

WITNESSES

An Audio Play about the Sermon on  
the Mount

by  
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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**TAMAR** The organizer of the group, a middle-aged Judean woman with a wealthy father living in Tiberias. She was an skeptical, unmarried spinster at the time of the Sermon. She describes action.

**EZRA** A grey-hair leader of a community in a Judean sect called the Observers (the Essenes). He worked as a manuscript copyist in the small community until his vision grew too weak to copy text. He plays the parts of different people asking questions from the audience.

**DEMAS** A middle-aged Judean trained as a lawyer but coming from a family of tradesmen. He is a new member of the Distinguished class. He also lives in Tiberias. Demas sees himself as a realist. He plays the role of Jesus.

**ULLA** An older, outspoken fisher woman. She is widowed, grey-haired. She lives in the fishing village. She provide the perspective of a working person who has led a full life. She plays to roles of people in the audience.

**FESTUS** A thin, young Greek, from a wealthy family in Decapolis, the non-Judean cities of the Galilee region. He has some experience in the theater. He spent his life as an aimless young person before the Sermon. He plays to roles of people in the audience.

**PISCA** A young woman from a shepherd tribe. She was a child and an outcast at the time of the Sermon. She is both playful and shy. Pisca describes the actions.

## SETTING

The setting is an assembly of early Christians in outside of Judea, but one that meets in darkness to keep themselves anonymous because of local persecution.

## TIME

The witnesses are speaking approximately ten years after the resurrection of Christ.

ACT I

SCENE 1

AT RISE:                   Crowd noise of audience before speakers begin. Tapping sound to silence the crowd.

TAMAR

Thank you for inviting us as witnesses to your assembly, though I must say, this is a unique experience for us. We have witnessed to more than a hundred different assemblies over the years, but this is the first time we have told our story in the dark, without the people in the assembly being able to see us. We understand that the local persecution of followers makes this necessary for large meetings, but it is new to us.

FESTUS

But it is also something new and fun. Our normal way of recreating the event has grown pretty routine.

TAMAR

Yes, Festus, we know your opinion. That was Festus. My name is Tamar. I'm from Tiberias, the largest city on the Sea of Galilee. Like our other five witnesses, I heard the Teacher speak as what has become known as the Sermon on the Mount. As the Teacher grew more famous, people asked me and my father, who was there with me, to describe what it was like. As more assemblies of followers formed after his passing, we were asked more and more frequently to bear witness to what we saw. As we traveled, we met others who were also at the Sermon. The first was Ezra.

EZRA

When I first met Tamar and her father, I was the leader of a small religious community. Tamar spoke at an assembly of followers near us. Since her father was ill, she asked for someone to read the lines of the sermon while she described what happened. I volunteered, but, since I too had witnessed the Sermon, I added my testimony to hers. Since Tamar's father had grown too weak to travel with her, he asked if I would accompany her so she could

continue traveling and testifying. He offered a generous donation to our community if I did. I agreed. And soon, we met Demas.

#### DEMAS

Thank you, Ezra. I was sent out to investigate the growing movement of the Followers of the Nazarene. I was sent as a member of a group that we call the Distinguished. In our language, the word for distinguished is "pharisee". I met Tamar and Ezra at a Follower assembly. Since I was also at the sermon, I saw that I could serve my mission more easily by traveling with them as another witness as they toured among Follower groups. Though they knew that I was a lawyer of the Distinguished, they thought I could add a valuable perspective. Then, we met Ulla.

#### ULLA

Thank you, Demas. I guess you will get to know us by our voices. I might sound like a young girl, but I am really should an old fishwife, a widow, and a grandma. Hearing Tamar's group brought back memories of hearing the Teacher speak. During their testimony, I added many things they had missed. Tamar was a rich, city girl. Demas and Ezra both scholars. The crowd that day was made up of working people like me. After the meeting, Tamar asked if I could join them to provide my perspective. Since she is rich, she offered to pay for my travel. Since I am poor, I agreed. Eventually, we encountered Festus who was also traveling. He said we were giving our testimony all wrong.

#### FESTUS

Thank you, Ulla. When I saw the Master, his performance was thrilling. But the way that Ulla, Tamar, and the rest gave their testimony? Just boring. Endless description. No action. When we met, I was traveling with a theater group. My name is Festus, by the way. I am not a Judean, but a Greek, though I too grew up in Gallilee, on the Hellenist side. I had learned enough about drama to show Tamar's group a better way to capture the experience. I asked if I could work with them. At first, I expected to stay with them only for a few months, but now here we are, years later. The last member of our group is Pisca.

PISCA

Hi. I am Pisca. I grew up in a shepherding tribe, but I have spent most of my adult life now traveling to follower assemblies, giving testimony with our little group. Along with Tamar, I will be doing a lot of the descriptions of what happened that day. What the Master did and how the crowd reacted. Festus's idea was that we should re-create the event, playing it instead of describing it. This is more difficult in the dark, where you can only hear us.

TAMAR

Relax, Pisca. This is Tamar again. You will get to know our voices soon. What we did was our different memories together with the Nazarene's words to construct a version of everything that happened there, that day. Some of this we usually act out, but since you cannot see us, we have adapted our presentation. In addition to re-creating the event, we also try to answer the questions that people usually have about the experience. One of the first things people ask is, "What did the Teacher look like?" Ezra, can you start?

EZRA

Glad to, Tamar. The Nazarene was an every man. Neither old nor young. Average height and weight. Neither dark nor light. Simple clothes, neither rich nor poor. Hair and beard midway between the longer hair of the country and the trimmed hair of the city. No distinctive features except for how expressive his face was and how nimble he was. Not old and creaky like Ulla and I.

ULLA

Speak for yourself, Ezra! But what impressed us all was his personality more than his looks. Especially his cheerfulness and confidence.

PISCA

And how much he liked people, Ulla. This is Pisca again. Every time someone asked him a question, he was so happy to hear from them. Even people like Demas, who was his enemy then, but has since become a very nice person.

DEMAS

Not really his enemy, Pisca. It was just my job.

FESTUS

Right, Demas. This is Festus again. The Nazarene could be whatever the moment required, as authoritative as a ruler and as playful as a child. And always surprising. Always entertaining. Never just saying a word when he could act it out.

EZRA

This is Ezra. Reading the Nazarene's words, you might think he was giving prepared remarks, but very little of it seemed prepared. It was all inspired by what happened there, what people asked and events like birds flying overhead.

DEMAS

He was so quick! He paid attention to everything and everyone.

FESTUS

Yes, Demas. And since none of us can really capture the Nazarene's tone and manner of speaking, we usually take turns reciting his words in the different parts of the presentation, but since you cannot see us, that would be to confusing. We have decided to let Demas alone say all of the Master's lines.

DEMAS

Not my preference, but I am the right sex and age as the Nazarene. I do get to offer some of my own opinions, however, between the various parts of the event.

TAMAR

Since you can't see us, we have also simplified the announcing and interaction roles. Pisca and I, Tamar, will do the descriptions. Ezra, Festus, and Ulla will play the many different roles of people in the crowd who interacted with the Teacher, asking him questions, and making the comments that the crowd made. However, in between sections, they also offer their own insights and opinions beyond playing the roles of the people there.

FESTUS

To separate our discussion of the event where we answer questions from our re-enactment of the event, we will use a gong and a chime. At the end of this section, you will hear the chime. At the beginning of our discussions, you will hear another chime. When we switch to reenacting and describing the event, we will sound a gong.

PISCA

And all of you get to pretend along with us, even though you cannot see us, that you are the crowd that we had there. Having it dark here may make that a little easier.

DEMAS

For example, we will lead you in applauding when the people there applauded.

PISCA

And with the chanting and the laughing.

FESTUS

Chanting, yes, as you will all see. But we can't force you to laugh. Humor doesn't always translate.

PISCA

But we laughed a lot that day!

TAMAR

Yes, Pisca, and we hope everyone here will laugh as well, but for now, let us start by setting the scene.

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 2

AT RISE:                   Sound of chime.

## FESTUS

This is a discussion section and this is Festus. Seven Springs is a lush rolling area on a hillside. It is watered by seven streams that flow from the hills into the sea. The sea would be on your right. Scrubby bushes dot the landscape.

## ULLA

Ulla, here. And rocks and wildflowers. The area is well-known as a meeting site. For many days, the Teacher's heralds had been spreading the word that the Teacher would be speaking there. We showed up by boat and foot, mule and wagon, excited to hear him. Hundreds of people of all types.

## DEMAS

And this is Demas. I arrived early with a guard named Boaz. Our job was to save some good seats for a group of the Distinguished with whom I was a new member. The Distinguished expect to get the best seats at meetings. I paid some beggars, widows, and orphans to hold this area right up front with Boaz watching them.

## TAMAR

Tamar here. The day was warm but overcast. People arrived steadily, sitting down, filling up the hillsides around the flat speaking area.

## EZRA

Ezra here. We sat in our groups. Galileans, sitting with others from their towns and clans. Judeans from nearer Jerusalem, and a number of other ethnic groups as well.

## FESTUS

Festus again. Many wealthy sat up front. They sent out their servants early to save them places. But people of all types arrived early and saved places for others.

ULLA

Ulla again. The area was large, but, as it filled up, it got crowded.

TAMAR

A murmur moved among us as the Teacher arrived, mingling with the people. I was cynical about what we had come to see, but I felt everyone's excitement as he appeared.

PISCA

Pisca here. One of the Master's heralds saw my mother and me standing off at a distance from everyone else. Instead of chasing us away, as we expected, he brought us to a place behind the speaking area, separated from the crowd.

ULLA

Ulla. As the Teacher came in, we all strained to get a look at him. Then, the chanting started.

THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!  
Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

EZRA

Ezra again. It was the slogan of another teacher, John, the Nazarene's cousin. The Nazarene had adopted it. His students and followers started the chant. As he walked alone out into the speaking area, the Master pointed up and twirled his finger at every chorus of "the realm of the skies."

TAMAR

This is where we will begin our presentation. From here on, Pisca and I will describe, and the others will play the parts of people that day.

*(Sound of Gong.)*

THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!  
Change your minds! It has gotten near.

What? The realm of the skies!  
Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

The Nazarene signalled the chant to stop. And immediately, one of the beggars holding spaces for the Distinguished called out.

FESTUS

Charity for the poor!

PISCA

The Master, play by Demas, responded, smiling.

DEMAS

**Lucky! Those beggars!**

TAMAR

Though he smiled, it shocked some and got others chuckling. The idea of beggars being lucky! The blind, lame, and crippled! It had to be a joke. He said it cheerfully, not cruelly.

PISCA

One of those who thought it was cruel called out.

ULLA

How can beggars be lucky?

PISCA

To answer, the Master took a deep breath and said.

DEMAS

**For the breath of life!**

EZRA

But why do they have such difficult lives?

DEMAS

**Because theirs is: the realm of the skies!**

TAMAR

The Nazarene pointed a twirling finger to the sky and his followers responded.

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

PISCA

I applauded the idea. People like my mother and I had difficult lives. The Master offered us a purpose, a goal.

TAMAR

Then the Master moved toward a group of widows. Also saving places for Demas's Distinguished.

