

Nick and Joe

CHARACTERS: Nicodemus 1, Joseph of Arimathea 1, body, a group of children,

COSTUMES: Biblical

Body: blood stained loin cloth

Doubled characters: To make both Josephs and Nicodemus' as identical as possible have actors of similar height and build, identical facial hair (beards, hair beneath head piece) play the 1 and 2 roles. Have the two Josephs' costumes different than the two Nicodemus' costumes and have a contrast in the actor's builds and heights.

Nicodemus should wear a cloak with hood pulled up and forward to hide his face.

PROPS: Aloes, bandages, wash cloth, basin, and heavy sack

SETTING: Jerusalem following Jesus death

RUN TIME: 10 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 12:17-22, 32-34; Luke 12: 4, 6-9; John 3, 7, 11, 12

FK reading level: 5.5

Scene 1

At rise: A body is lying on a table. JOSEPH is washing a hand. NICODEMUS enters carrying a large sack. He halts abruptly, saddened at seeing the body. He lowers the sack to the ground.

JOSEPH: You came?!

NICODEMUS: Yes. How did you get his body?

JOSEPH: I went to the governor and asked for it. *(Puts the wash cloth in the basin and begins wrapping up the arm, starting with the hand)*

NICODEMUS: *(shocked)* You asked Pilate?

JOSEPH: Yes.

NICODEMUS: *(glancing in the direction from which he arrived briefly)* The others will find out. *(beat)* They probably already know.

JOSEPH: So? I'm done being a secret disciple. *(NICODEMUS reaches down and brings out some aloes out of the sack. As they talk, the wrap the aloes into the cloth with which they wrap the arm)*

NICODEMUS: It's no secret you refused to consent to their plan, their actions, *(pointing at the body)* this.

JOSEPH: No, but I couldn't stop them. *(pained)* I couldn't stop this. But I can give him the burial he deserves. *(They work silently for a few moments)*

NICODEMUS: When did you first hear him?

JOSEPH: I was setting out on a journey. I stopped to listen as he answered questions from the Herodians, Pharisees and Sadducees. He confounded all of them with his wisdom. *(LIGHTS UP on stage right. JESUS is surrounded by little children, hugging and blessing them)* Then he did the most expected thing, he blessed some little children. *(JOSEPH 2 enters, kneels before JESUS turned so his face his towards Jesus and hidden from the audience. Actor will have to increase speaking volume to compensate for facing away from*

audience. *LIGHTS DOWN on CENTER STAGE*) I ran up, knelt and asked ... (*CHILDREN exit completely off stage*)

Scene 2

JOSEPH 2: Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?

JESUS: Why do you call me good? There is only One who is good. (*points upward*) If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.

JOSEPH: Which ones?

JESUS: Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not defraud, honor your father and your mother and love your neighbor as yourself.

JOSEPH 2: (*earnestly*) Teacher, I have kept all these from my youth. What do I still lack?

JOSEPH: He looked right at me. I knew he loved me. But I was stunned at his reply.

JESUS: (*crouching to face the kneeling JOSEPH and placing his hands on JOSEPH'S SHOULDERS*) You lack one thing: Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me. (JESUS and JOSEPH both stand. JOSEPH 2, hangs head and exits; lights up center)

Scene 3

JOSEPH: (*deeply grieved*) I left, stricken with grief

NICODEMUS: (*understanding*) because you had many possessions.

JOSEPH: Yes. But what good does it do for a man to own the whole world and lose his soul?

NICODEMUS: Or to have the praise of men but not God?

JOSEPH: When was the first time you spoke to him?

NICODEMUS: It was just after he threw the merchants and money changers out of the temple. (*lights out center, lights up half stage right*) It was at night.

Scene 4

(*NICODEMUS 2 enters wearing a hood to hide his face. NICODEMUS 1 speaks the lines*)

NICODEMUS: Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.

JESUS: No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.

NICODEMUS: How can someone be born when they are old? Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

JESUS: Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. (*Somewhat sarcastic, somewhat teasing*) You are Israel's teacher, and do you not understand these things? (*NICODEMUS 2 shrugs; JESUS speaks seriously*) Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

NICODEMUS: I never imagined he was talking about ... (*is too choked up to continue*).

JOSEPH: Being lifted up on a cross, you mean.

NICODEMUS: Yes.

JESUS: For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

JOSEPH: Life eternal at a terrible cost.

JESUS: For God (*pointing upward*) did not send his Son (*pointing toward himself*) into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (*ANNAS and OFFICER enter from stage right and cross to behind the wall. NICODEMUS sees them and pulls hood further to prevent being recognized*)

NICODEMUS: Then he pronounced his verdict:

JESUS: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. (*NICODEMUS 2 starts backing towards stage right*) Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

NICODEMUS: That was sharp, seeing as how I had come at night, not wanting to be seen.

