

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY
Who do you worship at easter?

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 Methodist Church, from where they retired to 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; they remain in contact with Christians living 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.

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Traditional/Contemporary Orders of Service are included at the end of the drama.

PARTS:

Narrator – The minister/service leader of Good Friday

The High Priest

Pilate

Simon of Cyrene

First Criminal

Second Criminal

John and three Marys

Nichodemus and Joseph of Arimathea

Centurion (The Spear)

Prop Pieces:

See Details at each part.

WE BEHELD HIS GLORY – THE TABLEAU DRAMA

Narrator - OPENING WORDS: The purpose of this meditation is to attempt to view Our Lord through the eyes of some of the people who, either in person or in thought, were assembled at Calvary that day. To aid the meditation, silhouettes of these people are affixed to the wall around a central Cross, gradually creating the outline of a tableau. It is the hope of the author that all who share in this meditation will find themselves drawn closer to Him who died for us on Calvary that day, and experience something of what the Evangelist meant when he wrote (John 1.14):

*We beheld His Glory,
Glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father Full of Grace and Truth*

Call to Worship

HYMN/SONG: (See attached Traditional or Contemporary Orders of Service)

PRAYER

Narrator - INTRODUCTION:

When the Son of God became the son of man his entry into this world was marked by almost complete anonymity. Love - true love - is the unconditional giving of one self to another. That birth at Bethlehem portrays in vivid, homely, human terms, the incredible self-giving of God. A helpless child - to be accepted and loved – or to be cast aside.

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son”... Those words are the only fitting caption for the scene in the Bethlehem stable. *“He came to His own..”* - and some that were His own received Him - poor though they were - and gave Him a home and the response of their love. And others too, as the years went by - a few fishermen, a tax collector, a woman of the streets, and simple, homely village people.

But there was always the possibility of rejection. For love - real love - can never demand acceptance. Acceptance must be freely given, or it is worthless. So it is that we stand today before a scene which is the complete antithesis of Bethlehem. And the only fitting caption is still the same: *“God so loved the world that He gave ...”*

The whole world was represented by these who gathered round Calvary, just as the whole world was represented in the family at Bethlehem. And, incredibly, it was John who himself witnessed that most tragic scene in the whole of this world's history, who later wrote: *“We beheld His Glory...”*

We beheld His glory! It is in the firm belief that Calvary is a window into the heart of God - and the unregenerate heart of man too - that we invite you to share in this meditation. Look again at Him, who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, who though he was the Lord of Life, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, who descended into hell - for US.

To look at Him through the eyes of those who were our representatives that day - and see - beyond, and through, and in the midst of the sickening, sordid degenerate horror of it all - what John saw - HIS GLORY.

Stand, and gaze, and fall, and own – There was never love like Thine, Lord!

HYMN/SONG: (See attached Traditional or Contemporary Orders of Service)

1. **THE HIGH PRIEST**

Narrator - Reading Luke 22 : 66-71

*(The reader brings the figure of the High Priest places it on the wall at left,
OR The actor of the High Priest reads and then takes position at Left.)*

High Priest:

I never had anything to do with Him,
Except this once.
I received reports, of course.
A man in my position cannot mix
with folk like that - and so must use informers.
I sometimes wonder if they tell us only
What they think we want to hear;
And sometimes use their shady situation
As steps to power in their murky underworld.
I feel degraded when I have to listen
To their smarmy lies in Court.
But one has to use whatever comes to hand
To keep the status quo, and hold the power
Bequeathed to us, to rule the people
In the name of God.

He was a harmless village carpenter,
Until His popularity amongst the peasantry
Produced delusions of high grandeur.
God's Son ... He called Himself.
Threatened to destroy God's Temple too,
And build it up again in three short days.
Such blasphemy must be rooted out
With utter ruthlessness.
Far better one deluded peasant die
Than that the people's mind be poisoned
By this foolish, dangerous talk.
It won't be long before He's forgot in Galilee.
Another nine days' wonder - nothing more!

2. **PILATE**

NARRATOR: Reading - Luke 23: 1-4, 18-25

*(The reader brings the figure of Pilate and places it on the wall at Right,
OR The actor of Pilate reads and then takes position at Right.)*

Pilate:

He was innocent! I well could see.
Caught in the toils of wily priests
And their political hangers-on.
Their net of intrigue round me too was spread.