DEMAS

**Lucky! Those weeping for their dead!**

TAMAR

More surprise and more laughter. Was he joking? Again, some were offended.

ULLA

How is losing a loved one lucky?

DEMAS

**Because, they themselves are going to be called near.**

PISCA

Again he pointed a twirling finger to the sky.

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

His followers encouraged the audience to join the chant. Some did. It grew louder.

PISCA

And we again applauded. It was making a kind of sense.

TAMAR

Suddenly, a little girl rushed out of the crowd toward the Teacher! The Nazarene was delighted and many of us laughed at the child and her parents trying to catch her. The Nazarene caught her and picked her up to show the crowd.

DEMAS

**Lucky! The soft ones!**

TAMAR

He pinched her cheek and the child giggled. More of us laughed.

PISCA

And as was quickly becoming the pattern, several people in the crowd asked why.

ULLA, EZRA, and FESTUS

Why? Yes, why lucky?

DEMAS

**Because they themselves are going to inherit...**

FESTUS

The realm of the skies?

PISCA

Many of us laughed and applauded the man's guess. But the Master shook his head no as he handed the child back to her mother.

DEMAS

**The mother earth!**

PISCA

We laughed because he said it as though it was obvious. Children get the earth when we go to the skies.

TAMAR

The Nazarene then moved toward some rich Romans who brought baskets of bread and bags of wine for their outing. A Roman woman offered him a piece. He held it up.

DEMAS

**Lucky, those hungering!**

TAMAR

After he said it, he bit off a piece of bread with such gusto that we laughed again. Everything he said was exaggerated, not just "hungry" but "hungering".

PISCA

Then one of the Romans handed the Nazarene a wineskin. The Nazarene toasted the audience.

DEMAS

**And thirsting!**

PISCA

He squirted the wine in his mouth. We again laughed. But someone wasn't pleased. They called out.

EZRA

What do those rich Romans hunger and thirst for? Our blood?

TAMAR

Which got both laughter and some cheers of agreement, but the Nazarene smiled, but shook his head "no."

DEMAS

**For this justice!**

PISCA

He indicated himself as he said it. Many again asked "why".

ULLA, EZRA, and FESTUS

Why? Why Justice

DEMAS

**Because they themselves? They are going to get their fill.**

PISCA

This drew the first big laugh from the crowd. Again of surprise. Then the Teacher pointed to the sky.

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

More and more were joining in. Then, the Roman women started breaking up their bread and passing some to the widows, children, and beggars near them. The Nazarene pointed to her.

DEMAS

**Lucky, the merciful!**

ULLA, EZRA, and FESTUS

Why? Why lucky?

DEMAS

**Because they themselves are going to receive mercy.**

TAMAR

Again, the Teacher pointed to the sky.

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

PISCA

We laughed and applauded ourselves as we did.

TAMAR

This is when the Teacher moved toward our own Pisca, just a girl at the time, with her mother.

PISCA

We were hidden behind the speaker because we were unclean outcasts.

TAMAR

As we noticed the two, we could see their skin sores. Word spread through the crowd, "unclean". The mood had been getting jolly, but now?

FESTUS

Unclean! An unclean woman! An unclean child!

TAMAR

The crowd murmured as the news passed out. Teacher held out his hands to help Pisca and her mother stand. The crowd gasped, noticing that the unclean woman was pregnant. The word that they were unclean was still spreading, but the Nazarene had touched them. Shock! He continued to hold their hands! Horror? The Nazarene spoke over the crowd's murmurs.

DEMAS

**Lucky! The spotless!**

TAMAR

Some laughed from surprise. Others in derision. Still others shushed them. It was sad. Tragic.

PISCA

And some were angry at the Nazarene and us. The unclean are forbidden to come near people, much less a gathering like that one.

FESTUS

How are they spotless?

DEMAS

**By this heart!**

PISCA

As he answerer, he indicated his own heart, but the answer was confusing. Did his heart see them as pure?

TAMAR

Or did he mean that they were going to be purified by his heart. We had heard that the Teacher was a healer. Were we seeing a healing? The crowd grew quieter.

DEMAS

**For they themselves?**

TAMAR

He touched Pisca's mother's pregnant belly.

**The Divine...they will behold!**

PISCA

The tenderness in his voice. His eyes. His words. His touch. I cannot describe it. My mother and I started crying.

TAMAR

And we saw them crying and were moved as well.

PISCA

Moved in many different directions. Not everyone was sympathetic.

TAMAR

But many were, especially we women. We saw birth as a vision of the Divine. But it was so sad: an unclean child born to an unclean mother. Some had hoped to see a healing.

PISCA

But there was no healing. We still had our sores. The crowd could see them. The polite thing is to ignore the unfortunate, but the Nazarene was congratulating us. It was surprising, amusing, but strange both to us and the crowd.

TAMAR

Remember, most weren't followers. Some, like me, came as skeptics, but most were just curious. And some came because they were trouble makers, looking for an opportunity. The Teacher gave them one. In Judea, political and religious zealotry are mixed together. Being friendly with Romans? Touching the unclean? Plenty of reason to get upset.

PISCA

And many were drinking on the warm afternoon. The result was that, though the Nazarene had just begun speaking, some began heckling him.

ULLA

They'd really be lucky if you could heal them!

FESTUS

I'd be lucky if your Roman friends passed me some of that wine!

EZRA

Or removed their swords from our necks

PISCA

Others called out worse. We were surprised that the Nazarene didn't respond. Instead, he seemed amused. And waiting. He looked expectantly at the crowd. He seemed to be silently asking them a question.

TAMAR

And, since most of us had come to hear the man speak, many, mostly women tried shushing the hecklers.

ULLA

Shush! Let him speak!

FESTUS

Oh, shush yourself!

TAMAR

But as the hecklers kept it up, several men, military, guards, including the big guard Boaz with Demas stood up to support the women.

EZRA

Silence! We all came to hear the man speak!

PISCA

As the men confronted them, especially big Boaz up front, the hecklers shut up. The Master smiled and applauded the men.

DEMAS

**Lucky! The peacemakers!**

ULLA, EZRA, and FESTUS

Yes, but why? Why

DEMAS

**Because their true selves? Sons of the Divine!**

TAMAR

We followed his lead and applauded the peacemakers among us.

DEMAS

**They are going to be called.**

TAMAR

The Teacher pointed upward.

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

PISCA

We laughed and applauded. Most of us appreciated the peacemakers among us. Boaz seemed very happy with the praise.

TAMAR

And one of the groups that stood as peacemakers were the ascetics, followers of John.

PISCA

Their wearing animal skins make them easy to spot.

FESTUS

Those proud drunkards shall be trodden down!

TAMAR

Demas tells me that it was a quote from Isaiah. John, the head of the ascetics, used it to speak against drinking. The Nazarene responded.

DEMAS

**Lucky! The ones harassing themselves for the sake of virtue.**

TAMAR

And we all laughed. The ascetics are an object of fun because they don't eat bread, drink wine, or wear woven cloth. Harassing themselves indeed! But again the crowd asked its "whys".

ULLA, EZRA, and FESTUS

Why? Why?

DEMAS

**Because theirs is: the realm of the skies!**

TAMAR

And we laughed. After all, the line was originally John's. Most of us knew that. As we laughed the Teacher pointed up!

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

DEMAS

**Lucky are you all!**

TAMAR

*He made a broad gesture indicating all of us and applauded us. We applauded ourselves readily enough.*

DEMAS

Then someone called out.

ULLA

Are we lucky when we are called fools for listening to you?

DEMAS

**When they chide you and harass you and proclaim every worthless thing against you!**

PISCA

Some chuckled nervously at that.

FESTUS

Are they lying about you?

TAMAR

He laughed and shook his head no.

DEMAS

**Lying to themselves!**

ULLA, EZRA, and FESTUS

Why? Why?

DEMAS

He touched his chest sadly as he responded.

DEMAS

**On account of me.**

ULLA

What should we do?

DEMAS

**Rejoice and celebrate!**

PISCA

He applauded. His happiness was infectious. He was turning around the crowd. But still some asked "why".

ULLA, EZRA, and FESTUS  
(*Call from the audience.*)

Why? Why?

DEMAS

**Because massive is that payment of yours:**

TAMAR

He paused and smiled.

DEMAS

**In the skies!**

TAMAR

And pointed up!

THE REST OF THE CAST  
Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

DEMAS

And we applauded and cheered our own chanting.

EZRA

But why are people harassed simply for listening to you?

DEMAS

**Like this? Because they probably would have harassed the luminaries:**

TAMAR

He made the broad gesture indicating all of us again.

DEMAS

**Those just like you!**

PISCA

And we laughed and applauded at being called luminaries, who were the most revered men of our history.

TAMAR

And the Nazarene pointed a twirling finger to the sky again.

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 3

AT RISE: Chime.

FESTUS

So, now we discuss. For those of us there, it was a pretty exciting first few minutes. We laughed. We cried. We almost had a fight.

ULLA

And we were excited to hear more. The words and ideas were strange and new.

TAMAR

And we were participating more. Calling out questions, making comments.

DEMAS

Many things were called out from the crowd, but the Nazarene picked what he responded to. Those are the only ones we recreate.

TAMAR

People always ask us about the repeated phrase, "realm of the skies". What does it mean?

ULLA

We all heard it in our own way, and in different ways at different times. Both the Teacher and this John used the phrase. Maybe it meant they were touched by the Divine. Maybe it meant they were crazy.

DEMAS

Some of us were critical of the Nazarene. We heard the phrase as meaningless.

PISCA

I found it full of hope and exciting.

EZRA

Over the years, I have collected many stories that he used to explain "the realm", but at Seven Springs every idea went back to it, like water to the sea.

FESTUS

It was a tool. A dramatic tool like the chorus in a Greek play. He made all of us into the chorus. It didn't need explanation because it was the explanation.

DEMAS

The concept was detailed logically. A home for those who suffer to which we are summoned by death, where justice is done and kindness and sacrifice rewarded.

PISCA

As a child, I didn't over think it like some people. It was felt. Hope. Happiness. Healing.

TAMAR

Though I too was a skeptic, I could trust that a change of mind was possible, perhaps necessary.

ULLA

For you? We don't pretend to know what it can mean.

TAMAR

So, let us start the next section. Again, Demas will say the lines of the Teacher and Ezra, Ulla, and Festus will play the audience. Pisca and I will describe.

*(Sound of gong.)*

After the chant, the Teacher pointed to the audience and smiled mischievously.

DEMAS

**You yourselves! You are the salt of the earth!**

TAMAR

As he said it, he tapped his temple, indicating his meaning. Among Galileans, an old "salt" is one with practical wisdom.

PISCA

We applauded, happily. We see ourselves as a salty people. Then someone shouted out.

EZRA

But your critics are learned, and, distinguished.

ULLA

Doesn't that make their common sense, their salt, more seasoned than ours?

PISCA

We laughed at the play on words.

DEMAS

**But what if that salt is: Insipid?**

TAMAR

He smiled and shrugged as he said it. Another play on words. More of us laughed.

