



**“This is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many”  
(Mark 14: 24)**

## **Maundy Thursday, April 13, 2006 Communion and Tenebrae**

Tenebrae: (n) a solemn holy week service, the name of which is derived from the Latin word for “shadows.” It recalls the shadows which gathered around Christ as his crucifixion drew near. A tenebrae service ends in near darkness and the worshippers go out in silence.

## **Maundy Thursday, April 13, 2006 Communion and Tenebrae**

### Greeting and Explanation

### **PART I: THE MEAL IN THE UPPER ROOM [This part of the service is in the sanctuary]**

Hymn # 378 “*From Heaven you Came, Helpless Babe*”

Mark 14: 12-21

<sup>12</sup>On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, [Jesus’] disciples said to him, “Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” <sup>13</sup>So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, <sup>14</sup>and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ <sup>15</sup>He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.” <sup>16</sup>So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

<sup>17</sup>When it was evening, he came with the twelve. <sup>18</sup>And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” <sup>19</sup>They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, “Surely, not I?” <sup>20</sup>He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup>For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.”

### Word from the Serving Boy

Festivals is just a lot of work for them of us as is in service. Sweep out the rooms as is never used except for festival time, fetch and carry, fetch and carry, and it's an awful mess of blood as those lambs make. It was the water I was carrying when the Teacher's disciples found me and followed me back to the house. They was lucky as Master had that one upper room left – a cancellation. I don't know how the Teacher's men came to know of it, for we hadn't a sign out or noffink, but then they say as He knows things. Master left me in the upper room wif the Teacher and his disciples, to serve at table and to wash the feet – these Jews is great ones for washing, that's what makes for all the fetchin' and carryin' – there ain't noffink so heavy as water – well Master says to me: you just stay wif them boy and see to them. Well, you can imagine my surprise when I came up to do the foot washing and there was Himself, the Teacher Himself, kneeled down and washing the feet of his disciples. I tried to take the bowl from him, but he wouldn't give it over. I thought: 'cor but there's gonna be trouble from Master over this. He'll think I ain't done my duty. But the Teacher, when he was finished, asked his disciples why he had gone and done a servant's job and him the lord among them. It was by way of an example he said, so that the disciples would wash one another's feet. I could see then why they said he was a trouble-maker. Not that it wouldn't be nice for those of us as serve if everybody started servin' one another, but that isn't the ways of the world. Would fair turn the world upside down, I shouldn't wonder, if people started takin' him literal. Well I stayed in the room until they went out, and it's a meal I'll never forget. Everyone was wound up tight as springs, except the Teacher. He was calm -- but sad, it looked to me. Do you know what he said as they was all dippin' their bread in the bowl with him? He said "one o' yous is gonna betray me." Well that set the cat among the pigeons good and proper. "Not I" they all said,

"Surely not I." Some of them said it indignant-like, especially the loud one, the one they called Peter. But when others said it, it was sort of like a question. Like as if they believed he knew what was inside them – what kind of stuff they were made of – better than they knew it themselves. There was one of them called Judas Iscariot, the one who looked after the money and paid Master for the room. He was the one dipping his bread in the bowl with the Teacher at the very moment when he said "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me." The others all looked down at the bread in their own hands, but I fixed my eyes right on Judas and if I had any money as to lay a bet with, I'd say it were Judas for certain as is gonna betray him. Judas went out just after that. The Teacher said as the one who'd betray him was accursed – better for him never to have been born – that's what he said. And the reason I know it were Judas is that he already had the look of the curse upon him. A curse is something you're warned about, that you know is coming, but you blunder straight into it anyway. That's what Judas looked like as he left that night, like a moth blundering about, determined about where he wanted to go, but looking a bit lost and awkward even as he went there. I can understand, because of the foot washin' why the Teacher's upsetting to some folk in high places, but what I can't understand is why one of them, one of them whose feet he'd just washed and who shared his bowl and his bread, would want to go against him. And if the Teacher knew about it, why didn't he stop it? There's many things about that night I don't understand. Master would say it ain't my place to be worryin' about understandin'. But them as serves sees things sometimes. Them as serves has our own thoughts about the things that we sees. Here's what I thinks. If that Teacher ever asked for me to serve him, I'd do it in a minute. My master would wonder at me taking up with a new Master, but I'd do it in a trice. If that Teacher ever asked me to bring him water, I'd bring it. If he

ever asked me to follow him, I'd follow. If he asked me to do sommat dangerous, I'd do it. All I don't understand is why Peter looked down at the bread in his hands, and why Judas looked murder when he left that room, and why every man in that upper room didn't feel just the same as I do.

