**Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 29, 2020, the Rev. David Ota**

**Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45**

We have now just come to the end of week two of Shelter-in-Place to flatten the curve of the COVID-19 virus. I don’t know about you, but as the days go by and the number of deaths and people contracting the virus grows exponentially, I am becoming more and more concerned.

It has bothered me that I am considered to be more vulnerable because of my age. When the Shelter-in-Place first began, I wasn’t worried about going shopping for groceries or going to the bank. But as the days pass by I have become somewhat concerned and wear a mask when I go shopping.

As the number of deaths rise due to COVID-19, we are confronted with the reality of death in our lives, our own mortality, and the mortality of our neighbors. So, we Shelter-in-Place in the hopes that we can flatten the rate of infection and the health care system will not be overwhelmed until a vaccine can be made.

Our lessons for today clearly address the reality and nature of death in our lives. In our gospel story for today Jesus and the disciples are on their way to Bethany, the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They have news that Lazarus is ill and near death. Instead of rushing to be Lazarus and his sisters, Jesus waits so that the Son of God may be revealed for God’s glory. Jesus would reveal who he is after Lazarus dies.

Unlike us who stay Shelter-in-Place to save ourselves and our neighbors from COVID-19, Jesus goes to Bethany even though the religious authorities wanted him dead. When he arrives, first Martha and then Mary speak with him and laments that he did not come earlier, so he could have healed their beloved Lazarus, so that he would not have to die.

We are all Martha and Mary, some more active and some more contemplative, but we all want our loved ones to be spared the pain of death. But Jesus who entered Bethany was actually heading to his death in Jerusalem at the hands of the authorities. He was unafraid and by performing the sign of raising Lazarus from death was actually ensuring that the authorities would need to have him killed.

We who are Sheltered-in-Place are like Martha and Mary wanting ourselves and our loved ones to be spared of the pain of death. But the new first responders, grocery delivery-people, workers in the grocery stores, bus drivers, Lyft and Uber drivers, the police, the fire department, the doctors, nurses, aides, and others who work and have a higher risk of contracting the virus are a bit more like Jesus. Even though they may risk a bit more danger, they do so not only because it is their job, but because they know their service is needed.

When we are Sheltered-in-Place for days, then weeks, and moving ahead perhaps months on end we may slide into a sense of being disconnected from one another, our ones, our neighbors and those we don’t know but upon whom our common life depends. This sense of being disconnected is expressed in the reading from Ezekiel and his vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. This desolate valley represented ancient Israel in exile as they were taken away to a foreign land, Babylon. They were without breath, without spirit.

Across the country there is the practice in some cities of people coming out and clapping for health care workers at 7 p.m. I am sure you have seen this on the news. While maintaining a safe physical distance, these neighbors can express their appreciation of health care workers and their solidarity.

As Christians, we have been doing this for centuries, as we gather for Sunday worship to give thanks for our salvation from living for ourselves alone, and being given new lives to live for the One who died and rose for us all. We follow in Jesus’ footsteps to live in the power of His Spirit.

Although we cannot gather to break bread together, through our virtual worship although separated to keep a safe physical distance we gather to worship God who is the Giver of all good things, to sing our hymns of praise, to hear our sacred stories, to make sense of the life and times God has given us, and to pray for the world, our neighbors and ourselves.

I thank our worship team for making it possible for us as a congregation to make worship possible while we are Sheltered-in-Place.

I give thanks to the members of this congregation who continue to reach out and to those who meet virtually to carry on the ministry we share.

Although living with the Shelter-in-Place is different for us, we are fortunate to have the technological tools to communicate. The other day, I was thinking about what it is like to be fighting a war against the invisible Coronavirus, COVID-19. We are a bit like the French resistance during World War II being hunkered down in tunnels hidden and yet communicating with one another. As we strive to fight this war against the virus, we don’t see each other on the streets.

Unlike Lazarus who died before Jesus arrived, we are not dead yet. Jesus has not yet come and is not crying to us, “Lazarus, come out!” No, we are still fighting the virus by staying Sheltered-in-Place. We are striving to support one another through acts of self-sacrifice and loving kindness.

As we are Sheltered-in-Place in our “bunkers” we are called not only to survive the pandemic, but to live in the power of Jesus’ Spirit, so others will know that they are loved. What matters more than surviving the pandemic is that the love of God in Christ Jesus is lived even in these difficult and dangerous times.