DEMAS

**In what should it be taken...with a grain of salt?**

TAMAR

He pitched his fingers together as he said it. More laughter. Then he threw his hands up in the air as he answered his own question.

DEMAS

**In nothing, it is worth nothing. Except being tossed out, and being walked on by people.**

PISCA

He made the "tossing-out-the-trash" and stomping around.

TAMAR

The Nazarene's clowning made many, especially the children, laugh. The more laughed, the more exaggerated his actions. Many gestures, like that "throwing out the trash" motion and tramping around, would be used over and over, becoming funnier the more they were repeated.

DEMAS

**You yourselves are: the light of this society.**

PISCA

He indicated the crowd and they applauded for themselves. The crowd was always happy to applaud itself.

DEMAS

**It really doesn't have the power, a city, to be kept secret, sitting on a hill!**

TAMAR

He indicated us as "the city sitting on the hill." We laughed. We were sitting on a hill but hardly a city!

PISCA

At that point, the sun came out momentarily from behind the clouds.

DEMAS

**Nor do they light up a lamp!**

TAMAR

He indicated the sun as "the lamp" but then a small cloud darkened the sun again. He pretended to hide his lamp, the sun, in his hand. Then he looked around and saw a basket nearby and pretended to put the lamp under it.

DEMAS

**And put it beneath A bushel basket!**

PISCA

He then took his imaginary lamp out again and held it up, standing on his tip-toes.

DEMAS

**Instead, up...on...**

PISCA

As the Master teetered there, we giggled. What was he doing?

TAMAR

Waiting for the cloud to pass. It did. The sun reappeared. He indicated it as if he had brought it out.

DEMAS

**A lamp stand! And it lights up everyone in the house! In this way, it must shine, that light of yours in front of other people.**

TAMAR

The sun was dazzling after the overcast. He shielded his eyes from the glare as he looked at us.

DEMAS

**So that they might see, your beautiful deeds!**

PISCA

He indicated the crowd. As they looked around, they all looked resplendent in the bright light.

DEMAS

**And recognize that Father of yours: the one in the skies!**

PISCA

He pointed upward.

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

Then he pointed upward again. You can just imagine him point upward whenever you hear the chorus.

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

And then more clouds rolled in and the sun went away as fast as it came.

PISCA

And, just as suddenly, the light mood of the crowd changed as well.

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 4

AT RISE: Chime.

DEMAS

To continue our discussion, people also ask why the words that we recite are different than the Master's sayings they've heard. Tamar can explain.

TAMAR

As I said, I am from Tiberias, the capital of the province of Galilee. Quintus Figuli is the official court recorder there. My father hired Quintus to come with us that day and record what the Teacher said. Thanks to my father's foresight, from the first time we described the event to others, we had a complete record of the Teacher's spoken words.

PISCA

Different versions capture the gist of what the Master said, but not his actual words. Many are changed so they can be more easily understood when read, but his words were spoken, not written.

FESTUS

Which brings us back to our scene, the mood changed because the Distinguished arrived. The ones Demas had been waiting for. They were late.

ULLA

Their arrival cast a pall over the good mood. Why? Because they are the Judean people's very own, self-appointed morality police.

TAMAR

The Distinguished have become a powerful part of our communities. At first, I didn't notice any Distinguished there, which was surprising. Then this group came down the aisle, complaining loudly. This leads us back to our description where Ezra and Festus will play the Distinguished.

*(Sound of Gong.)*

TAMAR (cont.)

Almost immediately, the Distinguished leaders called out to the Master. The first was a younger man names Simeon, who becomes important later in our story.

EZRA

We know about the nonsense you teach!

TAMAR

Another was a local elder, known as Johanon, who was our own Demas's boss at the time.

PISCA

And his prospective father-in-law!

FESTUS

Why do you scoff at that wisdom of our luminaries?

TAMAR

But there were several others as well, many of whom would play a part in the event.

EZRA

Why tear up our traditional laws?

DEMAS

**You all might not want to assume that I have shown up to tear up the law! Or the luminaries.**

TAMAR

He held up a loaf of bread when he said "the law" and indicated the audience when he said "the luminaires". At this point, the Teacher gave a signal to his followers. They responded with a different chant.

REST OF CAST

Not upon bread alone is he going to live, a man, but though every saying pouring out from the mouth of God.

TAMAR

A quote from one of the oldest Judean books of law. Then the Teacher held up the loaf of bread again.

DEMAS

**I really haven't shown up to tear up...**

PISCA

He tore off a piece of bread.

DEMAS

**But to fill up!**

TAMAR

Then he popped the piece of bread in his mount. We laughed. I'm sure Demas could explain comparing bread with the law, but I just laughed. He said that he wasn't tearing up when he was tearing up then filling up.

PISCA

I could see the Distinguished chasing off Demas's beggars and widows to claim their places. They didn't seem happy with the Teacher's joke.

FESTUS

Your clowning means nothing to the timeless law!

TAMAR

Then Johanon spoke again.

EZRA

Why should anyone listen to you?

DEMAS

**Honestly? Because I'm talking to you.**

PISCA

He put his hand over his heart and said it so sincerely. I laughed. He was so happy to answer their criticism.

EZRA

The law will survive your nonsense. It will survive as long as the sky and the earth!

DEMAS

**While, possibly, it just might pass away...**

FESTUS

The law? Your saying that the Law might pass away!

PISCA

Interrupting the Teacher was always a mistake.

TAMAR

But his pauses invited interruption. Here, he shook his head no and gestured toward sky and earth.

DEMAS

**The sky...also the earth.**

PISCA

This got another laugh.

TAMAR

And as more of us laughed, the Distinguished got angrier, calling out another challenge.

FESTUS

We know the law! We make sure our people dot each 'i' and cross each 't' in obeying it.

TAMAR

This inspired the Teacher to draw a "i" in the air and dot it.

DEMAS

**An 'i'? One?**

TAMAR

Then a "t" and cross it.

DEMAS

**Or a jot?**

PISCA

We giggled. He wrote "it" and then emphasized it.

DEMAS

**Never is 'it' going to pass out of the law!**

TAMAR

Even the most serious of us couldn't help but laugh.

PISCA

Even some of the Distinguished chuckled. Then he held up his loaf of bread again.

DEMAS

**Until, possibly, "it" becomes everything!**

PISCA

He patted his belly. We laughed. Though there was probably some deep meaning there too.

TAMAR

And relaxed about the Distinguished. The Teacher seemed happy to have them. Then someone else, not one of the Distinguished, called out a question.

ULLA

Master, some say that we can undo our small obligations under the law by giving gifts at the temple.

TAMAR

We all knew that the "some" who say that are the Distinguished.

DEMAS

**Who might really undo one of these laws? The tiniest?**

PISCA

He held up his little finger. Then he shook his head sadly.

DEMAS

**And he might teach the people this? The tiniest, he is going to be called.**

TAMAR

He turned his little finger so it pointed out. Everyone laughed. The gesture is a common Judean insult to the, uh, abundance, of someone's manhood. I couldn't believe that he did it. This was clearly not the type of religious teacher I was so skeptical about.

PISCA

I didn't understand it at the time, but he had to wait until the laughter died before finishing. As he did so, he wiggled his little finger and then pointed up.

DEMAS

**In the realm of the skies!**

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

PISCA

And that made it funnier. The he held up his loaf of bread again.

DEMAS

**The one, however, who produces and teaches this? The greatest, he is going to be called: in the realm of the skies!**

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

FESTUS

*(From the audience.)*

Are you telling us to ignore the teachings of our religious writers, lawyers, and authorities?

DEMAS

**What am I telling you all? The fact is that unless you each individually are superior to all of you.**

TAMAR

He held up the bread loaf again.

DEMAS

**this virtue, surpassing that of the writers and Distinguished? Never ever are you getting into... The realm of the skies!**

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!  
Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

As you might expect, this direct attack did little to  
calm the Distinguished.

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 5

AT RISE: Chime.

EZRA

The is Ezra again as we discuss. As I said, I have been collecting the Nazarene's quotes. Many remember the Nazarene saying similar things to what was said as Seven Springs, but under different circumstances. And, apparently, he had a number of hostile encounters with the Distinguished.

DEMAS

Demas here. The Nazarene's challenge to the Distinguished had a huge impact on me. My father had made sacrifices so I could be educated by the Distinguished and become one of them, moving up in our society.

FESTUS

In Judea, the academics, writers, and lawyers of the Distinguished have woven themselves into the social fabric. Very different than Roman society where the powerful are those of deeds not words.

ULLA

Even in small fishing villages, like mine, we have our Distinguished.

PISCA

And among the herding tribes like mine.

TAMAR

And certainly in the cities where the Distinguished hold the places of honor, sitting on city councils and courts. Which brings us back to that day and the Master saying that our virtue must surpass that of the Distinguished to enter his realm of the skies.

PISCA

The Distinguished didn't want to hear it. Johanon called out a challenge.

*(Sound of GONG.)*

EZRA

You attack our virtue, but we hold to the ancient law. How can you put your foolishness against these ancient proclamations.

DEMAS

**At some time, you have heard that it was proclaimed by the ancients...**

PISCA

Here, the Nazarene pretended to unroll a scroll, changing his voice into that of an old man.

DEMAS

**You might not want to kill.**

TAMAR

He wagged a finger at us.

DEMAS

**Someone who, however, might possibly kill is going to... bind himself by that decision!**

PISCA

We laughed at the voice. The first of many funny voices!

TAMAR

And we laughed at the weakness of the threat.

DEMAS

**I, myself? However?**

PISCA

He said "myself" humbly.

TAMAR

Or maybe in a mock pompous way. I chuckled. The Nazarene smiled.

DEMAS

**I tell you that everyone being irritated by his brother...**

PISCA

He then indicated everyone in the crowd and then himself.

DEMAS

**Is going to...bind himself by that decision!**

PISCA

We all laughed. He used the old man's voice for the last part.

TAMAR

The same as the punishment for murder. Just for getting irritated!

DEMAS

**Who, however, might possibly say to that brother of his, "You rag!"**

TAMAR

Among Galileans, a "rag" is someone in ragged clothing, a beggar. or miser, or simply a slob.

PISCA

A local insult. Festus's brother called him a "rag", dressing like a local rather than a Greek. The Master went back to the older person's voice again.

DEMAS

**Is going to...bind himself to...the town council!**

PISCA

We laughed louder.

TAMAR

Because, to the councils, all us common folk, no matter how successful, are "rags".

PISCA

And councils always include the Distinguished.

DEMAS

**Someone, however, who might possibly say, "You fool!"**

TAMAR

That kept us laughing. Some Distinguished call everyone who lacks their learning, "Fools".

DEMAS

**He is going to bind himself...into that Gehenna of the fire!**

TAMAR

The Master made the throwing out the trash gesture then made a face and held his nose. Again, everyone laughed.

PISCA

Except the Distinguished.

TAMAR

"The Gehenna" is the trash dump outside of Jerusalem. Everyone in Judea and Galilee has heard of it.

PISCA

And knows that the place stinks.

TAMAR

Before the Distinguished could respond, another question came from the crowd. At this point, the audience took over and we didn't hear from the Distinguished for awhile.

