

Good Friday Through Psalm 22 Script

This script is intended for two actors and a narrator – one actor portraying Jesus, and the other actor portraying every other character.

Narrator: Over the years, many Christians have been troubled by Jesus saying, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” We wonder: how can the only-begotten Son be forsaken? Tonight, we meet Jesus in perhaps his most human moments, falsely accused, abandoned, mocked, and crucified. Sorrowing and suffering, he bore the full weight of sin and evil in his flesh. Even then, when he lifted his voice to speak, it was not to attack or condemn. Though his words were likely pinched and strained at times, they were taken from the holy psalms. In his darkest hour, when he was stripped of human comforts and utterly exposed to all, he clothed himself in the words of scripture and the promise of prayer. As we hear the passion story anew this evening, we will hear combined passages from all four Gospels with the 22nd Psalm serving as an embodiment of Jesus’s experience of that great and terrible day. Scripture tells us that, “Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people.

Pilate: “You brought me this man [Jesus] as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him.” (Lk 23:13-16)

Narrator: Then the chief priests, the leaders, and the people all shouted out together, (Lk 23:18a)

Mob: “Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!” (Lk 23:18b)

Narrator: Barabbas was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder. Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, (Lk 23:19-21a)

Mob: “Crucify, crucify him!” (Lk 23:21b)

Narrator: A third time Pilate addressed them (Lk 23:22a)

Pilate: “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.” (Lk 23:22b)

Narrator: But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished. (Lk 23:23-25) After flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. (Mt 27:26b; Mk 15:15b)

Jesus: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? (Ps 22:1)

Narrator: Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him (Mt 27:27-29a)

Soldiers: "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Mt 27:29b)

Narrator: The soldiers spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. (Mt 27:30-31)

Jesus: O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. (Ps 22:2-3)

Narrator: So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. (Jn 19:16b-18)

Jesus: In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame. (Ps 22:4-5)

Narrator: The two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. (Lk 23:32-33)

Jesus: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Lk 23:34a)

Narrator: It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." (Mk 15:25-26) Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads (Mt 27:39)

Passersby: "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." (Mt 27:40)

Jesus: But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. (Ps 22:6)

Narrator: In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him. (Mt 27:41)

Mob: He saved others; he cannot save himself! Let the Messiah, the King of Israel come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe (Mk 15:31b-32) (Mt 27:42)

Jesus: All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me; they shake their heads. (Ps 22:7)

Mob: Commit your cause to the Lord; let God deliver – let God rescue the one in whom God delights! (Ps 22:8)

Jesus: Yet it was you, God, who took me from the womb; you who kept me safe on my mother's breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. (Ps 22:9-10)

Mob: He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, 'I am God's Son.'" (Mt 27:43)

Jesus: Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. (Ps 22:11-13)

Enemies: Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you? (Mt 26:68) All hail, King of the Jews! (Jn 19:3) Save yourself and come down from the cross! (Mk 15:30)

Jesus: I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. (Ps 22:14-15) I am thirsty! (Jn 19:28b)

Narrator: A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So the soldiers put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. (Jn 19:29)

Jesus: For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet are pierced. I can count all my bones. (Ps 22:16-17a)

Narrator: The soldiers took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, (Jn 19:23-24a)

Soldiers: "Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." (Jn 19:24b)

Narrator: This was to fulfill what the scripture says, (Jn 19:24c)

Jesus: They stare and gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O LORD, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion! (Ps 22:17b-21)

Narrator: One of the criminals who was hanged there kept deriding him (Lk 23:39a)

Criminal: "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" (Lk 23:39b)

Narrator: But the other rebuked him (Lk 23:40a)

Other Criminal: “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” (Lk 23:40b-41)

Jesus: “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Lk 23:43)

Narrator: When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. (Mk 15:33)

Jesus: “*Eli, eli, lema sabachthani*” (Mt 27:46a; Mk 15:34b)

Narrator: This is when Jesus cried out, “My, God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt 27:46b; Mk 15:34b). Some of the bystanders heard it and cried (Mt 27:47)

Bystanders: Listen, “Eli,” he is calling for Elijah (Mk 15:35b)

Narrator: But the others replied (Mt 27:49a)

Others: Wait, let’s see whether Elijah will come to save him. (Mt 27:49b)

Jesus: From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me, O God. I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you. (Ps 22:21b-22)

Others: What’s happening? Does this mean Elijah is coming?

Jesus: You who fear the LORD, praise the Lord! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify God; stand in awe of the Lord, all you offspring of Israel! For God did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; God, you did not hide your face from me, but you heard when I cried to you. (Ps 22:23-24)

Soldiers: You fool! Your God’s not coming to save you. There is no revolution, no liberation, no salvation for you. No one can stand against mighty Rome.

Jesus: From you, O God, comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear the Lord. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever! (Ps 22:25-26)

Soldiers: What is this nonsense? You’re nothing but a skeleton and you think your God will feed the poor – that your God can satisfy even the slightest hunger? You are defeated. Your God is defeated.

Jesus: All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before God. For dominion belongs to the LORD, and God rules over the nations. All those who prosper have eaten and worshipped; all that go down to the earth shall fall down before the Lord. And my soul lives for God. Posterity will serve

God; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim God's deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that the LORD has done it. (Ps 22:27-31)

Narrator: Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last (Mt 27:50)

Jesus: It is finished. (Jn 19:30a) Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. (Lk 23:46)

Narrator: Then Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (Jn 19:30b) At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified (Mt 27:51-52, 54a)

Centurion: "Truly this man was God's Son!" (Mt 27:54b)

Narrator: And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts [a sign of mourning]. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee and provided for him, stood at a distance, watching these things. (Lk 23:48-9) (Mk 15:41b) Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of those who had been crucified with Jesus [in order to remove their bodies]. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (Jn 19:31b-34) Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. (Lk 23:50-56) The next day the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate (Mt 27:62)

Chief Priests and Pharisees: "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." (Mt 27:63-64)

Narrator: And Pilate responded to them (Mt 27:65a)

Pilate: "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." (Mt 27:65b)

Narrator: So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone. (Mt 27:66)

Jesus: 27 Every part of the earth will remember and come back to the Lord; every family among all the nations will worship you. Because the right to rule belongs to the Lord, God rules all nations. Indeed, all the earth's powerful will worship the Lord; all who are descending to the dust will kneel before God; my soul also lives for the Lord. Future descendants will serve God; generations to come will be told about my Lord. They will proclaim God's righteousness to those not yet born, telling them what God has done. (Ps 22:27-31)

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