

WHO ARE WE ON PALM SUNDAY?

by Kay Bascom



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Who Are We on Palm Sunday?

A mini-drama on the
Triumphal Entry

by
Kay Bascom

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CAST

NARRATOR

CAIAPHAS

High Priest of Israel at the time of Christ.

THOMAS

One of the three disciples of Jesus in this drama, sometimes called a "doubter."

A CHILD

Representative of the children along the path of the Triumphal Entry.

A PHARISEE

Representative of the temple leadership in Jerusalem.

A GREEK

A gentile visitor in Jerusalem the week of the annual Passover celebration.

JUDAS ISCARIOT

One of Jesus' twelve disciples, the one who betrayed him.

MARY

Sister of Martha and Lazarus, of Bethany, just outside of Jerusalem.

CROWD MEMBER

Jerusalem resident aware of the dispute over the healing of a blind man.

JOHN

Intimate disciple of Jesus, who later recorded the Gospel of John.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The following drama, drawn from John 11 and 12, was originally written for impromptu presentation during an adult Sunday school class on Palm Sunday. The purpose of the script is to encourage both participants and listeners to confront the reality of Jesus Christ, and to examine their own hearts and minds in light of his life, death and Resurrection.

Scene: The road of Christ's Triumphal Procession, Jerusalem. It is 33 A.D. on the first day of the week of Jesus' Passion.

Props and Arrangements: *Palm branches:* For the members of the cast, except the High Priest and Pharisee.

Music: A prerecorded tape ready to play a closing song, such as "Via Dolorosa" or "Worthy Is the Lamb" from Handel's "Messiah."

Bibles: Reading the drama script takes less than fifteen minutes. If time allows, the group or leader may skim or summarize John 11 and 12, or read together aloud from Jesus' final public words: John 12:44-48, (with which the script closes).

Other: The leader may add further introduction at the beginning, or some closing resolution, discussion, or prayer at the end, depending on the group's needs and time constraints. Scripture references located within each individual reading are provided for reference or further study.

1 *(The drama begins with the nine cast members scattered through*
 2 *the sanctuary, including on the stage, in the balcony, in the aisles,*
 3 *and in the audience. There is an introduction by the*
 4 *NARRATOR, during which the characters are introduced. The*
 5 *light [if a spotlight is available] is on the NARRATOR only. No*
 6 *official recognition is given to each player until he or she speaks*
 7 *and is spotlighted; thus it is left to the decision of the listeners*
 8 *just who each person is portraying. The audience is then invited*
 9 *to become members of the Palm Sunday crowd and to consider*
 10 *the focus of the introduction. A word of procedural instruction*
 11 *may be in order, suggesting quiet meditation at the close of the*
 12 *drama and during the music.)*

13 **NARRATOR:** The major burden of the Gospels is to make the
 14 identity of Jesus Christ very clear by his example, his
 15 miracles, and his own teaching about himself. The
 16 question Christ asks men and women over and over is,
 17 **“Whom do you say that I am?”**

18 Today we commemorate Palm Sunday. This was the
 19 day when all the forces of belief and unbelief converged
 20 in a mass public judgment about the identity of Christ.
 21 The crowd proclaimed him “King of Israel” in Jerusalem.
 22 But Christ “knew what was in man” — knew men’s
 23 fickleness. He did not take their adulation as
 24 commitment, nor their denial as irreparable. Within a
 25 week the crowd had shouted for his crucifixion and he
 26 had died for their sins, been buried for three days, and
 27 had been raised by the power of God from earth, forever
 28 testifying to who he really is!

29 Now it is *we* who are on the judgment stand. Who are
 30 we on Palm Sunday? As we all participate in this
 31 Scripture-based drama, try to identify with the
 32 background, the reactions, and the verdict of each of the
 33 nine representatives of humanity standing along Christ’s
 34 palm-strewn path two thousand years ago. Then consider,
 35 **“Who am I on Palm Sunday?”**

CAIAPHAS, THE HIGH PRIEST: (*Looking down from a window or high place*) This is infuriating! Ever since he healed that man born blind and raised Lazarus from the dead, the world has gone after him. He deserves to be stoned. He claims he is equal with God, saying he was “before Abraham” and all that blasphemy! As we discussed in the Council, “If we let him go on thus, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.” (John 11:48) I told them, “Do you not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish?” (John 11:50) Today’s scene confirms it. We can’t delay any longer; he must be destroyed.

THOMAS, THE DISCIPLE: (*Standing with palm branch in hand*) I don’t know what to make of all this. Our Jewish leaders have vowed to kill our Master, and I don’t know why he is putting himself in this danger by coming to the Passover Feast with all this tension and all these crowds. I told the rest of the group who travels with him that if he insists on leaving seclusion and going to the Feast, let us also go, that we may die with him. (John 11:16) I’ve cast my lot with him, and I’m going to stick it out, but I’m pessimistic about what’s really going to happen before this week is over.

A CHILD: (*Palm branches in each hand*) Oh, how exciting to wave these branches and sing our pilgrim Psalm together, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” (John 12:13) Jesus always seems to love us children. How I’d like to ride with him on that donkey all the way into the city. I wonder what it means to be crowned the King of Israel. Will Jesus move into the palace? My parents are so excited, they’re even letting us children shout and sing!

