

THE EASTER STORY

HYMN: GIVE ME OIL

SCENE 1: PALM SUNDAY

Theo “Sing Hosanna to the king!” It’s a long time since I heard that. What a day it was - I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. They were all so confused. Oh, they wanted a king, all right. But they had no idea what kind of King he is.

Peter & Thomas at one side, Pharisee at other.

Peter Look at all the crowds! All cheering and shouting for Jesus. Look at them, waving palm branches. It’s happening - I think it’s really happening at last.

Thomas Peter, can it be true? Is Jesus the one who’s going to set us free?

Peter How can you doubt it, Thomas? We’ve seen his miracles. We know for sure that he’s the Messiah - a new king, sent by God to set his people free.

King appears in thought bubble in centre.

King Hurray for me! I’m so strong and powerful! The Jewish people have been ruled by the Romans for too long. But I will set them free. I’ll raise up an army and kill anyone who gets in my way!

King & thought bubble disappear.

Theo How could Jesus’ friends still think that? They’d seen how he loved everyone, Jewish or not. They’d heard what he’d said - all

that stuff about how he was going to Jerusalem to die. And now they could see him, riding on a young donkey. Did he *look* like a warrior on a war horse? But of course ... they just saw what they wanted to see.

Thomas Blessed is the king of Israel! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

Pharisee Hey - Jesus isn't the Messiah! Jesus, tell your followers to stop saying that.

Theo But d'you know what Jesus answered? He looked straight at that Pharisee, and he told him that if his friends kept quiet then the very stones in the road would burst out cheering!

SONG: BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES

SCENE 2: THE LAST SUPPER

Theo By the end of the week, things had got a bit quieter. Oh, the crowds were still there, but they'd stopped shouting so they could hear what Jesus had to say. And the questions they asked! Some of them - those Pharisees again - they hated Jesus, and they tried to trick him into saying something wrong - something they could tell the Romans about, and have him arrested. But Jesus was always too clever for them. And anyway, all the people loved him. And that huge crowd, filling Jerusalem - they were full of questions, too. Hungry for every word that Jesus said. Yet still

they didn't seem to listen. As far as I could tell, they were still looking for the wrong kind of king.

Peter & Thomas

Peter I can hardly wait to see what Jesus does next. To have come here to Jerusalem, at Passover time - surely he's planning something big.

Thomas Before we started this meal together tonight, I thought so too. But now I don't understand, Peter. Why is Jesus washing everyone's feet? That's a servant's job. It's disgusting. Our feet are all dirty from the road. And why did he tell us to wash each other's feet? Yuk!

Peter You heard what he said. He served us and now he wants us to copy him and serve other people. To love them and look after them, just like he does.

Thomas But then he said that one of us would betray him. We're his best friends. Can that be true?

Peter I don't know. But I'll tell you one thing for sure: even if everyone else lets him down, I'll never leave him.

Theo They all thought that. They all thought they'd found their king and he was going to win a great victory and they'd be really important in his new kingdom. They never stopped to think that before a victory there must be a battle. They never stopped to wonder if they were brave enough to fight for him.

Thomas There's something else I don't understand. Every Passover we eat the bread and drink the wine, to remember how God saved us

from slavery in Egypt. But Jesus said that from now on the bread and wine will help us to remember *him*. What does he mean?

Peter I think it's a promise: a promise that he'll save us. Just like God saved our people so long ago. Jesus is going to save us again.

Theo But the question was, what did they think Jesus was going to save them from? The Romans? Surely not. Hadn't they watched him break the bread? Hadn't they heard him say that his body was going to be broken too? Did that sound like a warrior king? It sounded more like a servant king to me.

HYMN: SERVANT KING

SCENE 3: GOOD FRIDAY

Peter, Thomas & Mary

Peter Leave me alone. I can't believe what I've done. Leave me alone!

Thomas It's not just you, Peter. We all let Jesus down.

