

Dramatic Readings for the Lenten Season

Calvin Theological Seminary Worship Symposium

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Dramatic Readings for the Lenten Season

By Donna McIlveen

Monologue - Mary's Sister and Jesus' Aunt

Oh, how I wanted to protect my sister Mary
from the terrible agony of watching
her son die.

All I could do was stand beside her...
stay with her...

and remind her that she was
not alone.

My heart was broken,
but not in as many pieces as Mary's.
She wept for such a long time.

I tried to hold her tight.

Everyone around was crying,
but Mary's weeping was so full of pain.
To lose a son right before her very eyes!
Why oh why?

The guards - they were so cruel to Jesus.

But not one dared come near us and
tell us to move on.

They could see the sheer anguish on
my sister's face.

Mary knew this day would come,

but it doesn't matter how much you
prepare.

She loved her son,

and watching him be put to death
was more than any mother
should have to endure.

EQUIPPING FOR . . . Worship

Life has not been easy for Mary.

As her sister, I tried to be there in any way I could.

As Jesus' aunt, I tried to be there.

I remember when Mary was pregnant...oh, it wasn't easy.

So many people talking

- but sisters look out for one another.

I remember when Jesus was born...

I cradled him in my arms...

And then when Jesus was just little,

Mary and Joseph had to escape to Egypt

so that cruel beast Herod wouldn't find them and kill the child.

We were all so glad when they were able to return home safe and sound.

Then, like children do,

Jesus was grown, almost before we knew it

- twelve years old and becoming a man.

We'd all been in Jerusalem for the Passover

when suddenly, on our way back,

we discovered Jesus was missing!

He was nowhere to be found!

I was frantic with worry.

But somehow Mary seemed to know that Jesus was all right.

And when she told me how they found him with the teachers of the Law...

seeing how they listened to him...

well...

we knew that he had been where he needed to be.

Jesus grew and became a strapping grown man...

and,

well,

life was never the same again.

After his baptism,

Jesus went about the countryside preaching about the kingdom of God.

Mary understood what her son was doing,

but still it was hard - as a mother -

to watch her son get so tired out

from all the crowds of people who wouldn't stop hounding him.

But Mary knew that Jesus had to do what he was doing...

that he was making a difference.

Not everyone listened to my nephew, but those who did...

their lives were changed.

I came to understand that Jesus was not just my nephew,

but truly God's own Son.

And then...not that long ago...

when Jesus talked about going to Jerusalem...

oh, if we had only tried to stop him...

But his mind was set.

He seemed to be drawn to Jerusalem.

Even though the crowds at first received him well,

he must have known that it wouldn't last.

I think he knew...

We didn't understand what he meant.

I don't think any of us really did.

Sometimes I feel like I have let Mary down.

I followed my sister and her family as they travelled with Jesus.

I helped to provide for the needs of all the followers.

But as the crowds grew bigger and near hysteria at times,

I sensed that all was not well.

I tried to speak to Mary about going back home...

but she knew her place was with Jesus.

And my place was with Jesus as well.

After all, I *am* a follower of Jesus,
not just because he is my nephew,
but because he is the Messiah.
I truly believe that he will save us.
But
I don't understand how that will be.
And when I see what this week has done to my sister...
She has seen so much pain.
As I think back on the events of these last few days,
I knew I had to do what I had always done.
I needed to stay with Mary.
And I am doubly thankful that I wasn't the
only one.
Some of our friends and fellow followers of
Jesus surrounded her too.
My good friend Mary, you know her?
She's married to Clopas.
She's another faithful Jesus follower, and she
stayed with us.
She is such a good friend.
She said as long as she was needed, she would
be there...
and she was.
Yes, good friends are so important,
and she has been such a rock during these last
few days.
Between you and me,
I don't think I would have been able to remain
strong for my sister
if it hadn't been for my good friend.
Her husband, Clopas, had decided to stay with
some of the disciples.
I don't understand why they all left.
I'll never understand why they abandoned Jesus
so quickly.
Not one was left,
Except John, that is.
He has been such a comfort to Mary as well.

Jesus must have known John would be.
He was on the cross, so close to death,
yet he found the strength to say to his mother,
"Dear woman, here is your son."
And then he turned to John and said, "Here is
your mother."
Oh, it was such a special moment.
Even in his agony on the cross, Jesus was thinking of
his mother, my sister.
But still the unimaginable pain...
Life has not been easy for Mary.
As I wonder what will happen now,
I know it won't be easy to continue as Jesus'
followers.
It will be difficult for all of us to know what to do.
But Jesus asked each of us to carry on, sharing his mes-
sage.
We must do that.
We can't let his message be forgotten.
I will look to God for strength, and it will be provided.
Doesn't the Psalmist say,
"Turn for help to the One who is your strength,
seek God's presence continually"?)
Hmm, true, true...
Life is not easy for any of us,
but no matter the darkness,
we are not alone - we are not forgotten.





