

I WONDER WHY?

by Mary Sue Rosenberger



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I Wonder Why?

An Ash Wednesday
meditation with music

by MARY SUE ROSENBERGER

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

WORSHIP LEADER — *May be the pastor or any person with a clear, strong voice*

READER 1 — *Peter*

READER 2 — *A woman in the jeering crowd that witnessed the crucifixion*

READER 3 — *A Roman soldier*

READER 4 — *Pilate*

CHOIR

PRODUCTION NOTES

The focus for this Ash Wednesday/Lenten dramatic meditation is reflection upon how we might receive Jesus if he came to us today. Would we crucify him again?

When originally presented, no staging or costumes were used. A worship center featuring a large, rough cross with a crown of thorns entwined around the crossbar stood in the front of the sanctuary near the pulpit. This visual Lenten image focused the attention of the congregation and encouraged meditation.

The Scripture passages were read from the pulpit by the worship leader. Those reading the parts of the four "voices" were sitting among the seated congregation. They used hand-held, portable microphones in order to be heard clearly without standing or focusing the attention of the congregation upon themselves. Those reading the "voices" should feel free to adapt wording to suit their own style, but all presentations will be more effective if read slowly and with appropriate feeling.

This meditation shares the title of the beautiful song included here, "I Wonder Why?" by Richard Avery and Donald Marsh. The five verses of the song are interspersed with the readings. It is very effective for the choir to sing from the rear of the sanctuary, behind the congregation. This focuses attention on the lyrics rather than on the singers. Adaptations may be made in the placement of the choir depending upon the setting in which the meditation is used. The music may also be sung by a solo voice or small group instead of a choir.

Periods of silence between the readings and verses of music heightened the effect of the presentation. The silence encouraged meditation and reflection upon the worship center and the words being read/sung.

Approximate time for presentation: 1 hour

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Part I — Peter

WORSHIP LEADER: “Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, ‘This man was with him.’

But he denied it. ‘Woman, I don’t know him,’ he said.

A little later someone else saw him and said, ‘You also are one of them.’

‘Man, I am not!’ Peter replied.

About an hour later another asserted, ‘Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.’

Peter replied, ‘Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!’ Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly.” (*Luke 22:54-62*)

READER 1: Yes, I denied him. I denied my Lord — not once — but three times. Every time I think of it, I am so ashamed. It wasn’t that I didn’t care . . . I really loved him . . . and I knew that he was the Messiah. But I was afraid — so terribly afraid. I did get brave enough to follow the soldiers who took him away, to see where they went. None of the other disciples even did that! But I was so afraid; so scared.

It was all so sudden and overwhelming. When they asked me if I knew him, I didn’t know what to say. I was afraid that if I said I did, they would arrest me, too. So I denied him — I swore I didn’t even know him . . . Well, what would you have done if you had been in my place? (*Allow several minutes for silent reflection.*)

CHOIR: Verse 1 of “I Wonder Why?”

I Wonder Why?

S.A.T.B. and Accompaniment
Verse 1

Richard Avery & Donald Marsh
Arr. by Lloyd Pfautsch

Slowly, Thoughtfully

S.A.
T.B.
Piano

5 *Unis.*
p I won - der why,
Unis.
p I won - der why, I won - der

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I Wonder Why?

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature. The score is divided into two systems. The first system begins with a measure rest followed by a measure containing a '10' above the staff, indicating a measure rest of 10 measures. The lyrics for the first system are: 'If his dis - ci - ples were like us here Why they all' on the top staff, and 'why, If his dis - ci - ples were like us here Why they all' on the bottom staff. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. The second system contains the lyrics: 'left him and ran in fear As the world did cru - ci - fy,' on the top staff, and 'left him and ran in fear As the world did cru - ci - fy,' on the bottom staff. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes. Dynamic markings include *mf* (mezzo-forte) above the top staff and below the bottom staff in the second system. A fermata is placed over the final note of the top staff in the second system. A large 'V' symbol is placed below the piano part at the end of the second system.

10

If his dis - ci - ples were like us here Why they all

why, If his dis - ci - ples were like us here Why they all

left him and ran in fear As the world did cru - ci - fy,

left him and ran in fear As the world did cru - ci - fy,

mf

mf

mf

I Wonder Why?

15

cru - ci - fy him? Oh, I won - der why?

cru - ci - fy him? Oh, I won - der why?

The musical score is for the song 'I Wonder Why?'. It features a vocal melody in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody begins with a measure rest followed by the lyrics 'cru - ci - fy him?'. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and single notes. The score ends with a double bar line.

Part II — The Jeering Crowd

WORSHIP LEADER: "But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

'Which of the two do you want me to release to you?' asked the governor.

'Barabbas,' they answered.

'What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?' Pilate asked.

They all answered, 'Crucify him!'

'Why? What crime has he committed?' asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, 'Crucify him!'" (Matthew 27:20-23)

READER 2: I was in that crowd. Yes, I shouted along with all the others, "Crucify him, crucify him!" I had no idea who he was — he didn't look dangerous to me. But the religious leaders said he was a revolutionary . . . that he preached treason and proclaimed himself King instead of Caesar. I had no way of knowing — but the crowd was screaming for his blood, so I screamed along with them, "Crucify him, crucify him!"

