)* “You are accused of blasphemy against God. How do you plead?” *(Jesus says nothing, and ignores him)*

Caiaphas: “What, nothing to say now, eh? You had plenty to say when you had the rabble around you, eating out of your hand. Never mind, we have witnesses to your words and actions, and they will speak for you” *(to a maidservant)* “Girl, go out and fetch the first witnesses” *(the maidservant goes to the outer area to fetch the witnesses, but pauses when she sees Peter by the fire)*

Maidservant: “Hey, don’t I recognise you? You go around with that Jesus from Galilee, don’t you?”

Peter: *(jumping up)* “Who is he? I don’t know what you are talking about”

(Slightly puzzled, the maidservant fetches the first two witnesses and leads them back to Caiaphas. While they are being silently sworn in, the maid comes back out and speaks to Peter again)

Maidservant: “I’ve seen you with him. When he came to the city last week and all the crowds cheered for him, you were there as well”

Peter: *(now scared and looking around him)* “You’re wrong! I tell you again, I don’t know the man. Why don’t you believe me?” *(Peter leaves the fire and moves out further)*

(The maidservant looks even more puzzled, but gives up and goes back into the courtyard again.)

Passion play script

Caiaphas: *(to one of the witnesses)* “Tell us what this man said and did. Have you seen him breaking our laws?”

Witness 1: “Oh, yes, your honour, he walks about on the Sabbath and he claims that we shouldn’t pay taxes to the Emperor”

Witness 2: *(interrupting and eager to be heard as well)* “Well, he didn’t exactly say that, it was the Temple tax he didn’t want to pay. And where were you if you saw him walking on the Sabbath?”

Caiaphas: *(irritated, to one of his staff)* “Get rid of these fools. They aren’t helping. Haven’t we got anyone better?”

Staff member: “Yes, sir, we have several more waiting outside. I’ll bring them in one at a time”
(The staff member comes out into the courtyard and brings someone else in. Meanwhile, the maidservant quietly leaves and looks for Peter again. During her further interaction with him, there is silent activity as two or three witnesses come before Caiaphas, mime talking and gesticulating, and leave again.)

Maidservant: *(to Peter)* “There you are! I’ve been looking for you. I know you are one of his followers, you even speak like a Galilean. Why not admit it?”

Peter: *(shouting and raising his fist)* “I swear solemnly to you that I don’t know the man. Why can’t you go away and leave me alone?”

(a cock crows. From inside the house, Jesus turns and looks at Peter. Peter looks frozen with horror as he realises what he has done, and rushes away from the house. Maidservant goes back inside)

Caiaphas: *(to his staff member)* “Go and get the last two witnesses” *(witnesses are brought in by the staff member)* *(to first witness)* “What did this fellow say about our sacred temple?”

Witness 3: “He said he was going to knock it down, and then rebuild it in three days”

Witness 4: *(interrupting)* “No, he said that someone else had to knock it down, and then he would build it again – but not using his hands”

Witness 3: “Anyway, he wanted it knocked down, which is a terrible crime”

Caiaphas: *(waving the witnesses away and addressing Jesus)* “Do you still have nothing to say in your defence? Can’t you hear the charges they are bringing against you?”

Caiaphas: *(losing his temper when Jesus still won’t answer)* “Say something! I put you under oath to the living God to tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God!”

Jesus: *(calmly)* “Yes, I am. And you will see the Son of Man seated at God’s right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven”

Caiaphas: *(with a triumphant horror)* “Blasphemy! You have all heard it for yourselves! What do you think?”

Priest 1 and Priest 2: “He deserves death!”

(Caiaphas and the priests draw away to one side. The servants and soldiers start to manhandle Jesus, blindfolding him, smacking him around and jeering. He says nothing and just takes it all calmly)

(Judas sees that Jesus is condemned and is appalled. He starts walking towards Caiaphas)

Priest 2: “Look out, here comes that Judas fellow!”

(Caiaphas turns and walks towards Judas, not happy to see him there)

Caiaphas: “What do you want? You’ve done your job and been paid. Be off with you!”

Judas: “I have done a terrible thing, in betraying an innocent man.”

Caiaphas: *(sneering)* “What is that to us? As you said, it was just a financial affair as far as you were concerned”

Judas: “Please take back your money. Let him go free, he has done nothing wrong”

Caiaphas: “Get out of here before I have you arrested as well”

(Judas gets up, throws the bag of money at Caiaphas’s feet and stumbles out. Caiaphas picks up the money, shakes the bag to feel the weight, and puts it in his pocket)

Passion play script

Narrator: Caiaphas has got what he wants, but Israel is an occupied land, and he has no power to put people to death. He now has to persuade the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to agree that Jesus should die.