FESTUS

Can offering gifts at the temple make up for my offenses against a brother?

TAMAR

The man was referring to the Distinguished, who teach that offering gifts at the temple cleans up many different mistakes. The Teacher gestured for the man to join him.

DEMAS

**If you present a gift on the altar, do you make amends for yourself?**

TAMAR

He pretended to hold a gift in a stately walk and met the man who had asked the question.

DEMAS

**You might be reminded...**

TAMAR

He clapped his forehead as if remembering something.

DEMAS

**That your brother has something against you. Drop it off there, that gift of yours, in front of the altar. And take off!**

TAMAR

He put down the present and ran in a circle to back to the man who asked the question and embraced him.

PISCA

Much to his surprise. We laughed.

DEMAS

**First, settle with that brother of yours. And then coming back, offer the gift!**

PISCA

He went back to his gift and pretended to present it at the altar. We applauded.

TAMAR

Amid the applause another man shouted out.

EZRA

But my brother is taking me to court!

TAMAR

Again, the Teacher summoned the man to him, speaking to him personally as he hurried through the crowd.

DEMAS

**Get friendly...**

PISCA

The man was so quick that he almost ran to the Teacher and then interrupted him.

EZRA

With the judge?

DEMAS

**With that complainant of yours, Speedy!**

PISCA

And this won more laughter from the crowd. The man answered skeptically.

EZRA

Why get friendly with him? He's suing me!

PISCA

The Teacher put his arm around the man and indicated an unseen path before them.

DEMAS

**Until you get together with him in this way forward.**

EZRA

We've been friends, brothers, but he gets mad at me, some times.

DEMAS

**He shouldn't want...at any time...to turn you over to the judge.**

PISCA

Now the Master started tugging himself back and forth across the stage by the shoulder of his tunic.

DEMAS

**And the judge to the officer. And, into a cell, getting tossed.**

TAMAR

The Teacher made his throwing out the trash motion, but this time throwing himself forward toward the audience.

PISCA

And of course, we laughed. And clapped. He gripped some imaginary bars and stared out at us with his hand over his heart, still speaking to the questioner directly.

DEMAS

**Honestly I'm telling you. Never are you getting out of there, until possibly... You have turned over...**

TAMAR

The Teacher teacher searched his clothes and help up a up a penny.

DEMAS

**Your last penny!**

PISCA

He kissed the PENNY good-bye, tossed it toward the questioner, who caught it. Then the Master gave him and hug and sent him back into the audience. We all laughed and applauded.

TAMAR

The Nazarene could bring people out of the crowd and get them to play along.

PISCA

He made you feel special being near him. He seemed so happy to meet you and so sympathetic about your problems.

TAMAR

And that made the Distinguished shy about calling out more challenges to him, at least for the moment. This was where our own Festus and his drunken friends started making jokes.

PISCA

He claims he doesn't remember it all that clearly, but he is speaking his own words here as we remember them.

EZRA

My last penny went to wine!

PISCA

We laughed.

DEMAS

My last penny went to my wife!

TAMAR

That got more laughter. I and the other women applauded.

FESTUS

My last penny went to a woman...

PISCA

He outlined a shapely woman in the air.

FESTUS

Who wasn't my wife but somebody else's. Shh! Shh!

PISCA

And that got the biggest laugh.

TAMAR

And it got some hisses. But most of us wondered how the Teacher would respond. And as if to dramatized the tension, another dark cloud passed over the sun. In the gloom, the Master seemed sterner and less light-hearted.

(SOUND OF CHIME.)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 6

AT RISE: Chime.

PISCA

The upcoming is one of my favorite parts of our testimony. Why? During it, not one but three of our little group here got their chance to speak with the Master.

ULLA

The Teacher heard Festus's joke about infidelity. He didn't take adultery lightly, but he also didn't take the boy seriously.

DEMAS

Under Judean law, sleeping with another man's wife is as serious as murder. The Distinguished were hoping the Nazarene would slip up. Joking about infidelity is touchy. Maybe he would take infidelity too lightly like some ethnic groups do. Or too seriously and appear prudish. In real life, people cheat, but it also ruins lives and families.

FESTUS

First, in my defense, I was drunk and really young. Second, I am not Judean. And third, Judean law isn't like modern, civilized laws, the decisions of men, enforced by the state and its courts.

EZRA

The traditions we Judeans follow are not man-made. They are divine.

ULLA

For us, the law of tradition is a special way of life, a gift of the Divine.

PISCA

As children, we learn that we are separated from the everyday world and ordinary people by our traditions.

EZRA

The Distinguished, however, teach that our traditional ways aren't enough. They found a long list of obligations

in the written law, a list so complex that we need their legal help to guide us through them.

TAMAR

But some ideas are still simple, like that of the need for complete trust in marriage. This takes us back to the scene and the Teacher's answer.

*(Sound of Gong.)*

DEMAS

**You have heard that it has been said...**

TAMAR

The Teacher again pretended to unroll a scroll and read.

DEMAS

**You don't want to defile a woman!**

PISCA

Some chuckled at the voice.

TAMAR

Others shushed them. I was among the shushers. I was surprised by how this topic upset me. Among us, only married women can commit adultery. I guess I had grown bitter at not being married. The Teacher touched his chest and smiled as he continued.

DEMAS

**I, myself, however?**

PISCA

He paused, smiling, and we waited to see where he would go.

DEMAS

**I am telling you all, that everyone gazing at...  
A woman!**

TAMAR

He copied the man, drawing curved figure in the air.

DEMAS

**To the point of getting hot about her?**

PISCA

He pulled open his collar and fanned himself. We all laughed.

TAMAR

Well, the Teacher was neither a prude nor an innocent. Men can get excited by a woman's looks. And women, even married ones, I suppose, can like exciting them.

DEMAS

**He has already defiled her...in that heart of his.**

TAMAR

He touched his heart as he said it. For some reason, this made me sad.

PISCA

Some young men and boys tittered, but most of us took his words seriously.

TAMAR

But one of Festus's drunk friends wasn't done.

EZRA

When it comes to pretty women, my right eye has a heart of its own!

TAMAR

We laughed. It was true! Men are funny that way.

PISCA

The Nazarene again spoke directly to Festus's drunken friend, not to the rest of us.

DEMAS

**If, however, that eye Of yours: the right one?**

TAMAR

The Teacher pointed to his own eye and Festus's friend nodded drunkenly, pointed at his own eye, and took a step toward the stage and stumbled. We laughed at the stumble.

DEMAS

**Trips you up!**

PISCA

We laughed harder.

DEMAS

**Pluck it out!**

TAMAR

He happily pretended to tug his eye out, holding it up, and wagged his finger at it accusingly.

DEMAS

**And toss it away from you!**

TAMAR

He did his throwing-out-the-trash gesture. We laughed.

DEMAS

**Because it helps you: when it destroys itself, one of your...**

TAMAR

He seemed to search for the right word, and then holding up his hand with his little finger extended.

DEMAS

**Members!**

PISCA

The crowd laughed.

TAMAR

I groaned.

PISCA

I blushed. I caught on to what that gesture meant.

DEMAS

**And you don't want your whole body...eing tossed into Gehenna!**

PISCA

The Teacher made the throwing-out-the-trash motion again and we laughed harder.

TAMAR

Not deterred, our clever Festus jumped in again.

FESTUS

My little member isn't bothered by my right eye, but by my right hand here!

TAMAR

Our Festus then raised his right hand and arm in a pumping motion. More of us groaned.

PISCA

But many more of the crowd laughed. I blushed. The Master looked up to heaven and shook his head, and spoke directly to Festus.)

DEMAS

**And so: if that right of yours, your hand?**

PISCA

Festus held up his hand and took a step toward the stage and stumbled. We laughed at the stumble. Festus claims he stumbled on purpose as a joke, copying his friend.

DEMAS

**Trips you up. Lop it off!**

TAMAR

The Teacher held out his right forearm and pretended to chop it off with his left hand. He folded his arm and waved his elbow as though he had chopped off his arm.

DEMAS

**And toss it away!**

ULLA

His tossing-out-the-trash motion again, but with one hand!

DEMAS

**Because, it helps you when it destroys itself: one of your...**

TAMAR

He unfolded his right arm and held up his hand.

DEMAS

**Members!**

PISCA

And we laughed.

DEMAS

**And you don't want that whole body of yours, into a trash heap it gets tossed!**

TAMAR

His tossing-out-the-trash motion again, but with both hands!

PISCA

Everyone laughed and cheered.

TAMAR

And at this point, our own Ulla called out from the crowd]!

ULLA

So you are saying that he should divorce his hand?

TAMAR

Ulla got a good laugh as well. Johanon, the Distinguished elder saw this joke as an opening to attack the Teacher.

EZRA

See? Your antics encourage people to mock the law! Moses's law about divorce is sacred!

TAMAR

The crowd quieted, waiting for the Master to respond. He gestured toward the Johanon.

DEMAS

**So, it has been proclaimed!**

TAMAR

And again, he pretended to unroll a scroll and read it in his old man voice.

DEMAS

**Whoever possibly might turn away that wife of his, let him give her a divorce notice.**

TAMAR

Then he returned to his regular voice, touching a hand to his chest in his mock pompous way.

**I myself, however?**

PISCA

He said it differently every time, but it always got a laugh.

DEMAS

**I am telling you all: that everyone turning loose that wife of his? Except because of whoring? He forces her to become defiled.**

TAMAR

A few giggled at the "whoring line", but his serious tone quieted most of the crowd. And many women applauded.

PISCA

My mind went another direction. I began wondering if my father had turned my mother loose because of her disease. After the clan tossed us out, father brought us our food himself, so he could see us. But over time, he stopped coming, sending servants. Had my mother been turned loose?

DEMAS

**And when anyone has sex with a loose woman? He becomes a defiler.**

TAMAR

He said it sadly. Released women without families to support them often turn to whoring to survive.

PISCA

I didn't understand this. I was wondering if we would have a home to go back to if we were cured someday.

TAMAR

And Ulla called out to the teacher again.

ULLA

Divorce is the only vow a man can break simply by paying a lawyer to write a note.

TAMAR

She got another laugh. And it upset the lawyers among the Distinguished again. One of them came back at her.

FESTUS

Without our overseeing the law, no one would honor any vows!

PISCA

The Nazarene smiled.

DEMAS

**Again, you have all heard that it is proclaimed by the ancients.**

TAMAR

And again, he pretended to unroll a scroll and read it in his old man voice.

DEMAS

**Do not renege on a promise!**

TAMAR

Then he wagged his finger at the audience, continuing in the old man voice.

**You each are going to give back to the Lord! Those promises of yours!**

PISCA

Which drew both laughter and groans from the crowd.

TAMAR

Groans because it was another familiar line of the Distinguished. The Distinguished required "giving back to the Lord". That is, paying them and the temple for the binding of oaths. Again, the Teacher touched his chest and spoke humbly.

DEMAS

**I myself, however?**

PISCA

More laughter from the repeating.

DEMAS

**I am telling you all, you do not want, anyone of you, to swear vows.**

TAMAR

Several in the crowd expressed confusion about this idea.

ULLA

We shouldn't swear on the sky? Or the earth?

