

The Hour



John 17
Year A Easter 7 ; Year B
Easter 7 ; Year C Easter 7

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Parts by scene

■ = large part ▲ = medium sized part ● = small part

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▲	Joanna - a wealthy woman with a perceptive and agile intellect who abandons her life as the co-manager of King Herod's household to follow Jesus	▲
▲	James - the most officious disciple, often the most frustrated with Jesus' unconventional decisions (such as his allowing women to join the group)	▲
■	Jesus	■
▲	Matthew - a former tax collector (i.e. a agent of the Roman occupation of his own people) who in his repentance from that past life is the most religiously fervent of the disciples	▲
▲	Phillip - one of the youngest disciples, always well-meaning and honestly curious, sometimes lacking in confidence	▲
●	Thomas - the skeptic, who really wants to believe because of his emotional bond with the others, but can't simply ignore his doubts	●

Scene 1

James , Jesus , Joanna , Matthew , Phillip , Thomas

{Jesus has been speaking with the disciples in an outdoor setting when he suddenly kneels in prayer.}

Joanna Rabbi?

James What's he doing?

Jesus Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.

Matthew He's praying!

Phillip Are we supposed to join him?

James He didn't say, "Let us pray" or anything like that.

Thomas It sounds like he's praying to God personally.

Joanna Then why is he speaking out loud?

Phillip Maybe it's a "tactical" prayer.

Thomas What in the world is that?

Phillip Well, it's when you're praying to God, but really, you're sending a message to one of the people listening to you pray.

James The rabbi wouldn't do a sneaky thing like that!

Thomas I don't know if I'd say it's sneaky.

Matthew Plus, the rabbi's done it before. Remember the raising of Lazarus, when he thanked God for hearing him in front of the tomb, but added that he knew and God knew that he always heard him, and the prayer was just for the sake of the people?

Jesus Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Joanna Okay, he just referred to himself by name in the third person.

Phillip See? A tactical prayer!

Thomas So what's the message he wants us to hear?

James "The hour has come!"

Matthew The Day is upon us!

Phillip You mean the revolt? It's really going to happen?

James Of course! We've entered Jerusalem haven't we?

Matthew And now the hour has come for the Son to be glorified, the Son to whom the Father has given "authority over all people!"

Joanna But it's authority to give them "eternal life", not authority to rule them or conquer them. Whatever "eternal life" might mean, it doesn't sound like political or military liberation to me.

Phillip He hasn't really sounded like a military commander preparing his troops for a battle. In fact, he's been acting kind of strange all night.

Joanna That's true! This whole night has had a strange feeling. Not victory, or anticipation of victory...what's the word...

Thomas Loss.

James Loss? That's crazy. Loss of what?

Jesus I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

Joanna *[suddenly distraught]* Oh my God, it's true! Mary must have heard it long before anybody else would. It's...it's the worst loss there could be!

Phillip What's the loss? What's the worst?

James *[firmly]* We're not losing anything! Unless we all start getting hysterical and losing our heads.

Matthew *[thoughtfully]* Why did the rabbi say he had already finished the work God gave him to do? Isn't the work only just beginning?

Joanna *[bleakly]* For us, yes.

Phillip Joanna, what's wrong? *[pauses for her answer, but she remains silent]* Thomas, what did you mean by loss?

Thomas I meant the loss of the rabbi.

{The next four characters speak their lines all at once.}

James *[simultaneously with the other two]* What are you saying? You *are* the traitor!

Matthew *[simultaneously with the other two]* No, let him speak. Let him speak!

Phillip *[simultaneously with the other two]* I knew it! I knew it but didn't want it to be true!

Jesus I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.

Thomas I'm sorry, everybody. I've been feeling all night like he's been saying goodbye to us, but I didn't want to say anything because...well, because I'm the Doubter.

James *[weakly]* How has he been saying goodbye?

Joanna He said he was going to prepare places for us in his Father's house.

Thomas That he was leaving this world.

Joanna That he would send a Spirit to comfort us in his place.

Thomas That we would weep and lament his loss.

