

A Dramatic Reading for Tenebrae from the Gospel of John
Arranged by Doodle Harris for the youth
at Highland Presbyterian Church, Louisville, Kentucky

Reading 1:

Narrator #1
Narrator #2
Jesus

Reading 2:

Narrator #1
Phillip
Jesus
Thomas
Peter

Reading 3:

Narrator #2
Thomas
Phillip
Peter
Jesus

Reading 4:

Narrator #1
Jesus
Annas
Caiaphas
Soldier
Woman

Reading #5:

Narrator #2
Jesus
Annas
Pilate
Caiaphas

Reading 6:

Narrator #1
Pilate
Jesus
Caiaphas (from choir loft)
Woman (from choir loft)
Annas (from choir loft)

Reading 7:

Narrator #2
Thomas (from choir loft)
Soldier
Jesus

READING #1 (Narrator #1, Narrator #2, Jesus)

John 1:1, 1: 3-5, 3:16-17, 12:44-46

Narrator #1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Narrator #2: All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and life was the light of all people.

Narrator #1: his life was the light of all hope.

Narrator #2: his life was the light of all love.

Narrator #1: the light shines in the darkness.

Narrator #2: And the darkness did not overcome it.

Narrator #1: the darkness could not overcome it.

Narrator #2: For God so loved the world, that God sent his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life.

Narrator #1: Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Narrator #2: And so it was, Jesus came into the world. His coming was foretold by the prophets. He called disciples to him, performed miracles, healed the sick and the lame, taught the masses, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead, and became shepherd to those who would follow him.

Jesus: Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in God, who sent me. And who ever sees me sees the one who sent me. I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness.

READING #2: (Narrator #1, Jesus, Peter, Judas, Phillip, Thomas)

From John 12 & 13

Narrator #1: Jesus had entered Jerusalem on a donkey to celebrate Passover with his disciples. As he entered, the crowd shouted:

CROWD: Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Narrator #1: But the enthusiasm soon ended, for at the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew this his hour had come to depart from this world and to go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him.

Phillip: At the supper of the Passover, Jesus took a towel and a water basin and began to wash our feet. Peter questioned Jesus, but Jesus said

Jesus: Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.”

Thomas: Of course, we wanted a share with Jesus, even if we didn’t completely understand what he was doing. Jesus told us that we were to wash one another’s feet and to set this example of servanthood to all. But one of us didn’t want a part of Jesus share, for Jesus declared.

Jesus: Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.

Narrator: Simon Peter answered Jesus.

Peter: Lord, who is it?

Jesus: It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.

Phillip: Jesus dipped the piece of bread and gave it to Judas, saying...

Jesus: Do quickly what you are going to do

----- Judas turns his back to the congregation ----

Narrator #1: And Judas left them. Jesus continued talking with the remaining disciples, saying to them

Jesus: I am with you only a little longer. But I give you a new commandment. Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are disciples, if you have love for one another.

Peter: Lord, where are you going?

Jesus: Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.

Peter: Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.

Jesus: Will you lay down your life for me? Before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times."

Narrator #1: And with these predictions of betrayals from Jesus, the disciples were in darkness, wondering at what would come to pass.

READING #3 (Narrator #2, Thomas, Phillip, Peter)

From John 14, 15, & 17

Narrator #2: After the meal, Jesus continued to teach the disciples.

Jesus: In my Father's house, there are many dwelling places. I will go and prepare a place for you. Then I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, you may be also.

Narrator #2: Thomas asked Jesus a question.

Thomas: Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?

Jesus: I am the way, ad the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my father.

Narrator #2: Phillip also asked a question.

Phillip: Lord, show us the father, and will be satisfied.

Jesus: Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? Very Truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do. I will do whatever you ask in my name so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Narrator #2: Jesus also promised them that the Holy Spirit, the Advocate would be sent in his name.

Phillip: Jesus taught us that he is the vine and that we are the branches.

Jesus: Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

Thomas: Jesus taught us to love one another as he has loved us.

Jesus: there is no greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Narrator #2: After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said

Jesus: Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one. Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them.

Thomas: Jesus was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

Philip: To those who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the power to be the children of God.

Narrator: The final meal with that Jesus would share with his disciples, his followers, his friends ended.

READING #4 (Narrator #1, Jesus, Judas, Annas, Caiaphas, soldier, woman, Peter)

John 18:1-14, 19-22

Narrator #1 After dinner, Jesus went with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with the disciples. Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus knew why they were there and asked

Jesus: Whom are you looking for?