JESUS: But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God. (*black out stage right; lights up center*)

Scene 5

JOSEPH: As we are doing now: honoring him in the sight of God.

NICODEMUS: And men.

JOSEPH: Men who have just orchestrated the crucifixion of an innocent man.

NICODEMUS: For guilty ones like us.

JOSEPH: (*agreeing*) Like us.

NICODEMUS: (*beat*) Do you think they will confront us, arrest us?

JOSEPH: (*Shrugging*) I remember when they sent the temple police to arrest him. (*lights up stage left on Jesus and crowd including OFFICER. JOSEPH 2 enters from stage left*) He was teaching and I had asked a question. (*Lights out center*)

Scene 6

NOTE: To shield JOSEPH 2's face, he can be holding a small child or bundle in his downstage arm that partially obscures his face)

JOSEPH 2: Of all the commandments, which is the most important?

JESUS: The most important one is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

JOSEPH 2: Well said, teacher. You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

JESUS: (*placing a hand on JOSEPH 2's shoulders*) You are not far from the kingdom of God. (*Black out stage left*)

JOSEPH: And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Scene 7

NICODEMUS: And the guards returned empty handed. (*Lights up stage right. NICODEMUS, taking off his hood, steps into scene with ANNAS, CAIAPHAS, ALEXANDER. OFFICER enters from behind the wall*)

ANNAS: (*demanding, irate*) Why haven't you brought that Jesus?

OFFICER: No man ever spoke like he does!

CAIAPHAS: (*incensed*) Are you fooled too? Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd, which doesn't know the law, is accursed!

NICODEMUS: Our law doesn't judge a man before it hears from him and knows what he's doing, does it

ALEXANDER: You aren't from Galilee too, are you? Investigate and you will see that no prophet arises from Galilee. (*Scene freezes*)

JOSEPH: When Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead, the chief priests and the Pharisees were horrified.

NICODEMUS: (*Unfreezes and to JOSEPH*) They called that meeting of the Sanhedrin. Annas was furious. (*scene unfreezes and NICODEMUS inserts himself back into it*)

ANNAS: (*pacing, angry*) What are we accomplishing? Here is this man performing many signs. If we let Jesus go on like this, everyone will believe in him!

ALEXANDER: The Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.

ANNAS: (*exasperated*) But what can we do?

CAIAPHAS: (*coldly*) You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.

ANNAS: We aren't allowed to exercise the death penalty.

CAIAPHAS: Then we'll figure out a way to let the Romans do it for us. (*lights out stage right. NICODEMUS puts hood back on. Lights up center stage*)

Scene 8

JOSEPH: (*sorrowful*) And they did. I wish I could have stopped it.

NICODEMUS: (*ashamed*) I believed in him but I did not openly acknowledge my faith.

JOSEPH: Nor did I, for fear they would put me out of the synagogue.

NICODEMUS: (*cut to the heart*) I loved human praise more than praise from God.

JOSEPH: Yet here we are, openly burying him. I, Joseph of Arimathea, burying Jesus in my own new tomb for all of Jerusalem to see.

NICODEMUS: *(removing the hood)* I, Nicodemus, bringing 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes. They know already. I'm sure of it.

JOSEPH: *(resigned, repeating the words of Jesus)* There is nothing covered that won't be uncovered

NICODEMUS: Nothing hidden that won't be made known.

JOSEPH: *(Less resignation, nor resolve and determination in his voice)* Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light

NICODEMUS: and what you have whispered in an ear in private rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. *(Lights slowly fade as the two men finish wrapping the body as Jesus delivers lines from behind the wall)*

JESUS: *(from behind wall off stage)* I say to you, My friends, don't fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. Aren't five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. *(NICODEMUS and JOSEPH place a cloth beneath body's head and cover face with a napkin)* Indeed, the hairs of your head are all counted. *JESUS enters stage right, holding out his hands to NICODEMUS and JOSEPH.*

JESUS: Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows! *(NICODEMUS and JOSEPH cross to embrace him, and then fall to their knees in worship. (lights out center, up full on JESUS)*

JESUS: *(to audience)* And I say to you, anyone who acknowledges Me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God, but whoever denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. *(JESUS reaches to touch NICODEMUS and JOSEPH. They look up at JESUS)*

JESUS: *(to NICODEMUS and JOSEPH who are acknowledging their commission with nods, and to the audience)* Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.

(to audience) And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.