TAMAR

As he answered, the Teacher gestured toward sky.

DEMAS

**Really! Neither on that sky...since a judge's bench is for the Deity.**

PISCA

And looking up, I saw a cloud that looked like the big chair that judges sit in. Then the Master gestured downward and rested his foot on a rock.

DEMAS

**Nor on the mother earth, since, a footstool? It is for those feet of His.**

FESTUS

What about vows in Jerusalem? At the temple?

DEMAS

**Nor in Jerusalem, since a city is for.. the great: a king!**

TAMAR

And he took a regal pose. Our own Ezra was inspired to call out his question. Not Johanon. the Distinguished, but our own Ezra himself.

EZRA

So our promises fall only upon our own heads?

PISCA

So the Teacher invited Ezra to come up to him, pointing at Ezra's head.

DEMAS

**Nor should you promise on that head of yours, seeing that you really don't have the power to make a single hair... light...or dark!**

PISCA

He indicated Ezra's grey hair and then his own dark hair.

DEMAS

**You fix it for yourself by an agreement.**

PISCA

This last line was said to Ezra, but then he turned to the rest of us.

DEMAS

**That word of all of yours...Yes or no! That, however, more than these? Out of that worthlessness,**

TAMAR

The Teacher recreated the earlier scene about being thrown in jail, tugging the shoulder of his tunic this way and that as if he was being dragged, throwing himself forward, and gripping imaginary bars, searching his clothing and holding up a PENNY, kissing the PENNY good-bye, tossing it toward Ezra.

DEMAS

**It exists!**

PISCA

And we applauded the whole bit.

(SOUND OF CHIME)  
(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 7

AT RISE: Chime.

EZRA

To discuss my own feelings at the time, the Nazarene's words about vows stuck a chord within me. When I was young, I'd made a vow on my own head. I had kept it, but must an old man live according to the outdated desires of a foolish young man?

DEMAS

But the dismissal of vows worried the Distinguished. Like divorce, they officiated over vows, especially contracts between people. It gave them power.

PISCA

And money.

DEMAS

So did the Nazarene take Judean law more lightly or more seriously than the Distinguished? Perhaps both.

ULLA

He took the criticisms of the Distinguished lightly.

EZRA

But to the Distinguished, all of this was deadly serious. Another Distinguished elder tried to trip up the Nazarene.

DEMAS

Again, we will have Festus and Ezra take the voices of the two main Distinguished who start this next section.

*(Sound of Gong.)*

Festus

If people don't vow to God, they will break their word and then take revenge on one another!

PISCA

And the Teacher pretended again to unroll a scroll.

DEMAS

**You have heard that it was proclaimed...**

TAMAR

We all laughed. Even before he said anything. Of course, he used his old voice again.

DEMAS

**An eye in return for an eye. And then more...A tooth in return for a tooth.**

PISCA

He pretended to pluck out an right eye and pull out a tooth, lisping the next line, holding both hands before her "Tooff". We laughed. Then used his humble voice again.

DEMAS

**I myself, however? I am telling you all you do not want to compare the worthless!**

TAMAR

He held both hands, one with the imaginary tooth and the other with the imaginary eye, side-by-side to the audience for comparison. He balanced his hands against each other and then tossed them both out as worthless with his throwing-out-the-trash gesture. The crowd mostly laughed and applauded the idea, but many were skeptical.

EZRA

So what do I do if someone punches me in the jaw?

DEMAS

**So, someone punches on that right jaw of yours? Turn back to him...**

PISCA

He said this in a threatening way, then paused and changed his tone completely.

DEMAS

**Also the other?**

PISCA

We laughed. The Master was having fun.

TAMAR

Silliness is contagious. Someone twirled a tunic over his head and called out a question.

FESTUS

Should I also give in to someone suing me in court? I will lose my shirt!

TAMAR

The Nazarene gestured for the man to come to him. We applauded him as he walked up.

PISCA

I was surprised that the man seemed sober. The Teacher spoke to him directly.

DEMAS

**And for the one wanting to sue you? And that shirt of yours...**

PISCA

The Master pulled on the shirt in the man's hand.

DEMAS

**To take it?**

TAMAR

The man pulled back. This created a friendly tug of war. Then the master said.

DEMAS

**Let go!**

TAMAR

The Teacher released his end of the shirt as he said it. The man fell back.

PISCA

We laughed and applauded. The Master helped the man up and took of his cloak and offered it to him.

DEMAS

**Also the cloak?**

PISCA

The man denied the offer, but they gave each other a hug. We cheered and applauded louder.

TAMAR

As an aspiring lawyer, Demas said that letting go instead of fighting in court bothered him. But we all have seen what court was like. It served no one but the lawyers. They told themselves that they are helping others, that without courts disputes would lead to violence. The Nazarene's words made some angry, but it made Demas and those like him thoughtful.

PISCA

And while they were thinking, a street urchin called out.

FESTUS

So I shouldn't fight for myself if someone forces me to bear burdens for them?

TAMAR

The Nazarene signalled this boy to join him on stage as well. In Judea, the powerful use their guards to force bystanders to carry their burdens. The powerful may travel without their own porters, but they never travel without guards.

FESTUS

I may be poor, but I am free, not a slave. I should just accept it even if someone forces me to work for him?

DEMAS

**Even if he might press you into service.**

PISCA

The Teacher spoke directly to the boy, putting his arm around him.

FESTUS

Even if he wants me to go a mile?

DEMAS

**A mile? One?**

PISCA

The Teacher held up a finger and the boy nodded.

DEMAS

**Go along with him!**

TAMAR

The Teacher waited for the boy to register disappointment and then added.

DEMAS

**For two!**

FESTUS

But they won't pay me a penny! Not even if I beg.

PISCA

The boy held out his hand as if begging.

DEMAS

**To the one begging from you...give!**

TAMAR

To illustrate, the Master dropped a several pennies into the boy's hand.

FESTUS

Lucky, those beggars!

TAMAR

We laughed, the Master laugh. We all applauded the boy's quickness. The urchin held up the pennies.

FESTUS

Thank you kindly, master, but giving so much in front of everyone, others will want to borrow from me.

TAMAR

Then the master dropped some more pennies in his hand.

DEMAS

**Also, for the one wanting to borrow from you!**

FESTUS

Give this to them?

DEMAS

**You might not want to turn away!**

FESTUS

If you mean I should keep my eyes on them, you're right. When I get this much, I try to keep it a secret, even from myself. Don't want my left hand to know what it is doing, my right hand, so to speak.

TAMAR

We laughed. The boy was a philosopher. The Demas's Distinguished boss had something more to say.

EZRA

But the law doesn't tell us to give to those who hate us!

DEMAS

**You have heard that it was proclaimed—!**

PISCA

He pretended to unroll another scroll and read it in his old person's voice.

DEMAS

**Love those close to you. And hate those hated of yours!**

TAMAR

Then he changed back to his own voice and changed to his humble voice.

DEMAS

**I myself, however?**

PISCA

The Master moved toward where my mother and I were sitting apart from the crowd as he continued addressing the crowd.

DEMAS

**I am telling you all, embrace those hated of yours.**

TAMAR

The Nazarene embraced the unclean, Pisca and her mother. It was both brave and foolish to embrace the diseased.

PISCA

It was also the greatest thing ever!

TAMAR

The Distinguished hadn't noticed Pisca and her mother before. They had arrived after the Nazarene had declared them lucky. They were shocked to notice their disease! My boss, Johanon spoke up.

EZRA

They are unclean! You are openly breaking our laws!

DEMAS

**Pray for those who harass you.**

PISCA

He addressed that to my mother and me when he said it. My mother asked, "Why?"

DEMAS

**In order that you might become children of that Father of yours, the one in the skies.**

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

At this point the sun came out from the clouds. The Teacher indicated it as he spoke.

DEMAS

**Because, that sun of His? He makes it rise on the worthless...and the valuable.**

TAMAR

He indicated the unclean mother and child when he said "worthless" and the Distinguished when he said "valuable". Then came a strange moment. The sun was shining, but a sprinkle of rain began to fall.

PISCA

It was refreshing in the heat, and only lasted a moment.  
But the Teacher used it.

DEMAS

**Not only does He shower rain...On the law-abiding...  
But also the law-breakers.**

TAMAR

And here, the Teacher indicate himself as the law-breaker  
and the Distinguished as the law-abiding. And again, the  
Johanon had a comment.

EZRA

But to live the law, we must never embrace law-breakers.

DEMAS

**Since, maybe, you show affection to those showing affection  
for you?**

TAMAR

He took his arms from Pisca and her mother and wrapped  
both of his arms around himself.

DEMAS

**What compensation do you have due? Don't even the...Tax  
collectors do that!**

TAMAR

We laughed. The tax collectors were in the back of the  
crowd with the whores and other outcasts. They are no  
more popular in Judea than they are here.

DEMAS

**Also, if you all embrace...those relatives of yours alone.**

TAMAR

Again, he indicated the unclean mother and child who were  
now embracing each other.

DEMAS

**What out of the ordinary are you doing? Nothing! Don't  
even those other ethnic groups do the same thing?**

PISCA

He gestured toward the group of Romans up front. They laughed with the rest of us, but one of them called out.

FESTUS

If we embrace our enemies, how can we be true Romans?

DEMAS

**You all will truly be yourselves.**

FESTUS

But what will that be?

PISCA

And we laughed. The Master did as well.

DEMAS

**Perfect! As that Father of yours, the sky one.**

THE REST OF THE CAST

*(Quietly and slowly.)*

Change your minds! It has gotten near.

What? The realm of the skies!

Change your minds! It has gotten near.

What? The realm of the skies!

Change your minds! It has gotten near.

What? The realm of the skies!

DEMAS

**Perfect. He is.**

(SOUND OF CHIME.)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 8

AT RISE: Chime.

TAMAR

Before I heard the Teacher, I was skeptical about my people's history, but seeing the Teacher was like seeing the luminaries of old.

DEMAS

People ask us if this was because the Teacher was a good performer, an actor. My answer is no.

FESTUS

I was an ex-actor, and I can tell you from first-hand experience, the best of them are merely convincing liars.

PISCA

The Master was never false.

DEMAS

Nor are we acting here. We are telling a story. Storytelling is a Judean tradition, used for passing down our history. And the Teacher was the best storyteller anyone has ever seen.

ULLA

Every tribe and town has storytellers. But next to the Master?

EZRA

Like comparing a lamp to the sun. The Master entertained, doing funny voices and acting out his words, but he was always being himself, open, hiding nothing.

FESTUS

Which brings us back to our story. Despite the presence of the Distinguished, the mood remained happy.

ULLA

Especially after the sunshine and rain.

TAMAR

That idea of perfecting ourselves seemed to trigger the next question from a woman in the crowd.

(GONG.)

ULLA

Will the Deity perfect us if we are virtuous?

DEMAS

**Take care, however, of that virtue of yours.**

ULLA

Is it virtuous to perform public acts of charity?

TAMAR

As he answered, the Nazarene used a series of theatrical gestures and poses.

DEMAS

**Not to perform in front of people for the purpose of displaying yourself to them.**

PISCA

We laughed at how he acted it out.