A PHARISEE: (*Watching from a distance*) How utterly blasphemous...singing hosanna — “save now” — to this deceiver! Our Messiah will come on a white steed and

1 drive out our oppressors. This liar sits peacefully on a
 2 donkey, and yet...ever since that Lazarus incident, we've
 3 been powerless. As I said to the other leaders, "You see
 4 that you can do nothing; look, the world has gone after
 5 him." (John 12:19)

6 **A GREEK:** *(Standing with palm branch — looking at it, perplexed)*

7 What is going on with these Jews? We don't understand
 8 all their customs, but surely we will learn something by
 9 coming to this annual festival that seems to mean more to
 10 them than any other. It has something to do with a
 11 sacrificial lamb. Actually, we came to investigate who this
 12 man is, this miracle worker everyone is talking about.

13 This Jesus talks about having "other sheep, that are
 14 not of this fold." (John 10:16) We went to the Galilean,
 15 Phillip, and begged him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." (John
 16 12:21) He and another disciple named Andrew told Jesus
 17 this, but Jesus' response was strange. He said, "The hour
 18 has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I
 19 say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and
 20 dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit..."
 21 (John 12:24)

22 Jesus stopped to pray, finally, standing right in the
 23 middle of the crowd we were at the edge of. He said,
 24 "Father, glorify thy name." (John 12:28) I heard something
 25 like a roar of majestic thunder from heaven, and then
 26 Jesus spoke: "This voice has come for your sake, not for
 27 mine. Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the
 28 ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up
 29 from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (John 12:30-
 30 32) We do not understand what he meant, but perhaps we
 31 will learn as we follow him into Jerusalem for this
 32 Passover week.

33 **JUDAS ISCARIOT:** What was that thunder we heard the other
 34 day? What was our peaceful Master talking about? Is he
 35 going to "drive out the ruler of this world" or not? On a

1 donkey? I'm tired of his heavenly talk. I want action. Let
 2 him prove himself one way or another, I say. I'm not going
 3 to shuffle around behind him any longer. Now or never,
 4 I'll help them make him do *something!* (*Throws his branch*
 5 *down.*)

6 **MARY, THE SISTER OF LAZARUS:** (*Studying her branch,*
 7 *prayerfully*) Oh, dear God, at last the people are
 8 proclaiming him to be our Messiah! I've felt it in my bones
 9 every time I've been near him these last three amazing
 10 years of our lives. He's come and gone from our home in
 11 Bethany...we were so privileged to give him that
 12 hospitality. And when he didn't come when our brother
 13 Lazarus was so ill, Martha and I couldn't believe our most
 14 loving friend wouldn't come and do for us what he did for
 15 strangers.

16 When he finally did arrive, four days after the
 17 funeral, I hardly knew how to speak to him. I was numb
 18 from Lazarus' death, and numb from Jesus' strange
 19 insensitivity, too. I was confused when he asked us to still
 20 believe — and called himself the "Resurrection." We were
 21 horrified to be asked to open the tomb — to have to smell
 22 our brother's deadness! He looked so longingly at Martha
 23 and me, and said, "Did I not tell you that if you would
 24 believe, you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40)

25 And then he called my brother forth...and Lazarus
 26 came out, alive! Weeks it's been — and Lazarus has gone
 27 on living. I touch Lazarus and am overcome by joy and
 28 overflowing praise to this one who can bring back the
 29 dead! The people are amazed. They come just to see
 30 Lazarus — a living proof of Jesus' ability to give victory
 31 even over death.

32 Still...I find fear in my heart, for my brother's
 33 resurrection has stirred up so much attention that the
 34 Pharisees cannot bear such evidence. They threaten to
 35 kill Lazarus along with Jesus. I am so afraid. Something

1 Jesus said at our supper for him last week put terror in
 2 my heart. When I anointed his dear feet and Judas was so
 3 indignant, Jesus defended me. "Let her alone," he said.
 4 "Let her keep it for the day of my burial." (John 12:7)
 5 Burial? If they kill Jesus, our hope will be extinguished!

6 And even if they don't kill my brother now, Lazarus
 7 will still someday have to die. And it would be final,
 8 without Jesus here to heal him. Oh, what does it all
 9 mean... Jesus' calling himself the "Resurrection"?

10 **A CROWD MEMBER:** (*Carelessly picking at his palm branch*) I
 11 missed that day he turned the temple upside down. How
 12 I'd loved to have seen those moneychangers scrambling!
 13 We'll get quite a show this week, if today is any sample.
 14 Last time he was around, that case of the man born blind
 15 stirred up the whole town. I used to throw pennies to the
 16 poor beggar myself. Strange. I could swear the blind man
 17 and seeing one were the same person. But it can't be!
 18 Sometimes you can't even believe your own eyes. Blind
 19 fools! I'll not be easily taken in!

20 **JOHN THE DISCIPLE:** (*Holding two palms, criss-crossed, hugged*
 21 *to his chest*) Oh, my dear Lord, how much we've come to
 22 love you these years together...for how much you have
 23 loved us! What light you have brought to our lives! What
 24 is to happen to you now? Over and over you keep
 25 speaking of departure, of death.

26 We have seen your glory displayed before our very
 27 eyes! When Peter and James and I were with you on the
 28 mountain that glorious day a year ago, you were
 29 transfigured before us — standing there talking with
 30 long-dead Moses and Elijah — alive! So strange it was, we
 31 said to each other, that in such glory you spoke of your
 32 departure, which you were to accomplish at Jerusalem.

33 I fear that your departure may be at hand. You keep
 34 warning these people who do not know you as well as we
 35 do: "The light is with you for a little longer. ...While you



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