Imagine how we can use the time given to us to help and love others as Christ Jesus has done for Lazarus, Martha and Mary, even at a risk to his own human life. It may mean overcoming the fear of contracting the disease to help a neighbor in need. It may mean sharing with someone who is in need because they lost their job. It may mean coming to the realization that our life here is not guaranteed and we have only the time we have to live in love and to be at peace with it. Perhaps, the last example is the greatest gift we can give, trusting our lives and our deaths to God in Jesus so we all may live in peace. Amen.

**I propose to show that as the number of deaths rise due to COVID-19, we are confronted with the reality of death in our lives, so that the stories of the raising of Lazarus and Ezekiel’s vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, and Paul’s letter to the Romans reminds us that our hope is not to merely survive the pandemic in this life, but to live in the power of the Spirit so in this life and in eternal life God’s love may be revealed through our lives.**

**The Collect**

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

**Old Testament**

**Ezekiel 37:1-14**

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act,” says the Lord.

**The Response**

**Psalm 130**

***De profundis***

1 Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord;  
Lord, hear my voice; \*  
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.

2 If you, Lord, were to note what is done amiss, \*  
O Lord, who could stand?

3 For there is forgiveness with you; \*  
therefore you shall be feared.

4 I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him; \*  
in his word is my hope.

5 My soul waits for the Lord,  
more than watchmen for the morning, \*  
more than watchmen for the morning.

6 O Israel, wait for the Lord, \*  
for with the Lord there is mercy;

7 With him there is plenteous redemption, \*  
and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

**The Epistle**

**Romans 8:6-11**

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law-- indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

**The Gospel**

**John 11:1-45**

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

**In preparation for this coming Sunday’s worship, please pray this coming Sunday’s Collect of the Day and read and reflect on the lessons assigned as printed below**

**Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday**

**The Liturgy of the Palms: Matthew 21:1-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29**

**The Liturgy of the Word: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:14- 27:66**

**The Liturgy of the Palms**

**The Gospel**

**Matthew 21:1-11**

When Jesus and his disciples had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, `The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

"Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!

"

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

**The Response**

**Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29**

***Confitemini Domino***

1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; \*  
his mercy endures for ever.

2 Let Israel now proclaim, \*  
"His mercy endures for ever."

19 Open for me the gates of righteousness; \*  
I will enter them;  
I will offer thanks to the Lord.

20 "This is the gate of the Lord; \*  
he who is righteous may enter."

21 I will give thanks to you, for you answered me \*  
and have become my salvation.

22 The same stone which the builders rejected \*  
has become the chief cornerstone.

23 This is the Lord's doing, \*  
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 On this day the Lord has acted; \*  
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Hosannah, Lord, hosannah! \*  
Lord, send us now success.

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; \*  
we bless you from the house of the Lord.

27 God is the Lord; he has shined upon us; \*  
form a procession with branches up to the horns of the altar.

28 "You are my God, and I will thank you; \*  
you are my God, and I will exalt you."

29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; \*  
his mercy endures for ever.

**The Liturgy of the Word**

**The Collect**

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**Old Testament**

**Isaiah 50:4-9a**

The Lord God has given me  
the tongue of a teacher,

that I may know how to sustain  
the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens--  
wakens my ear   
to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear,  
and I was not rebellious,   
I did not turn backward.

I gave my back to those who struck me,  
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;

I did not hide my face  
from insult and spitting.

The Lord God helps me;  
therefore I have not been disgraced;

therefore I have set my face like flint,  
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;   
he who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me?  
Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?  
Let them confront me.

It is the Lord God who helps me;  
who will declare me guilty?

**The Response**

**Psalm 31:9-16**

***In te, Domine, speravi***

9 Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; \*  
my eye is consumed with sorrow,  
and also my throat and my belly.

10 For my life is wasted with grief,  
and my years with sighing; \*  
my strength fails me because of affliction,  
and my bones are consumed.

11 I have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my neighbors,  
a dismay to those of my acquaintance; \*  
when they see me in the street they avoid me.

12 I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind; \*  
I am as useless as a broken pot.

13 For I have heard the whispering of the crowd;  
fear is all around; \*  
they put their heads together against me;  
they plot to take my life.

14 But as for me, I have trusted in you, O Lord. \*  
I have said, "You are my God.

15 My times are in your hand; \*  
rescue me from the hand of my enemies,  
and from those who persecute me.

16 Make your face to shine upon your servant, \*  
and in your loving-kindness save me."

**The Epistle**

**Philippians 2:5-11**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God   
as something to be exploited,

but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,   
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,  
he humbled himself   
and became obedient to the point of death--   
even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name   
that is above every name,

so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,   
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,   
to the glory of God the Father.

**The Gospel**

**The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew (26:14- 27:66)**

Scene 1: Meeting place of the Chief Priests

Narrator: One of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said,

Judas Iscariot: "What will you give me if I betray Jesus to you?"