And this He knew. His clear-eyed gaze
 Met mine.... and in that fleeting moment
 It was I who was on trial - not he!
 He was no suppliant, begging me for mercy,
 But a King –
 Standing there in regal splendour.
 He read my coward's heart, but in His eyes
 I saw no fear.... no disappointment either;
 Not even the disdain I knew I merited.
 Just a great pity ... wide as all eternity....
 Deep as the grave ... embracing all the world...
 That scum arrayed against Him ... and me too!
 And intermixed with pity....
 There was something more....
 Ye gods! it was forgiveness!
 ... and I washed my hands of Him!
 May the gods forgive!
 Yes! Let it stand!
 What I have written I have wrote!
 He was a King! He is a King!
 What am I saying? He's already dead
 or nearly so!
 It's over now!
 Give me another glass of wine to dull the memory.
 yet ... somehow I've a feeling
 It will never be over!
 And down the years

(Voices murmur) -

born of the Virgin Mary
 Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 Crucified, dead and buried
 the third day He rose

3. SIMON OF CYRENE

NARRATOR: Reading Luke 23:26

*(The reader brings the figure of Simon of Cyrene and places it on the wall at left,
 OR The actor of Simon of Cyrene reads and then takes position at Left.)*

Simon of Cyrene:

I met Him once before - in Galilee.
 The words I heard Him say that day
 Engraved for ever on my mind will be.
*"If any man compel you
 To go with him a mile.
 Go with him two."*
 Those arrogant Romans treat us as animals
 To carry their equipment when they're weary.
 And when they dragged me from the crowd

That lined the road, I blazed with anger.
But when I saw that broken, bleeding figure
Bowed to the earth beneath that awful load,
A surge of pity welled within me.
I didn't see His face
Until they stretched Him out
To nail His hands.
'Twas then I heard Him whisper : "*Father
.... forgive ... they know not what they do.*"
.... Lord I thank You for the privilege
Of carrying Your Cross.
...but there's another Cross I must take up...
My own! ... for I must follow now
.... I can't give up! must follow
To the very end!

CHOIR/MUSIC GROUP: (See attached Traditional or Contemporary Orders of Service)

(Two crosses are placed on the wall on either side of the central Cross)

4. FIRST CRIMINAL:

NARRATOR: Reading Luke 23: 33-43

*(These two readers bring the figures of the first criminal and second criminal and place them on the wall at left and at right of the central cross,
OR the actor of the first criminal reads, then takes position at left of the central cross, followed by the second actor who reads, takes position at right of the central cross).*

Who do You think You are with Your glib words?
Forgive? Forgive? Blast them to hell rather!
True, we have robbed.
We've taken what belonged to others.
But we-did it openly.
Not like those politicians.
They call it tax.
'Tis for the common good, they say,
But more than half they take goes
Not into the public purse
But into private store.
They talk of justice
But if justice were to be
They would be hanging here
Alongside you and me.
They too have robbed
Grown fat upon the profits gained
By overcharging in the name of Trade.
They too have murdered
But they call their murder, war.
Ravaging whole countrysides,
Calling men to sacrifice their lives

That they might satisfy their lust
For power and wealth
And yet more power and wealth.
Forgive? They wouldn't know the meaning of the word,
E'en were it writ in letters twelve foot high!
No — Man of Miracles — as You're said to be,
Keep Your forgiveness for yourself — and me!
And use your power to free us from this mess.
Use it to bring the fiends of night
To tear their rotten souls to shreds.
Pluck out their eyes,
Rip out their entrails,
Break their limbs;
And then with red-hot tools
Drag them to the lowest depths of Sheol's pit.
If You're a King - which much I doubt —
Go ... prove it man! And save yourself!
... and me!

5. SECOND CRIMINAL

(See above narrator and comment at the first criminal).

Enough! Enough!
Such bitter words
Were once within my heart,
Waiting to be shouted to the winds. Then
Through the red-hot pain that sears my eyes
And hammers drumbeats in my ears
I heard that word forgive!
We need to be forgiven - you and I —
Our evil deeds as much as they.
Perhaps they do deserve to suffer as we do,
We pay the penalty ... and they are free.
Yet.. e're this day is done, we face eternity.
And now I know
(Though how I know I cannot say)
That he who hangs between us,
Sharing our tortured agony,
Will be our Judge.

Jesus ... you healed my sister's child;
Laid your cool hand upon her brow
And brought her back to life.
I should have thanked you,
For I loved that child but
So many evil deeds....
And so much good undone!
Lord You forgave those men
Can you forgive a man like me?
I heard that in the judgement hall, you said

Your Kingdom is not of this world.
When you do enter it
Wheresoever it may be
Lord if it is possible
Remember me!

