

Today You Will Be With Me in Paradise

By Terri Dill

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DEDICATION

As I wrote this play, my thoughts were of my mother, Dorothy Jackson. She passed away October 2014 and she was one of my greatest fans. She and Dad have supported me, in every way, throughout my career as a playwright and director. I would like to dedicate this play in her memory. My mother would tell me, "Every time you put a play on the stage the children will see Jesus." I felt my mother was sitting in the front row for this play, cheering me on. In my heart I felt she was telling me for those two hours, during the play, we all were standing on holy ground because the presence of the Holy Spirit was with us. Thanks, Mom, I love you.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Joshua is a young man struggling with his father's abandonment. When he begins to run with the wrong crowd and tries to rob a liquor store, he is caught and charged. Blaming God, unable to accept his mother's love or Pastor Brian's guidance, he sits in his jail cell. How will he find forgiveness? As Joshua struggles, we see Jesus work to accept his upcoming crucifixion. Beginning with his baptism to his resurrection, Jesus is seen and heard by his followers. His disciples attempt to understand how to help Jesus as He approaches death. Intermixing the resurrection with a modern day story of faith and forgiveness, this play reminds us that Jesus will come for each of us who reach out to Him. About two hours.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(With doubling: 19 m, 8 w, 3 teen boys, 2 teen girls. Extras.)

NARRATOR: Any aged man.

JOHN THE BAPTIST / NONSPEAKING DISCIPLE: Middle-aged man.

PRIEST ONE / JAMES: Middle-aged man.

PRIEST TWO: Older man.

LEVITE ONE / JOHN MURPHY: Middle-aged man.

LEVITE TWO: Older man.

JESUS: Middle-aged man.

VOICE OF GOD: Offstage

PASTOR BRIAN: Any aged man

JOHN MURPHY / LEVITE ONE: Middle-aged man.

PETER: Middle-aged man.

ANDREW / POLICE MAN: 30-40-year-old man.

JAMES/PRIEST ONE: 30-40-year-old man.

JOHN THE DISCIPLE: Any aged man.

MARY MAGDALENE: Young woman.

MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS: Older woman.

ROSE MURPHY: Woman in her 40s.

KAY / JOANNA: Any aged woman.

MARILYN / SALOME: Any aged woman.

MARY MOTHER OF JAMES: Woman in her 40s.

JUDAS / THIEF ONE: 20-30-year-old man.

PILATE / DISCIPLE: Middle-aged imposing man / a disciple in the upper room scene and the final scene.

THIEF ONE / JUDAS: 20-30-year-old man.

THIEF TWO / DISCIPLE: 20-30-year-old man/ doubles as a disciple in the upper room and final scene.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA: Older man.

NICODEMUS: Older man

SALOME / MARILYN: Woman of any age.

JOANNA / KAY: Woman of any age.

ELLEN / SARAH: 10-14-year-old girl.

PHILLIP / JOSIAH: 10-14-year-old boy.

JOSHUA: At both 12 and 18 years old.

JOANIE / REBECCA: 10-14-year-old girl.

AMOS / YOUNGER JOSHUA: 10-14-year-old boy.

THE DEVIL: Faceless, motionless. An actor who will not be in scenes 9 or 11 can play this part.

EXTRAS: Many extra people for the biblical scenes.

SUGGESTED MUSIC

Music throughout the play can help set the tone of the scenes. (Eldridge Publishing does not hold the copyright for the suggested music. Please obtain appropriate permission for use in your production. Other orchestrated, dramatic music may be used instead of that listed below.)

Prologue: "In the Beginning" from "Son of God."

Scene 1: "Fisher of Men" from the "Son of God."

Scene 3: "Peter Denies Jesus" from "Passion of the Christ" and then "It Is Done" from "Passion of the Christ."

Scene 4: "Roma's Lament" from "Son of God."

Scene 6: "Oh, Son of God" by Francesca Battistelli.

Scene 7: "Circle of Hell" from "Constantine."

Scene 8: "Bearing the Cross" from "Passion of the Christ." And then "Earth" from the "Gladiator."

Scene 9: "World on Fire" by Les Friction.

Scene 10: "Destiny" from "Constantine."

