

**AT CALVARY**  
**Who do you say He is?**

**A Meditation For Good Friday**  
**by Roy A Rabey**

**Rev Roy A Rabey**, and his wife Kathy, were originally from the Channel Islands, but ministered mainly in the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, lastly in Mutare, then retirement ministry in Selsey and Felpham in the UK. After 57 years in ministry, Roy died for resurrection in 2008, Kathy still lives in their home in West Sussex. Roy's son lives in Cape town, his daughter in the UK near Kathy; the family is part of and remains in contact with Christians in South Africa.

Two such 'read or acted part' tableau dramas for Good Friday by Roy Rabey are known to have remained in print. Family permission for their use is that they should be used only as a free worship offering available to God's church, not altered, and not used for commercial gain. The scripture passages included are from the Good News Version, but can be replaced with a modern version translated competently from the original languages. For eMail Information:

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**PARTS:**

- Narrator – The minister/service leader of Good Friday .....
- Wine Bearer (Wine bottle) .....
- 1 Carpenters (The Cross) .....
- 2 carpenter/ oldier (Hammer and Nails) .....
- Justice Official (Indictment) .....
- Seamstress (The Robe) .....
- 1<sup>st</sup> Soldier (Crown of Thorns) .....
- Nurse (Sponge and Water) .....
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Soldier (The Dice) .....
- Centurion (The Spear) .....

**Prop pieces:**        **See details at each part.**

## AT CALVARY – THE TABLEAU DRAMA

### CALL TO WORSHIP

#### **HYMN/SONG:**

#### **PRAYER**

Narrator - Introduction: **If you had been at Calvary to watch the crucifixion and death of Jesus, what would you have said about Him? This Good Friday tableau drama gives Bible readings of how it really happened. The actors speak fiction words of what some of the lesser figures at Calvary might have said. They also add props to a tableau scene depicting the Good Friday message. As Bible, drama and props come together, we become challenged by the Jesus of the cross. Who is He to us? We do know that the Roman centurion at the cross said: "This man was really the Son of God!"**

**OPENING NARRATOR – Reading Luke 3: 13 – 26: (13) Pilate called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, (14) and said to them, "You brought this man to me and said that he was misleading the people. Now, I have examined him here in your presence, and I have not found him guilty of any of the crimes you accuse him of. (15) Nor did Herod find him guilty, for he sent him back to us. There is nothing this man has done to deserve death. (16) So I will have him whipped and let him go." (17) OMITTED TEXT (18) The whole crowd cried out, "Kill him! Set Barabbas free for us!" (19) (Barabbas had been put in prison for a riot that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) (20) Pilate wanted to set Jesus free, so he appealed to the crowd again. (21) But they shouted back, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (22) Pilate said to them the third time, "But what crime has he committed? I cannot find anything he has done to deserve death! I will have him whipped and set him free." (23) But they kept on shouting at the top of their voices that Jesus should be crucified, and finally their shouting succeeded. (24) So Pilate passed the sentence on Jesus that they were asking for. (25) He set free the man they wanted, the one who had been put in prison for riot and murder, and he handed Jesus over for them to do as they wished. (26) The soldiers led Jesus away,**

#### 1. THE WOMEN WITH THE WINE

**NARRATOR – Reading Matt 27:33-34: They came to a place called Golgotha, which means, "The Place of the Skull." (34) There they offered Jesus wine mixed with a bitter substance; but after tasting it, he would not drink it.**

*[A wine bottle with straw surround is brought up the aisle by a lady and placed quietly and slowly on the Communion table. She stands to one side while the commentary is said, then returns to a seat in the front row.]*

#### Woman with Wine Bottle:

His first miracle was when He turned water into wine,  
enriching the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee,  
..... a better quality than this sour liquid.

So many, with their crosses,  
drank it to escape the horror of reality,  
to deaden the pain, to drug the mind.