Caiaphas and his retinue take Jesus down to Pilate's court, and it is now Pilate's turn to question him . . .

Scene 4 – JESUS BEFORE PILATE (Gospel hall)

Matt 27:1-31 Mark 15:1-20 Luke 23:1-25 John 18:28-19:16

Synopsis

The priests take Jesus to the Roman governor to confirm the death sentence. The governor wants to free him, but is afraid of the consequences to himself. Pilate washes his hands to show he is not responsible for this death. Jesus is sentenced, flogged and given his cross to carry.

Script

Narrator: Caiaphas, with a group of priests, has brought Jesus to the court of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. But Caiaphas does not enter the building . . .

Caiaphas: *(to his group)* "We cannot go into Pilate's headquarters or we will become ritually unclean and unable to eat the Passover. *(to one of the soldiers)* "Go and ask the governor to come out to us" *(Pilate enters followed by his aide Quintilinus and crowd fall silent.)*

Pilate: "Why have you brought this man to me? What has he done?"

Caiaphas: "This is Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been perverting the nation and telling people not to pay taxes to the Emperor. He has committed blasphemy by setting himself up as the Messiah, and he claims to be a king."

Pilate: "Jesus of Nazareth? I have heard of this man. Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law"

Caiaphas: "We have done so, but we are not permitted to put anyone to death"

Pilate: "Bring him up here, then, so that I can question him" *(Jesus is taken up to the courthouse)*
(A servant comes out of the courtyard and walks up to Quintilinus)

Maid servant: "Sir, I have a message for the governor, from his wife" *(gives a tablet to Quintilinus)*

Quintilinus: *(to Pilate)* "Urgent message for you, sir, from your wife"

Pilate: *(looks startled)* "My wife? She knows not to interrupt me in court. What does she say?"

Quintilinus: *(reading from the tablet)* "She warns you not to have anything to do with this Jesus, whom she describes as an innocent man. She says she has had a bad dream about him. Do you want to send a reply?"

Pilate: *(worried)* "Yes, tell her I understand her concerns and I will be cautious"

Quintilinus: *(writing on the tablet)* "Yes sir" *(to the maidservant)* "Take this back to the governor's wife" *(maidservant departs)*

Pilate: *(turning to Jesus)* "Are you the King of the Jews?" *(Jesus is silent)* "What about these other charges they bring against you?" *(Jesus remains silent)*

Pilate: "What's the matter with you? Why don't you answer me? Are you a King?"

Jesus: "Are you asking me this because you want to know, or because of what the Jewish people are saying?"

Pilate: "Am I a Jew? It is your own people who have handed you over to me. What have you done?"

Jesus: "You say I am a king. My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my followers would be fighting to prevent me falling into the hands of the Jewish leaders. But my kingdom is far from here"

Passion play script

Pilate: "So you are a king, then?"

Jesus: "It is you who keep calling me a king. But I was born and came into the world to bear witness to the truth. Anyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice"

Pilate: (*slightly bitterly*) "Truth? What is truth?"

Pilate: (*turns to Quintilinus*) "Whatever this man is, he's done nothing wrong as far as I can see. I'd like to release him."

Quintilinus: "These priests are jealous of him, but I've heard that the common people love him, so why not appeal to them directly? As it is Passover time, you could offer to release either Jesus or that bandit who led an insurrection and was found guilty of murder – Barabbas, his name was. A thoroughly nasty piece of work. The people aren't likely to choose him"

Pilate: (*turning to the priests and the crowd*) "I find no case against this man." *Priests consternated.* "But you have a custom that one prisoner is released at the Passover. Shall I release for you the King of the Jews, or Barabbas, the convicted murderer?"

(Some of the crowd call out "Jesus", but the priests rapidly move through the audience, targeting each one of them and persuading everyone to call out "Barabbas". This takes a little while, until everyone is shouting for Barabbas)

Pilate: "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

Priest 1 and Priest 2: "Crucify him!" (*the priests turn and urge the crowd to take up the call. Again, this takes a little time*)

Pilate: "Why, what evil has he done? I find in him no grounds for the sentence of death. I shall have him flogged and then release him" (*Pilate turns to go.*)

Caiaphas: "If you let him go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who sets themselves up as a king is an enemy of Caesar"

Pilate: (*turning back*) "Enough!" (*to Quintilinus*) "Get the girl to fetch me a bowl of water"

Quintilinus: (*calling into the courthouse*) "Maid!" (*maidservant comes out*) "Bowl of water and a towel for the governor, quickly!"