### The First Candle is Extinguished

#### Mark 14: 22-25

<sup>22</sup>While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." <sup>23</sup>Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. <sup>24</sup>He said to them, "This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many. <sup>25</sup>Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

### The Meal

Hymn 537 "*'Twas on that night*" verses 1-4

#### The four questions of Passover (adapted)

##### **P: Why is this night different than all other nights?**

M: Because this is the eve of the Lord's Passover. Jesus and his disciples gathered on this night in an upper room to remember the Lord's merciful deliverance of his people Israel, when he spared them from death by the blood of a lamb, and led them out from captivity in Egypt into freedom. On that night when Jesus ate the Passover with the twelve, he foretold that one of them would betray him, that his body would be broken, and that his life's-blood would be poured out, and that, in this way, God would again bring salvation to his people.

##### **P: Why do we say that God has Passed Over on this night?**

M: Because God, regarding the perfect obedience and sacrifice of his Son, our Lamb, was pleased to "pass over" our sin, and

pardon us for it. As the prophet Isaiah says: "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all...Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away...although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain, [to make] his life an offering for sin... He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his wounds we are healed.*"

M: Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

P: **Have mercy upon us.**

M: Lord, have mercy upon us

P: **Christ have mercy upon us.**

M: Lord, have mercy upon us.

##### **P: Why do we say that the cup which we share is the new covenant in Christ's blood?**

M: Because Christ's death is the beginning of a new relationship for us with the Lord, our God. We are not in right-relationship with God on the basis of good behaviour or religious rites of appeasement. We are in right relationship with God on the basis of Christ's death and the trust we place in him for our salvation. As the prophet Jeremiah says: "*I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more,*' says the Lord.... *I will make a new covenant with [them.] It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband' ....But this is the covenant that I will make...,*' says the Lord: *'I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.*"

**P: Why does Christ say that he will never drink wine again until he shares it with his disciples in God's kingdom?**

M: Because God's kingdom is about to come. The evangelist Mark tells us that Jesus drinks sour wine, raised to him on a sponge, at the moment of his death. The other evangelists speak of meals Jesus shared with his disciples following his resurrection, at which wine would have been served. Now each time Christians share the Lord's Supper they eat bread and drink wine with Christ in the kingdom of God. This is how the prophet Isaiah describes that greatly anticipated feast of joy: *"On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples...he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces....It will be said on that day, 'Lo this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'" At the moment of his death, when he seemed utterly defeated, Christ began to reign in victory, bringing in the kingdom of God. As on this night, God's people long ago fled the oppressive reign of Pharaoh and passed over into the life-giving reign of God, so on this night when Christ is handed over to die, his people are liberated from the tyranny of death and hell, and they pass over into the glorious freedom of the children of God. In the kingdom which Christ brings us by his death, death is swallowed up forever, and there is a banqueting table set for all the nations.*

The Invitation:

This is the Lord's Table. All who have been baptized and are in communion with any branch of the Christian Church, are invited to partake of this meal.

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

M: The Lord be with you

P: **And also with you**

M: Lift up your hearts

P: **We lift them up to the Lord**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

P: **It is right to give Him thanks and praise**

M: It is indeed right, ... sing your praise in the angels' song:

**Holy, Holy, Holy, God of power and might.  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory  
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

And now we give thanks that...Here we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died;  
Christ has risen;  
Christ will come again**

We give you thanks, O Christ... Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are yours almighty Father, now and forever. AMEN.

The Breaking of the Bread

[Please come forward forming a circle around the communion table]

Hear us now O Lord as we pray in the words your Son has taught us:

**Our Father....AMEN.**

We make this memorial, ...do it in memory of me.”

