

## **Easter Stories**

***Aim :** These four scripts were originally used on Good Friday as part of a Walk of Witness around our village, so they were performed outside, but can be done indoors as well obviously. The pieces aim to bring Gospel stories to life in a modern context and to help understand the people behind the well known biblical episodes.*

### **Characters:**

***Part One (Calling) :** Simon, Andrew, Jesus, reader*

***Part Two (Healing) :** The Woman, 2 disciples, 2 crowd members, Jesus, reader*

***Part Three (Raising Lazarus) :** Martha, Mary, 2 mourners, Jesus, reader*

***Part Four (Betrayal) :** Judas, 2 priests, Jesus, reader*

### **Props/Costumes :**

*We used modern costume and minimal props as we were outside and moving between the scenes.*

***Notes :** These pieces can be performed separately or together. If all four are performed it is best to keep them in the order they are written, as they build in terms of theme and tension. The readings at the end of each scene can easily be omitted. We used them to provide cohesion between the scenes and a chance for audience response with the phrase at the end.*

*Many characters are named and those that are not can be played by either gender. Jesus should be played by the same person in all the scenes. The scenes emphasise His humanity – humour, compassion, love of life, and so should be played naturalistically.*

## **Part One :The Calling of the Disciples**

*Simon and Andrew are (miming) busy pulling in nets and sorting through fish. Andrew carries on as Simon breaks off to address the audience. He is a good Yorkshire man. His tone is chatty and he's obviously used to speaking his mind*

**Simon:**

I've always been hotheaded, jumping in with both feet. My brother says I should learn to stop and think before barging in with me size elevens. I think *he's* too laid back by half. It's a good job one of us has got some get-up-and-go, I say, or our business would be going under by now. (*Laughs to himself*) That's quite good actually, "going under" – we're fishermen you see, "going under" ha. . . . Simon, they call me, or Peter, since *he* changed it – *that's* not all he changed either I can tell you. Peter – the Rock. I don't mind it really, quite glad it's stuck all this time. I think it makes me sound strong, reliable like. . . . Andrew says it makes me sound thick. *Says 'im.*

Yep. Life certainly changed for us that day. For the better I mean. Well, it's certainly more exciting nowadays, if nothing else. Not that I was looking for excitement. I were quite happy thank you very much, didn't want for any different to what I had – before I met Him that is.

We'd begun to hear the rumours about him, and t'other one, John, his cousin. I remember saying to our Andrew, they're a bit like us really, both in the family business together. 'cept their reputation spread a bit quicker than ours. Still, fishermen are ten-a-penny in these parts, whereas washing people from their sins and such like, well that makes you stand out a bit more from the crowd doesn't it?

We'd talked about going to see them actually, just to be nosey like, but it's difficult to take time off in our work. I joked to our Andrew, I said,

*(Turns to Andrew and calls over to him)*

"Well, if he wants to meet us, he'll have to come and find us"

*(he turns back to the audience)*

you should always be careful what you say . .

*Simon returns to helping Andrew pull in nets and throw the fish from them into a bucket (all mime of course!)*

**Andrew:** The thing is, you probably believe that.

**Simon:** What?

**Andrew:** That Jesus'd want to meet *us*.

**Simon:** *Everyone* wants to meet us, Andy. So why shouldn't he?

**Andrew:** ‘Cos he doesn’t need any fish probably. That’s why people normally come to us.

**Simon:** Even so, he’ll need to eat and we’re

**Andrew:** “The Best Catch Around” – I know, I know.

**Simon:** No, I can just see him right now thinking to himself, “Well, I’ve got a big job ahead of me, and I’ve met a lot of people , but I need a couple of right-hand men, and I can’t think of anyone better than them two fishing blokes”

*Jesus walks up behind them*

**Jesus:** Simon. Andrew.

*Simon freezes in shock*

**Simon:** Sh .sharks!

**Andrew:** (*whispers*) Simon! (*To Jesus*) Er, morning. Are you after something in particular?

**Jesus:** Possibly. It depends if you’ll agree to come with me.

**Andrew:** Us? Actually I was more thinking of sardines or hake? We’ve got the catch in . .

**Simon:** It’s not as good as usual but you can only get what’s there can’t you, but we’re known as the Best Catch Around you know.

