

THE LORD'S SUPPER

A Readers Theatre for Five Voices

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Running Time: Approximately 8 minutes

Theme: The sacrament of communion is steeped in symbolism and enriched by the knowledge and understanding of Jewish history and tradition.

Scripture References: Mark 14

Synopsis: The origin and symbolism of the elements used in Communion are explained and explored in Readers Theatre style. Music for the Great Hallel is included for an optional arrangement of the hymn the Jesus and disciples may have sung at the conclusion of the Last Supper. The hymn has a distinctive Jewish sound and may be sung acappella in Gregorian chant style.

Production Notes: Staging: Reader ONE stands S.R., a little removed from others. TWO and THREE stand C.S., FOUR and FIVE are S.L. Wireless lapels are preferable if amplification is necessary, although individual Microphone stands may also be used. Optional score for the "Great Hallel" in Gregorian Chant form is included at the end of script. The Hymn may be spoken or sung, depending on the abilities of the cast.

The use of * indicates that the Reader should assume a different character, either through some sort of accent, or mannerism. The raised hand,  tells the Reader to drop character and resume a normal speaking voice. For most of the reading, Reader ONE is the voice of Jesus; Readers TWO and THREE are two of His disciples.

Cast:

ONE—Male
TWO—Male
THREE—Male
FOUR—Female
FIVE—Female

FIVE: In the fourteenth chapter of Mark's Gospel, we read:

FOUR: "On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread,

FIVE: when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb,

FOUR: Jesus' disciples asked him,

* THREE (*a disciple*): “Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

*TWO (*another disciple*): It’s getting close to the time, and I’m sure You realize there’s an awful lot to be done!

THREE: Not that we’re worried or anything;

TWO: we still have enough time to get it all done ...

THREE: ... if you just tell us where to go ...

TWO: ... and what to do.

FOUR: So ...

FIVE: ... Jesus “... sent two of his disciples,

FOUR: telling them,

* ONE (*Jesus*): “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you.”

THREE (*laughing, incredulous?*): A **man**?!

TWO: Carrying water in a jar?!

THREE: That’s women’s work!

TWO (*scoffing*): What kind of a man would ...

ONE (*interrupts, amused*): Just “follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, “

TWO: ‘The Teacher asks:

THREE: ‘Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’

ONE: “He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.”

FIVE: “The disciples left,

FOUR: went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them.”

THREE (*looking around*): There sure are a lot of people here this time of year.

TWO: Always are. I just hope we can find a room somewhere. I tell you, I'd really like to get out of this heat!

THREE: Yeah; I could do with a long drink from a cool well about now.

TWO: Hey; would you look at that? There's a guy with a water jar on his head!

THREE: Where?

TWO: Over there, with all those **females!**

THREE (*amused*): Oh brother. Doesn't he have a woman to do that for him? He sticks out like a bad olive in a . . .

TWO (*interrupts*): Wait a minute. That must be the one.

THREE (*dense*): What 'one?'

TWO: You know, the 'one' Jesus told us about. (*quotes*) "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you." (*getting excited*) Don't you see? It's a prearranged signal.

THREE: Oh; I get it! It's symbolic: he's carrying that water jug as a sign . . .

TWO: Yes. A sign of humility . . . given by the Master **Servant**.

THREE (*delighted*): Don't you just love it?! Jesus has our whole Passover already planned!

TWO (*smiling*): Now, why am I not surprised?

FIVE: So the disciples followed the man,

FOUR: found the upper room,

FIVE: and there, "they prepared the Passover."

TWO (*announces with formality*): The candle is lit and the time for the ceremonial "search" for leaven is at hand.

THREE (*reverently looking up*): "Blessed art thou, Jehovah, our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by thy commandments, and commanded us to remove the leaven."

FOUR: You see, the tradition of eating unleavened bread started way back at the first Passover.

FIVE: The children of Israel ate it for two reasons.

FOUR: One: they needed to eat quickly because they were getting ready to escape from bondage

FIVE: And, two: leaven is the Jewish symbol for corruption. By casting it out of their homes, they showed their desire to purify their hearts and lives before stepping into the freedom of God's holy covenant.

TWO (*solemnly announces*): The house has been thoroughly searched.

THREE (*prays, looking up*): Lord, "all the leaven that is in my possession, that which I have seen and that which I have not seen, be it null, be it accounted as the dust of the earth."

TWO (*ticking off the things to do from his list*): Okay, next we have to prepare the lamb:

FOUR (*explaining to audience*): whose blood reminds us of God's protection when the angel of death passed through Egypt.

THREE: . . . bake the unleavened bread:

FIVE (*explaining to audience*): to remind us of the purified bread eaten in haste.

TWO: . . . set a bowl of salt water on the table:

FOUR (*still explaining*): symbolizing the tears shed in Egypt and God's miraculous deliverance through the Red Sea.

THREE: . . . and collect the Bitter Herbs:

FIVE: Horse radish.

FOUR: Chicory.

FIVE: Endive.

FOUR: Lettuce.

FIVE: And horehound.

FOUR / FIVE: . . . to remind us of the bitterness of slavery.

TWO: . . . prepare the Charosheth paste.

FOUR: A mixture of apples, dates,

FIVE: pomegranates, nuts,

FOUR: . . . and cinnamon sticks;

FIVE: to remind us of the clay and straw from which they made bricks in Egypt.