M: Jesus Lamb of God

P: **Have mercy upon us.**

M: Jesus bearer of our sins

P: **Have mercy upon us.**

M: Jesus redeemer of the world

P: **Grant us your peace**

Draw near with faith...with thanksgiving.

### The Communion

[The minister will pass a plate, then a cup, to the person next to her on either side. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CUP MARKED WITH THE RED STAR CONTAINS A NON-ALCOHOLIC GRAPE JUICE. When the plate reaches you, if you wish to receive, BREAK OFF A PIECE OF THE BREAD AND HOLD ONTO IT UNTIL THE CUP COMES; THEN DIP THE BREAD IN THE CUP, TAKE AND EAT. When passing the elements to your neighbour you may wish to say: “The body of Christ, broken for you...the blood of Christ, shed for you.” In receiving the elements from your neighbour, you may wish to say “Amen.” When the plates containing the bread meet at the midpoint of the circle, the last people to receive them are requested to bring them forward and lay them back on the communion table. The cups will each travel the complete circle, crossing at the midpoint, so that everyone has

the opportunity to partake either of the wine or of the grape juice.]

### The Peace

M: The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you

P: **And also with you**

[You are invited to share a handshake or an embrace with your neighbour, with the words: “The Peace of Christ”]

### Post Communion Prayers of Thanksgiving and Supplication

Gracious God, we thank you for the dying and undying love ...and live always to the glory of your name, through Christ your Lord. AMEN

### Processional Hymn 537 “’Twas on that night” verses 5 and 6

[While singing, the congregation withdraws to the Narthex]

## **PART II: CHRIST’S AGONY IN THE GARDEN**

**[This part of the service is among the palms in the Narthex]**

### Mark 14: 26-31

<sup>26</sup>When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. <sup>27</sup>And Jesus said to them, “You will all become deserters; for it is written,

‘I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep will be scattered.’

<sup>28</sup>But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”

<sup>29</sup>Peter said to him, “Even though all become deserters, I will not.” <sup>30</sup>Jesus said to him, “Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three



times.”<sup>31</sup> But he said vehemently, “Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And all of them said the same.

### Word from Peter

That night when he ate the Passover with us it was as if all the meals we had shared before, all the three and a half years we had been following him, all the renunciations and the commitments he had asked of us, all of it was coming to a head. Would we stand behind everything that we had risked by staying with him *now*, following him *now*, even as the shadows gathered, as the enemies he had always spoken of took form and became real, or would we desert him? It was our last chance to get out. We all sensed it. He was leaving the door open. Would we take it? I remember how I felt that night. Young and full of confidence. Argumentative and full of wine. I thought the rest of them were a poor lot, especially that John, sitting with his chin in his hand, thinking his deep thoughts – contemptible contemplative. During the meal I saw the fear on the faces of the others. I was sure he could see it too. I was determined he would never see it on mine. Reticent, lily-livered, that’s what they all were. Reclining like old, mute sheep, going through the motions of the meal, remembering the deliverance of Israel, just like every other year, no one wanting to be so impolite as to mention the thing that was hanging over us all *this year*, in the *present*, the danger just outside the doors of our upper room. Except Him, of course. He brought it up. He was never one to mince his words and he didn’t then. After the meal we went out to the hills and stayed a while beneath the olive trees. Jesus said we should all scatter like sheep, when our shepherd was stricken. Them maybe. Sheep is exactly what they were. I felt like a lion that night, my head swarming and my blood hot. “I will not desert you” I said. I wanted him to hear my vow. He looked so sad and so resigned. I wanted him to know that even if it was only us two left, we would go down swinging. I wanted them all to hear it. Maybe it would inject a bit of life into them. And it seemed to, for they rallied a little just then, and all of them said the

same: “I’ll not deny you, even if it comes to the point of death.” I meant the words as I said them. Meant them with all my heart. But then that’s the trouble with me. A person is not really a hypocrite if they mean what they say totally when they say it. I despise hypocrites. But he knew even then what I was. Changeable. He knew better than I knew myself. For I *meant* my *denial* too. With my whole heart I meant for that interfering chit of a girl to believe I never knew him. “Before the cock crows twice,” he had said, “you’ll deny me three times.” I didn’t believe him then. I find to believe now that I did what I did. I who had stood on the mountain with him and with Moses and with Elijah. I who had walked on water. I who had known him for the messiah when all the others were silent. Silence. I have never considered silence a virtue. I’m for saying a thing straight out if it needs saying. But how I wish I had endured that girl’s questioning in silence. How I wish I had not opened my big mouth. If I had not spoken so rashly in the garden of my faithfulness unto death, I would not have looked later like such a fool. A fool, and worse than a fool. If I had not opened my mouth and said what I did to that silly serving girl, my sin would not have cried aloud to heaven against me, as shrill as the call of that cock. What a sound! It stopped my heart I’m sure for a minute. It might have awakened the dead.

