**Friends and Followers**

by

Daniel Carlson

**Summary**

This is an Easter themed drama that takes place in Bethany, focusing on the week leading up to Jesus's crucifixion as seen through the eyes of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. The story begins shortly after Lazarus is raised, right up to Jesus’s death. It is a time of great ferment, passion and danger. Lazarus, Martha and Mary are caught up in the events of Jesus’s passion and reflect varying attitudes of his followers.

**Characters** *(in order of appearance)*

**Annas** member of the Jewish ruling council  
**Barak** member of the Jewish ruling council  
**Joseph** member of the Jewish ruling council  
**Caleb** member of the Jewish ruling council  
**Lazarus** brother of Martha and Mary  
**Mary** sister of Lazarus and Martha  
**Martha** sister of Lazarus and Mary  
**Judas** disciple of Jesus  
**Malachi** servant of Joseph

There are other non-speaking parts, including Simon, Jesus and some of his other disciples.

**Acknowledgements:**

I used John’s Gospel as a starting point for the plot (hence Jesus being anointed in Bethany before the Triumphal Entry), but was also influenced the narratives of Matthew, Mark and Luke for some of the other incidents.

The timeline for the plot is based on conclusions from Sir Colin Humphrey’s book, *The Mystery of the Last Supper*, as quoted in Ian Paul’s blog, *Psephizo*, on 27th March 2018 ([https://www.psephizo.com/biblical-studies/what-actually-happened-in-holy-week/](about:blank))

The Passover meal in the final scene is based on an essay *Passover in the Time of Jesus* by Daniel B Wallace ([https://bible.org/article/passover-time-jesus](about:blank)).

Other useful articles I read in preparation for writing were the following:

* *Was Jesus’ Last Supper a Seder?* by Jonathan Klawans ([https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/was-jesus-last-supper-a-seder/](about:blank))
* *Jesus’ Last Supper Still Wasn’t a Passover Seder Meal* by Jonathan Klawans ([https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/jesus-last-supper-passover-seder-meal/](about:blank)).

Particular thanks go to Helen Dalgleish for her thoughtful reading and helpful suggestions of the first drafts of my script.

**Scene 1**

*(Jewish Council Meeting. Thursday afternoon. A number of Jewish religious leaders are sitting around a table.)*

Annas: Brothers, thank you for coming. As you know, we are here to discuss the pressing matter of this story of the resurrection.

Barak: If this story spreads, it will prove very dangerous for us.

Joseph: It is already spreading.

Barak: Then we must stamp it out. What do we know about what happened?

Caleb: I don’t think it is necessary to concern ourselves with facts.

Barak: I’m not sure I’m entirely comfortable with that. Making up lies?

Caleb: I’m not suggesting that. We just need to look for ways to discredit the story.

Annas: What do you mean?

Caleb: Like, did he really come back to life?

Barak: There are too many witnesses to that now. Many people have seen him.

Caleb: No. Did he really die in the first place?

Barak: There must be plenty of witnesses to that too.

Caleb: But are they credible?

Joseph: There would be some highly respected people among those witnesses.

Caleb: Like you?

Joseph: Yes. I was there. But there were others.

Caleb: But who was there at the point of death? Maybe he just passed out and came to in the coolness of the tomb.

Joseph: After four days?

Barak: Could it have been a hoax?

Caleb: An elaborate set-up?

Annas: They’re not particularly sophisticated.

Caleb: But he does have influential friends.

Joseph: What are you insinuating?

Caleb: Well, you seem very keen to refute all these suggestions.

Joseph: I’m trying to help. We need a solid plan – one that will stand up to argument.

Caleb: Come on. By your own admission, you were there. You’re a personal friend.

Joseph: I know the family… through business … my father and his father…

Annas: Gentlemen. This arguing is getting us nowhere. If we can’t deny the story, we need another way of stopping it from spreading further.

Caleb: There is another way.

Annas: Yes?

Caleb: We could arrange for him to be killed.

Annas: On what grounds?

Caleb: We could find something… Blasphemy?

Annas: Blasphemy?

Caleb: Doesn’t he claim his resurrection was an act of God?

Joseph: How else could it have happened?

Caleb: It is against nature – a demonic act.

Barak: The popular view is that it was an act of God.

Caleb: A view that can easily be swayed.

Barak: Yes, but my point is, has he actually claimed that for himself?

Caleb: I’m sure we could find someone to confirm it. Joseph?

Annas: How would killing him help?

Caleb: An example… to others who might be attracted to the Nazarene. After all, didn’t Caiaphas advise us not so long ago that it would be good for one man to die for the people?

Annas: I am not sure this was what he had in mind.

Caleb: What other options do we have? If this continues, we lose control.