HYMN/SONG: (See attached Traditional or Contemporary Orders of Service)

6. JOHN

NARRATOR: Reading John 19:25b — 27

*(The reader brings the figures of the three Marys and John and places them on the wall below and to the Right of the Central Cross,
OR The actors of the three Marys and John come up, John reads and then takes position at Right with the three Marys.)*

He was in the beginning with God.
All things were made by Him,
And without Him was not one thing made.
In Him was life....
Life which is the light of men
.... and now that life is fading
.... the light is flickering
The darkness is obscuring it.
The awful, frightening evil,
Grained in the heart of all mankind,
Destroys the only life that matters.

It is so hard, Lord, to believe,
As darkness like the plagues of Egypt
Gathers round
Not soft and sweet like shades of evening
Perfumed with scent of roses
At the close of summer's day
But thick and claustrophobic,
Smothering, black and evil
The darkness of the Pit ... of night
From which there is no hope Of dawn to follow.

The Lords of hell rejoice
For good, and God, and love, and peace
Are driven from the earth
In this dread act.

But I must hold the faith you gave to me
That You will conquer,
Though you seem to fail.
There on the Cross, in agony, You bear
Sin not your own the-whole world's weight.

A human body, torn and broke
By slings and arrows of outrageous form,
Can little longer hold
The great and glorious spirit
That still shines through eyes
Prepared to close in death.

My eyes are glazed with tears
My heart is broken too
As too is hers, who 'neath her heart
Carried Your growing body
E'er it came to birth.
But, through the mist of tears I see
More plainly now than e'er I did before,
The glory that is Yours;
The love that nothing can destroy.

Once, long ago, the Baptist said :
"Behold the Lamb of God!"
I followed and I found 'twas true.
But now I see Oh, so much more
The price that love must pay
If it would win,
And save from sin
Each sullied soul of man.

Yes. Lord I'll take your mother home
.... pierced to the heart with pain
and sorrow none can share.
Within my home she shall find comfort,
Rest and peace. In outward things
I'll take your place. But in her heart
You'll always be her Son.... her Lord
.... and mine!

CHOIR/MUSIC GROUP: (See attached Traditional or Contemporary Orders of Service)

7. NICHÔDEMUS

NARRATOR: Reading John 19: 38 - 42

(The reader brings the figures of Nichodemus and Joseph of Arimathea and places them on the wall at right,

OR The actor of Nichodemus reads and then the actors of Nichodemus and Joseph of Arimathea take position at Right.)

I came to him by night.
I was ashamed to let my interest in
This Galilean Preacher become known

To follow members of the Sanhedrin.
But ever since, as I have lain in bed
At night, and heard the wind
-Whis'ring in the trees ... and sometimes
Howling round the eaves
I've thought of Him.
How can a man be born again?
I asked. I couldn't see the deeper meaning
His reply contained.
But now I do.

Weakly, I tried to stem
The hatred in the words of those who sought
In council to condemn Him out of hand.
And when they took Him in Gethsemane,
Marched Him to court, and summoned us
To pass our Judgement I declined to go.
Sent the excuse that I was sick.
And sick I was not in my flesh

But in my heart.
I knew they would condemn.
That trial was a farce. And
God forgive me for my coward's heart
I was afraid to stand alone
Amid those men of bitter heart and mind
To play the part I should.
I could not stand there and condemn
The innocent the Son of God.
And so I stayed away.

But, Joseph, I've been born anew this day,
As once He said I could.
There, as I knelt before the Holy Book
I long have held so dear,
My tears of penitence flowed deep and long,
Smudging the Prophet's words.
"He was bruised" - Isaiah said,
"For our iniquities".
Because we held our peace
"He was chastized".
And then I op'ed my eyes and read
That *"by His stripes we all are healed"*.
I have been born anew this day
And that blood flowing from His gaping wounds
Is like a healing stream.
His eyes met mine and held me.
It was just a fleeting moment

But, for me it was the moment of eternity
Through which I passed from death to life.

Now I am His for ever and a day
And all the world must know!

You too, my brother Joseph?.....
You too are one of His?
We are alike in sin and cowardice.
We've left it late too late
How different things might be
If we had made our stand at morning's light.

We'll make it now though....
There's little left that we can do,
But use that new and empty tomb of yours
To see His body has
A decent burial.
Pilate will let us that I know
He's bad enough of sycophantic Caiaphas.