Peter But I said that I wouldn't. I promised him! And then ... then I couldn't even stay awake when he asked us to pray for him. And when he was arrested, I couldn't even admit that I knew him. Oh, I'm such a failure. Just leave me alone.

Mary I can't believe that he's really dead. How can Jesus be dead?

Thomas I know, Mary. But you saw it with your own eyes. We all did. They laughed at him and they hit him and then they hung him on a cross and he died.

Theo It was true. That huge crowd filling Jerusalem - the crowd that had shouted Hosanna when they thought Jesus was a warrior king - they'd shouted something different in the end. When, at last, they understood that he hadn't come to fight the Romans. When they saw his poor, beaten body held up between the guards. No, they weren't shouting Hosanna any more. They were shouting for him to be crucified. Release Barabbas, they said - because he might really lead us in our fight against the Romans. As for this Jesus, what can he possibly do? Why, he can't even save himself, never mind the rest of us.

Thomas 'King of the Jews', the notice above his cross said. I really thought that's what he was.

Mary But now he's dead.

Peter How can I ever forgive myself?

REFLECTIVE MUSIC

SCENE 4: EASTER SUNDAY

Theo Jesus wasn't a warrior king. But he wasn't only a servant king, either. Peter and Mary and the others - they still had no real idea of who he was. Not until the third day after he had died, when Mary went to look at the place where his body had been laid: a tomb, like a cave, with a huge stone rolled across the entrance, and guards making sure nobody disturbed it. Well, they tried

anyway. But they hadn't reckoned on an angel of the Lord moving the stone.

Mary & Angel

Mary Where's Jesus? Oh, what have you done with his body?

Angel Why are you looking for him in a tomb? Why would you look among the dead for someone who's alive? Jesus isn't here. He has risen, just as he said he would. Look where his body was. You can see it's not there.

Mary But where is he?

Angel He's alive! Now go and tell his friends. Quickly - go!

SONG: WHY DO YOU LOOK HERE FOR THE LIVING?

Angel & Mary disappear.

Peter & Thomas appear at other side.

Peter I keep thinking about all the things Jesus said when he was alive. You know, he told us that he would die, but I wouldn't listen. I didn't want to believe it.

Thomas And he told us he'd rise again. But that's impossible.

Mary appears.

Mary Peter, come quickly! Jesus is alive!

Thomas Alive? How can he be alive? We saw him die.

Mary I went to the tomb. His body's gone. And an angel of the Lord told me that he's alive.

Thomas But that's impossible.

Peter Jesus alive? Can it really be true? And if it is - oh - how could I face him, after what I did?

Theo Peter still didn't get it. He didn't get what Jesus had done for him on the cross - and not just for him but for all of us. You can't blame him. I mean, the truth is amazing. That God loves us, even though we keep messing up. That he loves us so much that he won't let anything get in the way of us knowing him. That he loves us so much that he would even come to earth and let himself be killed on a cross, so that when we mess up all we need to do is say sorry, and really mean it, and we can be friends with him again. It blows your mind, doesn't it?

HYMN: I KNOW JESUS LOVES ME

SCENE 5: PETER

Peter

Peter It's true. It's really true. God came to earth. We saw him with our own eyes. We ate with him. We listened to him - and then, when things got tough, we turned our backs on him. *I* ran away from him. And he died on a cross, all alone.

Theo There was a sign over the cross. It said, 'King of the Jews', and it was wrong. He isn't just the king of the Jews. He's King of

everyone and everywhere.

That man who hung on the cross was the King of kings. He could have saved himself, but he didn't. He chose to save all of us, instead.

Peter And afterwards, when he rose again, we saw him again with our own eyes. We ate with him again. And this time, we really listened. We listened when he told us that he's saved us. *I* listened, when he told me that he forgave me for messing up.

Theo Sing Hosanna to the King of Kings! The kingdom, the power and the glory are his, now and forever.

Let's say together the prayer that he taught us.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

THE BLESSING