

The Passion of our Lord according to Matthew

Matthew 26:1-27:66 (Abridged)

Speaking Parts: Narrator, Peter, Jesus, Priests, High Priest, Disciples, Maid, Pilate, Judas. The congregation reads the part of “The People.”

Narrator: Jesus said to his disciples,

Jesus: After two days the Passover is coming and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.

Narrator: Then the chief priests and elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest Caiaphas, and conspired to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said,

Priests: Not during the festival or there may be a riot among the people.

Narrator: Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said,

Judas: What will you give me if I betray him to you?

Narrator: They paid him thirty pieces of silver. From that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him. On the first day of Unleavened Bread, the disciples said to Jesus,

Disciples: Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?

Jesus: Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, “The Teacher says, ‘My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’”

Narrator: So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said,

Jesus: Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.

Narrator: They became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another,

Disciples: Surely not I, Lord?

Jesus: The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 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.

Narrator: Judas, who betrayed him, said,

Judas: Surely not I, Rabbi?

Jesus: You have said so.

Narrator: While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying,

Jesus: Take, eat; this is my body.

Narrator: Then he took a cup and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying,

Jesus: Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.

Narrator: When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them,

Jesus: You will all desert me tonight; for it is written, “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.” But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.

Narrator: Peter said to him,

Peter: Though all become deserters because of you, I will never desert you.

Jesus: Truly I tell you this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.

Peter: Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.

Narrator: So said all the disciples. Then Jesus went with them to the place called Gethsemane and said to his disciples,

Jesus: Sit here while I go over there and pray.

Narrator: He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated.

Jesus: I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here and stay awake with me.

Narrator: And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed,

Jesus: My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.

Narrator: He came, found the disciples sleeping and said to Peter,

Jesus: So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Narrator: He went away for the second time and prayed,

Jesus: My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

Narrator: Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. Leaving them again, he went and prayed for the third time in the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them,

Jesus: Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of the sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.

Narrator: While he was speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived with a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying,

Judas: The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.

Narrator: At once he came to Jesus and said,

Judas: Greetings, Rabbi!

Narrator: and kissed him.

Jesus: Friend, do what you are here to do.

Narrator: Then they arrested Jesus. All the disciples deserted him and fled. They took Jesus to Caiaphas the high priest. But Peter followed at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and sat with the guards in order to see how this would end. The chief priests and whole council looked for false testimony against Jesus so they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said,

People: **This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days."**

Narrator: The high priest stood up and said,

High Priest: Have you no answer (to what) they testify against you?

Narrator: But Jesus was silent.

High Priest: I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.

Jesus: You have said so. But I tell you from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Narrator: Then the high priest tore his clothes.

High Priest: He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?

Priests: He deserves death.

Narrator: Then they spat in his face, and struck him; and some slapped him, saying,

Priests: Prophecy to us, you Messiah! Who is it that struck you?

Narrator: Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl said to him,

Maid: You were with Jesus the Galilean.

Narrator: But he denied it before all of them.

Peter: I do not know what you are talking about.

Narrator: When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders,

Maid: He was with Jesus of Nazareth.

Narrator: Again Peter denied it with an oath,

Peter: I do not know the man.

Narrator: After a while the bystanders came up and said to Peter,

People: **Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.**

Narrator: Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath,

Peter: I do not know the man!

Narrator: At that moment the cock crowed and Peter remembered what Jesus had said, "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." He went out and wept bitterly. When morning came, the chief priests and elders of the people conferred together to bring about Jesus' death. They bound him, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate the governor. When Judas, his betrayer, saw Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.

Judas: I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.

Priests: What is that to us? See to it yourself.

Narrator: Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he went out and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said,

Priests: It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money.

Narrator: After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter's field as a place to bury foreigners. For this reason, (it) has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Jesus stood before the governor, who asked him,

Pilate: Are you the King of the Jews?

Jesus: You say so.

Narrator: But when the chief priests and elders accused him, he did not answer.

Pilate: Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?

Narrator: But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, and the governor was greatly amazed. At the festival the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them,

Pilate: Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called Messiah?

Narrator: For he realized they had handed him over out of jealousy. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." Now the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them,

Pilate: Which man shall I release for you?

People: **Barabbas.**

Pilate: Then what should I do with Jesus, called the Messiah?

People: **Let him be crucified.**

Pilate: Why, what evil has he done?

Narrator: But they shouted all the more,

People: **Let him be crucified.**

Narrator: So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying,

Pilate: I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.

People: **His blood be on us and on our children!**

Narrator: So he released Barabbas for them. After flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. The soldiers of the governor took Jesus to the governor's headquarters and gathered the whole cohort around him. Stripping him, they put a scarlet robe on him. Twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him.

People: **Hail, King of the Jews!**

Narrator: They spat on him, took the reed and struck him on the head, then stripped him of the robe, put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him. Coming upon a man of Cyrene named Simon, they compelled him to carry his cross. When they came to a place called Golgotha (which means the Place of a Skull), they offered him wine mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. When they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Two bandits were crucified with him, on his right and on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads, and saying,

People: **You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.**

Narrator: In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him.

Priests: He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, "I am God's Son."

Narrator: The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him. From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. About three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice,

Jesus: Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?

Narrator: That is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said,

People: **This man is calling Elijah.**

Narrator: One of them ran, got a sponge filled with sour wine, put it on a stick and gave it to him to drink. But others said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah will come to save him." Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. When the centurion and those keeping watch over Jesus saw what took place, they were terrified, and said,

People: **Truly this man was God's Son!**

Narrator: That evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb which he had hewn in the rock. He rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting opposite the tomb. The next day, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered before Pilate.

High Priest: Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was alive, "After three days I will rise again." Command the tomb to be secured until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, "He has been raised from the dead," and the last deception would be worse than the first.

Pilate: You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.

Narrator: They went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.