

Gospel: Luke 23:1-7, 9-11, 13-26, 32-34, 36-47

*Narrator:* The story of the suffering and death of Jesus, taken from the Gospel of Luke. The chief priests and the scribes took Jesus to Pilate and accused Jesus of doing wrong. They said to Pilate,

*Priests:* “This man has been trying to confuse our people and change the way they think and live. And he told us not to pay taxes to Caesar. He also says that he is the Christ, a king.”

*Narrator:* So Pilate asked Jesus,

*Pilate:* “Are you the king of the Jews?”

*Narrator:* Jesus answered,

*Jesus:* “You have said so.”

*Narrator:* Then Pilate said to the leaders and to all the people who were there,

*Pilate:* “I do not find this man guilty of doing anything wrong.”

*Narrator:* But the people said over and over again,

*Crowd 1:* “He has been teaching and making trouble all over Judea. He started in Galilee and now is doing the same here in Jerusalem!”

*Crowd 2:* He’s stirring up unrest among our people; he’s a dangerous man. He threatens peace.

*Narrator:* When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent him to King Herod because he was the ruler of Galilee. Herod asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus did not answer any of them. Then Herod and his soldiers started making fun of Jesus. They put a beautiful robe on him, like a king would wear. Then they sent him back to Pilate. Pilate called all the people and their leaders together and said to them,

*Pilate:* “I don’t find Jesus guilty of any of the things you have said. And Herod didn’t find him guilty either. He has not done anything wrong and

does not deserve to be put to death. I will have him whipped and let him go.”

*Narrator:* But the people shouted,

*Crowd 1:* “Kill him. Let Barrabas go free.”

*Crowd 2:* Barrabas! Baraabas! Free Barrabas!

*Narrator:* Now, Barrabas was a man who was in prison because he had started a riot in the city, and he was also a murderer. Pilate told the people; he would let one prisoner free. Again, he told the people that he wanted to let Jesus go. But they shouted,

*Crowd 1 & 2 (together):* “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

*Narrator:* For the third time, Pilate said to the people,

*Pilate:* “Why? What has he done wrong? I haven’t found him guilty of anything. He does not deserve to die.”

*Narrator:* But the people kept on shouting that Jesus should be killed. They wouldn’t stop shouting, so Pilate finally gave in to them. He let Barrabas, a murderer, go free and let them have their way with Jesus. As they were taking Jesus away, they saw a man named Simon of Cyrene coming into the city. They made him carry the cross on his shoulder and walk behind Jesus. Two men who were criminals were also lead away with Jesus to be killed. And when they came to the place which is called “the skull”, they crucified Jesus.

And Jesus said,

*Jesus:* “Father, forgive them! For they do not know what they are doing!”

*Narrator:* The soldier made fun of him, and said,

*Soldiers:* “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.”

*Narrator:* There was a sign at the top of his cross which said, “This is the King of the Jews.” And they crucified the two criminals behind him, one on his left and one on his right. One of the criminals yelled at Jesus,

*Thief 1:* “Aren’t you the Christ? Then save yourself and save us too!”

*Narrator:* But the other criminal scolded him,

*Thief 2:* “Have you no fear of God. We deserve this; but, he did nothing to deserve this.”

*Narrator:* He then said to Jesus;

*Thief 2:* “Jesus, when you come into your kingdom, remember me.”

*Narrator:* Jesus said to him,

*Jesus:* “I promise you; today you will be with me in Paradise.”

*Narrator:* It was now about noon, and the sun stopped shining, and it was dark until about three o’clock in the afternoon. Then Jesus cried out loud,

*Jesus:* “Father, I put myself in your hands; I give you my spirit.”

*Narrator:* Then he died.

One of the soldiers in the Roman army who saw all of this began to praise God, and he said,

*Soldier:* “Surely, this man was good and he was innocent.”

*Narrator:* This is the Passion of our Lord, Jesus Christ.