Annas: We need to come back to this. Let’s take some time to reflect.

Caleb: We don’t have the luxury of time. The festival starts next week.

Barak: The pilgrims…

Caleb: Exactly. Simple people. If they latch on to this, things could get out of hand.

Annas: The points you make are compelling, but as I said, we need time to reflect. We meet again at the beginning of next week. We’ll make our decision then.

*(Blackout)*

**Scene 2**

*(The house at Bethany. Thursday late evening. Lazarus sits at his table and pours himself a drink. There is a knock at the door. Lazarus gets up, checks who it is then opens the door. Joseph enters.)*

Lazarus: Joseph?

Joseph: Lazarus! You’re looking well!

Lazarus: You’re not the first to have told me that recently.

Joseph: No, I mean it. It’s good to see you.

Lazarus: Good to see you too, my friend. I’ve just poured myself a drink. Would you like one?

Joseph: Thank you.

Lazarus: Now, you haven’t come all this way for pleasantries. What brings you out here at this time of night?

Joseph: I’ve come straight from the Council.

Lazarus: And?

Joseph: News about your… your… what happened to you… has spread.

Lazarus: You don’t need to tell me that. We’ve had all sorts of people come to visit, hoping some of the miracle will rub off on them, or something like that, I suppose. It’s becoming a pain. Martha wants to invite them all in, of course, but I just want to be left alone.

Joseph: Well, that’s just it.

Lazarus: What?

Joseph: You’re attracting too much attention for the Council’s liking.

Lazarus: I haven’t asked for it.

Joseph: I know.

Lazarus: So why are the Council getting involved?

Joseph: Well, it’s not so much you… Well, it is, but… It’s more that you are attracting people to him.

Lazarus: To whom?

Joseph: Jesus. Because of what he did to you, people are turning to him in their hundreds.

Lazarus: You say it like it’s a bad thing.

Joseph: It is. To the Council. You know how they are – anything they perceive as a threat.

Lazarus: But I’m not making people turn to Jesus.

Joseph: I know. But it is still a problem for the Council.

Lazarus: Well, then let them sort that out.

Joseph: They are. That’s why I’m here.

Lazarus: What do you mean?

Joseph: I’ve come to warn you.

Lazarus: About what?

Joseph: There’s a threat to your life.

Lazarus: What?

Joseph: Yes.

Lazarus: That doesn’t make sense. What would be the point?

Joseph: I know.

Lazarus: So what are the Council playing at?

Joseph: Times are difficult. The Council is on edge – especially with the festival approaching. There are many who are fearful. They think…

Lazarus: Fear rarely results in sensible decisions.

Joseph: I know. But they think… they fear… some sort of revolt.

Lazarus: But killing me won’t stop that.

Joseph: It might send some sort of message.

Lazarus: What? And you went along with this?

Joseph: No. Of course not.

Lazarus: So you did speak up for me?

Joseph: Well… It’s not that easy.

Lazarus: Maybe, but…

Joseph: The situation’s… complicated.

Lazarus: Complicated? I thought you were my friend.

Joseph: I am. But…

Lazarus: But things have got complicated so you just give it all up.

Joseph: Of course not. Listen, just the act of me coming here tonight is putting me in danger.

Lazarus: Danger? You seem to have forgotten, I’m the one in danger.

Joseph: Yes. But I am trying to help.

Lazarus: But you sat and said nothing.

Joseph: That’s not fair. You don’t understand…

Lazarus: I think I understand well enough.

Joseph: The way the Council works… There are other ways to sort this out.

Lazarus: It sounds like it’s too late for that.

Joseph: Not necessarily.

Lazarus: So what do you suggest? Just wait until someone comes along and claims the bounty?

Joseph: No. At the moment it is just talk. There are some on the Council who could be persuaded, but the meeting was not the right time. I will do what I can. You just need to lay low for a while.

Lazarus: That won’t be easy.

Joseph: I know. I must go. Give my regards to Martha and Mary. Thank you for the drink.

*(Joseph exits. Lazarus sits at his table and finishes his drink.)*

**Scene 3**

*(The house in Bethany. Friday early morning. Lazarus is still sitting at the table, the empty cups in front of him. Mary enters.)*

Mary: Lazarus? Did you not go to bed last night?

Lazarus: I was having trouble sleeping.

Mary: Dreams?

Lazarus: It feels like one. Or rather, a nightmare.

Mary: Do you want to talk about it?

Lazarus: Not now.

*(Enter Martha. She sees the empty cups on the table and whisks them away with a disapproving look.)*

Martha: Late night?

Mary: Trouble sleeping.

Martha: Hardly surprising.

Mary: Martha.

Martha: Was that Joseph I heard come round last night?

Lazarus: Joseph? Yes.

