

Christmas Journey 2009 Acting Script

Introduction

As you proceed through the Christmas Journey, you will witness a portrayal of the greatest love ever known to mankind ó the love of God. God loved us so much that He sent His own son, Jesus, in the form of a man to provide a way for us to reach God. God desires for every person to come to Him and to understand His Truth. It is our hope that during the next few minutes you will experience that Truth and embrace the amazing depth of God's love.

Scene 1: Angel appears to Mary

God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin who was pledged to be married to a man named Joseph. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel said to her, "Greetings, the Lord is with you. You are blessed among women." Mary was troubled at the angel's words, but the angel said, "Do not be afraid, God has shown you His grace. Very soon you will become pregnant and have a baby boy. You are to name him Jesus. He will be very great and be called the Son of God." Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let it happen to me as you have said." When Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant, he decided to break the engagement quietly. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Do not hesitate to take Mary as your wife, because the child conceived within her is of the Holy Spirit." Joseph did as the angel commanded.

Scope:

To represent God's announcement to Mary

Action:

Mary: She is lying in bed, on her side (approx 30 seconds). Mary stretches as she awakes, realizes the angel is present. She moves to kneel in front of the angel (in profile to front of scene). Looking at the angel, she nods in agreement ó points to herself as if to say "You've chosen me?" When the angel disappears, she stands and looks around in astonishment. She returns and kneels beside the bed, looking heavenward as if to say, "Lord, your will be done." Mary then returns to bed to restart scene.

Scene 2: Tax Collector

In those days, the Roman emperor declared that a census should be taken throughout the nation. Everyone was required to return to their home town to register for a tax. Because Joseph was a descendent of King David, he went to Bethlehem to register. He took with him Mary, who was obviously pregnant at this time. While Mary and Joseph were there, the time came for Mary to give birth.

Scope:

To represent the journey to Bethlehem for the census.

Action:

Taxpayers: They are lined up with goods in hand to pay taxes. They are tired, hungry, frustrated, but obedient to the law. Occasionally some may complain to passing cars about high taxation and unfairness of Roman government. Mary and Joseph are in line ó Mary on donkey and Joseph walking beside her. As each taxpayer approaches table they give food, animals, or money to the guard on duty. The taxpayers move away from the table and behind the scene to pick up items and rejoin the scene at the end of the line.

Tax collector: As a Roman official, his job is to make sure he gets ample payment from each family, plus some for his own pocket. He's abrupt, unfriendly, intimidating, and often questions truthfulness of taxpayers. He may sit occasionally to argue or demand more payment.

Scribe and guards: The scribe will simply sit and record names and amount of goods paid. The guards control crowd and collect the payments. They take items and place in baskets, which are pushed behind the scene.

Scene 3 – Bethlehem

The city of Bethlehem, just south of Jerusalem, was a self contained town with shops, merchants, tradesmen, and street vendors. Most families were unaware of the significant, predicted event that would occur just outside the town. There would be stories of a special birth; some mention of a strange brilliance in the sky; but to these people, the everyday routine of buying and selling, living and dying, kept their attention on the mundane rather than the spiritual. How ironic, that these people could be so close to the Savior of the world, and yet so far.

Scope:

To represent the culture and lifestyle of Jesusøtime.

Action:

Shopkeepers: Will have assigned kiosks to sell their wares. They can move around to solicit customers or promote from their storefront.

Shoppers: Provide movement in the scene by walking from kiosk to kiosk looking at goods and talking to other shoppers. They should haggle with shopkeepers occasionally. Any goods òpurchasedö should be recycled within a few minutes after the transaction.

Soldiers: Peacekeepers of the city. They stroll in the street and keep traffic moving. They may occasionally ask drivers for travel papers.

Beggars: They approach shoppers and occasionally cars to ask for money or food.

Scene 4 - Angels appear to shepherds

Now there were shepherds living in the fields nearby watching over their sheep, when suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified, but the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy for everyone. Today, in the city of Bethlehem, your Savior has been born, Christ the Lord. Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast number of heavenly beings, and they were saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to all those who please God."

Scope:

To represent the proclamation of Christ's birth by the angels to the shepherds.

Action:

The shepherds will be able to move in small groups. One group should be gathered around a campfire. Two shepherds will move between the campfire and the sheep pen kneeling before the angel and telling one another about what they have seen and heard. Shepherds should have their backs to the cars and remain in character at all times, making appropriate comments that match the scene and narration.