But this Jesus would not drink.  
He preferred to face it sober.  
He did not want to escape it  
or rely on other help than God's.  
The cup His Father gave Him,  
He would drink it to the dregs.

## 2. THE CROSS

**NARRATOR – Reading John 19.17: (So Jesus) went out, carrying his cross, and came to "The Place of the Skull," as it is called. (In Hebrew it is called "Golgotha.")**

[The cross is brought down the aisle in two pieces, by two men in carpenter's overalls. It is assembled on the floor in front of the table. The sounds of this speak their own dramatic message. It is then placed leaning on the table so that the cross piece projects up in the air.]

### 1<sup>st</sup> Carpenter:

A nice piece of wood ... such a waste.  
It could have been carved ....  
Used in a house for door or window frame;  
on the farm, or along the road,  
part of a seat for weary folk to rest upon.  
It took years to grow, green and beautiful in the woods....  
Then it was cut down, and it took time to season it,  
..., but I suppose ....

**This man too** took time ....  
Time to grow, time to prepare, time to come to fruition  
Wasted years now...  
**He was** a carpenter.  
His strong hands would have made good use of this wood....  
planed and smoothed and polished it to make a yoke  
that would not gall the shoulders of the beasts that pull the plough.

Of part He might have made a toy  
to gladden the heart of a little child;  
satin smooth .... no splinter left  
to tear the flesh of a tiny hand.

Yet .... **something is** being built by this cross.  
A sign-post to eternal life;  
a door to a new opportunity;  
a bridge between man and God -  
between earth and heaven -  
between sin and love.

HYMN/SONG:

### 3. THE HAMMER AND NAILS

**Narrator – Reading John 19:18: *There they crucified him; and they also crucified two other men, one on each side, with Jesus between them.***

*[The hammer and nails are brought to the table and quietly and slowly laid on it. The man bringing them wears overalls.]*

2<sup>nd</sup> Carpenter: Nails are used to hold things together,  
.... not to tear apart ....  
.... to construct, .... not to destroy.  
They are made to pierce wood,  
not a man's flesh.

Those scribes are the people responsible ....  
I hate to have a part in, it with them.  
..... they look as hard as nails too.

.... That's right .... It's their hard hearts,  
their anger, their pride,  
those are the real nails  
that pin Christ to the Cross.

**Narrator – Reading Luke 23:32 – 37: (32) *Two other men, both of them criminals, were also led out to be put to death with Jesus. (33) When they came to the place called "The Skull," they crucified Jesus there, and the two criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. (34) Jesus said, "Forgive them, Father! They don't know what they are doing." They divided his clothes among themselves by throwing dice. (35) The people stood there watching while the Jewish leaders made fun of him: "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah whom God has chosen!" (36) The soldiers also made fun of him: they came up to him and offered him cheap wine, (37) and said, "Save yourself if you are the king of the Jews!"***

### 4. THE INDICTMENT

**Narrator: Reading John 19: 19 – 22: ( 22) *Pilate wrote a notice and had it put on the cross. "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," is what he wrote. (20) Many people read it, because the place where Jesus was crucified was not far from the city. The notice was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. (21) The chief priests said to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am the King of the Jews.' "* (22) *Pilate answered, "What I have written stays written."***

*[ A player in a justice robe quietly carries a board with "The King of the Jews" in Hebrew, Latin and Greek up the aisle and hangs it on a hook on the cross.]*

Justice official: A controversy surrounds this notice.  
.... Some people are always ready to find fault.  
Here is written a feeble Roman's obstinacy,  
And also an enraged Jewish jealousy.

Poorer, less educated men have spoken things,  
More accurate and more sincere, about this good man.  
And what they said was true,  
proved beyond any shadow of a doubt  
in a living experience of their own.

But this ,  
Meant as a sign of mockery,  
displays the truth .... for all the world to see.

Yet .... words are inadequate ....  
For He is King, not only of the Jews,  
but of every man and nation;  
not only of time,  
but of History and Eternity too.