DEMAS

**Unless, however, you really don't want a reward. You are not going to get it from that Father of yours, the one in the skies.**

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

As he answered, the Nazarene used a series of theatrical gestures and poses.

DEMAS

**When you truly perform a kindness, you don't want to blow a trumpet.**

TAMAR

At which point, he pretended to blow a trumpet, and, as he continued, he was at his most theatrical.

DEMAS

**Before you like, the actors! They perform in the meeting places and in the crowded streets. So that they might be recognized by the people.**

PISCA

He acted as if he was accepting applause, making little bows right and left.

DEMAS

**Honestly, I'm telling you...**

PISCA

Again in that mock, pompous way.

DEMAS

**They are getting that payment of theirs!**

TAMAR

Acting again as if he was accepting applause. The questioner approached the Nazarene, who addressed her personally.

ULLA

What should I do instead?

DEMAS

**If you perform a kindness? Don't let that left of yours know what it is doing: that right hand of yours.**

TAMAR

He affected the street urchin's voice as he said the line. We laughed, but then, just like for the urchin, he took out some coppers and put them in her hand.

DEMAS

**So that it might be...your kindness. In the hidden.**

PISCA

He whispered the last line and indicate her heart as he brought he to Pisca and her mother, indicating she should secretly give them the money. The crowd was quiet.

DEMAS

**And that Father of yours, the one seeing into the hidden?  
He is going to give back to you.**

TAMAR

Again, he indicated her heart. The Teacher's answer wounded me. I was a very visible public giver to charity. I felt virtuous showing off my father's wealth. It was painful to think about giving up that attention.

PISCA

Others felt the same way. One of them asked.

FESTUS

So we hide our good deeds? When else do we hide?

DEMAS

**Also when you pray.**

PISCA

He smiled when he said and, oh, what an uproar that caused!

TAMAR

Public prayer is popular. Very popular.

PISCA

One of the few public demonstrations the Romans allow.

TAMAR

The Distinguished elders saw an opportunity in the crowd's reaction.

PISCA

The other Distinguished elders immediately stood up to encourage the crowd's protest.

FESTUS

He wants to take away your right to public prayer? Will you stand for this?

PISCA

Many in the crowd complained.

ULLA

Public prayer is our right! Public prayer is our right!

EZRA

Even the Romans cannot stop it!

TAMAR

But the Teacher just waited patiently, happily. Finally, the hubbub faded when he raised his arms for quiet.

DEMAS

**Don't be like the actors!**

PISCA

He took a dramatic pose expressing horror. This drew a nervous little laugh.

TAMAR

Then the Teacher became more animated. He again embraced himself.

DEMAS

**Because they love...In those meetings and on those crossroads, standing to pray for themselves...**

PISCA

He bowed over and over, more and more deeply, until we began to laugh.

DEMAS

**So that they shine, among the people!**

TAMAR

After saying that triumphantly, he then did his humble thing.

DEMAS

**Honestly, I'm telling you...they are getting that pay of theirs.**

PISCA

He made the "accepting applause" gesture again and kept us laughing through this all.

TAMAR

Enough so that he kept his louder critics quiet, but some still felt he was mocking prayer in general. He then pointed at the man who asked the question and invited him to come to him, speaking to him personally.

DEMAS

**You, however, When you pray? Go in that inner sanctum of yours. And shutting that door of yours.**

PISCA

He pretended to open a door, go through with questioner, and then close it behind them.

DEMAS

**Pray to that Father of yours, the One within the hidden. And that Father of yours, the one seeing into the hidden? He is going to give back to you.**

PISCA

When he said the "hidden" he indicated the questioner's heart. Many applauded, but the Distinguished complained and encouraged more protest.

TAMAR

But then another group stood up to pray very loudly together. We call them the Samarites but that would be the Watchers, in the common tongue. They are half-breed Judeans, considered heretics. They usually don't speak publicly among us much less pray. Hearing them was shocking.

FESTUS, EZRA, and ULLA

*(From audience, bowing, chanting  
running the words together.)*

Eloowwem of Abraahm, we bow to You.

Eloowwem of Yesaaq, we bow to You.

Eloowwem of Yaaqob, we bow to You.

Eloowwem of Yusef, we bow to You.

Eloowwem of Mooshe, we bow to You.

PISCA

The crowd heard a parody of themselves.

TAMAR

The crowd quieted except for the Samarites, who continued more quietly. The Teacher indicated them.

DEMAS

**Praying? Like that? I don't want to re-re-re-repeat. Like those other ethnic groups.**

PISCA

It was funny.

TAMAR

And it changed everyone's perspective . Even the Distinguished elders quieted down. Only the Samarites continued praying stubbornly.

DEMAS

**Because they think that in their long-windedness...they are going to be listened to.**

PISCA

We laughed.

DEMAS

**You all don't want, really, to become like them.**

TAMAR

The Samarites finally gave up their chanting.

DEMAS

**Because He has seen, the Divine, that Father of yours what needs you all have before anyone else.**

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

PISCA

Everyone started clapping, I joined them.

TAMAR

Then a cranky-sounding woman called out.

ULLA

Why should the Divine care about my needs?

DEMAS

**Yours? Ask Him!**

ULLA

What do we ask him? How?

DEMAS

**In this way, then, you pray for yourselves. All of you!**

TAMAR

Then he sat down among his followers with his back to us, so he was hidden to the crowd. We heard his prayer, but the speaking area was empty except for light because the sun came out again.

PISCA

But he spoke every line patiently, like he was unwrapping a series of presents.

DEMAS

*(Going off stage)*

**Father of ours:**

**The one in the skies.**

**Let it be sanctified: this name of Yours.**

**Let it start: this reign of Yours.**

**Let it emerge: this purpose of Yours.**

**As in sky,**

**Also as on earth.**

**This bread of ours,**

**The existing upon,**

**Give to us today.**

**Also, let go for us what is owed by us.**

**Just as we ourselves let go what is owed to us.**

**Also, You might not want to bring us into a trial.**

**Instead, draw us toward Yourself, away from the worthless.**

TAMAR

When he was done praying, the crowd was quiet. Then someone called out.

FESTUS

That's a public prayer! No reward for you!

TAMAR

The Nazarene stood up, showing himself again to the crowd, laughed, and applauded.

PISCA

We all laughed and applauded as well.

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF SCENE)

(END OF ACT I)

ACT II

## SCENE 1

AT RISE: Chime.

## FESTUS

Though this is a new way of us recreating the event, it seems to be going well, doesn't it? By this point at Seven Springs, we all knew we were witnessing something special. Even those who were celebrating the event with wine, like I was.

## TAMAR

The crowd was quiet after the Teacher's prayer. For awhile. As with much of what the Teacher did and said that day, his prayer impressed us all differently.

## ULLA

I focused on the bread part. I like bread. It was funny how the Teacher equated it with the law as what we exist upon. Leaven gives bread life. Life grows. And life grows old and stale.

## PISCA

I found myself wondering: if the Father doesn't want to lead us into a trial, why are our lives so filled with trials? Like my mother's and mine. Our disease.

## TAMAR

My father was the only thing I trusted, so I liked the way the Teacher addressed the Divine as a father rather than our traditional as "master". My father also hated debt. He said more slaves are made by debt than Roman conquest.

## EZRA

But, in our way of speaking, most debts aren't about money. They come from mistakes people make. Not just the mistakes that cost time or money. Just offending some people puts you in their debt. We Judeans can be a proud people, sensitive to slights. Inviting someone to dinner can put them in your debt, but not invited someone else can be seen as a slight, also creating a debt.

DEMAS

For the Distinguished, forgiving debts is a sensitive topic. Our first lawgiver, Moses, said that debts must be forgiven every seven years. We choose to ignore this law today. We say it is impractical in our modern era.

TAMAR

So it wasn't surprising that the first question after the prayer was about debts.

(GONG.)

ULLA

Why do we let go those who owe us? Don't people need to be held accountable?

EZRA

Especially when people are offensive, like those stumbling drunks tripping over their immorality?

PISCA

The Nazarene responded warmly, happily. Indicating the whole crowd with right and left-hand sweeps.

DEMAS

**Because, if you all...Let go for these people...**

TAMAR

He took a step back and stumble intentionally over a rock.

DEMAS

**Those missteps of theirs. He is going to let you go as well...that Father of yours...The sky one.**

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

DEMAS

**If, however, you all don't want to let go of these people...**

TAMAR

Again he gestured to include the whole crowd, and again, he stumbled over the same rock.

DEMAS

**Those missteps of theirs. Neither is that Father of yours going to let go of those missteps of yours.**

*(Taking a pratfall.)*

PISCA

He bent over to pick up the offending rock and took a comic fall.

TAMAR

So much for the serious mood. And now we come the man who was fasting. When fasting, Judeans make a public show of it. We do not groom our hair. We cover our faces with ashes. We wear dishevelled clothes. I should also explain that among our people, fasting is, or maybe was, a sign of atonement. It started as one day a year, fasting on the Day of Atonement, but it grew more popular over time. We added more and more fast days. Now, we fast any time we feel we need it. A drunk who embarrasses himself in public might go on a fast to show his regret or signal his new found virtue. So a man who was fasting called out.

FESTUS

Does fasting atone for our missteps?

DEMAS

**When, however, you all fast? You don't want to become like the actors!**

PISCA

He took a dramatic pose that was clearly meant to be funny.

DEMAS

**Gloomy! Since they mask those faces of theirs. So that they might show off among people!**

PISCA

He passed his hand over his face to show himself smiling and passed his hand again to show his face frowning.

DEMAS

**Fasting! Honestly, I'm telling you...they are getting that reward of theirs.**

PISCA

He bowed right and left as if accepting applause. Then he spoke directly to the man who asked the question.

DEMAS

**You, however, fasting?**

PISCA

The man nodded and the Master handed him a vial of hair oil.

DEMAS

**Oil your head! And that face of yours? Wash!**

TAMAR

The Master handed him cloth. The man oiled his hair and wiped the ash from his face. The Master continued to speak to the man personally.

DEMAS

**So, you don't show off for the people. Fasting!**

PISCA

The Master made a sour face and then pointed to the man's heart.

DEMAS

**Instead, for that Father of yours, the one in the hidden. And that Father of yours, the one seeing into the hidden? He is going to give back to you.**

PISCA

Again, we applauded.

TAMAR

But many, like my father and I were skeptical about hidden rewards. As I said, I took pride in my public charities. My father called out a question for me.

EZRA

Doesn't the Divine reward us for all our virtues, private and public? Isn't our accumulation of wealth on earth a sign of Divine favor?

DEMAS

**You don't want to accumulate for yourselves accumulations on the earth!**

TAMAR

The Teacher spoke to the audience, as he pretend to gather things and put them in a pile on the ground.

DEMAS

**Where a moth?**

TAMAR

He fluttered one hand like a moth sighting a meal and diving in.

DEMAS

**And a meal? It hides!**

TAMAR

Hiding in the imaginary pile, the Teacher made chomping motions with his hand to indicate it eating. We laughed. Then he continued.