Scene 11: "The Dawn Will Come" from "Dragon Age: Inquisition" and then "Jesus Is Carried Down" from "Passion of the Christ."

Scene 12: "Faith" from "Son of God."

Scene 13: "Elysium" and "Now We Are Free" from the "Gladiator" and then "The Last Goodbye" by Billy Boyd.

STAGING

Scenes shift from Biblical times to modern day. Different time periods can be represented on various parts of the stage by furnishing and lighting. The river may be represented by a moving sheet. In staging the crucifixion, use of lighting and shadows may work in place of raising a cross.

Prologue

(Orchestrated, dramatic MUSIC is played. AT RISE: On a hillside, JOHN THE BAPTIST pantomimes speaking to his FOLLOWERS who have come to hear him and to be baptized. People continue to gather and move closer as to hear all he has to say to them. Off to one side stand some of the PHARISEES, SADDUCEES and LEVITES. He barely acknowledges them as he continues to speak to the crowd.)

Scene 1: The Testimony of John the Baptist

(As the NARRATOR steps out, ALL ACTORS on stage freeze. Orchestrated, dramatic MUSIC plays under the scene.)

NARRATOR: "There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. *(With emphasis.)* The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world."

(ACTORS unfreeze. JOHN is speaking to his FOLLOWERS when the TEMPLE LEADERS approach him.)

PRIEST ONE: Who are you? Who are you to preach to these people? You put yourself above the teachings of the Temple?

JOHN THE BAPTIST: *(With conviction.)* "I am not the Messiah."

LEVITE ONE: "Who then? Are you Elijah?"

JOHN THE BAPTIST: "I am not."

LEVITE TWO: "Are you the prophet?"

JOHN THE BAPTIST: "No."

PRIEST TWO: "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

JOHN THE BAPTIST: "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

PRIEST ONE: "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

JOHN THE BAPTIST: "I baptize you with water for repentance, but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the strings of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He will come ready to clean the grain, separating the good grain from the chaff. He will put the good part of the grain into his barn, but he will burn the chaff with a fire that cannot be put out." "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near. This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: 'A voice of one calling in the desert, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. *(Pause.)* Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

(After JOHN finishes talking, FOLLOWERS come forward to be baptized. As he does this, he looks up and sees JESUS. He stares almost in disbelief. He then crosses over to where Jesus is standing on the side of the river. Dramatic MUSIC plays under the scene.)

JOHN THE BAPTIST: *(Cont'd. Hesitant but reaches out to JESUS.)* "It is I who should be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

JESUS: "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."

(JOHN goes back to the river. JESUS follows. As soon as Jesus is baptized, He goes up out of the water.)

VOICE OF GOD: *(Offstage.)* "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(The PEOPLE standing around the river watch in disbelief and as JESUS walks out of the water. JOHN slowly walks to the people and they come to him as if to question what they just saw. John continues to watch after Jesus. LIGHTS fade to black.)

Scene 2: The Son

(AT RISE: Modern day. JOHN MURPHY and ROSE MURPHY, a young couple, stand in a small chapel, holding their newborn son. PASTOR BRIAN stands on the other side of a baptismal font.)

PASTOR BRIAN: You have brought your son today to be blessed and anointed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In doing so, you have promised to raise him up in the way of our Lord. His life is in the hands of the one and only and in turn God has asked that you help him in his Christian faith. He will face all of life's trials as you have, but know that God is always with him and with you. *(HE reaches out for the baby.)* What name have you given your son?

JOHN MURPHY: We have named him Joshua Aaron Murphy.

PASTOR BRIAN: Joshua Aaron, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. May you always walk in the way of the Lord.

(HE kisses the baby and hands him back to ROSE. The PARENTS look from one to the other, smiling at their child and thanking the PASTOR. LIGHTS fade to black then come up on JOSHUA, now age twelve, ELLEN, PHILLIP, JOANIE and OTHER YOUTH sitting in the chapel. PASTOR BRIAN talks with them about their upcoming confirmation service.)

PASTOR BRIAN: *(Cont'd.)* Well, class, it is time for you to go before the church on Sunday and be confirmed in your faith. Are there any questions?

End of Freeview

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