

TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE
By Terri Dill

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AUDITION -- for 4 m and 1 flex.

In this scene, Jesus is on the cross and Joshua reads.

NARRATOR: "The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."

(AT RISE: Orchestrated, dramatic MUSIC plays under the scene. This scene becomes very dark and the tension can be felt throughout. MARY MOTHER OF JESUS, JOHN THE DISCIPLE, MARY MAGDALENE, MARY THE MOTHER OF JAMES, SALOME and JOANNA have all come and weep to see the crucifixion of Jesus. A CROWD is there. JESUS is hanging on a cross center stage. He has been beaten and a crown of thorns is on his head. The SOLDIERS are casting lots for his robe at the foot of the cross. There are two other crosses with men in place.)

THIEF ONE: *(In pain.)* This man is the one they call the Messiah. *(Pause.)* What kind of a Messiah can he be if he is crucified?

THIEF TWO: Do you not fear God? We deserve this punishment. What has he done to deserve this? We have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong!

THIEF ONE: *(Turning to JESUS, mocking.)* Are you not the Messiah? They say you have saved others, so why can you not save yourself!

(The CROWD is yelling insults at Jesus. "Let God rescue him now!" "If He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross!!" The TEMPLE LEADERS stand off to one

side, pleased. OTHERS fall to the ground, crying for Him. His MOTHER is standing by the cross of Jesus, offering Him comfort. JOHN stands close by.)

THIEF TWO: Listen to the crowd. *(Pausing to catch HIS breath.)* Listen to what they are saying about Him. *(Pause.)* They know Him not, yet they hurl insults at Him.

THIEF ONE: You are a thief like me. What do you know about this man?

THIEF TWO: I know that He truly is the son of God. *(JESUS looks at HIM.)* Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

JESUS: *(Looks at THIEF TWO as if to see the faith he has in his heart.)* "Truly I tell you; today you will be with me in Paradise."

(ALL freeze and the LIGHTS darken on this part of the stage. LIGHTS come up on JOSHUA who is sitting on his bunk.)

JOSHUA: *(Reading the Bible.)* "Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with Him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they divided up his clothes by casting lots." *(HE pauses. With hesitation, he skips ahead.)* "One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Him: 'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!' But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.'" *(JOSHUA becomes emotional. He stands, looks up and offers this prayer. Forceful but with great feeling.)* Pastor Brian wanted me to read this.

JOSHUA: *(Cont'd.)* So, Jesus, if you are really there, if you really exist, help me to understand this kind of forgiveness. *(Pausing.)* The thief who hung beside you on the cross did not know you, had probably never been baptized and never asked to be forgiven, yet you saw his heart and saved him. He believed in you for he saw who you really were. This thief who hung next to you for only a short time knew you were the Messiah. And you knew he was yours. This thief was to be a part of your paradise. *(Pause.)* How can this be that you forgave him just like that? No expectations. *(Pause.)* If you can forgive this thief, can you forgive me? *(Emotional.)* I have blamed you for my dad walking away. I blamed you for everything that has gone wrong in my life since then, but you have looked down on me and said, "Today you will be with me in paradise," for you know me and have called me by name. I don't understand that kind of love. Maybe I will never understand it, but I just ask you if you can do this one thing for me: please forgive me for all I have done that separated me from you. *(HE sits back on the bunk, with his head in his hands.)*

(LIGHTS slowly fade to black.)

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