Maidservant: (*puzzled*) "Out here, sir?"

Quintilinus: (*angrily*) "Of course out here! Don't argue, just do it!" (*Maidservant hurries away*)

Pilate: (*to Quintilinus, defensively*) "I have no choice. I cannot save him from these priests"

Quintilinus: "But why? You know that those old priests have no real power. They can't force you "

Pilate: "You heard their threat. I can't risk the Emperor finding out that I let a would-be King go free. It would mean recall to Rome, and then . . ." (*makes a throat-cutting gesture*)

(Maidservant comes back with the bowl and towel, and kneels down holding it for Pilate)

Pilate: (*washing his hands as he speaks to the crowd*) "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. See to it yourselves"

Crowd: "His blood be upon us and upon our children!"

(Maidservant departs with bowl and towel)

Pilate: (*to his soldiers*) "Take him away and flog him"

(The soldiers seize Jesus roughly and take him out of sight.)

Quintilinus: "Sir, what inscription do you want on the cross? We usually put the crime, but . . ."

Pilate: ". . . but he has committed no crime. He was no threat to the Emperor, only to the power of the Jewish priests, because he claimed to be their Messiah, or King." (*thinks*) "I know, write 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews'."

Quintilinus: (*he writes down the inscription on a tablet*) "The priests won't like that, sir. They will want to change it to 'he said he was King of the Jews' or something similar. What will you say to them?"

Pilate: (*grimly*) "I shall say 'What I have written, I have written'. Make sure it is inscribed in the Jewish language, and Latin, and Greek, so that everyone can understand it, *especially* the priests."

Passion play script

Quintilinus: "Yes, sir"

(Pilate and Quintilinus leave the court)

Narrator: In the barracks, the soldiers flog Jesus and then mock him. They dress him in a purple robe and press a crown of thorns on his head. They bow to him and say "Hail, King of the Jews!" He is blindfolded, and struck repeatedly, with calls of "Prophesy to us O Christ! Who is it that struck you?" Throughout this ordeal Jesus says nothing. Finally he is brought back and shown to the people. *(This passage might need extending – we need enough time for Jesus to be bloodstained and fitted with the crown and robe. And we also need the audience to feel that a realistic time has passed for the flogging and the mocking. There might be some music to fill the gap)*

Soldier 1: *(bringing Jesus back to the top)* "Here he is"

(Priest 1 and Priest 2 urge the crowd to start shouting "Crucify him!" again)

(the soldiers take him down to the middle level (The Hills), tug off the purple cloak but leave the crown of thorns. They put the cross onto his shoulder, none too gently)

Soldier 1: "Get moving!" *(pushes him, and Jesus starts to walk towards the place of execution)*

Narrator: Jesus is exhausted and weak from loss of blood, and seems likely to fall at any moment, but he has to carry his own cross to the place of execution. Let us follow him as he begins his last journey . . .

(Jesus stumbles towards the corner of Station Road, where he falls. The crowd is following)

(At the corner . . .)

Soldier 1: *(hitting him with the butt of his spear)* "Get up, you wretch" *(Jesus struggles to his feet)*

Soldier 2: *(to a strong young man in the following crowd)* "You there! What's your name?"

Simon: *(nervously)* "Simon – I'm not from round here, I come from Cyrene"

Soldier 2: "I don't care where you come from. Just get hold of that cross and carry it – I don't want this fellow dying on the way"

(Simon reluctantly picks up the cross and carries it. Jesus follows, stumbling from time to time.

(On the way up Station Road they pass a group of women crying and wailing. One of them comes forward and wipes his face with a cloth. Jesus looks at them)

Jesus: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children"

(the journey continues to the place of execution)

Scene 5 – CRUCIFIXION (Ferry farmyard)

Matt 27:33-56 Mark 15:22-41 Luke 23:32-49 John 19:17-30

Synopsis

Jesus has walked to the place of execution, where he is nailed to the cross and dies. The Roman Centurion realises that he is the Son of God.

Script

Narrator: Jesus is now at the place called Golgotha, which means The Place of the Skull. Jesus is the third person to be executed today – there are already two bandits who were crucified earlier. It was traditional for the soldiers to take and keep the clothing of prisoners before crucifying them, so Jesus will be stripped and his garments shared out . . .