Martha: A bit late for him, wasn’t it?

Lazarus: Mm.

Martha: What did he want then?

Mary: Martha. I don’t think Lazarus wants to talk about it.

Martha: What? Has he got something to hide?

Mary: Martha. You don’t…

Lazarus: It’s all right, Mary. You’ll both find out sooner or later.

Martha: What?

Lazarus: Martha, Mary, sit down.

Mary: Lazarus?

Lazarus: Joseph came last night straight from the Council. He came with a warning… for me.

Martha: What have you done.

Lazarus: Nothing.

Martha: Then why…?

Lazarus: The Council think I’m attracting too many people to Jesus.

Mary: But how is that a…?

Lazarus: They fear him.

Martha: They fear what he might do to their power and influence.

Lazarus: They fear a revolt.

Mary: But that won’t happen.

Lazarus: You can’t say that.

Martha: Whether it does or doesn’t, this has nothing to do with you. You’re not leading a revolution.

Lazarus: That doesn’t seem to matter. They think that taking me out might serve as a warning to everyone else.

Martha: Taking you out?

Mary: No.

Martha: So what can we do?

Lazarus: Nothing.

Martha: But…

Lazarus: Apparently, it’s just talk at the moment. Joseph says he will do something.

Martha: And in the meantime?

Lazarus: He tells me to lie low.

Martha: Does he know how many people have…?

Lazarus: Yes.

Mary: But what about tomorrow?

Lazarus: Tomorrow?

Martha: Mary, now isn’t the time to be talking about this.

Mary: Jesus is coming to the village.

Lazarus: But he can’t stay here. Not this time.

Martha: No. He’s going to Simon’s house.

Mary: But we’ve been invited.

Lazarus: That doesn’t mean…

Mary: I’ve got something I want to give him. And Martha’s got to go as she’s helping with the food.

Lazarus: Martha...

Martha: Well, Simon’s not up to it. You remember the food at his niece’s wedding?

Lazarus: Martha, that’s not your job. Don’t you remember what Jesus told you…?

Martha: But this is different. This time I’m doing it for him.

Mary: So, can we still go?

Lazarus: You can. I’ll stay.

Mary: But Lazarus, it’s Jesus. He’ll want to see you.

Lazarus: It’s best I don’t go this time.

Mary: What do you mean?

Lazarus: It’s just better I stay away.

Mary: But Jesus will be…

Lazarus: Maybe that’s it. Maybe it’s Jesus. I didn’t ask for any of this. If Jesus had just left me alone. What’s he done? Brought me back to life just so I can become a martyr? I’d be better off dead.

Mary: Lazarus!

*(Exit Mary, crying. Silence.)*

Martha: Lazarus.

Lazarus: I know.

Martha: You need some rest. Just think about it. Jesus is our friend. He’ll want you there. You’ll be safe. It’s at Simon’s, after all.

*(Exit Martha. Lazarus stays seated, head in his hands.)*

**Scene 4**

*(The house in Bethany. Friday afternoon. Martha and Mary are preparing food in the kitchen. They are working silently. Mary is pensive.)*

Mary: I’m worried about Lazarus.

Martha: Me too.

Mary: He’s changed.

Martha: The news from Joseph is worrying him.

Mary: No. It’s more than that.

Martha: What do you mean?

Mary: Haven’t you noticed?

Martha: What?

Mary: Ever since the miracle. It’s turned our lives upside down –

Martha: What, you mean like you helping out with preparing food?

Mary: And you not getting stressed about it all!

Martha: *(smiling)* OK, yes.

Mary: But it’s more than that, isn’t it? Jesus coming and doing what he did… I mean, it’s the most amazing thing ever – and yet for Lazarus…

Martha: *(Suddenly realising)* It’s like nothing special happened.

Mary: Exactly.

Martha: I’ve never really thought about it before.

Mary: And now it’s like he just wants to turn away from Jesus. After everything he’s done. It doesn’t make sense.

*(They carry on working, lost in their own thoughts.)*

Martha: I guess it was different for him.

Mary: What?

Martha: The miracle.

Mary: How do you mean?

Martha: Well, we lived through it all. We experienced everything – the pain, the grief, the… well, you know… and then the sheer joy when he came back.

Mary: And…?

Martha: But for him, I guess, one minute he was very ill and the next he’s coming out from the tomb, blinking in the sunlight…

Mary: Have you talked to him about this?

Martha: No. I’ve only just thought of it. I assumed he felt like we did.

Mary: Maybe you’re right. It kind of makes sense.

Martha: And what with him suddenly becoming the centre of attention, people visiting at all hours…

Mary: He’s never liked that.

Martha: No.

*(They pause again, carrying on with their work.)*

Mary: I want him to come tomorrow.