**Jesus:** I heard that

**Simon:** You did?! Er . .I mean, of course you did.

**Jesus:** That’s partly why I’ve come

**Andrew:** Oh right, so which will it be then?

**Jesus:** (*smiling*) Well, I wasn’t sure until I’d met you, but now I know. I’ll take both please

**Andrew:** Sardines and hake?

**Jesus:** No. Simon and Andrew.

**Andrew:** Sorry?

**Jesus:** I need fishers. Fishers of men. And I think you two could do it.

**Simon:** Hang on a minute. Let me get this straight. You want us to leave our business?

**Jesus:** Yes.

**Simon:** A business that we’ve put our whole lives into building up

**Jesus:** Yes.

**Simon:** And you want us to go wandering around the country with you, talking to people

**Jesus:** Yes.

**Simon:** About God

**Jesus:** Yes.

**Simon:** Even though we don’t know that much ourselves

**Jesus:** Yes.

**Simon:** No wage, I take it

**Jesus:** No

**Simon:** No job security

**Jesus:** No

**Simon:** No pension plan

**Jesus:** No

**Simon:** And I assume we'll be saying things that not everyone will like

**Jesus:** Absolutely

**Simon:** So we could be putting ourselves in danger

**Jesus:** 'Fraid so

**Andrew:** Jesus?

**Jesus:** Yes Andrew?

**Andrew:** Could you at least *try* and sell this to us?

**Jesus:** I'm not going to give you false promises, and I'm not going to force you to come. Your choice. Stay as you are, or take a risk. What do you say?

***He looks at them, they look at each other. All freeze.***

***Reader :*** We remember that moment. The moment of calling, when men left behind their possessions, their status, their security, to start an adventure of faith. We remember that moment, when Christ gave ordinary people the chance to share an extraordinary ministry that would change lives and change history.

*We remember the moment of calling in our own lives. That moment when we heard the voice of Jesus amongst the clamour of our world, and recognised it as the voice of love that demanded a response. We remember that moment when we too were challenged to look at our priorities and order our lives according to His will.*

*We remember the moment of history, of present and of future*

***All : And know eternity in our midst.***

## **Part Two : A Healing Takes Place**

*The woman addresses the audience, ideally having emerged from them, as though they are all following Jesus together.*

**Woman :**

I had been ill for so long, that I'd forgotten what it felt like to feel well. I suppose I'd realised that I would just have to learn to live with it. Not without a fight though. I'd been to every doctor in the area, and beyond, but each time it was the same story, they could do nothing to help. It was like dying a little bit, every time I heard their words "I don't understand what's causing it. I can't do any more." I'd lost everything. Not just my money, which had quickly disappeared as I paid to hear the same thing over and over, but also my confidence, my pride as I was poked and prodded in the most private places and my friends who didn't know what was wrong with me because I couldn't bear to tell them.

That was the worst of it. Not the inconvenience, the discomfort, but the shame. And the tiredness. I had been bleeding for twelve years, for more than a quarter of my life. I had nothing left.

I suppose he was my last chance. I had nothing left to lose. At first I'd not really taken any interest in the stories flying around. I mean we'd seen our fair share of supposed prophets and healers in the past. I'd even tried some of them. Gaining nothing but more shame as each stranger found out more about me than those around me knew. But this one seemed different. He seemed to care about people more than show, and more than the rules of both the law and our culture. I had to get to him, somehow.