(The centurion, with a couple more soldiers, is standing nearby supervising. There is also a group of priests. Separately, John the disciple, Mary Jesus's mother and several other women followers are standing. The centurion doesn't do anything, but watches all the exchanges up to Jesus's death very carefully and slightly anxiously)

Soldier 1: *(dragging Jesus's robe off him)* "Get your arms up!" *(he pulls the robe over Jesus's head. The crown comes off and the soldier puts it to one side as they remove his other garments. The garments are piled to one side for the moment)*

Passion play script

Soldier 2: *(Jamming the crown back on)* “Here, King of the Jews, you’ll need this!”

Soldier 1: *(to soldier 2)* “Get him onto the cross *(Jesus is pushed and tugged into position on the cross, which is laid out on the ground.)*

Soldier 1: *(to soldier 2)* “Get those nails from over there” *(points)*

Soldier 2: “Nails? We usually just tie them on”

Soldier 1: “Yes, well this one must have upset someone important, so its nails and rope for him” *(Soldier 2 carefully bangs three nails into the pre-drilled holes near either hand and the feet, while soldier 1 lashes Jesus’s hands and feet to the cross.)*

Jesus: *(quietly, but obviously in pain)* “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!”

Soldier 2: *(startled)* “What did he say?”

Soldier 1: *(uneasily)* “He says he forgives us – that’s a new one on me. If they can still speak they usually curse us. Anyway, let’s hoist him up” *(calls to the other soldiers)* “Come and give us a hand here, will you?”

(They raise the cross. The other soldiers drop back, leaving the original two)

Soldier 2: *(looking at the garments)* “Can we share his clothes out now?”

Soldier 1: *(picking over the pile and sorting them)* “You can have this – I’ll take that. *(picks up the robe)* “Here’s a surprise – this is really good material, and it seems to have been woven in one piece. I wonder where a peasant gets something like this? ”

Soldier 2: “Can I have it?”

Soldier 1: “No, we’ll roll for it. Have you got your dice with you?”

Soldier 2: “Never without them” *(pulls leather case with two dice out of his pocket)* “Highest wins” *(kneels and rolls the dice)* “Six and three – nine”

Soldier 1: *(gets down and rolls)* “Ha! Two fives – ten” *(picks up the robe)* “this will fetch quite a lot when it has been washed” *(gets to his feet, looks up at Jesus, and Jesus just looks back at him)* “Right, job done. Now we just have to stand guard until this lot have died. I hope it doesn’t take too long – it is hot out here” *(they both move off to the side with the other soldiers).*

(When the soldiers move back, the priests and bystanders move forward)

Bystander 1: “What does that notice by his feet say?”

Bystander 2: “It says ‘Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.’”

Priest 3: *(irritated)* “We told Pilate it was wrong, and that Caesar is our only king, but he wouldn’t change it”

Priest 1: “So! You’re the Messiah, are you? You don’t look like him now, do you? Come on down and we will believe in you!”

Priest 3: “Yes, you claimed to help others, but you aren’t so good at helping yourself, are you?”

Bystander 1: “Rebuild the temple in three days? Don’t make me laugh”

Bystander 2: “He was deluded and thought he was the Son of God. If that were true, why hasn’t God saved him?”

(the priests leave, talking and laughing among themselves)

Thief 1: “Oi, Messiah, Son of God, King, whatever you are. Get me out of here if you are so clever!”

Thief 2: *(horrified, to Thief 1)* “Don’t you fear God? We deserve what we’ve got, but this man is innocent” *(speaking to Jesus)* “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”

Jesus: *(looking at him, but speaking with an effort)* “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise”

Jesus: *(looking down at his mother and John, who have come closer)* “Mother, here is your son” *(to John)* “John, here is your mother” *(Mary is weeping and John puts his arm round her shoulders)*

Jesus: *(weakly)* “Eloi, eloi, lema sabachthani? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Bystander 1: “What did he say?”

Bystander 2: “Not sure – it sounds as if he was calling upon Elijah, the prophet who was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot.”

Bystander 1: “Maybe Elijah will come and save him.” *(looking around)* “There’s a wine jar over there and some reeds. Get something to moisten his mouth so that we can hear what he is saying.”

Passion play script

Bystander 2: *(going to the jar and looking nervously at the soldiers. He picks up a reed and dunks it in the jar and comes back. The centurion nods to him, and he holds it up to Jesus's lips. Jesus tastes it but does not drink.)*

Jesus: *(loudly and triumphantly, looking up to heaven) "It is finished!" (more quietly) "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!" (drops head and dies)*
(Sounds of thunder and an earthquake. Everyone staggers as if the earth is shaking. The centurion falls on his knees in front of the cross)

Centurion: *(awed and horrified) "Truly, this man was the Son of God"*

(We leave the scene quietly, with all the actors still in place, and return to the village hall)