Martha: Me too. Let’s put these in the oven and talk to him.

*(They put the food in the oven and then exit.)*

**Scene 5**

*(Simon’s house in Bethany. Saturday evening. A table is set for a meal. Guests, including Lazarus, enter and recline at the table. Martha is busy serving them. Mary kneels at the feet of one of the guests – Jesus – although this should not be immediately obvious. Judas enters and reclines next to Lazarus.)*

Judas: Lazarus! Good to see you. I heard rumours you weren’t going to be here.

Lazarus: Well, my sisters can be quite persuasive.

Judas: What’s that? Smells like someone has just… Lazarus! Look at what your sister’s doing.

Lazarus: Ah, so that’s what she meant.

Judas: Did you know she was going to do this?

Lazarus: Not exactly.

Judas: What a waste!

Lazarus: Typical Mary.

Judas: That perfume must be worth a fortune.

Lazarus: It’s not cheap.

Judas: You don’t seem very annoyed by this.

Lazarus: Why should I be?

Judas: The waste of money… Your sister drawing attention to herself…

Lazarus: That’s just Mary, isn’t it? She’s always been extravagant.

Judas: But the perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor.

Lazarus: She said she wanted to give something to Jesus.

Judas: It’s not appropriate. Why can’t she be more like Martha?

Lazarus: What do you mean?

Judas: Serving the food. Keeping in the background.

Lazarus: What, Mary, keeping in the background? That’s hardly her style.

Judas: It’s not about style. It’s about duty and obligation.

Lazarus: I don’t think Martha is doing what she’s doing out of duty. She says it’s her way of giving to Jesus, showing her love for him.

Judas: Listen, Lazarus. I know you have a looser view of the roles and relationships between men and women, but don’t you think you need to tighten things up a bit?

Lazarus: What?

Judas: You’re the head of the house. There’s a natural order to things. You have a role and you have a responsibility to make your sisters take on their roles.

Lazarus: They have their roles. We share responsibilities.

Judas: Really? Now is not the time for that sort of stuff. You need to get back to how things should be.

Lazarus: What, like Jesus does?

Judas: What do you mean?

Lazarus: Women following a rabbi around? That’s hardly traditional, is it?

Judas: That’s different. Those women provide for us - cooking and serving. And they’re also rich – they provide financially. Very convenient.

Lazarus: And what about the one you call the Magdalene? She’s not rich, and I’m not aware she does any cooking…

Judas: Yes, Mary… Perhaps not so dissimilar to your Mary, my friend.

Lazarus: What are you insinuating, Judas?

Judas: Lazarus, let’s not fall out over this. I didn’t want to talk to you about the women. I wanted to thank you for your continued generous donations to the cause.

Lazarus: Well then, thank my sisters. It’s them who…

Judas: But it’s your purse the money comes from – and very helpful it is too.

Lazarus: Well it may not be coming for much longer.

Judas: It may not need to. We’re almost there. Things are happening. More and more people are joining the movement – in no small part thanks to you.

Lazarus: What do you mean?

Judas: Well, ever since your miracle, people have been flocking to us.

Lazarus: It’s not *my* miracle.

Judas: No, but you’re the one people saw come out of the tomb. A stroke of genius!

Lazarus: So you’re saying Jesus is using me?

Judas: It’s for the cause!

Lazarus: But I haven’t had any say in this.

Judas: Don’t you believe in the cause?

Lazarus: I’m not sure I know what the cause is exactly.

Judas: The coming of the Messiah! The overthrow of the Romans and re-establishment of the throne of David!

Lazarus: Both Mary and Martha say that Jesus is the Messiah, but they don’t talk about it like that.

Judas: Well they wouldn’t, would they. They don’t understand. I’ve been with Jesus for three years now. It’s all been building up to this. The signs are all there. Crowds are joining us. Something is going to happen this week – I can sense it. At the festival. In Jerusalem.

Lazarus: But what about the authorities? The soldiers?

Judas: What about them? They can’t turn away a whole crowd.

Lazarus: But…

Judas: Where’s your faith? The power he has – look what he did to you – nothing can stand in his way!

Lazarus: *(Looking at Jesus who is watching Mary. All this time she has been wiping Jesus’s feet. She gives them one last kiss and then exits.)* Then why does he look so sad?

Judas: It’s people’s lack of faith… their lack of understanding. I need to go and speak to him.

*(Judas gets up to go and talk to Jesus. Blackout)*

**Scene 6**

*(The house in Bethany. Sunday morning. Lazarus is sitting at his table. Mary enters.)*

Mary: I didn’t see you leave last night.

Lazarus: I left early.

Mary: Jesus was asking after you. Didn’t you speak to him?

Lazarus: No.

Mary: Lazarus?

