

National Youth Conference 2022 Worship Resources

Foundational (Colossians 2: 5-7)

Sunday Morning (July 24) Readers' Theater

By Walt Wiltschek, Worship Coordinator

Two-person reading (women/Peter) weaves in w/ drums, recounting Jesus' last days—and first new day.

Drums should engage in a lively chorus—starting slowly, perhaps, but quickly building to party mode, light and joyful. After about 10 seconds, speakers begin—drums might need to pull back a little for volume but keep up tempo.

1: It was glorious. Walking with Jesus and seeing him in action was like nothing I had ever experienced.

2: His words. His actions. His very being. Everything about him. It made every day seem like anything was possible.

1: Preaching to thousands of people!

2: Healing the blind and the lame!

1: Calming storms!

2: Including people who had never been included!

1: Facing down the Pharisees!

2: Even raising people from the dead!

1: And when we came into Jerusalem ... I can't even fully describe it.

2: It was a parade! A celebration! A hero's welcome!

1: We were on top of the world. The Messiah was here.

2: Everything was going to be different.

1: I'm not saying it was always easy, but it was a time of deep, abiding joy

2: Life was ... good. It was good.

1: And then...

Drums pause.

2: It wasn't.

1: In the midst of our Passover meal, Jesus said one of us would betray him.

2: We didn't believe it, but soon Judas did just that.

1: The soldiers and religious leaders came and took him away.

Drums resume softly, more solemn.

2: After that it was a blur.

1: I was so afraid that I denied even knowing Jesus. I'm ashamed to admit it, but I did.

2: Then there were trials—before the religious leaders, before the Roman leaders.

1: And those horrible cries began:

2: Crucify him! Crucify him!

Drums pick up, violent tempo--dark.

1: And that's what they did.

2: They led him away, had someone carry his cross up that horrible hill.

1: Atop the hill, they put up the cross.

2: Nailed him to it. What an awful sound.

1: Some mourned, but many more jeered and mocked him.

2: They taunted him, 'Save yourself!'

1: The hours dragged on, then darkness filled the sky.

2: Jesus cried out, "It's finished!"

1: And he took his last breath.

Drums stop suddenly.

2: It was quiet.

1: So quiet.

2: Like the world had ended.

1: It felt like our world had.

2: They took down his body, his broken body,

1: And they wrapped it in linen cloth,

2: And put it in a tomb belonging to a councilman named Joseph.

1: And they rolled a large stone across the opening to seal it.

2: It was indeed finished.

1: The miracle was over. Or so we thought.

One drum begins slowly, a single repeating beat, like a heartbeat.

2: On Sunday morning I and some of the other women went back to the tomb, bringing spices and perfumes to place there. We arrived feeling empty. We never expected the tomb would be empty, too. But that's what we found—an empty tomb and a mysterious angelic visitor. "He is not here!" the stranger said. "He is risen!"

Drums begin to build again into a joyful cacophony.

1: Risen! From the dead? I had to see it for myself. I ran to the tomb when I heard the news, and it was just as the women said. He wasn't there. The third day, he had said. That meant maybe, just maybe he was ... [trails off]

2: Suddenly everything seemed possible again.

1: Everything could be different again.

2: Sorrow and joy and breathlessness and hope all woven together.

1: A marvelous mystery

2: The miracle worker!

1: The Messiah!

2: Life was ... good. It was very, very good.

Drums hit final notes and end with a flourish.

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Adapted from *Education for Justice* Resources

Living God, who through Jesus came to this world and entered human pain,
come and be in every painful place in our lives; be in every painful place in our world.

Living God, who in the secret darkness rose from the grave,
come and be in the secret, dark places in our lives; be in every secret, dark place in our world.

Living God, who sent the women to proclaim the resurrection to the frightened, imprisoned apostles,
come and empower us in every frightened, imprisoned place in our lives; give power to all those in every frightened, imprisoned place in our world.

Living God, who hears every prayer,
hear the prayers of our hearts today.

Be with all those who hurt, who are lonely, who are in need, who are lost, who are excluded, who are seeking for your presence. Fill them with healing and hope, turning their gaze to the dawn of new days filled with miracles.

Living God, Risen Son, come and make us your living Church, your risen Church, in every place in our world. Amen.

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Luke 24: 1-12 *The Message*

Reader 1

24 1-3 At the crack of dawn on Sunday, the women came to the tomb carrying the burial spices they had prepared. They found the entrance stone rolled back from the tomb, so they walked in. But once inside, they couldn't find the body of the Master, Jesus.

Reader 2

4-8 They were puzzled, wondering what to make of this. Then, out of nowhere it seemed, two men, light cascading over them, stood there. The women were awestruck and bowed down in worship. The men said, "Why are you looking for the Living One in a cemetery? He is not here, but raised up. Remember how he told you when you were still back in Galilee that he had to be handed over to sinners, be killed on a cross, and in three days rise up?" Then they remembered Jesus' words.

Reader 1

9-11 They left the tomb and broke the news of all this to the Eleven and the rest. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them kept telling these things to the apostles, but the apostles didn't believe a word of it, thought they were making it all up.

Reader 2

12 But Peter jumped to his feet and ran to the tomb. He stooped to look in and saw a few grave clothes, that's all. He walked away puzzled, shaking his head.

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Adapted from a resource by Thom M. Shuman, 2019

We could just return to our schedules and go back to life as usual,
but we will go to rebuild neighbors, and share the light we have received.
We could just stand around and wonder where Jesus has gone,
but we will turn and, as he calls us by name,
follow to bring hope and healing to our world.
We could just keep quiet and not whisper a word to anyone,
but we will go to tell others of the good news
that Jesus is alive and here in our midst and more than we ever imagined. Amen.