

## **HOLY WEEK STORY**

*A fictional story based on fact. It was written for a Key Stage 1&2 Assembly (ages 5-110. It is interactive and there is a PowerPoint presentation that goes with it with the parts the children say (see words in red below). I also asked staff members to help and gave them copies of the script.*

*Explain how you want the children to take part in telling the story and give some conducting rules (e.g a sign to go louder, or quitter, or stop).*

*Hint: It is better to know the story well and tell it as dramatically as possible rather than reading it slavishly. Make a few lines to remind you for the story progression and where to PowerPoint should change and people join in the story.*

One of the problems when you are in prison is that you cannot see much from your prison cell window. You are shut off from the world outside. But while the prisoners could not see what was going on, they were able to hear. Sometimes the sounds inside the prison drowned out the noises from outside. These were the familiar sounds of soldiers marching along the passage outside the door, or the jailer locking or unlocking a door. Sometimes there were groans, or men crying out, or simply men crying. But that morning, there was a different sound coming, it seemed, from far away.

The prisoner in cell number 12 strained his ears to try to make sense of it. It certainly sounded like lots of people making lots of noise. But because it was coming from far away it seemed faint. He could hear people cheering...

***[Hooray! Hooray!..... (keep repeating)]***

... and the sound of clapping mixed with the cheering.

***[Hooray! Hooray!..... (keep repeating mixed with clapping)]***

Sometimes the prisoner in cell number 12 thought he could hear a few words. But they were too far away to be sure what they were shouting.

***[Add odd words in any order to the cheering and clapping. "Lord" ..... "coming"... "David"... "blessed"... "hosanna"]***

But slowly the cheering, clapping and shouting got louder and louder

***[As before but gradually louder]***

Until, at last, the prisoner in cell number 12 could understand what people were shouting and repeating, while they clapped and cheered:

***[Clapping and cheering while some call out clearly: "Hosanna to the son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven"]***

Whatever did it mean, wondered the prisoners. One of them called out to a passing Roman guard.

"It's that Jewish teacher", growled the soldier. "He's finally come to Jerusalem and the people seem to think he's some great hero promised by their prophets. Some think he'll lead a rebellion against us Romans. But I'd like to see him try!"

Several of the men in prison had tried to fight against the Romans. The prisoner in cell number 12 had even killed some of the Romans. But they had all failed and been captured.

After a while it became quiet again.

The next day the prisoner in cell number 12 overhears two of the Roman soldier talking.

“Are you telling me the truth? That man Jesus went into their temple and did all that”

“Yes, I tell you it’s true. He tipped over the tables of those greedy money changers, and he drove them right out of the temple. He said it was meant to be a holy place of prayer.”

“Well I ever did. He is usually such a peaceful man!”

A few days later and very early in the morning, the prisoner in cell number 12 could hear the sound of a growing crowd or people in the courtyard nearby. He could just make out a man speaking to them, but he couldn’t make out what he was saying.

Then, he heard his name being shouted. At first not too loud, but rising to an huge shout. Over and over again they chanted his name.

***[Shout: Barabbas..... Barabbas... Barabbas.. etc]***

Then, soon afterwards, he heard the crowd chanting a word that made him feel sick inside with fear.

***[Crucify him... crucify him... crucify him]***

The prisoner shrank back in fear. They had called out his name and then crucify him. It seemed he was about to die a terrible death. A few moments later he heard the footsteps of the jailer and soldiers coming down the passage outside the cells. He heard two doors being opened and men being led away shouting and struggling. He knew that any moment it would be his turn.

Then it came. Footsteps coming his way. He heard the key turning in the lock and then three men entered his cell.

“It’s your lucky day Barabbas. We’re setting you free!”

“Free?” said Barabbas, “But I heard them shouting, “Barabbas, Crucify him!”

“You misunderstood,” said one of the soldiers. The Governor of Judea gave the people a choice as this is a religious festival and one prisoner would be set free. We’ve arrested that Jesus person. The governor wanted to set Jesus free because he is a good man, so he gave the people a choice who they wanted to free; Jesus or you. For some reason they chose you”. He still hoped to save Jesus, but when he asked the crowd what he should do with Jesus, they shouted ‘Crucify him’.”

Later that day, Barabbas slipped into the crowd on the hill outside the city where he saw three crosses. On two of them he saw criminals that he knew from prison. But between them was the naked body of Jesus. It was bruised and bleeding from a beating he had been given. He heard him pray for the soldiers who had hammered nails through his hands and feet. Jesus asked God to forgive them and Barabbas wondered how anyone could be so loving and so good. And he thought to himself....

“It should have been me there. Jesus is dying in my place!”

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