Lazarus: Hmm?

Mary: What’s the matter?

Lazarus: You know what’s the matter.

Mary: No. There’s something else.

Lazarus: No. There’s nothing.

Mary: Don’t lie to me.

Lazarus: What?

Mary: I know you.

Lazarus: Do you?

Mary: Enough to know there’s something bothering you. Just tell me.

Lazarus: I’m… I’m just not… comfortable with what you did last night.

Mary: Not comfortable?

Lazarus: It didn’t look right.

Mary: What?

Lazarus: Kneeling at his feet… all that perfume… drawing attention to yourself.

Mary: Where is all this coming from?

Lazarus: It doesn’t give the right impression. In front of all those men.

Mary: Don’t you think what I do for Jesus is between me and him?

Lazarus: Well, maybe…

Mary: There’s no “maybe” about it.

Lazarus: But what about the money? You could have sold that perfume and given the money to the poor.

Mary: Since when have you been concerned about money? Or about what I do with it?

Lazarus: But things are changing. Judas was telling me…

Mary: Judas? Iscariot? That explains it.

Lazarus: What?

Mary: Well, you don’t want to listen to him.

Lazarus: Mary!

Mary: Did all that money stuff come from him? He’s a thief.

Lazarus: You can’t say that.

Mary: I can.

Lazarus: You haven’t got proof.

Mary: Everybody knows it.

Lazarus: Everybody?

Mary: Mary told me.

Lazarus: Which one?

Mary: The one from Magdala. You know he looks after the money for Jesus? Well, she says he keeps back some for himself.

Lazarus: Well, maybe that’s just… his commission?

Mary: Pah!

*(Enter Martha)*

Martha: Mary, quick! They’re getting ready to go.

Lazarus: Who? Where?

Mary: To Jerusalem.

Lazarus: Who?

Martha: Jesus and his disciples, and a whole crowd of us.

Lazarus: Us?

Martha: Jesus has asked for a donkey.

Mary: Riding into Jerusalem on a donkey!

Martha: Just like King David!

Lazarus: Wait! Stop!

Martha: What?

Lazarus: You think you two are going into Jerusalem with this crowd?

Mary: Yes.

Lazarus: No.

Mary: What?

Lazarus: You’re not going. It’s too dangerous.

Martha: Dangerous?

Lazarus: This is what Judas was talking about last night.

Mary: Not him again. Why are you suddenly…?

Lazarus: He was talking about a revolt… restablishing the throne of David with Jesus as king.

Martha: A revolt?

Mary: But Jesus isn’t a rebel.

Lazarus: Really? Isn’t this being provocative?

Mary: He’s just going into Jerusalem for the festival, with his friends and followers.

Lazarus: But it’s the Passover festival. It would be symbolic.

Martha: You’re reading too much into it. We’ve known Jesus for years. He’s never tried to start a revolt – never even talked about it.

Lazarus: But what about the authorities?

Martha: The Romans?

Lazarus: The Jewish leaders. You know there’s talk of them getting me.

Martha: You think…?

Mary: They won’t recognise us.

Lazarus: They’re out to get Jesus. Anyone seen with him is at risk.

Martha: They won’t dare do anything with all the soldiers around.

Mary: Or the crowds.

Lazarus: A crowd can be dangerous.

Martha: There are always crowds for the festival.

Mary: We’ve been in Jerusalem when the festival is on. We’ll be fine.

Lazarus: You don’t understand. By all accounts they’re all... They’re expecting something to happen. They could make something happen.

Mary: And how do you know this? Judas?

Lazarus: Well…

Martha: But the crowd are on our side – on Jesus’s side.

Lazarus: A crowd can be turned.

Mary: This doesn’t make any sense. You’re just being over-protective.

Lazarus: It’s my responsibility as head of the house to protect you.

Martha: Head of the house?

Mary: And I suppose it’s your responsibility as head of the house to tell us what we can and can’t do.

*(Mary looks at Lazarus defiantly. Lazarus looks back at her but says nothing.)*

Martha: Where is all this coming from?

Mary: He was talking with Judas Iscariot last night.

Lazarus: Just leave Judas out of this. I do not want my sisters taking the risk of going into Jerusalem with things as they are.

Mary: Do not want, or do not allow? Are you going to forbid us?

Lazarus: If that’s what it takes.

Mary: Come on, Martha. They’ll be leaving soon.

*(Mary exits. Martha follows, reluctantly, looking back at Lazarus who slumps back in his seat.)*

**Scene 7**

*(The house in Bethany. Sunday afternoon. Lazarus is still sitting at his table. Enter Joseph)*

Joseph: Lazarus?

Lazarus: Joseph!

Joseph: I was knocking but no one answered, so I let myself in.