Scene 5: Kings see the star

The birth of Christ had been predicted and anticipated for centuries. A group of scholars and astrologers from the eastern region of Persia had a particular interest in these predictions. These scholars were commonly referred to as the wise men. They were guided to the Christ child by a special star. Upon finding the Child, they fell down before Him and worshipped Him, presenting Him with precious gifts of gold, perfumes, and spices.

Scope:

To represent God's guidance of the wise men to Jesus.

Action:

Wise men: They move around the campsite studying and comparing charts, discussing the appearance of the star, pointing to it frequently. They occasionally approach cars, asking if they have seen the star and if they know about the newborn king.

Attendants: They take care of the campsite by tending the fire, maintaining the tents, caring for the camel. They follow any orders given by the king, but are spontaneous in serving them.

Scene 6: Manger

Mary gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in strips of cloth, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government of the world will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. Of His ever-increasing kingdom, there will be no end. He will reign over His kingdom forever and ever. These are the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah, regarding the birth of Christ.

Scope:

To represent the humble circumstances of Christ's birth.

Action:

Mary sits the whole time while Joseph may stand to walk/rock the baby. He also sits with Mary sometimes, while she holds the baby or places the baby in the manger. They need to be in loving conversation with each other about the baby and the amazement of this event.

****Black is car narration**

Scene 7: Jesus as a boy

Soon after Jesus was born, Joseph was commanded by an angel to take his small family to Nazareth. Here Jesus would work with Joseph as a carpenter. The Bible says that during this time, He grew in great wisdom and blessings from God.

Scope:

To represent the young Jesus with his father in the carpenter's shop

Action:

Father and son will work together in a wood shop that reflects one from Jesus's time. Joseph should spend time showing Jesus how to plane the wood, use a chisel, hammer, saw, etc. Joseph should be very encouraging and intent on teaching Jesus how to be a carpenter. Jesus should be intent on learning carpentry and taking direction from Joseph.

Scene 8: Temptation

With the completion of his spiritual preparation, Jesus was baptized. This marked the beginning of His earthly ministry. Immediately, God sent Jesus into the desert, where he remained without food for 40 days. Then Satan came to Jesus to tempt Him, offering him food, wealth, and a chance to flaunt His power. "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. For it is written in the Scriptures, 'God has commanded His angels to protect you. They will hold you up in their hands to keep you from hitting your foot on a rock.'" Jesus, however, did not give in to the temptation, proving to be worthy and without sin.

Scope:

To represent the 3 temptations of Christ

Direction:

(Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13)

The action will occur at various levels of the staging. The action should begin with Jesus on the ground level praying while Satan watches from the top of the staging. Satan comes down the steps and picks up a rock from the ground and entices Jesus to turn it to bread and eat. Jesus should motion that he is refusing. The actor may quote Jesus' words from scripture. Frustrated, Satan will beckon Jesus to follow him up the steps to the top of the staging. Satan will encourage Jesus to throw himself from the top of the staging. Again, Jesus should refuse him, quoting scripture. In a final act of frustration, Satan will move back down the stairs. Jesus follows down the steps, going to the lower stage. Satan moves up the stairs and encourages Jesus to worship him. Jesus adamantly says, "Go away from Me, Satan!" Jesus will physically turn his back on Satan and point his hand as if sending him away. Jesus continues to walk to the ground level while quoting scripture. Satan becomes furious and flees back to the shadows at the top of the staging to his starting position. The scene then repeats itself.

Scene 9: Jesus healing

Jesus went throughout the land, teaching and proclaiming God's love for all. The people were astounded at his teaching, for he spoke with true authority, unlike anything they had heard.

Jesus demonstrated His divine authority through the many miracles He performed. He healed the crippled, the blind, the deaf, and those suffering from disease. He even raised the dead. His tender acts of love to the common sinner caused the religious leaders known as Pharisees to become angry. Their legalistic rules blinded them to understanding Jesus's message of love and forgiveness. As great crowds began to follow Jesus, Satan planted hatred in the hearts of the Pharisees. Jealousy consumed them and they began to plot Jesus's death.

Scope:

To represent Jesus ministry.

Action:

Jesus: Will be moving with disciples among crowd as He performs miracles and teaches the children. He will perform 3 healing miracles (blind man, dead girl, crippled woman). He will also stop, sit briefly, and teach children and crowd.

Crowd: Respond to Jesus's actions and miracles. Show amazement, shock, disbelief, worship, praise, and a desire to get as close to Jesus as possible. Lots of interaction with other characters.