I hated the Romans just as much as the next good Jew — but the very thought of violent revolution made my blood run cold. If that man were released to lead an uprising against Rome, the whole city might take up arms . . . nobody would be safe . . . my children, my husband and I, we might all be killed. No, this man had to be stopped; this dangerous revolutionary could not be released to endanger us all. "Kill him, kill him!" I yelled with the others. Can't you see? It was really only self-defense. Wouldn't you have done the same thing? (Allow several minutes for silent reflection.)

CHOIR: Verse 2 of "I Wonder Why?"

Verse 2

S.A. *Unis.*
p I won - der why,

T.B. *Unis.*
p I won - der why, I won - der

Piano
p

5
 I won - der why If they were peo - ple like you and

why, If they were peo - ple like you and

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I Wonder Why?

me Why they re - fused then to set him free For the

me Why they re - fused then to set him free For the crowd yelled:

The first system of the musical score for 'I Wonder Why?'. It features a vocal melody in the treble clef and a piano accompaniment in the bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: 'me Why they re - fused then to set him free For the' on the first line, and 'me Why they re - fused then to set him free For the crowd yelled:' on the second line. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and single notes.

¹⁰ crowd yelled: "Cru - ci - fy, cru - ci - fy him!" Oh, I

"Cru - ci - fy, cru - ci - fy him!" Oh, I won - der

The second system of the musical score. It continues the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'crowd yelled: "Cru - ci - fy, cru - ci - fy him!" Oh, I' on the first line, and '"Cru - ci - fy, cru - ci - fy him!" Oh, I won - der' on the second line. A rehearsal mark '10' is placed above the first note of the vocal line. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes.

I Wonder Why?

The musical score is for the hymn "I Wonder Why?". It is written for a four-part choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains the vocal parts with lyrics: "won - der why?" and "why?". The piano part provides harmonic support. The second system continues the vocal parts and piano accompaniment. A rehearsal mark "15" is placed above the first staff of the second system.

Part III — The Roman Soldiers

WORSHIP LEADER: "The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him." (Mark 15:16-20)

READER 3: We really didn't mean him any harm; we were just having a little fun. It's mighty hard to find anything to enjoy about military duty in Jerusalem. It's a hard and bitter life; we're far from our homes and families in Rome; there's no night life in this dead town, and everybody in this "holy city" hates a Roman soldier. The higher-ups give us all their dirty work to do, and the Jews hate the sight of us. They won't even give us the time of day. They act so righteous and holy—but the truth of the matter is, they're just plain stubborn. Roman power is the only thing they understand.

I guess that's why the boys got carried away making fun of that poor prisoner. After all, they knew it would only be a few hours until they had to crucify him—a nasty business if ever there was one. The younger ones had had a little too much to drink—takes the edge off of the ugliness of it all, you see. But all of us needed something to keep our minds off of the miserable business we'd soon march up Golgotha to do. And for just a few brief minutes, making fun of that poor, helpless prisoner gave us a laugh or two. Surely you understand that, don't you? You'd probably have done the same. (Allow several minutes for silent reflection.)

CHOIR: Verse 3 of "I Wonder Why?"

Verse 3

S.A. *p* I won - der why, I won - der why,

T.B. *p* I won - der why, I won - der

Piano *p*

5 *p* If they were sol - diers like boys we know why they all

why, I won - der why, Oh, why? I won - der

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I Wonder Why?

beat him and mocked him so

why, Oh, why? Then went out to

cru - ci - fy,

f

cru - ci - fy him? Oh, I won - der why?

15

Part IV — Pilate

WORSHIP LEADER: “When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood,’ he said. ‘It is your responsibility!’

All the people answered, ‘Let his blood be on us and on our children!’

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.” (*Matthew 27:24-26*)

READER 4: But of course I sentenced him to be crucified. I didn’t really want to — I was convinced that he was innocent of the charges those sneaky Jewish priests had trumped up against him. My wife begged me to release him, and I tried in every way I knew how to set him free. But the crowd insisted that he be crucified. I already had my hands full trying to keep the peace in that city — especially during the Jewish holidays, which are always a time of unrest.

I finally just ran out of patience with the whole situation. After all, I can’t pardon every prisoner that comes before me, or justice would never be done — and the Jews would lose all respect for Rome. Order must be maintained at all costs. The life of one Galilean nobody is a small price to pay for maintaining law and order.

I’m sure you understand that governing a stubborn and rebellious people like the Jews is not a pleasant job, but somebody has to do it. Politics is a tough business. In this case, I had no choice but to give in to the angry mob and condemn the prisoner to death. He simply had to die to prevent a riot and mass bloodshed in the streets of Jerusalem. Surely you agree with that, don’t you? (*Allow several minutes for silent reflection.*)

CHOIR: Verse 4 of “I Wonder Why?”

Verse 4

S.A. *f* If they were lead - ers like those we trust, why they were

T.B. *f*

Piano *f*

cru - el and so un - just When they judged to cru - ci - fy, cru - ci - fy him?

ff

ff

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I Wonder Why?

poco rit.

Oh, I won - der why?

Epilogue

WORSHIP LEADER: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (*Isaiah 53:3-6. Allow several minutes for silent reflection.*)

CHOIR: Verse 5 of "I Wonder Why?"



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customerservice@christianpub.com