Lazarus: That’s OK. Why are you here?

Joseph: Checking on you.

Lazarus: Well, I’m still here.

Joseph: I heard you were out last night.

Lazarus: Yes. At Simon’s house.

Joseph: With Jesus.

Lazarus: With a whole crowd of people.

Joseph: It’s hardly lying low, is it?

Lazarus: Well, I’m here now.

Joseph: Good. I was worried you were part of the crowd heading down to Jerusalem with Jesus.

Lazarus: Martha and Mary are there.

Joseph: Is that wise?

Lazarus: Don’t you start.

Joseph: Sorry. I don’t mean to interfere. It’s just that the atmosphere around the city is nothing like I’ve experienced before.

Lazarus: Hostile?

Joseph: Not exactly. Febrile… almost to the point of hysteria.

Lazarus: It’s the festival.

Joseph: No, it’s more than that.

Lazarus: But Martha and Mary will be safe?

Joseph: Oh, yes. For now. But things could change.

Lazarus: How?

Joseph: I can’t really say.

Lazarus: Oh, come on, Joseph…

Joseph: Lazarus. Jesus, the Nazarene, you know him well, don’t you?

Lazarus: I know him.

Joseph: Do you think he is planning anything?

Lazarus: I’m a friend. He stays with us sometimes when he’s passing through. I’m not one of his inner circle.

Joseph: No. But you would get a sense, wouldn’t you?

Lazarus: No. I don’t know. I mean, he’s always seemed… but…

Joseph: The Council have met again. They’re getting serious.

Lazarus: What? About me?

Joseph: No, him. It’s like they’re trying to provoke a confrontation, catch him out. And Jesus is walking straight into their…

Lazarus: He can look after himself. You’ve seen and heard him. He won’t be drawn.

Joseph: I hope you’re right.

Lazarus: Joseph, you’ve looked into these things. Do you think Jesus could be the one?

Joseph: You mean, the Messiah?

Lazarus: Yes.

Joseph: Well, if he is, it’s not quite what we were expecting.

Lazarus: But it’s not out of the question.

Joseph: No.

Lazarus: I’ve been doing a lot of thinking recently. If he is the Messiah, then we can’t just sit back and do nothing. We have to take a side.

Joseph: It’s what the Council are saying.

Lazarus: They think he’s the Messiah?

Joseph: No. They’re talking about taking sides – either with the Council or with Jesus.

Lazarus: And what about you?

Joseph: I don’t like the way the Council are talking.

Lazarus: Come on, Joseph. You don’t have to be the diplomat with me.

Joseph: It shouldn’t matter to you what I think. We both need to make a decision for ourselves. Let me just say, I believe the time is coming when we won’t be able to hide anymore.

*(Blackout)*

**Scene 8**

*(The house in Bethany. Monday afternoon. Enter Martha and Mary, excited, laughing and breathless. It is clear they have been talking all the way home)*

Mary: And what about when he turned over the tables!

Martha: “My house is a house of prayer…”

together: “… and you have turned it into a den of thieves!”

Mary: Their faces!

Martha: And then them scrabbling on the floor for their money…

Mary: Animals and birds everywhere!

*(Enter Lazarus)*

Lazarus: Martha, Mary! I’ve been sick to death.

Martha: Sorry, Lazarus.

Lazarus: Where have you been?

Martha: We left a note. Didn’t you…?

Mary: We went into the city again.

Lazarus: But you were there yesterday. What were you doing?

Mary: We followed Jesus.

Martha: Into the Temple.

Mary: It was amazing!

Martha: We were just talking about when he threw out all the moneylenders and market sellers.

Lazarus: He did what?

Mary: I know!

Lazarus: But what about the authorities?

Mary: They didn’t dare touch him.

Martha: Not after yesterday - with all the crowd on his side.

Lazarus: Not even the Temple guard?

Martha: They didn’t really know what to do.

Mary: It’s like they were all in shock. It all happened so quickly.

Lazarus: This doesn’t sound like Jesus.

Martha: I know. He was so angry.

Lazarus: I don’t want you going into Jerusalem again.

Mary: But Lazarus…

Lazarus: Listen. They may not have done anything today, but this will have angered the authorities – all of them. They’ll see it as a direct challenge. They’ll be back.

Mary: But what if this is the moment Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah?

Lazarus: Whether it is or not, things will get dangerous. I don’t want you hurt.

Mary: You can’t…

Lazarus: This is not about me telling you what to do. This is about you staying safe.

Martha: He’s right. If something happens, we’ll know soon enough. It’s best we watch and wait from here.

*(Martha takes Mary off. Lazarus looks out of window towards Jerusalem, then exits.)*

**Scene 9**

*(The house at Bethany. Wednesday late afternoon. Lazarus and Mary are sitting, studying passages from the Old Testament together. Martha enters.)*

Martha: Lazarus, there’s someone to see you.