Children: Stay with assigned adult until Jesus beckons them to come and sit with him. They should listen intently, smile, and talk with Jesus.

Pharisees: Stand at the back of the scene next to archway in a huddle. They only interact with each other, criticizing Jesus. They are angry and worried.

Guards: One in scene overseeing crowd, but no interaction. Two in street keeping traffic moving and interacting with drivers. All can rotate positions.

Blind man: Sits at the corner of fence yelling and begging. Disciple will lead Jesus to him for healing. After healing, he rejoices (overdo it!!) and shares with everyone he sees, including cars.

Dead girl and father: While Jesus is teaching children and crowd, father approaches slowly carrying daughter who needs to be dead weight. Father is grief-stricken as Jesus takes girl from him. Father steps back as Jesus prays over her and revives her. Jesus sets her down and she runs to her father who kneels to embrace her. Her friends then run to her in joy and some follow as father picks her up and leaves upstage into the scene.

Crippled woman: Sitting with a friend stage right until Jesus comes into view (after dead girl is healed). She rises and friend helps her to front of scene to see Jesus. Jesus places hands on her back, prays, and she straightens up. Appropriate response from crowd follows.

After woman healed the scene begins again.

Scene 10: The Last Supper

The Jewish Passover Feast was a long-established celebration of God's promise to protect His people. Jesus shared this special supper with his closest followers, his disciples. Jesus knew He had come to earth to die as a sacrifice ó to suffer the punishment for the sins of mankind. The bread and the cup symbolized his body and blood, given for all people. Although the disciples would not yet understand, He now offered them a new promise:

õI am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The only way to the Father is through me.ö

Scope:

To represent the last Passover meal Jesus had with his disciples.

Action:

Jesus: Sits in center position at the table with disciples on either side. He will control the action and the passing of the bread and wine. He will first stand and pray over the bread, then sits to break and pass the bread, watching as each disciple eats, explaining the meaning. He then stands again with cup in hand to pray, lifting upward, then sits to pass it, also watching as each drinks.

Disciples: Interact with warmth and fellowship with Jesus and each other, then become confused at Jesus's actions with bread and wine, but follow his lead. There is much conversation among them but it must be in character and can be pantomimed.

When Jesus needs to leave the scene, Jesus stands and interacts with disciples until he reaches the end of the table. The disciples may stand to help conceal the change. Rotating disciples may exit at this time if needed.

Scene 11: The Garden

After the supper Jesus and three of His disciples went to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, "My heart is full of sorrow, even to the point of death." Then Jesus fell to the ground and prayed fervently,

"Father, You can do all things. Please take this cup of suffering from me. Yet not my will, but your will be done."

Choosing to betray Jesus in exchange for 30 pieces of silver, Judas, one of the disciples, led a band of guards and temple priests carrying torches and weapons to arrest Jesus. As they seized Him, the disciples fled, fearing for their lives.

Scope:

To represent Jesus' anticipation of his own death and his betrayal.

Action:

Jesus: Jesus and disciples enter and Jesus goes to kneel and pray and directs disciples to wait for Him. Disciples kneel and fall asleep. Jesus is on his knees on the ground in agony. He raises his hands to Heaven falls down on the ground. He needs to portray the struggle between following the will of his Father and wanting to avoid death. He gets up and goes to his disciples to wake them. He then returns to his praying position. Guards and Judas enter and confront disciples who try to protect Jesus by telling the guards He is not there. Judas points to Jesus and Jesus surrenders calmly to guards who take Him out of scene. Disciples follow fearfully. Scene resets with Jesus and disciples coming back into scene.

Disciples: They are sleeping until Jesus wakes them. They awaken for a brief time and try to pray, then fall asleep again.

Judas, Pharisees, guards: They stand in a huddle, questioning Judas and scheming to arrest Jesus. The Pharisees hand Judas a money bag. Judas points in Jesus' direction occasionally.

Scene 12: The Trial

Jesus was taken to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. The crowds and Pharisees shouted accusations of treason and rebellion. The same people whom Christ had ministered to days before were now demanding his death. Pilate questioned Jesus, but he gave no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have the power to release you or to crucify you?"

"You would have no power over me unless it had been given to you from above."

Pilate had Jesus whipped, then handed him over to be crucified.

Scope:

To represent the trial of Jesus before Pilate.

Action:

Jesus: Stands with head bowed and says nothing, offering no resistance.