#### **HYMN/SONG/GROUP/CHOIR:**

#### 5. THE ROBE

**NARRATOR - Reading John 19:2-3: (2) *The soldiers made a crown out of thorny branches and put it on his head; then they put a purple robe on him (3) and came to him and said, "Long live the King of the Jews!" And they went up and slapped him.***

*[a seamstress brings it up the aisle, draped across both arms, and hangs it on the up-pointed arm of the cross. It is allowed to drape behind as a back-drop.]*

Seamstress: His own robe was of high quality and design,  
woven without a seam; made by His mother  
in the peaceful home at Nazareth,  
with loving care and tender thoughtfulness.  
He was made to exchange it for this ....  
.... this cast – out, second-hand thing.

Jesus deserved better tribute than this;  
the tribute of nimble fingers ....  
styling .... fashion .... quality.  
But it was not tailor-made for Jesus.  
He is Unique.  
He cannot be pushed into a human mould,  
or squeezed into a human category.

For He is King .... and King He remains.  
Such as it is .... this tribute is to Him ....  
The King of kings.

**NARRATOR - Reading Luke 23: 39 – 49: (39) One of the criminals hanging there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" (40) The other one, however, rebuked him, saying, "Don't you fear God? You received the same sentence he did. (41) Ours, however, is only right, because we are getting what we deserve for what we did; but he has done no wrong." (42) And he said to Jesus, "Remember me, Jesus, when you come as King!" (43) Jesus said to him, "I promise you that today you will be in Paradise with me." (44) It was about twelve o'clock when the sun stopped shining and darkness covered the whole country until three o'clock; and the curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two. (45) (SEE 23:44) (46) Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Father! In your hands I place my spirit!" He said this and died. (47) The army officer saw what had happened, and he praised God, saying, "Certainly he was a good man!" (48) When the people who had gathered there to watch the spectacle saw what happened, they all went back home, beating their breasts in sorrow. (49) All those who knew Jesus personally, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance to watch.**

## 6. THE CROWN OF THORNS

**NARRATOR – Reading John 19: 1-2a: (1) Then Pilate took Jesus and had him whipped. (2) The soldiers made a crown out of thorny branches and put it on his head;**

*[A modern adaptation (Christ-thorn/ barbed wire/ razor wire is plaited into a crown and brought in on a cushion, and placed over the robe on the up-pointed arm of the cross.]*

### **MUSIC GROUP/CHOIR:**

#### Soldier – Crown of Thorns:

A useless object, thorns.  
Out in the country  
we spend our time trying to avoid them ....  
..... lest clothing becomes entangled and torn.  
Useful, maybe, to sheep, to scratch their backs,  
relieving irritation.

Jesus too was avoided .... lest He lead to entanglement.  
.... But He got entangled ....  
entangled in our problems and our sin.  
That's why He came.

They used this crown of thorns to relieve their irritation  
but there the likeness ends.  
A crown adorns .... not scratches;  
A crown is priceless .... not worthless.

They gave Him a crown .... of thorns  
.... of derisive, scornful injury.  
He wore it with royal dignity,  
for His real crown  
is the crown of eternal glory.

## OFFERING AND OFFERING SONG:

### 7. THE SPONGE

**NARRATOR - Reading John 19 : 29: *A bowl was there, full of vinegar or cheap wine; so a sponge was soaked in the wine, put on a stalk of hyssop, and lifted up to his lips.***

[A lady dressed as a nurse brings a clear glass bowl in which is a sponge, and places it on the table.]

Nurse: He is hot, feverish, delirious,  
.... the pain is unbearable.  
.... His poor tormented body writhes in agony.

It's Unjust.  
No legal enactment should demand this of anyone,  
least of all of Him.

Whatever may be the right of it  
this man should be in a clean bed  
and left in healing silence and peace ....

I can't reach His head to soothe His brow.  
.... His lips and throat must be as dry as sawdust.  
I wonder .... if I could soak this sponge in vinegar  
.... how can I .... here, lend me your spear ....