### The Second Candle is extinguished

#### Mark 14: 32-38

<sup>32</sup>They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.”<sup>33</sup> He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated.<sup>34</sup> And said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.”<sup>35</sup> And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.<sup>36</sup> He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I

want, but what you want.”<sup>37</sup> He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour?”<sup>38</sup> Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

### The Third Candle is extinguished

Refrain from Taizé: **“Stay with me; Remain here with me. Watch and pray; Watch and pray.”** (x3)

### Mark 14: 39-40

<sup>39</sup>And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

<sup>40</sup>And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him.

### Word from John

I had had a very long day. I couldn't even keep my eyes open – the four cups of Passover wine weren't helping. The suspense of the outcome was killing me. I just wanted to know how this would end. Even then I saw that the whole affair was bigger than a renegade Jew in trouble with the law; it was a confrontation between the human and the divine. We were being asked to choose our side, to be children of light or children of darkness. As I think of myself, loving the darkness which enfolded me, there in the grove, beneath the silvery soft leaves of the olive, loving the scents the night brought, the silence, everything conspiring to bring on sleep, sleep, gentle sleep, oblivion, darkness, rest, I think I know which side I chose. Men love the darkness when their deeds are evil. It was evil to abandon him in that terrible hour. I should really have tried to show some more support. Jesus looked so forlorn and weary, yet strangely agitated. When he went off to

pray he usually did so alone but this night he *wanted* us to wait with him. Peter and James and me. Somehow, he needed us, and we left him to pour out his prayers to the Father alone. How his face looked that night when he returned a first, and a second and a third time to find us sleeping. It was pale and drenched with sweat. The sweat ran in dark and glistening rivers over his pale brow in the moonlight. Dark and glistening like the blood which flowed the following day from under the crown of thorns. Between my lapses into unconsciousness fragments of his prayer came to me. He prayed for himself: “Abba, remove this cup, not my will, yours, glorify your son, that your Son may glorify you, my work completed, glorify.” And I wonder that in his darkest hour, our Lord prayed for us also, for us who could not wait with him, but reposed ourselves in sleep: “I remain in the world no longer, but they – still in the world...protect...I have kept them safe...protect them from the evil one...sanctify them by truth...you love them, even as you love me, let the world know...that they may be one as we are one...in you as I am in you, in them...love, truth, know.” We ought to have been praying for *him*. It was *he* who was in need. He who was drinking the cup alone which we all said we would drink of with him. We ought to have been praying for him. Instead *he* was praying for *us*. Praying that we may be one.... The first time he returned to us, he spoke to Peter: “could you not keep awake one hour? The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” I was glad he spoke to Peter. Perhaps he had not seen the difficulty *my* eyes were having in focusing. Perhaps James had jerked his head up just in time, before he had seen it slumped and nodding. Peter had always fancied himself the strong one in our little band. The first to jump, the first to speak, the first among equals. Imagine *his* flesh being weak! I supposed I had the stronger mind. I could see why Jesus was upset with some of Peter's gaffes. He might have *said* more, but I *thought* more, and I was convinced that Jesus loved me the better for it. That we may be one.... The second time Jesus came we were

united alright, united in sleep, united under his reproach, united in our weakness and desertion.

Refrain from Taizé: **“Stay with me; Remain here with me. Watch and pray; Watch and pray.”** (x3)

Mark 14: 41-46

<sup>41</sup>He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

<sup>42</sup>Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

<sup>43</sup>Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

<sup>44</sup>Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” <sup>45</sup>So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. <sup>46</sup>Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.