*Jesus walks through the crowd, with two rather hassled disciples. They move the people out of the way as they speak to them. There should be a sense of confusion as the action takes place amidst the audience.*

**Disciple 1:** Can you all please move back! Stop crowding!

**Disciple 2:** He can't see you all. He's in a hurry. I'm sorry

**Crowd 1:** But we've travelled for miles to see him

**Crowd 2:** We want to see the miracle-man

**Disciple 1:** He's got important business to attend to

**Crowd 1:** More important than a child who's lame?

**Disciple 1:** A child who is dying. Probably dead by now.

**Disciple 2:** Please, let us through. Quickly.

**Crowd 1:** We only want a glimpse of him

**Crowd 2:** Or a handshake

**Disciple 1:** He's not a freak show you know

**Crowd 1:** Everyone else gets to meet him

**Crowd 2:** Are we not good enough for him round here?

**Crowd 1:** Not important enough?

**Crowd 2:** Too far from Jerusalem?

**Crowd 1:** He doesn't need us now

**Crowd 2:** Is that it? Deciding to play high and mighty now he's got our attention?

**Disciple 2:** Look. Do you want this little girl's blood on your hands? We need to get to Jairus's house as soon as possible.

**Crowd 1:** Jairus? His daughter's ill? But he's such a godly man

**Crowd 2:** How could that happen to his family?

**Woman:** How could I stop Jesus from getting where he needed to be? I couldn't take his time when he had a child to see, to heal. My life was gone anyway, but she still had a chance. So I let him pass by without any word.

**Disciple 1:** Please keep back. Keep the path clear.

**Disciple 2:** I'm sorry, but we've no time today.

**Crowd 1:** Come on let him past. He's on his way to Jairus

**Crowd 2:** Jairus deserves his help. Look at all the work he puts in for his faith.

**Disciple 1:** Look really, that has nothing to do with it.

**Disciple 2:** But he's promised his help so please – let us through.

**Crowd 1:** For goodness sake, let the man past.

**Crowd 2:** Selfish the lot of you!

*Jesus and the disciples are now on their way past the woman.*

**Woman:** Maybe I was selfish. Or desperate. I didn't want to hold him up, but I knew this was my chance. I knew that all I would need to do was touch his clothes and I'd be healed. My faith made me reach out and . .

*The woman stretches out to the back of Jesus. She touches him and then falls to her knees. He stops immediately and turns round. All freeze.*

**Reader :** *We remember that moment. The moment when faith brought healing out of despair. That moment when one woman risked the little she had and the fear of rejection and failure on the reach of a hand and the touch of a miracle. We remember the moment of faith restored and wholeness regained. We remember those moments of testing in our own lives. Those moments when faith is clung to rather than embraced and when Jesus is our only answer. We remember those moments when we look again into the face of love and know that we are healed.*

*We remember the moment of history, of present and of future*

**All :** *And know eternity in our midst*

### **Part Three : The Raising of Lazarus**

*Martha speaks to the audience. She is agitated in her confusion and hurt.*

**Martha:**

I was so sure that he'd come. Every day I watched my brother getting worse and worse and thought, "It's not his time. Not yet. Jesus will be here and will make everything well." And still he didn't come. I tried to keep strong, for Mary and our friends who'd rallied round us, but it was all I could do to stop myself shouting out, "Where is he? Where is he?"

We'd sent word as soon as Lazarus was ill, but nothing. I'd begun to doubt – I'm ashamed to admit it, doubt our friendship, his love for us, his ability to change things. Funny though, even then, my head was determined to blame him, but my heart wouldn't harden. I suppose some things are just part of your soul.

When he did arrive, though, I really had a go at him. I can't believe I dared speak to him like that now. But I suppose what you see is what you get with me.

**Jesus:** *(approaching from amongst the crowd)* Martha?

**Martha:** Lord.

*She runs to him with excitement and they embrace, but then she pulls back and demands*

**Martha:** Why weren't you here?

**Jesus:** What?

**Martha:** Why weren't you here? I sent you messages every day, you must have known he was getting worse. Did you not even want to see him one last time? Are you so busy healing others now that you can't find time to come and be with one of your closest friends at the point he needed you most? I mean if you'd been here, I might not even be in mourning now.

**Jesus:** Martha, come on, you don't mean all that. Besides, your bother will rise to new life.

**Martha:** I know, I know. I've not been round you all this time not to know the teaching "He will rise to life on the last day". Doesn't stop me missing him now though.