Lazarus: Really? I’ve said, I don’t want…

Martha: He says he’s come from Joseph.

Lazarus: Joseph?

Martha: With a message.

Lazarus: Tell him to give it to you.

Martha: He insists on giving it to you in person.

Mary: Do you want me to go?

Lazarus: No. Stay. Bring him in, Martha.

*(Martha exits. Lazarus stands up. There is tension in the air. Martha returns with Malachi.)*

Malachi: Lazarus?

Lazarus: Yes.

Malachi: My master, Joseph, has told me to give you this. He says it’s important.

*(Cautiously Lazarus approaches the messenger who holds out a sealed scroll. Lazarus takes it and checks the seal.)*

Lazarus: Thank you. Martha, can you give this man something for his pains.

*(Martha gives Malachi some money and then escorts him out. She returns. Meanwhile, Lazarus opens the scroll and starts to read.)*

Mary: What does it say?

Lazarus: He says the Council have met. There is a plot to kill Jesus. He wants me to warn him… Is he still at Simon’s?

Martha: He’s not back from Jerusalem yet.

Mary: I’ve heard he’s staying there tonight.

Lazarus: In Jerusalem? I need to find him.

Mary: He’s been in the Temple these past few days.

Lazarus: I’ll start there.

Martha: We’ll come with you.

Lazarus: No. Not now. I’ll be quicker on my own.

Martha: Stay safe.

Mary: We’ll pray for you… and for Jesus.

*(Lazarus exits. Blackout)*

**Scene 10**

*(Joseph’s house in Jerusalem. Thursday, very early in the morning, before dawn. There is frantic knocking at the door. Joseph enters and opens it. Lazarus enters.)*

Joseph: Lazarus!

Lazarus: I can’t find him. I’ve been looking for hours.

Joseph: It’s too late.

Lazarus: What?

Joseph: Judas is already leading a mob to Jesus to arrest him.

Lazarus: Judas? A traitor?

Joseph: They paid him off.

Lazarus: But why now?

Joseph: The constant challenges to their authority – to all of them. Riding into Jerusalem as a king, clearing the Temple courts, the subversive teaching…

Lazarus: But they had every opportunity to arrest him before now. He was hardly hiding away.

Joseph: The crowd. They feared the crowd.

Lazarus: What now? Is this a lynch mob?

Joseph: There’ll be a trial.

Lazarus: But they have nothing on him.

Joseph: They’ll find something.

Lazarus: But they don’t have the power to authorise an… the death penalty.

Joseph: They see Pilate as weak. They think they can persuade him.

Lazarus: Is there nothing we can do?

Joseph: Not now.

Lazarus: What about taking sides?

Joseph: We took it. We did what we could. We chose the wrong one.

Lazarus: No.

Joseph: It’s over. Protect what you still have. Go home. Good night, Lazarus.

*(Lazarus exits. Joseph closes the door. He sits down and lets out a deep sigh. Blackout.)*

**Scene 11**

*(The house at Bethany. Thursday morning. Martha and Mary have been praying.)*

Martha: We just have to leave it all in God’s hands now.

Mary: You’re so calm.

Martha: Sorry?

Mary: How can you be so calm? What with everything going on…

Martha: I don’t think I am. My mind is racing with thoughts of what might happen and yet… maybe you’re right. deep down inside me – deep, deep down – there is a sort of peace.

Mary: How?

Martha: I don’t know. I suppose we’ve done all we can. Maybe I’ve just accepted there’s nothing we can do now to change anything.

Mary: Really?

Martha: Maybe. No. No, you’re right. It’s more than that.

Mary: Yes?

Martha: It’s Jesus.

Mary: What? Where?

Martha: No. It’s Jesus; the way he’s been this week. I’ve never seen him so focused, so resolute. It’s like he’s fixed his eyes on something. He knows what’s going to happen and he’s going to see it through. He’s in control.

Mary: But it’s all falling apart.

Martha: Haven’t you been listening to his stories these past few days?

Mary: Yes.

Martha: Haven’t you noticed they’re different? He’s been talking a lot more about death, the end…

Mary: You’re not saying…

Martha: I’m not sure what I’m saying exactly. But maybe it’s part of a plan.

Mary: But it doesn’t make sense. We were there on Sunday. He was being welcomed like a king into Jerusalem… and then in the Temple, like he was claiming it as his own. And now this talk of death…

Martha: Maybe this is how he’s going to reveal who he really is.

Mary: What, you mean as they try to take him, he’ll suddenly rise up against them?

Martha: I don’t know. I don’t think so. That hasn’t been the tone of his teaching.