Word from Judas

I had traveled with them for 3 and a half years. O we were full of high hopes at the beginning. I don't know what the others saw in him. I saw someone I could follow, someone who might be able to bring Israel together again, who might bring a change to our sorry condition under the Herods, those puppets, and under the idolatrous minions of Rome. There were signs and wonders and no mistake. The others were amazed by the things they could do, but they had no focus. No concentration. *I* was focused. My parents always said that about me. “Judas will do well in business,” they always said. “He has application.” Well I didn't choose business, I chose to follow a madcap prophet, and a band of beggars. Humiliating it was sometimes, the way they insulted all the people who might have helped them to get on. The way they frittered money away – not that we ever had that much. They just

didn't seem to care about making provision. They didn't understand that kings don't get crowned without a lot of networking and more than a little palm-greasing. John hated me from the beginning. Suspicious piece of work is John. But I had hoped for an alliance with Peter. Peter had called Jesus Messiah one day. He clearly shared my hope, the great hope of Israel. The problem, as it turned out, was with Jesus himself. Jesus just wouldn't help his own cause. When we should have been planning his tactical siege on Herod's palace, there he was talking nonsense about dying and rising again. The others were struggling too to make out his meaning, but the thing is they were *trying*. I saw that they were in so deep that they would follow him off a cliff if that's where he led them. And it began to look very much as if that's where he *was* leading us. Well I hadn't signed on for that. I had followed him; I had been one of them, but I hadn't yet sold out my last marble. Sometimes it felt a bit lonely there around the fire or on the hillside with them. He would speak to us, and it would be like no one else you'd ever heard speaking. I swear there were times when I *wanted* to lose my mind – just give up common sense, and get swept away by the sweet dream they all shared, by that thing he called “faith.” But I was not like them. There were times I would try to believe, try to make sense of it by looking at the world his way, the way he was teaching us. But who was I kidding? I belonged to the real world: the world of dollars and cents. The world of political happenings. The straightforward world where one fears the powerful people, and tries not to be found forever among the powerless. I saw nothing there among his disciples that made me believe any other kind of world was possible: Peter and John always at one another's throats, James and John always bickering over the seats of honour. Only sometimes when *he* would speak, I would think, maybe he's not so crazy after all. That was his power; he could make you believe anything. That's why he had to be stopped. This is what I had concluded, and I was sure I was right. The hatred in the disciples'



eyes when they saw me arrive with those who were his enemies, would not have made me doubt it. It was only when I looked at the glee in the eyes of his captors, and the compassion in the eyes of the one I had kissed, that I saw what I had done. In trying to avoid foolishness I had made myself a fool. In trying to protect my life, I had lost it. For those with whom I had sided had no love for me. And the one who stood there bound and loving me still, was the one I had betrayed. There is no place on earth or in heaven for the likes of me. There is no way of return. The only one who might have offered the way, is at the end of his own road now. And I am at the end of mine.

#### The Fourth Candle is extinguished

##### Mark 14: 47-50

<sup>47</sup>But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. <sup>48</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? <sup>49</sup>Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.” <sup>50</sup>All of them deserted him and fled.

#### The fifth candle is extinguished

##### Mark 14: 51-52

<sup>51</sup>A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, <sup>52</sup>but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

#### Word from Mark

I was little more than a kid then. I knew nothing of politics, and little enough about sacred learning and what the prophets had told us to expect. All I knew was that there was a big noise on the street on Sunday when he entered the city, riding on a donkey. Everyone was shouting “Hosanna” and waving palm branches, so I