Narrator: They paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

Scene 2: The Last Supper

Narrator: On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying,

Disciples: "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

Narrator: He said,

Jesus: "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, `The Teacher says, ‘My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'"

Narrator: So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said,

Jesus: "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

Narrator: And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another,

Disciples: "Surely not I, Lord?"

Narrator: He answered,

Jesus: "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

Narrator: Judas, who betrayed him, said,

Judas: "Surely not I, Rabbi?"

Narrator: He replied,

Jesus: "You have said so."

Narrator: While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said,

Jesus: "Take, eat; this is my body."

Narrator: Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying,

Jesus: "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Narrator: When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them,

Jesus: "You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, `I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

Narrator: Peter said to him,

Peter: "Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you."

Narrator: Jesus said to him,

Jesus: "Truly I tell you, this very night, before the cock crows, you will deny me three times."

Narrator: Peter said to him,

Peter: "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you."

Narrator: And so said all the disciples.

Scene 3: In the Garden of Gethsemane

Narrator: Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples,

Jesus: "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

Narrator: He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them,

Jesus: "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me."

Narrator: And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed,

Jesus: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want."

Narrator: Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter,

Jesus: "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Narrator: Again he went away for the second time and prayed,

Jesus: "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

Narrator: Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them,

Jesus: "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

Narrator: While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying,

Judas: "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him."

Narrator: At once he came up to Jesus and said,

Judas: "Greetings, Rabbi!"

Narrator: and kissed him. Jesus said to him,

Jesus: "Friend, do what you are here to do."

Narrator: Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him,

Jesus: "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?"

Narrator: At that hour Jesus said to the crowds,

Jesus: "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled."

Narrator: Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Scene 4: Caiaphas’ house

Narrator: Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered. But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said,

Witnesses: "This fellow said, `I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'"

Narrator: The high priest stood up and said,

High Priest: "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?"

Narrator: But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him,

High Priest: "I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

Narrator: Jesus said to him,

Jesus: "You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Narrator: Then the high priest tore his clothes and said,

High Priest: "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?"

Narrator: They answered,

Chief Priest: "He deserves death."

Narrator: Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him, saying,

Chief Priest: "Prophesy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?"

Scene 5: In the courtyard

Narrator: Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said,

Servant Girl: "You also were with Jesus the Galilean."

Narrator: But he denied it before all of them, saying,

Peter: "I do not know what you are talking about."

Narrator: When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders,

Servant Girl 2: "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth."

Narrator: Again he denied it with an oath,

Peter: "I do not know the man."

Narrator: After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter,

Bystanders: "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you."

Narrator: Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath,

Peter: "I do not know the man!"

Narrator: At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Scene 6: Caiaphas’ House

Narrator: When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor. When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said,

Judas: "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

Narrator: But they said,

Chief Priests: "What is that to us? See to it yourself."

Narrator: Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said,

Chief Priests: "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money."

Narrator: After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

Scene 7: Pilate’s House

Narrator: Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him,

Pilate: "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Narrator: Jesus said,

Jesus: "You say so."

Narrator: But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him,

Pilate: "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?"

Narrator: But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them,

Pilate: "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

Narrator: For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him,

Pilate’s Wife: "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him."

Narrator: Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them,

Pilate: "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?"

Narrator: And they said,

**All**: **"Barabbas."**

Narrator: Pilate said to them,

Pilate: "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

Narrator: All of them said,

**All**: **"Let him be crucified!"**

Narrator: Then he asked,

Pilate: "Why, what evil has he done?"

Narrator: But they shouted all the more,

**All**: **"Let him be crucified!"**

Narrator: So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying,

Pilate: "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."

Narrator: Then the people as a whole answered,

**All: "His blood be on us and on our children!"**

Narrator: So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying,

Soldiers: "Hail, King of the Jews!"

Narrator: They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

Scene 8: The road to Calvary and Calvary

Narrator: As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross.

*All stand*

Narrator: And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying,

Passersby: "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

Narrator: In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying,

Chief Priests: "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, `I am God's Son.'"

Narrator: The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way. From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice,

Jesus: "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?"

Narrator: that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said,

Bystanders: "This man is calling for Elijah."

Narrator: At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said,

Bystanders: "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

Narrator: Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

*Silence is kept.*

Narrator: At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said,

Centurion: "Truly this man was God's Son!

Scene 9: Calvary and the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea

Narrator: Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb. The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said,

Chief Priests: "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, `After three days I will rise again.' Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, `He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first."

Narrator: Pilate said to them,

Pilate: "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can."

Narrator: So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.