Monologue - The Forgotten Followers, Salome and Mary (Mary's Sister and Jesus' Aunt)

Narrator:

Listen now as two of Jesus' forgotten followers -
Salome, the mother of James and John,
and Mary, the mother of James the younger and
Joseph

- linger at the cross of Jesus.

They have followed...

they have listened...

they have learned...

and they have served.

And today they have seen with their own eyes their
master

abused, scorned, whipped and hung on a cross
to die.

Now they linger...

wondering...

What does it all mean?

Salome:

Oh Mary, why has this happened?

My heart is breaking

and I don't know if I can stay here...

How can I stay after everything that has happened?

How can you stay?

Mary:

I don't know why all this has happened...

I just know that I can't leave him.

He didn't give up on me when I needed him the most.

He healed me.

And then he looked at me

and smiled

and told me of God's love.

His words changed me.

He spoke compassion and healing and love.

His words had life.

I can still hear those words...

I can still feel his love...

God's love...
and I just know that I have to stay.

Salome:

I remember the first time I heard Jesus...
I was walking along the road
and noticed this crowd of people gathering by
the water.
I was so curious.
I just went over to see what all the fuss was about.
Everyone was listening so intently...
and yet it was as if he was speaking just to me.
His words had power
and I knew that my life would never be the
same.

Mary:

I remember the stories he told.
The woman mixing some yeast with the flour.
The sower scattering seed on the
plowed field.
The woman searching for a
lost coin.

As Jesus shared these stories,
he showed us how concerned he was for each
one of us...
that none of us is forgotten.

Salome:

Ah yes.
The story of the woman who found the coin
was a real turning point for me.
As I listened to Jesus tell that story,
I began to understand what true joy is.
The woman was so full of joy when she found her lost
coin.
She wanted to tell everyone that she had found it.
And now I know
that God wants us to share in that joy as well.

Mary:

Hmmm...
Jesus taught us so much as we followed him.

It sure wasn't easy following him about the countryside,
but there was joy in that simple service.

But today...
where is the joy today?
All I feel is pain and sadness.
What does it all mean?

Salome:

Mary, remember when he spoke about suffering -
about coming here to Jerusalem to suffer.
I know I didn't understand.
All I wanted was my sons, James and John,
to sit with Jesus in his kingdom -
one on his right and one on his left.
I thought it was about greatness...
about participating in Jesus' rule...
But now I know it has nothing to do with power.
It's all about serving.

Oh, if only we had understood...

Mary:

None of us really understood, Salome.
You only wanted what was best for your sons, James
and John.
I wanted what was best for my sons, James and Joseph.
We all wanted what was best.
At first we didn't understand, but as we
listened...
as we followed...we learned.
Jesus showed us - and our sons -
what true joy and true greatness really is.

Salome:

But I feel so lost now without Jesus.
We need him...
still...
just as much as that woman needed to find her
lost coin.

Mary:

I know...
I feel the same.

But remember what Jesus said about his suffering.
As difficult as it is to understand,
Jesus suffered for us.
He suffered
and showed us his strength in weakness.

Salome:

Yes...
I remember...
He tried to help us see.
He said that he did not come to be served
but to serve
and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Mary:

And that means for you and me...
and for everyone.

Salome:

But he's gone!
Where will we get our courage now?

Mary:

Salome, we joined his ministry and became followers
not knowing where it would lead.
He showed us God's love;
he showed us joy;
he showed us that in service is life.
As we listened to Jesus, our lives were changed.
We moved from being lost to being found.
Because of Jesus, we are no longer forgotten.
Because of him, we have courage.

Salome:

But I still don't understand -
I know I keep coming back to this -
but Jesus did nothing wrong.
Jesus was always more concerned for others than he
was for himself.
Everyone wanted so much from him.
There were days when he couldn't even walk down
the street
without someone begging for healing.

And he always took the time.
He always gave the people hope.

Mary:

Do you suppose when he sat and had dinner with
James and John
and the others last night that he knew what lay
in store for him today?
Looking back, he had that sad look in his eyes...
like he knew.
But if he knew, why didn't he do something to stop it?
I don't understand.

Salome:

His thoughts were on others again.
Remember last night when he spoke about the
new covenant -
about his body and his blood.

Mary:

And now his body is broken...
his blood shed.
To what end...
what purpose?

Salome:

I don't know.
Not even Peter seemed to understand last night.
And then it only got worse...

Mary:

I know... What was Peter thinking?
How could he deny Jesus like that...
three times?

Salome:

Peter is so ashamed of himself.
He never thought he could or would ever deny
Jesus -
he still can't believe he was so weak.

Mary:

He's beside himself, drowning in guilt.