DEMAS

**And where robbers tunnel in, and rob!**

TAMAR

And he masked his face with his hands and pretended to dig toward the pile and carry it away on tip-toes. My father was confused. He asked another question.

EZRA

But where else do we accumulate the Divine's rewards?

DEMAS

**Accumulate...instead, for yourselves, accumulations in a sky!**

TAMAR

He pretended to toss the pile into the sky and pointed upward.

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

Then he fluttered his hand again, creating the moth searching.

DEMAS

**Where not even a moth.**

TAMAR

Then referring to the pile in the sky.

DEMAS

**Not at all meal! It hides!**

TAMAR

Masking his face and staring up into the sky, he continued sadly.

DEMAS

**And where robbers do not tunnel in nor rob!**

TAMAR

My father and I both laughed at the answer, but he quickly asked another question that I thought was clever.

EZRA

Why can't my heart be in the sky even if I accumulate my rewards on the earth?

PISCA

And again, others from the audience supported that question with their own "why's".

FESTUS, ULLA

Why? Yes, Why?

DEMAS

**Because wherever it is, that accumulation of yours. There it is: That heart of yours!**

TAMAR

While saying this, the Teacher gestured for my father to join him. My father asked his next question while walking up to him.

EZRA

I may be very bright, but my eyes only see what is on earth.

PISCA

The Master pointed to his eye.

DEMAS

**The lamp of the body IS the eye. If, then, is that eye of yours open?**

PISCA

He asked Tamar's father directly while looking into his eyes.

EZRA

Yes, and open, it only sees the earth.

TAMAR

At this point, the sun broke through the clouds and the Teacher pointed to it. My Father's eyes followed.

EZRA

And also what is in the sky.

DEMAS

**That whole body of yours?**

TAMAR

The sunlight lit the whole area, but my father was wearing a bright white tunic and robe, which gleamed in the light. The Teacher pointed to the sun.

DEMAS

**Shining! It is going to be!**

TAMAR

My father admired himself in the bright light. The brightness was amazing, but it only lasted a moment. The teacher continued speaking directly to him.

DEMAS

**If, however, that eye of yours is worthless? That whole body of yours?**

PISCA

The crowd grew quieter as threatening clouds rolled over the sun. Many pointed at the darkening sky. The Master continued to talk directly to Tamar's father.

DEMAS

**It is going to be dark! If the light, the one in you? Is a darkness? It is a darkness: so dark!**

TAMAR

My father returned and sat down next to me. He was deeply affected. He touched his chest where the Teacher had touched it and turned to me. "It is light", he said quietly. He was a changed man until the day he died.

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 2

AT RISE: Chime.

DEMAS

At this point, a lot of people at the meeting were murmuring about the weather and about whether the Nazarene was controlling it.

TAMAR

And as with so many things, we had different feelings about that at the time.

PISCA

To me, it seemed like the Master controlled the clouds. It was like seeing the miracles we heard about in the old stories.

ULLA

And it wasn't just children who felt that way. A lot of people like me saw these events as miraculous. To us, the Teacher was working wonders before our own eyes.

DEMAS

But were they really wonders? It was cloudy. The sun came out and then went away many times that day. A few times, the Nazarene was able to work the sun's appearance into his remarks. He had a command, but not a command of the sky. It was his command of the situation. He paid attention to what was happening, what people were saying. And he responded in the moment. It seemed magical because so few people can pay attention and act on what they see.

TAMAR

Or maybe he saw himself as responding to his Father, in the sky? It is near: the realm of the sky.

EZRA

So was the sky working with him or was he working with the sky? You decide.

PISCA

But it wasn't just the sky. There were the birds and the snake...

TAMAR

Yes, but let's not get ahead of our story.

EZRA

This is an old question about the Divine: why doesn't the "All Powerful" force us to abide by his will? Because His will is for us to make our own choices. Nothing that happened with the Nazarene forced us to believe one way or another. Most who saw these things trusted him, but many, the Distinguished among them, saw the same things and chose not to trust.

TAMAR

As the crowd was murmuring about the Teacher and the sky, a servant asked the next question.

(SOUND OF GONG)

FESTUS

I am a bond slave to a worldly man. And he is not going to let my debts go. I want your realm of the sky, but how can I serve a higher power when I am already slaving for Mr. Moneybags?

DEMAS

**No one has the power, to slave for two masters...**

TAMAR

And again, as he paused, people asked why. It was now like he was pausing on purpose to get us to ask.

EZRA, ULLA

Why? Yes, Why?

DEMAS

**Because either he is going to...hate the one...and care for the other.**

PISCA

He shook a fist at the sky and patted the earth as he said it. Then reaching upward and looking down sadly he added.

DEMAS

**Or...he is going to attach himself to one...And he is going to look down on the other.**

FESTUS

But I am a slave! I don't have the ability to make my own choices.

TAMAR

The Teacher disagreed with a shake of his head, but then addressed the whole group.

DEMAS

**You all do not have the ability to be a slave for the Divine and Mr. Moneybags.**

TAMAR

Many of the people there were slaves, bondsmen enslaved by debt. They called out to the Teacher.

EZRA

But we must slave for our bread!

FESTUS

We need our drink...to kill the pain of slaving for our bread!

ULLA

I'm not going to run around without clothes!

EZRA

By this, are you telling us not to care for ourselves?

DEMAS

**By this, I'm telling you all don't WORRY! About that self of yours. What you might eat? Or drink? Nor for that body of yours. What you might put on.**

PISCA

The Master acted it all out, the worrying, eating, drinking, putting on clothes.

DEMAS

**Certainly not! This self is more than food. And the body? A covering!**

PISCA

At this point, a flock of birds flew overhead.

TAMAR

Another happy coincidence in Demas's view.

DEMAS

**Look up! To the winged ones of the sky!  
Because they don't really...**

PISCA

Then he went into a sing-song voice as he acted out each rhyme.

DEMAS

**Sow,  
or hoe,  
or stow...into storehouses.**

TAMAR

The rhyme was fun. Some laughed and some applauded. The Teacher continued happily, patting his belly.

DEMAS

**And the Father of you all? That sky one? He fattens them!  
Aren't you yourselves more important than they?**

DEMAS

He raised his hand, as if asking us to visibly agree that we were more important. As he paused, more and more chose to raise their hands. As more hands went up, the happier he became.

DEMAS

**Who, from your worrying...has the power to add to that  
lifetime of his?**

FESTUS

But we aren't children! Isn't there a big difference between the worries of children and ours as adults?

PISCA

The Master nodded in agreement, holding his hands at the heights of a child and an adult.

DEMAS

**Eighteen inches!**

TAMAR

We all laughed. But the same man had another question.

FESTUS

Then why doesn't the Divine make all of those worshipping him rich to prove his power to the world?

TAMAR

Instead of answering, the Teacher signalled his followers and they recited another verse from Moses.

REST OF CAST

Never will you test a Lord, that divine of yours.

TAMAR

We Judeans are taught that the Divine is beyond our proofs.

ULLA

But what about our clothing? It shows our status to others, determining what they think of us. Don't we have to worry about that?

DEMAS

**Also, about your clothing. Why do you worry?**

PISCA

He pretended to worry again and then plucked a wildflower from the ground.

**Look closely at the wildflowers of this countryside.**

PISCA

Then he went into a sing-song voice again as he again acted out each rhyme.

DEMAS

**How do they grow?  
They don't bow.  
Nor do they sew.**

FESTUS

Are you saying women don't need to wear clothes?

DEMAS

**I'm saying, however, to you all, that not even Solomon, with all that fame of his, wrapped himself...as well as one of these.**

TAMAR

He held out the flower and many applauded. Then he continued more seriously.

DEMAS

**If, however, this foliage of the countryside, existing for today, and tomorrow? Into the oven, it's being tossed!**

PISCA

He tossed away the flower with his exaggerated throwing out the trash motion. The motion got a laugh.

DEMAS

**The Divine, in this way, clothes!**

TAMAR

Ezra and Demas claim that there is a deeper meaning in this. About our bodies being temporary like our clothes, but most of us normal people missed that, including the lady that asked the question about clothes.

ULLA

But the Divine doesn't clothe us like that!

PISCA

He gestured toward the woman's clothing, which seemed nice, like you would wear to a public gathering.

DEMAS

**No? Much better! For all of you!**

TAMAR

He addressed all of us and as we looked around. As we can look around here today. All these styles and colors of clothing we see here? We wore them there as well. He then went on using a series of funny voices.

DEMAS

**You tiny trusters! You all don't want to worry, saying,  
What do we eat?  
What do we drink?  
What do we put on ourselves.**

DEMAS

Then a Roman called out.

FESTUS

If your divine can provide physical wealth, why are other nations more wealthy?

DEMAS

**Because these things are ALL those other ethnic groups seek after!**

TAMAR

The many different ethnic groups among us cheered this idea. Many of us laughed at them for doing so.

ULLA

I agree that we need more than food and clothing, but how can the Divine know everything we need?

DEMAS

**Because He has seen, that Father of you all, sky-like, that you need these things in every area.**

EZRA

But how do those of us who are Judean or who follow you act differently than those other groups?

DEMAS

**You search, however, first...for the realm,**

THE REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

DEMAS

**And that virtue of His, and these things? All? They shall be put in front of you!**

PISCA

He pretended to serve a platter. We laughed.

FESTUS

But don't we have to prepare for bad times and worry about our future?

DEMAS

**You all certainly don't want to worry... about tomorrow.**

TAMAR

The Master pointed to the dark clouds over the sea in the distance.

DEMAS

**Because tomorrow?**

PISCA

There was a small flash of lightning in the dark clouds. The Master pretended to worry.

DEMAS

**It is going to worry...about itself!**

TAMAR

He said it in a funny way that made us laugh. The lightning was distant and seemed to be moving away from us. He continued cheerfully, in a light hearted tone.

DEMAS

**Enough! For this day, the suffering of it!**

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 3

AT RISE:                   SOUND OF CHIME.

DEMAS

It is true that I didn't see the Nazarene as magical as some others like Pisca and Tamar do. However, in focusing on his use of the sun coming out or birds flying by, we can miss the real magic here. Think about what he was saying, things that no one had ever said before: let people slug you, let go of debts, hug those who hate you, and on and on. He not only made these ideas entertaining and interesting, he actually made them sound reasonable and preferable to our normal way of living. He was changing our minds, like his chant said. And the whole time, he was making jokes and exaggerating everything, pretending we could pluck out our eyes or cut off our arms. That was the real miracle.

ULLA

And it drove your Distinguished crazy.

DEMAS

Because his ideas and actions were crazy and yet minds were being changed. Most of the crowd went along with it, but the Distinguished couldn't.

PISCA

Who were the real crazy ones? Was I crazy for believing I could be cured?

EZRA

Listening to him, I began seeing that I had been crazy, worrying about clothing and status. When young, I'd taken vows of celibacy and poverty to work toward becoming the leader of my religious community. I had reached that goal a decade before, but did I feel fulfilled? I worried more than ever about my status, my position. I had thought I was wise, but listening to him, my mind was changing.

TAMAR

My mind was changing too. My public charity. I saw that my virtue was nothing but vanity. But I wasn't unhappy about changing. I felt freer letting it go.