## HYMN/SONG:

### 8. THE DICE

**NARRATOR - John 19 : 23 – 24: (23) *After the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took the robe, which was made of one piece of woven cloth without any seams in it. (24) The soldiers said to one another, "Let's not tear it; let's throw dice to see who will get it." This happened in order to make the scripture come true: "They divided my clothes among themselves and gambled for my robe." And this is what the soldiers did.***

[ The three soldiers, young men with spears, come up the aisle,  
and sprawl on the floor in front of the tableau, throwing dice.]

Soldier 3 – The Dice: Sitting down, they watched Him there, the soldiers did  
and while they played with dice....  
He made His sacrifice ....  
and died upon the Cross  
to rid God's world of sin.

He was a gambler too, my Christ.  
He took His life and threw it ....  
Threw it for a world redeemed.  
And before his agony was done,  
Before the western sun went down  
Crowning the day with its crimson crown  
He knew that He had won....

## 9. THE SPEAR

**NARRATOR: Reading: John 19 : 34** *One of the soldiers, however, plunged his spear into Jesus' side, and at once blood and water poured out.*

*[The leading soldier/centurion, picks up his spear and places its tip in a hole in the cross, its other end on the ground. He stands to one side with head bowed, while the others look up at the cross in silence.]*

Soldier 3 Centurion: This is the end of it all ....  
the proof of death ....  
and I should know. I have seen it many times.

Mind you, from the way they questioned me afterwards  
you would never think I'd seen death before.  
But true it is ....  
.... and my evidence could not lie ....

And faith that this man lives again  
cannot be disproved by me.

If He is a-live, well ....  
.... I can 'vouch' for this ....  
He was well and truly dead.

## CLOSING PRAYERS

**HYMN/SONG:**

**BENEDICTION**

**AT CALVARY – WHO DO YOU SAY HE IS?**

**A Possible Service Order for Good Friday**

**[More modern adaption of songs only from the original by Roy A Rabey]**

Call to worship

**HYMN/SONG: P 110 – And can it be**

Prayer

- Narrator: Matt 27:33-34**
1. **THE BOTTLE OF WINE** is brought to Communion Table  
*Wine Bearer's Comments*  
**Narrator: Luke 23: 13-26**
  
  2. **Narrator: John 19: 17**  
**THE CROSS** is assembled and placed on table  
*1st Carpenter's Comments*  
**HYMN/SONG: SOF 82 – El-Shaddai**
  
  3. **Narrator: John 19:18**  
**THE HAMMER AND NAILS** are laid on table  
*1st Soldier/2 Carpenter's Comments*  
**Narrator: Luke 23.32-37**
  
  4. **Narrator: John 19:19-22**  
**THE INDICTMENT** is hung on the cross  
*Official's Comments*  
**HYMN/SONG/CHOIR/MUSIC GROUP: SOF 120 – From heaven you came**
  
  5. **Narrator: John 19:2-3**  
**THE ROBE** is hung on the cross  
*Seamstress's Comments*  
**Narrator: Luke 23: 39 – 49**
  
  6. **Narrator: John 19:2a**  
**THE CROWN OF THORNS** is hung on the cross  
*1st Soldier's Comments*  
**HYMN/SONG/CHOIR/MUSIC GROUP: SIS 2.410 – We are the soldiers**

Offertory Hymn/Song:

- Narrator: John 19:29**
7. **SPONGE AND VINEGAR** are placed on the table  
*Nurse's Comments*  
**HYMN/SONG: SOF 1151 – Above all**
  
  8. **Narrator: John 19:23-24**  
**THE DICE** thrown by soldiers at foot of the tableau  
*2nd Soldier's Comments*
  
  9. **Narrator: John 19: 34**  
**THE SPEAR** is placed against the cross  
*Centurion's Comments*

Closing Prayer

**HYMN/SONG: SOF 1310 – I danced in the morning**  
Benediction