What happens next?
We'll wait and see. -
I feel within my bones
That this
Is not the end!

8. CENTURION

NARRATOR: Reading Mathew 27:54

*(The reader brings the figure of the Centurion and places it on the wall central left,
OR The actor of the Centurion reads and then takes position at Left.)*

How I detest this filthy business!
I am a soldier, trained to fight,
Cleanly and bravely 'gainst my country's foes.
Not one of those sadistic scum
Who get delight from hurting others.
Coarse, mean, tortuous minded men,
Not fit to bear the name of human kind.
Whoever thought out this vile means
Of death by drawnout torture, must have been
A fiend in human guise.
if a man must suffer death
It should be clean and swift
the single, flashing blow
Of a well sharpened sword.
But this it makes me want to vomit!
Whate're he may have done,
No man deserves such treatment
Such torture such indignity.

And that man on the central cross
He feels it all 'tis obvious
Yet bears it not with stoicism
But somehow with a regal dignity,
As if He were performing some great deed
Of monumental import.

It's getting dark .. unusual for this hour.
Those threatening clouds pile up -
Upon each other like great hordes of hell,
Massing for some almighty cosmic battle.
And as the darkness grows, it is as if
The universe is shamed
By what's been done this day.

And now ... those thorns upon his head
Glow in this strange, unearthly stillness
That precedes the storm
As if they were a crown of glory.

The very earth is shaking too
Beneath our feet

What's that He said?..... Father
Again that word Thy hands My spirit
For Him it is over,
May the gods be praised.
Those rotten Jews
Have had their pound of flesh.
I hope they're satisfied!

He was a man

Such as they'd never be!
A man? ,,... much more I say

He was He is will be to all eternity
None other than the Son of God.

CHOIR/MUSIC GROUP: (singing softly; See attached Traditional or Contemporary Orders of Service)

READING: Isaiah 53:3, 6, 9 – 11a

HYMN/SONG: (See attached Traditional or Contemporary Orders of Service)

THE BENEDICTION

TRADITIONAL ORDER OF SERVICE
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY – WHO DO YOU WORSHIP AT EASTER?

Entrance of Word and Welcome
Congregational Notices

Purpose of Tableau Drama and Opening Words (Of the hymn “O Love Divine! What hast Thou done?”):

HYMN/SONG: Beneath the cross of Jesus
Opening Prayer

Introduction

HYMN: “There is a Green Hill Far Away”

Narrator – Luke 22.66-71
High Priest: Drama Reading

Narrator – Luke 23.1-4, 18-25
Pilate: Drama Reading

Narrator - Luke 23:26
Simon of Cyrene: Drama Reading

CHOIR: O Sacred Head Sore Wounded...

Narrator - Luke 23: 33-43
First Criminal: Drama Reading
Second Criminal: Drama Reading

HYMN: There is a fountain filled with blood...

Narrator - John 19:25b-27
Apostle John: Drama Reading

CHOIR: Verses 1, 2 and 4 of “At the Cross her Station Keeping” -

Narrator - John 19: 38-42
Nichodemus: DramaReading:

Narrator - Matthew 27:54
Centurion: Drama Reading

HYMN: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

BENEDICTION

CONTEMPORARY ORDER OF SERVICE
WE BEHELD HIS GLORY – WHO DO YOU WORSHIP AT EASTER?

Entrance of Word and Welcome
Congregational Notices

Purpose of Tableau Drama and Opening Call to Worship

SONGS: **We want to see Jesus lifted high
My Jesus, my Savior**

Opening Prayer

Introduction

SONG: **Lord I lift your name on high**

Narrator – Luke 22.66-71

High Priest: Drama Reading

Narrator – Luke 23.1-4, 18-25

Pilate: Drama Reading

Narrator - Luke 23:26

Simon of Cyrene: Drama Reading

MUSIC GROUP/CHOIR: The Old Rugged Cross/God sent His Son

Narrator - Luke 23: 33-43

First Criminal: Drama Reading

Second Criminal: Drama Reading

SONGS: **O let the Son of God enfold you**

Narrator - John 19:25b-27

Apostle John: Drama Reading

MUSIC GROUP/CHOIR: Above all powers

Narrator - John 19: 38-42

Nichodemus: DramaReading:

Narrator - Matthew 27:54

Centurion: Drama Reading

HYMN: **Light of the World**

BENEDICTION