Pilate: Standing next to Jesus addressing the crowd. He can say, "What would you have me do with Jesus?" "I find no fault in this man," etc. At some point, a soldier brings out Barrabas, giving Pilate to give the crowd a choice. "Who shall I give you, Barrabas or Jesus?" When the crowd chooses Barrabas, he raises his hands in defeat and the guards take Jesus away. The scene begins again as the soldiers bring Jesus back to Pilate.

Matthew 27: 11-26

Luke 23: 1-25

Mark 15: 1-15

John 19: 1-16 **

Pharisees: Caiaphas stands at front of crowd making certain that the crowd chooses to crucify Jesus. He responds to Pilate's words and indecision with accusations "fill in" Other Pharisees incite the crowd.

Crowd: Very angry, responsive, yelling. All want Jesus crucified. They respond to Pilate and Caiaphas and are very vocal.

Barrabas: Is drug out by guards and when released, runs quickly away through the crowd, behind the scene to cycle back.

Guards: One on ground to restrain crowd, one with Jesus, one with Barrabas

Scene 13: The Crucifixion

Narration: Jesus was nailed to a cross between two thieves to die in the cruelest, most humiliating means of execution. Jesus willingly gave His life as a sacrifice, taking upon Himself our punishment.

“No one can take my life from me, but I give my own life freely. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. This is what my Father has commanded me to do.”

Sinless as He was, Jesus died for the sins of mankind, fulfilling God’s plan for the world’s salvation.

Scope:

To represent the death of Jesus

Action:

The scene will depict Christ’s time on the cross. **Jesus and the thieves** will maintain a simple posture with head bowed or drooped to the side. Jesus may from time to time lift his head and lay it back as if resting it on the cross. Jesus will look down at his mother occasionally, but he does not need to say anything.

Mary and John are to be positioned to the right at the foot of the cross. John will comfort and take a protecting position as he comforts the overwrought Mary. They will stand at times or kneel in grief.

The **soldiers** are to be in position between the crosses. Their role is to make sure that the criminals receive their punishment without interruption from the crowd that has gathered. They may walk back and forth between the crosses. The soldiers represent Rome’s political authority in Jerusalem. The guards represent the church’s authority over the people. The two do not interact: the Roman guards assume an arrogant posture over the Temple Guards.

The **men and women** in the crowd have come to observe this event. Many will be grief stricken while others may take a more observatory stance. One or two in the crowd will taunt Jesus to prove he is the Christ.

Matthew 27: 32-44; Luke 23:26-43

The thieves and Jesus will rotate on/off the crosses every 20 minutes. When the rotation occurs, the crowd will freeze while the soldiers/guards help the new characters in place. If the weather is bad, the rotation will be every 10-15 minutes. It is at this time that members of the crowd should also rotate in/out of the scene.

Scene 15: Jesus is Alive

After Jesus' resurrection, it is documented biblically, and confirmed historically, that He appeared to over 500 people. It was a time of great rejoicing and celebration for those who were His closest followers. Soon after His resurrection from the grave, Christ returned to Heaven.

“All authority in heaven and on the earth has been given to me. So go and make followers of all people. Teach them to obey everything that I have taught you, and I will be with you always, even until the end of the age.”

Today, Jesus reigns in Heaven, but His Spirit is living in all who believe. This is why we celebrate Christmas; the coming of God's only Son, the most precious gift ever given, Jesus Christ.

Scope:

To represent the joy of Christ's followers after His resurrection

Action:

Jesus: Will move through a crowd that has parted to allow Him to walk through them. He will approach the bridge and talk with his disciples as He stands on the bridge and reminds them of their unbelief in those who had seen him after He was risen. He will show his palms to Thomas, He will tell them to “Go into all the world” (Mark 16:14-18)

Disciples: Will be amazed as Jesus approaches. Shocked and disbelieving until He identifies Himself to them and they will move towards Him but not touch Him. They will listen as He instructs them to “Go into all the world” .

Mary and Martha: Will approach Jesus, He will notice them and they will kneel before Him in worship. He will gently ask them to rise and He will speak with them. They will lead Him to the dancers' area.

Dancers: Joyfully and in amazement, greet Jesus, circle Him and dance.

Crowd: Will join in with clapping as Jesus observes the dancers and talk to each other about whether this could be the risen Jesus that they saw crucified. They follow Jesus as He moves away from the dancers and will make a pathway through which Jesus will walk and the scene begins again.