We may never know why he ran.

But I do wonder how he could leave Jesus in
his hour of need.

How could he abandon Jesus like that?

Salome:

And now they've all left...

gone back to Galilee.

Do they think that going back to Galilee will make
everything just go away?

What are they thinking?

Mary:

So much has happened...

Maybe they just don't know what to do, where
to turn, what to say.

Salome:

But even the centurion who was standing here seemed
to understand.

He praised God and said that Jesus was a righteous
man.

If only he had spoken sooner...

but now even he has gone.

Why is everyone so eager to leave...

to just give up?

Mary:

So much has happened...

We left everything to follow this man,

and now here we stand.

What should we do?

Salome:

We have to stay.

We can't leave now.

I can't leave now.

Mary:

Remember the story that Jesus told

about the poor widow and the judge.

She didn't give up, and I don't think Jesus wants us to
give up now.

It won't be easy, but remember we are not forgotten.

As his followers,

it's our responsibility to persist,

to remain steadfast, just like that poor widow.

Salome:

And we need to pray.

Remember how Jesus always took time to pray.

Mary:

We need to pray for strength.

We need to pray for courage.

We are not forgotten

and we can keep doing what we can

to make sure that others know about Jesus and
his mission.

Salome:

Yes, we will keep doing what we can.

We will stay together and continue to serve.

Together we will ensure that Jesus' message of love and
compassion is shared. We have witnessed the horror
and the suffering

- now we must witness to others

and tell them about Jesus and his mission.

We must continue doing the will of God

by not forgetting the one who did not forget us.

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Calvin Theological Seminary Worship Symposium

Each year, Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, offers a worship symposium with a large variety of activities: music workshops, lectures, plenary addresses and worship seminars. The first worship symposium in 1988 had 20 participants. It has now grown to 1,400 participants, including visitors from 37 countries. Several people from The Presbyterian Church in Canada attended the conference in 2009, and Grace-ann McIntyre, one of the participants, sends this report.

Report on “Youth, Worship and the Seven Second Attention Span”

Mark Yaconelli, co-founder and director of the Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project housed at San Francisco Theological Seminary, presented an interesting seminar entitled “Youth, Worship and the Seven Second Attention Span.”

In describing worship that young people find meaningful, Yaconelli urged worship leaders to avoid trying to dazzle kids by overusing technology. PowerPoint displays are not going to impress them. What they need is real relationships with the adults in their church. Kids need acceptance and guidance about how to be in the world.

Worship services tend to be set up by adults for adults. Teenagers want first-hand religion, to see and feel Jesus, not just listen. Reach them by

- contemplation and openness to the presence of God, not control
- creativity and vitality, not conformity
- having people walk alongside them, rather than using products to teach them
- savouring and slowing down, rather than speeding up and overusing activities
- concentrating on relationships, not results
- looking at who they are, not what they can do
- valuing authenticity over order
- stimulating and reaching them, not just distracting them

Kids need a church that doesn't patronize, that listens to them. It should be a place where they can use their gifts, and a place that sees beyond those gifts. Adults should know the names of every young person in their congregation and a little bit - or a great deal - about them.

Details about the upcoming symposium (January 28-30, 2010) can be found at www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos/2010.

Your church should be a safe place for teens to explore and practice their faith, where they can talk about their doubts and get honest answers to honest questions. Teenagers want to see how God is impacting on people's lives. They want to learn the history of God and about their own place in their congregation. They need to know that the leaders care about their relationship with Jesus, not just their attendance.

Advice to adults who welcome youth in congregations
When meeting youth, it is helpful for you, as adults, to remember how you felt and what concerned you when you were a young adult. Were you worried about what others thought of you? Did you need affirmation? Did you have an adult to go to when you were in trouble?

Yaconelli states that, in a typical congregation, the adults are made anxious by teenagers. They want the kids in their church to be safe, respectful model citizens. In their turn, young people are just as anxious about the adults. They see them as isolated, stressed out and worried, with no friends, no fun, no passion about life.

How do we create meaningful spiritual encounters for young people when they live in a culture of constant physical, emotional, intellectual, and even spiritual stimulation? How do we avoid designing worship services that are anxious imitations of the marketplace? Through spiritual exercises, discussion and lecture, Mark Yaconelli explored an approach to adolescent worship, prayer, and spiritual formation that embodies wonder, heartbreak and healing.

Prepared and submitted by Grace-ann McIntyre, elder at Riverdale Presbyterian Church

Books by Mark Yaconelli:

Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus (Zondervan, May 2006)

Growing Souls: Experiments in Contemplative Youth Ministry (Zondervan, June 2007)

Downtime: Helping Teenagers Pray (Zondervan, October 2008)

Wonder, Fear and Longing: A Book of Prayers (Zondervan, due October 2009)