*Jesus laughs loudly and Martha looks angry with him*

**Jesus:** Sorry, sorry. But you still don't understand do you? Too busy rushing around as ever and missing the point.

*He takes her hands to force her to stand still and look at him*

Martha, *I am* the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me *will live*, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will *never* die. Do you believe this?

*She looks down, not wanting to admit it*

Well, do you?

**Martha:** *sighs* Yes, all right, you know best, you know more. You are life. You are Lord, and yes I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God. . . . doesn't stop you being annoying though.

*Jesus laughs and puts his arm round her shoulder as they walk through the crowd. Two mourners are left, talking*

**Mourner 1:** Well he's left it a bit late hasn't he?

**Mourner 2:** I suppose he wanted to come and bring some comfort to the sisters

**Mourner 1:** Well some comfort that'll be. Comfort as cold as that body after four days lying there.

**Mourner 2:** He was miles away, the other side of the country

**Mourner 1:** Yes, but I heard he waited til Lazarus had *died* before he *set off*

**Mourner 2:** Well that is a funny business, I've got to admit.

**Jesus:** Mary?

*Mary hears from a distance and runs towards him, kneels in front of him and takes his hand*

**Mary:** Lord.

*Jesus and Martha exchange a look, as though Jesus is showing Martha how she should have greeted him*

**Mary:** If you had been here my brother would not have died.

*Martha's look becomes "I told you so"*

*Jesus looks down at Mary and crouches down to her*

**Jesus:** Dear Mary, if you trust me, take me to him.

*Mary indicates away from them to the "tomb" and Jesus walks ahead as they stop. He falls to his knees.*

**Mourner 2:** See, look at how upset he is. That shows how much he loves them.

**Mourner 1:** Anyone can shed a few tears. If he loved him that much, and if he's powerful enough to give sight to the blind, why didn't he just stop him dying in the first place?

*Jesus stands up and looks back*

**Jesus:** Take the stone away.

**Mourner 1:** Oh for goodness sake

**Mourner 2:** disgusting

**Martha:** The body's been in there for four days. It will reek to high heaven.

**Mary:** Martha!

**Jesus:** Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believed?

**Mary:** Please, let them take the stone away.

*Martha nods*

**Mourner 1:** Oh this is turning into a freak show now

**Mourner 2:** Sh. He's praying I think

**Jesus:** I thank you Father that you listen to me. I know you always listen to me, I'm just saying that for the sake of *some* people here

*He looks across at the mourners who look sheepish*

so they'll believe you sent me. . .

*He shouts*

Lazarus, come out.

*They all look towards the tomb. Freeze*

*Reader : We remember that moment. The moment when faith seemed so fragile and yet was the only hope. That moment when friendship confronted kingship and the intimacy of love and the power of the miraculous touched earth. We remember how one woman raged at God yet recognised his authority over all.*

*We remember those moments of despair in our own lives. Those moments when love seems distant and the God of Power weak. We remember the glimpses of God's glory in the midst of our darkness and the knowledge of His love, stronger than our confusion.*

*We remember the moment of history, of present and of future*

*All : And know eternity in our midst*

## **Part Four : Jesus is Betrayed**

*Judas is standing obviously on his own, as he addresses the audience*

**Judas:**

I almost watched myself as I did it. I know that sounds like an excuse. Maybe it is. But by then I'd lost sight of what was right or wrong, the truth or lies, even in my own head. I'd followed this man, this so-called Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour and believed it all. I'd given up career, status and principles at times because I'd believed all the hype. I really thought he was the one we'd been waiting for, spent our lives waiting for.

He was certainly radical enough in his teaching. He was quite happy to humiliate the religious authorities, throwing their rules and laws back in their faces in the name of love. But he always stopped short of attacking the state. Even when he was asked outright, he didn't take the chance, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" surely he should have been saying the opposite, "let's take from Caesar what is rightfully ours". If he truly was the Son of God, where was the power? Where was the passion for the Jews, God's own children?

I'd heard the rhetoric and I'd had enough. Things were getting worse for us. When the pressure started building I have to say, I was glad. Thought it might force his hand, that we'd finally see some action. But he seemed to embrace the danger ahead, walked straight towards it - like a lamb to the slaughter.