went outside to check it out. Everyone was throwing off their cloaks and tossing them down before him, so that’s what I did with mine. There was another big noise on the Thursday, late, after we had finished eating the Passover. This time it was a crowd whom the chief priests had gathered. They were carrying swords and clubs and making for the Mount of Olives. I had undressed for bed already, but I threw that cloak around me, the same one his donkey had trodden on, and I followed the noise. That was me all over. When I was a youth if there was a big noise anywhere I was not happy unless I was right in the middle of it. When I followed that night I had no idea it would be to witness the arrest of the one they called Jesus, the one whom later I have come to know as the Son of God. When it was over and they had taken him off, I am ashamed to think that my greatest concern was for the cloak that I had lost, and with the shame of my nakedness as I streaked homeward through the streets. That night they all left him. I have always blamed them for that. I fled too. It was a scary night with an armed mob and everyone’s nerves stretched tight as a drum. But they were his own trusted friends, his followers who had traveled with him over years. Some people say in my record of his story, I am too hard on those followers – but they weren’t there. They didn’t see him roughly handled, his eyes cast up to heaven looking for the mercy, which he would never find at the hands of men, and all his own disciples high-tailing it through the trees. I am an old man now. I have been baptized for almost 30 years, and I know what it is to follow in the Way he showed us that night, and to drink my share of the sufferings. Although I may not die painlessly, I can at least die at peace now because I have finished the task, which the Holy Spirit laid upon me. I have committed to writing the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In the years since my baptism, and especially in the months I spent compiling that account, I have come to know more of the truth about Jesus than I ever did as an eyewitness. Yet as I say, I was always one to be in the middle of things. To me anyway, the first-

hand experience always did matter. I pray that my little account may be a blessing to the brothers and sisters who are following in the Way. I have tried to write it as vividly as possible, so that they can *feel* like eye-witnesses, even if they were not. If the Holy Spirit is pleased to do with other people what he has done with me, he can take the little glimpses such as I had on the night of Jesus' arrest, such as I offer the reader in the stories I have recorded, and he can build from such glimpses a Person in the round. A Person who Lives and who commands our faith and our following – even Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The congregation walks silently back into the sanctuary

**PART III: CHRIST IS TRIED BY THE SANHEDRIN**  
**[This part of the service is again in the sanctuary]**

Mark 14: 53-65

<sup>53</sup>They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. <sup>54</sup>Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. <sup>55</sup>Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. <sup>56</sup>For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. <sup>57</sup>Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, <sup>58</sup>“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’” <sup>59</sup>But even on this point their testimony did not agree. <sup>60</sup>Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?” <sup>61</sup>But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” <sup>62</sup>Jesus said, “I am; and

‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven.’”

<sup>63</sup>Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “Why do we still need witnesses? <sup>64</sup>You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?” All of them condemned him as deserving death. <sup>65</sup>Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!” The guards also took him over and beat him.

Word from Caiaphas

I had played over in my mind many times how it would go – how it would play out when we finally had Jesus of Nazareth before the Sanhedrin. First I should do something to control the noisy crowd. After having silenced them, I should remind the elders who I am and the position I hold in the community and why I am involved in the trial. I should emphasize that as the High Priest, I am responsible to deal with all religious matters brought before me, and that there is no crime more abominable before the Lord – blessed be he – than the heinous sin of blasphemy. I should appear eminently reasonable, never too hasty to make a decision, but a true contemplative in all my dealings. I should not appear to be too easily influenced by the actions of the crowd. When I make my summary, I should show that I have thought long and hard, and that my conclusions are the result of profound reasoning and dispassionate scholarship. I should say regrettably, that for the common good, it is better that *one* should die than that a *whole nation* should suffer. Then, since the Sanhedrin cannot inflict the punishment of death, I should recommend that we send Jesus to Pilate – let Pilate take the heat if his followers want to make trouble. Everyone should surely be pleased with that. In the event it was much easier to condemn the scoundrel than I had ever thought possible. I had heard that he was clever in answering, and had more than once sent our scribes away looking foolish before a whole crowd of people because of his quick-witted rejoinders. But

he had no crowd to play to that night. Where were his followers, we wondered? Surely they had not all fled! This was almost too easy. I have been a judge in Israel for many years and I can say that the first part of the proceedings were disappointing in the extreme. I would have expected my colleagues to root out some more trustworthy informants. None of them could agree in any particular. Some said he had made threats to destroy the temple, and indeed it seemed he had made quite a ruckus in there when he overturned some tables and went after the money changers with a whip, but truth be told, those money changers have troubled us for years. You wouldn't find me speaking against anyone who displayed a righteous zeal for the House of God. Others said he had promised to raise up the temple again in three days after having first destroyed it. That seemed just too foolish to believe. It took hundreds of men decades to build even this poor copy which we have, of Solomon's temple, in all its glory. All the while, the Nazarene stood there in silence, confessing nothing, denying nothing. In the end I put it to him: "Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?" "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" And then he said (I can hardly bear to repeat what he said) – he said "I am." I mean he actually used, *of himself*, the unspeakable name which the Lord – blessed be he – gave to our ancestor Moses. A man less wicked would have contented himself to say he was the Messiah, the Son of David – not He. He actually said he was the Lord, the master of the Universe, and that we should see the son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. Well I could stand it no longer. All my good resolve to be reasonable, to be temperate, or at least to appear so, left me in that moment, and I tore my robe like a wailing woman tears her clothes at a funeral. He had blasphemed against the Blessed One – and even my relief, my pleasure at having caught him in his evil doing, paled next to the assault which I felt in my bowels at hearing the name of the Most High God so abused. We condemned him, and some of the others began to make sport with