THREE: And finally, we'll place four cups of wine on the table:

FOUR (*explaining*): . . . to remind us of the four promises God made to the children of Israel.

TWO (*with great solemnity*): "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

THREE: "I will rid you of their bondage.

TWO: "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.

THREE: "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be your God." (*Ex 6:6,7*)

FOUR: "When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve."

FIVE: The preparations were complete;

FOUR: the time was at hand.

FIVE: Jesus invited them to come to the Table.

FOUR: "While they were reclining at the table eating, he said,

ONE: "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me - one who is eating with me."

FOUR: "They were saddened,

FIVE: and one by one they said to him,

TWO: "Surely not I."

THREE (*emphatic*): Nor I!

2/3 (*suddenly doubtful*): Is it?

ONE: “It is one of the Twelve, one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. (*sadly*) But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

THREE (*to TWO*): Do you know what he’s talking about?

TWO: No; but then, that’s nothing unusual. For the last three years, I’ve been lost most of the time.

THREE: Me too. Maybe later ...

TWO: He’ll explain . . .

2/3: . . . and we’ll all understand.

FIVE: “While they were eating,

FOUR: Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it,

FIVE: and gave it to his disciples, saying,

ONE: “Take it; this is my body.”

FOUR: Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them,

FIVE: and they all drank from it.

ONE: “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,”

TWO (*trying to understand*): Now, He’s not talking about the **old** Covenant, is He?

FIVE: An arrangement,

FOUR: a bargain,

FIVE: a relationship.

TWO: The one made between God and Israel?

FOUR: A relationship entirely dependent upon keeping the Law,

FIVE: which is entirely impossible for any man **to** keep!

THREE: No; I think this is different; something new:

FIVE: A covenant between man and God;

FOUR: a relationship sustained . . .

FIVE: . . . not by Law,

FOUR: but through Love!

ONE: “ . . . I tell you the truth, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.”

TWO: I think I’m beginning to understand. This supper is really a parable, isn’t it?

THREE (*delighted*): Yes, I think maybe you’re right! It’s a parable of bread and a cup.

FOUR: The Bread He broke,

FIVE: and the Cup He bore.

2,3: A parable of incredible love,

FOUR: where the “Last Supper” of the old covenant . . .

FIVE: . . . has become the “First Supper” of the new!

2,3,4,5 (*awed*): The **Lord’s** supper.

THREE (*joyfully*): And we’ve been invited to come to the Table!!

FOUR: A Table set with symbolism,


FIVE: steeped in tradition,

FOUR: sanctified by love.

2,3: Completely planned;

4,5: fully orchestrated ...

2,3,4,5: ... an event of eternal magnitude!

( Readers ONE, TWO, THREE, *drop character.*)

(The following scripture may be spoken or sung - see score at end of script. If sung, Organ or Synthesizer plays a D pedal tone and holds until pitch is established.)

ONE: “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

TWO: His love endures forever.

ONE: Give thanks to the God of gods.

2,3 (*unison*): His love endures forever.

ONE: Give thanks to the LORD of lords:

2,3,4 (*unison*): His love endures forever.

ONE: To him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,

2,3,4,5 (*unison*): His love endures forever.

ONE: To him who divided the Red Sea asunder

2,3(2 *part*) : His love endures forever.

ONE: To him who led his people through the desert

4,5 (2 *part*) : His love endures forever.

ONE: To the One who remembered us in our low estate

2-5 (*unison, softly*): His love endures forever.

ONE: And freed us from our enemies,

2-5 (2 *part*) : His love endures forever.

ONE: And who gives food to every creature.

2-5 (2 *part, stronger*): His love endures forever.

(Organ stops playing - slight pause before ONE continues)

ONE: Give thanks to the God of heaven.

2-5 (2 part): His love endures forever. *(from the 136th Psalm - the great Hallel)*

FOUR *(spoken)*: “When they had sung a hymn,

FIVE: they went out to the Mount of Olives.” *(Mark 14:12-26 NIV)*

ALL: *(sing)* A - men.

THE END

"The Great Hallel"

(From Psalm 136)

In Gregorian Chant style

2 4

TWO

ONE

His love endures for e - ver,

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. _____

6 8

TWO

ONE

His love endures for - ev - er.

Give thanks to the God of - Gods. _____

10 12

FOUR

TWO

ONE

Add THREE His love en-dures for - ev - er;

His love en-dures for - ev - er;

Give thanks to the Lord of - Lords! _____

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FOUR 14 16 Add FIVE

THREE TWO His

ONE His

To Him who struck down the first-born of E - gypt _____;

FIVE FOUR 18 20

love endures for - e - ver _____.

THREE TWO love endures for - e - ver _____.

ONE

To Him who di-vid - ed the Red Sea a - sun - der;

22 24

His love en-dures for - e - ver _____

_____ To Him who led His

26 28

His love en-dures for - e - ver _____

peo - ple thru the des - ert _____; _____ To the

30 32

His love en - dures for - e - ver;

one who re-mem-bered us in our low es - tate _____

34 36

His love en - dures for - e - ver!

And freed us from our en - e - mies. _____

38 40

His love en-dures for-e-ver!

And who gives food to ev-ry crea-ture.

42 44

His love en-dures for-e-ver.

Give thanks to the God of - hea-ven

(Spoken)

FOUR: "When they had sung a hymn,

FIVE: ... they went out to the Mount of Olives."

46 48

A - men

A - men