I couldn't afford to be associated too closely. Here was my chance to show my loyalty to the church and it's leaders. And the money would be useful too, if I wanted to try and start again, re-build my life somewhere else.

So I went to see them. Of course, they were thrilled. Almost salivating. Like wolves. It made the words stick in my throat, but I told myself, "Judas, you need to do this. Maybe for yourself, and maybe for the Jewish state. Throw him into the public arena once and for all and let's see if he'll rise to the challenge." And besides, when it was put simply it didn't sound that bad – a bag of cash for a name, a place, a signal.

*Two of the chief priests come up behind Judas, and Jesus appears and kneels down some distance away.*

**Priest 1:** Is this the place? Where he'll be?

**Judas:** This is where they'd planned to come, yes.

**Priest 2:** Why leave the city in the middle of the night?

**Priest 1:** Are they hiding?

**Judas:** Not from us. In fact he made it very clear to me where they would be.

**Priest 1:** Well he obviously doesn't know you as well as he thought

**Priest 2:** Not quite the all-seeing one that everyone thinks

**Judas:** Or maybe it's proof he is. Maybe he knows me better than I know myself

**Priest 1:** Well whichever, now is hardly the time for homespun philosophy.

**Priest 2:** Let's just get on with this. Get him while we can

**Judas:** For people who claim he has no power, you're very nervous of him

**Priest 1:** Not at all. He's all talk. That's what you've said yourself.

**Judas:** Yes, maybe. So far.

**Priest 2:** Besides, we're not nervous of *him*, but he does have quite a following. And they seem willing to do anything for him.

**Judas:** Yes.

**Priest 2:** Present company excepted of course. At least you've seen sense.

**Priest 1:** But we don't want any trouble. So the sooner we get on with this . .

**Judas:** Fine. Let's get it over with

**Priest 1:** Can you see him in there?

**Judas:** Yes, I can. He's away from the others, by the trees.

**Priest 2:** Is he on his own?

**Judas:** No. I don't think so

**Priest 2:** Well I can't see anyone else

**Judas:** I think he's talking to his father

**Priest 1:** What?

**Judas:** All right, yes he's on his own as far as earthly presence is concerned

**Priest 2:** You've spent too long with the Nazarene. You're talking as much sense as he does.

**Judas:** Look, I've shown you where he is. Can I go now?

**Priest 1:** Not so fast. You're earning good money for this little thing. I'm not being blamed for bringing in the wrong man.

**Judas:** What do you mean?

**Priest 1:** You must go up to him. Speak with him.

**Judas:** No.

**Priest 1:** Don't pull out on us now. You'll land yourself in trouble.

**Priest 2:** We'll take him anyway. But we'll take you as well.

**Judas:** So what? What do you want me to do? Greet him as a friend and watch you arrest him?

**Priest 2:** That would do.

**Judas:** (*bitterly*) What does it matter after all how I betray him? Right, you can have your floor show and your proof. The man I kiss is the one you want.

**Priest 1:** Good man.

*Judas walks towards Jesus*

**Priest 1:** er, Judas?

*Judas looks back, and the priest throws a bag of money towards him. Judas looks at it and puts it in his pocket, looking crushed. He walks up behind the kneeling figure of Jesus*

**Judas:** Master?

**Jesus:** *looking up but not at him, knowing it is Judas anyway*

Judas.

*Judas kneels in front of Jesus*

**Judas:** Peace be with you, Teacher.

*Their eyes lock. They freeze.*

**Reader :** *We remember that moment. The moment when one man followed his fear and disappointment and betrayed all that he had known. When the King of Glory allowed himself to be bound by the narrowness of human understanding and the cruelty of the fearful. We remember how he accepted the kiss, knowing what it signified and faced death for each of us who followed.*

*We remember those moments in our own lives when our words and actions betray our weakness, rather than reflect the lives of the faithful. Those moments when we too approach our Saviour, knowing that we can't help but do wrong. We remember those moments when having failed we look into his face once again, and see love, nothing but love.*

*We remember the moment of history, of present and of future*

**All :** *And know eternity in our midst*