him, but I had no stomach for mockery. I had heard enough mockery for one night.

#### Mark 14: 66-72

<sup>66</sup>While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. <sup>67</sup>When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." <sup>68</sup>But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. <sup>69</sup>And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." <sup>70</sup>But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." <sup>71</sup>But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about." <sup>72</sup>At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

#### Word from the Serving Girl

Caiaphas, that's me master, was in an awful temper that night when they condemned the Galilean in the court. Sometimes he forgets himself and talks to me, the Master does, though I don't understand him, me being a simple servant girl without knowledge of his fine words, and him being a great man with all his learning. But this night he just come in and fling down his robe on the chair and says to me: "mend it." I know I ain't supposed to think too deeply, or to have an opinion on all the doings around the high priest's house, and mostly that's fine by me. It's easier just taking orders and doing what I'm told as quickly as possible than it is having to think everything through and to make arguments for things the way Master does. So not being used to thinking, or interfering, or doing anything beyond just what I'm told to do; I really don't know what made me pipe up that night. I heard that

they condemned the man from Galilee, but what was that to me? Did I feel sorry for him? Did I want the one in the courtyard to come in and speak to Master in the man's defense? Strange if I did, I didn't even know what the accusation was. Or did I want the man in the courtyard to be dealt with by Master, more severely? Did I want to be rid of the whole troublesome lot of them? Anyhow, I piped up: "You," I said, to the one warming himself by the fire "you also were with Jesus the man from Nazareth," for certainly he had been. I could tell that accent anywhere. "No," he said, "you don't understand what you're talking about." Well, I knew very well what I was talking about! I may not know much, but I have a good ear for accents and earlier in the day I had actually seen them together. Again he denied it. He seemed angrier than he needed to be, and I might have imagined it, but under all that bluster, he seemed a little afraid. I don't know what possessed me to keep on at him. "Surely you were!" says I, and I hollered to some people standing nearby in the street to back me up. And then didn't he give vent to a stream of the foulest language as ever I heard. Oaths and curses such as would embarrass even a tax collector. I was still sure I had seen him with the Galilean, and if the Galilean had friends like that, then Master was quite right to condemn him I'm sure. It was just then our old rooster gave up his second crow of the morning, and when the man heard it, you'd have thought he heard a prophecy of his own death. So pale he got and he stood straight and still as a board. Then like a little kid's, his face just crumbled, and he started to weep. It has been such a strange night altogether. I just want this thing to go away. I am so confused and frightened and I feel just uncomfortable. I just wish I wasn't here.

Prayer:

Father, wherever we find ourselves placed on this strange and uncomfortable evening, whether our sin is the weakness of the sleeping disciples, or the whole-hearted changeability of Peter, or

the mercenary outlook of Judas, or the misguided zeal of Caiaphas, help us to cling to him who comes to serve us in our need this night, to uphold us with intercession, even on the night when his own need was greatest, and who gives up his body to be broken for us and his blood to be shed for us, so that God might pass over. Grant that we might watch and pray with him this night and on the morrow, so that we might see the wondrous salvation of our God. Through Christ our Lord, AMEN.

Choir: "*When you prayed beneath the trees*"

(words: Christopher Idle; music: Lloyd Larson)

[There is no benediction at the end of the service, and no one to greet you at the door. You are invited to remain in the sanctuary for as long as you like. When you leave, please do so in silence, and carefully, for it will be quite dark].