Judas, Annas, Caiaphas, soldier, police: Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus: I am he.

Narrator #1: When Judas, who betrayed Jesus, heard this, he fell to the ground.

----- Judas turns away from the congregation -----

Narrator #1: Jesus asked again...

Jesus: Whom are you looking for?

Annas, Caiaphas, soldier: Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus: I told you that I am he.

Narrator #1: Then Peter drew a sword, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. Jesus said...

Jesus: Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?

Narrator #1: So the soldiers, their officers, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. First, they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Peter and another disciple followed Jesus and the soldiers to the High Priest. Once he arrived, a woman asked him...

Woman: You are not also one of Jesus' disciples are you?

Peter: I am not.

Narrator #1: Peter went to join a group of soldiers warming themselves around a fire. There, a soldier asked him..

Soldier: You are not also one of his disciples are you?

Peter: I am not.

Soldier: Didn't I see you in the garden with him?

Peter: No, I was not there.

Narrator #1: With this Peter's third denial, the cock crowed three times. In this way Jesus was arrested and Peter had denied Jesus.

READING #5 (Narrator #2, Annas, Police, Caiaphas, Pilate, Jesus, soldier)

John 18: 19-24

Narrator #2: Jesus was brought to the high priest.

Annas: What are you teaching these people?

Jesus: I have spoken openly to them. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said.

Narrator #2: When they had heard this, one of the priests struck Jesus and asked him

soldier: Is that how you answer the high priest?

Jesus: If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?

Narrator #2: Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas. From there, Jesus went to Pilate's headquarters. Pilate greeted them

Pilate: What accusation do you bring against this man?

Annas: If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.

Pilate: Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law.

Caiaphas: you know that by our law, we are not permitted to put anyone to death.

Narrator #2: Pilate then entered the headquarters and summoned Jesus.

Pilate: Are you the King of the Jews.

Jesus: Do you ask this on your own, or did others tel you about me?

Pilate: I am not a Jew, am I? Your own people handed you over to me.

Jesus: MY kingdom is not from this world.

Pilate: So, you are a king?

Jesus: You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world to testify to the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.

Pilate: What is truth?

Narrator #2: Then Pilate went back to the Jews and said.

Pilate: I find no cast against him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?

Narrator #2: They shouted in reply

Annas, Caiaphas, soldier: Not this man, but Barabbas.

Narrator #2: In this way, Jesus was released from the Jews to the Roman Governor, Pilate.

READING #6 (Narrator #1, Pilate, Jesus, woman, Annas)

John 19:1-16

Narrator #1: After the crowd refused to accept Jesus as a released prisoner, Pilate had Jesus flogged. The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They dressed him in a purple robe. They came to him and said:

CROWD: Hail, King of the Jews!

Narrator #1: Pilate went to them and said

Pilate: Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.

Narrator #1: So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of the thorns and the purple robe.

Pilate: Here is the man.

Narrator #1: When the crowd saw him, they shouted

CROWD: Crucify him, Crucify him.

Pilate: Take him yourselves and crucify him. I find no case against him.

Caiaphas: We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.

Narrator #1: when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He asked Jesus

Pilate: Where are you from.

Narrator #1: Jesus did not answer.

Pilate: Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you know that I have the power to release you and the power to crucify you?

Jesus: You would have no power over me unless it had been give to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilt of a greater sin.

Narrator #1: From then on, Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out.

Woman: If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor.

Annas: Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.

Narrator #1: When Pilate heard these things, he brought Jesus outside.

Pilate: Here is your king.

CROWD: Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!

Pilate: Shall I crucify your king?

CROWD: We have no king but the emperor.

Narrator #1: Pilate then handed Jesus over to be crucified.

READING #7 (Narrator #2, Disciple, Soldier, Jesus)

John 19:16-30, 40-42

Narrator #2: The crowd took Jesus. And Jesus, carrying the cross by himself, went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with two others, one on either side. Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read:

Thomas: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

Narrator #2: When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic which was woven in one piece from the top. The soldiers said

Soldier: Let us not tear it, but casts lots for it to see who will get it.

Narrator #2: After this, Jesus knew that all was now finished. He said

Jesus: I am thirsty.

Narrator #2: A jarful of sour wine was standing there. So, they put a sponge of wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. After Jesus had the wine, he said

Jesus: It is finished.

Narrator #2: Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

... a few seconds of silence...

Narrator #2: They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen clothes, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now, there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which on one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.