Mary: Then what?

Martha: I don’t know.

Mary: But you’re still calm?

Martha: I was. I am when I think about Jesus. But now you’re confusing me. I’m beginning to doubt…

Mary: Don’t.

*(Mary hugs Martha and holds onto her tightly. Lazarus enters suddenly.)*

Martha: Lazarus?

Mary: What’s the news.

Lazarus: It’s bad.

Mary: No!

Lazarus: Jesus has been arrested. His disciples have deserted him. He’s now on trial.

Mary: On what charge?

Lazarus: Blasphemy, rebellion… Whatever they think it will take to get the death penalty.

Mary: But there’s no basis…

Lazarus: The Jewish Council and High Priest have already ruled against him. Now they’re waiting for Pilate to see him.

Mary: But he won’t…

Lazarus: Joseph tells me Pilate will be persuaded.

Mary: So this is the end?

Lazarus: It appears so.

*(Lazarus slumps into a seat. Mary holds him. The two of them look defeated. Throughout this last interchange, though, Martha has been keeping her thoughts to herself. As the lights fade, she holds herself calm and steady. We see she has regained her composure and sense of reassurance. Blackout.)*

**Scene 12**

*(The house at Bethany. Friday evening. The table is laid for the Passover meal. Lazarus, Martha and Mary are sitting at the table.)*

Mary: It doesn’t feel right eating the Passover… not today.

Martha: I know.

Lazarus: But it’s what we do. What else can we do? Let’s pray: Blessed are you, O LORD our God, king of the universe, who has created the fruit of the vine. . . . And you, O LORD our God, have given us festival days for joy, this feast of the unleavened bread, the time of our deliverance in remembrance of the departure from Egypt. Blessed are you, O LORD our God, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to enjoy this season.

*(Lazarus takes the unleavened bread, breaks it and passes it round. He then pours out the wine for each of them, raises his cup and they all drink.)*

Lazarus: Mary, can you start the first psalm for us?

Mary: Praise the LORD.

Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.

Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and forevermore.

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised.

I can’t…

Lazarus: It’s OK.

The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.

Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high,

who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?

Martha: Let me continue.

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people.

Mary: Martha?

Martha: It’s OK.

He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD.

Mary: But you…

Martha: I know. It’s OK. I’m OK.

Lazarus: Let’s continue. In the book of Exodus, God says, “I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.”

Martha: An outstretched arm…

Lazarus: Pardon?

Martha: It just made me think…

Lazarus: Of what?

Martha: Jesus.

Mary: We should have been there.

Lazarus: Mary, a crucifixion is a barbaric way to die. It’s not something anybody should see. You can’t even watch an animal being sacrificed.

Martha: You know, it was while our lamb was being sacrificed that he died.

Lazarus: Maybe Mary’s right. Maybe today is not the time for the meal. I don’t feel particularly hungry, anyway.

Martha: Can we finish the psalms, though?

Lazarus: Mary?

Mary: No. You start this time.

Lazarus: I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.

Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.

The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow.

Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, save me!”

*(Lazarus pauses, struck by the words he has just said. It is not lost on Martha and Mary. From this point on, the reading of the psalms gradually moves from being a ritual to something more real and meaningful as each character finds verses that resonate with them and what they have recently experienced. By the end, the verses should sound less like a formal reading and more like surprising joyous discoveries and bold declarations of faith. A subtle use of bread and wine could be used to hint at a deeper meaning as yet unrealised by the characters.)*

Martha: The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.

The LORD protects the simple-hearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.

Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.

Lazarus: For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling,

that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

I believed; therefore I said, “I am greatly afflicted.”

And in my dismay I said, “All men are liars.”

How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me?

Martha: These words.

Lazarus: What?

Martha: Haven’t you noticed? We read this every year. Yet somehow, today, these words feel more real.

Mary: Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.

I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

Martha: The stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone;

the LORD has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

Lazarus: This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success.

Martha: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.

Mary: The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

Lazarus: You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.

together: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

*(There is silence. A thought forms in Martha’s mind.)*

Martha: I am the resurrection and the life.

Lazarus: Pardon?

Martha: I am the resurrection and the life. It’s what Jesus told me before he brought you back. I didn’t understand it at the time. Then I thought he was referring to you. Now…

Mary: You don’t think…

Martha: Why not?!

*(Blackout)*

END

....................................................................................

© Copyright Daniel Carlson, all rights reserved. The script may not be reproduced, translated or copied in any medium, including books, CDs and on the Internet, without written permission of the author.

This play may be performed free of charge, on the condition that copies are not sold for profit in any medium, nor any entrance fee charged. In exchange for free performance, the author would appreciate being notified of when and for what purpose the play is performed. He may be contacted at: carlsondaniel27@gmail.com