Matthew It's true, then.

James Matthew, no! You can't give up just like that! Not on the word of a woman and a skeptic! What kind of man are you?

Matthew *[gently]* James, I'm not giving up on anything. I'm simply trying hard to hear the words my master has spoken.

Phillip *[desperately]* Rabbi, is that what you really meant? Please stop praying and talk to us! Tell us plainly what you mean!

Jesus *[continuing to pray]* I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. *[slowly and carefully, after a pause]* I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you.

{There's a long silence.}

- James** *[on the verge of tears]* It's true.
- Jesus** Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that scripture would be fulfilled.
- Phillip** "The one doomed to destruction?"
- Thomas** The traitor. We've got to find out who it is. Maybe he's the reason why the rabbi is leaving us, but if we can stop him...
- Matthew** "So that scripture would be fulfilled." Which scriptures?
- James** *[despondently]* Who cares?
- Joanna** If we knew the scriptures he was referring to, maybe they might give us a hint about who the traitor is.
- Jesus** I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.
- James** *[angrily to Jesus]* Joy? "The full measure of your joy???" How are we supposed to be joyful when you're - you're wimping out on us, and you won't even tell us to our faces! If you're so scared of the Romans, then fine, quit! Maybe we'll just carry on the fight on our - *[breaks off suddenly, unable to continue]*
- Matthew** *[in calm, steady tones]* It's going to be all right, James. It can't be that he's quitting the fight. I'll never believe that! Whatever he's praying about, you can bet it's something good. Good for him and for us, and for the world.
- Joanna** You don't think the traitor is somebody to worry about? You don't think he's leaving us because he's going to be assassinated or arrested or otherwise neutralized by this traitor?

Matthew If the traitor were a real concern, he would have named him. No, I think what's happening is some kind of change in the plan.

Phillip I was never even sure what the old plan was, and now there's a new one? It took us so long just to enter Jerusalem!

Thomas Whatever the plan is, I think it's going to involve more traveling.

Joanna What makes you think that?

Thomas What he just prayed. He's sending us out into the world.

Phillip Wow. I just got the shivers again when you said that! It somehow made a picture in my mind.

Matthew Of what?

Phillip Roads. Endless roads snaking through the whole world. And us, like tiny blips, making our slow ways along them.

Thomas You think we're going to be separated? We aren't going to stay together?

Phillip I don't know. It was just a picture in my mind.

Joanna Was the rabbi anywhere in the picture?

Phillip I couldn't see him, but somehow, I knew he stood at the end of every road.

Jesus My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one - I in them and you in me - so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Thomas "Those who will believe..."

Matthew It's the new mission

James Is the Day only being delayed, then? Do we just have recruit more followers for it to happen? Judas has been harping on that non-stop.

Joanna *[shakily]* I think - I think it's bigger.

Phillip Joanna, are you all right?

Joanna *[shakily]* I think I just had a vision - *[to Phillip]* like you did.

Phillip Did you see the roads running across the world, too?

Joanna No. I saw the world...before that. When he prayed about Glory, and about how the Father loved him even before the Creation, I saw the world dark and formless. I saw the Void. There was no sun and no moon and no stars. I thought I was witnessing the end of all things, but then He was there. He...brooded over the chaos of darkness, and though that dark was as black as all the despair of the world, there was Love. And then there was Light. *[with a strangled sob]* Oh, I've been such a fool!

Thomas How so?

Joanna When I first started following the rabbi, I thought I was supporting an original thinker whose teachings needed to be heard by more people. Then he began healing people and I thought, "Ah, he has medicine for both the body and the mind." Then all this talk about the Day of the Lord started up, and I thought, "Can he heal the nations themselves?" But now...

Matthew But all those things are still true, aren't they?

Joanna Oh, yes! Like one plus one is two, and two plus two is four. I never thought...how much more might be true!

Jesus Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them. Amen.

{After a pause, Jesus rises to his feet and looks around.}

Jesus *[in a quiet voice]* Ready to move on?

everybody Yes, Lord.

*You can read my thoughts about this play and respond with your own at
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