ULLA

My mind was changing too. I was having more fun that day than I had had since I was a girl. I realized that I had become an old woman, both outside and in. I thought I had only death to look forward to, but, just by being there that day, I felt more life and the desire for more.

TAMAR

Maybe that was the Teacher's real magic. We all had a great time together that day, despite his craziness, our craziness, and the crazy divisions among us. And that brings us right back to our story. A man from a group that most people there thought was crazy, the ascetics, wearing animal skins, asked the next question.

*(SOUND OF GONG)*

EZRA

We're called crazy for not eating, drinking, or wearing cloth. Who is crazier, the ascetics or the worriers, who think only eating, drinking, and their appearance matters?

PISCA

The Master answered cheerfully, making the crazy sign, twirling a finger around his ear, every time he said "criticize".

DEMAS

**You don't want to criticize, when you don't want to be criticized.**

ULLA

Why can't a sane person criticize a crazy one?

TAMAR

Which got many supporting "why's".

EZRA and FESTUS

Why? Why not?

DEMAS

**Because by what criticisms you all criticize, you all, are going to be criticized.**

EZRA

But we ascetics measure by the spiritual not the material values of the world. Aren't our measures more sane?

DEMAS

**And by what standard you all measure...it is going to be measured out to you all!**

TAMAR

He made his "throwing out the trash" gesture, which mad the crowd laugh nervously at the idea of not measuring up to our own standards.

PISCA

Then a man next to the ascetic apologized for him.

FESTUS

Excuse my brother. As an ascetic, his supposed "virtue" blinds him, completely blinds him to the real world.

PISCA

The Master smiled and signalled the man to join him and spoke to him directly as he approached.

DEMAS

**What, however, do YOU see?**

FESTUS

That he has a bit of blindness toward the practical?

DEMAS

**That's a speck in the eye of that brother of yours?**

PISCA

The man nodded in agreement, but the Master look closely into the man's eye. Pointing to it.

DEMAS

**That one, however, in your own eye?**

FESTUS

My eye? Something in my eye?

DEMAS

**A roof beam!**

TAMAR

We all laughed. He said it serious, but a roof beam in someone's eye?

FESTUS

A roof-beam in my eye? That's crazy!

DEMAS

**You don't see? Really?**

FESTUS

I just wanted to help remove my brother's blind spot!

DEMAS

**How do you say to that brother of yours?**

TAMAR

The Teacher covered his own eye with his arm and then mimicked the man's voice.

DEMAS

**Let go! I am going to take that speck from that eye of yours.**

TAMAR

The Teacher waved the arm covering his eye.

DEMAS

**And look! That roof beam in that eye of yours!**

TAMAR

Then, the man caught on, covering his own eye with his arm and waving it like the Teacher had done. The Teacher applauded his recognition and the imitation.

DEMAS

**Mr. Actor! Toss out, first, from that eye of yours...the roof beam! And then you might see clearly to toss out the speck from that eye of that brother of yours!**

TAMAR

The Teacher removed his arm from his eye and the man copied him. Then they embraced. Then someone else called out.

ULLA

So we shouldn't criticize these crazy ascetics, but what about those men who are just dogs?

PISCA

Some applauded. Some laughed. Some men barked.

EZRA and FESTUS

*(From the audience.)*

Bow-wow! Bow-wow!

TAMAR

And many looked to see who asked the question. So they could know which group she was with. So they could know which dogs she meant. Then someone added fuel to the fire.

FESTUS

And aren't some women also sows?

PISCA

More cheers, boos, some oinks, and applause.

TAMAR

Again, people looked to see which groups were involved. Then Demas's boss, the Distinguished elder, Johanon, weighed in.

EZRA

People turn into dogs and sows when no one disciplines them to the law.

PISCA

And someone from deeper in the audience challenged this Johanon.

FESTUS

The only things sacred to your type is your social position. Your pearls of wisdom are all self-serving.

TAMAR

The crowd was growing raucous again, when the Teacher raised his hands for quiet and pointed to the sky.

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

PISCA

The Master nodded and indicated the entire audience.

DEMAS

**You all don't want to hand the sacred to those dogs.**

PISCA

Then he nodded to the Distinguished.

DEMAS

**Nor are you all going to toss those pearls of yours in front of those sows. Not when they might want to trample them with those feet of theirs.**

PISCA

He made his throwing out the trash motion and then trampled the ground. Then he twisted his face and snarled.

DEMAS

**And, being twisted, rip you ALL apart!**

TAMAR

The crowd grew quiet at his vehemence. And again, what he said had a double meaning. Our criticisms are worse than useless to twisted people, just making them mad. But calling each other names was also tearing us apart as a group.

PISCA

And this lead more questions.

FESTUS

How do we learn to see what is true wisdom?

PISCA

The Master looked up and indicated the sky.

DEMAS

**Ask! And..it will be given to you.**

PISCA

He indicated his heart as he said the last part. Then another person asked.

ULLA

Where is the path that brings us together?

DEMAS

**Search! And...it will be discovered!**

PISCA

He indicated the crowd and looked surprised as if he was just seeing them. Then someone else asked.

EZRA

But if there was such a path, it would be barred to us the common people.

DEMAS

*(Knocks on an imaginary door.)*

**Knock! And it is going to be opened for you all!**

PISCA

He pretended to knock on a door, open it, and welcome someone. But the questioner didn't like the answer.

EZRA

That's not how the world really works!

PISCA

And the Master just pointed to the sky.

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

EZRA

Why are people so different in your realm of the skies?

TAMAR

Which triggered many "why's" from the crowd.

ULLA and FESTUS

Why? Yes, Why?

DEMAS

**Because everyone asking, gets! Not only does the one searching discover, but also to the one knocking...it is going to be opened.**

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.

What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

Then one of the prostitutes in the back called out a sad question.

ULLA

Even for those like us?

DEMAS

**Certainly!**

PISCA

Then a man with a child spoke up.

FESTUS

If I were any kind of deity, I wouldn't care about most of these people. Why does yours care about any of us?

TAMAR

The Teacher gestured for the man and his child to come to him.

PISCA

The man had a ten-year-old boy with him, who said nothing.

DEMAS

**What about you? A man?**

FESTUS

Not no deity. Just a fisherman.

TAMAR

The Teacher addressed the crowd, gesturing first to the man and then his son.

DEMAS

**From him...might he ask for bread? This child of his?**

TAMAR

The Teacher again raised his hand and waited for a response from the crowd. More and more of us raised our hands as he waited.

ULLA and EZRA

Sure he would! Of course! Yes!

PISCA

The Master then picked up a stone and showed it to the boy.

DEMAS

**You're not going to give him a stone?**

FESTUS

Not a stone! Might offer a fish. I am a fisherman not a stone mason.

PISCA

We laughed. The Master dropped the stone, like rock. We laughed more.

DEMAS

**Surely! And he might ask for a fish?**

FESTUS

Absolutely! We never get tired of fish!

PISCA

The boy looked that crowd and shook his head "no". We laughed. Then something caught the Master's eye and he darted across the stage to get it.

DEMAS

**You don't want...a snake, to give to him?**

TAMAR

It was a live snake. We were surprised. Snakes were common in the area, but this appeared so suddenly. Coincidentally, as Demas would say. The man was confused.

FESTUS

I don't want to give him no snake.

TAMAR

The Master playfully offered the snake to the boy, who reached for it. He looked to the boy's father for approval. The father shrugged and the Teacher gave the boy the snake. We laughed and applauded.

PISCA

The boy took his snake and he and his father went back into the crowd. The the Master spoke to the crowd.

DEMAS

**If, when you yourselves...worthless beings.**

TAMAR

We laughed at the insult. That was also part of his magic. He got us to laugh at ourselves.

DEMAS

**Have identified gifts, good ones, to give those kids of yours. How much better will that Father of yours...the one in the skies...**

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

DEMAS

**Give good things to those asking Him?**

PISCA

This got applause, cheers and some laughter. Then another woman called out.

ULLA

What about what we want from others? Their caring, thoughts, and attention? Can your Father in the skies help us with any of that?

DEMAS

**All, in fact.**

ULLA

As much as I need? I need a lot!

TAMAR

She spread her arms wide to show how much. The Master copied her. Then indicated the whole crowd both times he said "you all". Once with the right hand and again with the left.

DEMAS

**As much as. If you all...desire what they might produce for you all. These people?**

PISCA

The he held his hands apart again like the lady did.

DEMAS

**So much.**

PISCA

Then indicated the whole crowd twice again as said "you yourselves" and "them".

DEMAS

**You yourselves... Must also produce for THEM.**

EZRA

Why? Why can't we just follow the law and the luminaries?

ULLA and FESTUS

Why? Yes, Why?

DEMAS

**Because this IS the law and the luminaries!**

PISCA

Most of us clapped.

FESTUS

How do we follow the path that brings us together rather than the path that leads to our destruction?

DEMAS

**Go, all of you, in through the tight gate.**

TAMAR

He pretended to try to squeeze through a narrow opening between his hands.

PISCA

I didn't understand it, but it made me laugh.

TAMAR

Then he stopped and look at the audience, a spread his arms wide.

DEMAS

**Because wide and spacious...the way, the one leading into...that destruction.**

PISCA

He did his throwing out the trash thing. Then he indicated the whole crowd again.

DEMAS

**And many are the ones going straight through it.**

TAMAR

Then again, he pretended to try to squeeze through a narrow opening between his hands.

DEMAS

**Because tight the gate...and squeezing oneself...the way,  
the one leading into...the life!**

PISCA

His voice went squeaky as he squeezed through. Then he  
gesture toward us all again.

DEMAS

**And, few, are The ones discovering it.**

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

PISCA

We applauded ourselves.

TAMAR

Then lightning flashed again. Closer this time. And again,  
clouds darkened the sun.

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 4

AT RISE:                   SOUND OF CHIME.

TAMAR

Now we are heading into the big fight scene in the Sermon, between the Distinguished and the Teacher.

DEMAS

It had been stewing since the group of Distinguished first arrived.

EZRA

And even before. The Distinguished hated the Nazarene from the first time he started to become known. As they had hated his cousin John before him.

DEMAS

This was when it came to a boil. Because of a man named Simeon. He was the son of one of the most powerful members of the Grand Council in Jerusalem.

EZRA

The Distinguished had sat fairly quietly since the Nazarene's prayer, but they were upset and getting more upset.

ULLA

Like a swarm of angry bees, this Simeon was stirring them up, whispering to them, finding fault with everything the Teacher said.

EZRA

The sky was getting darker, threatening rain again, real rain, and the hour was growing late.

TAMAR

If the Distinguished wanted to make a stand against the Teacher, this was the time to do it. This Simeon spoke out.

*(SOUND OF GONG.)*

FESTUS

This fool is speaking nonsense! Another fake luminary!  
He is a fake like his cousin, John! They are both fake  
luminaries! Stay away from those fake luminaries!

TAMAR

The other Distinguished joined him.

FESTUS, EZRA, ULLA

*(From the Distinguished section.)*

Stay away from those fake luminaries!  
Stay away from those fake luminaries!  
Stay away from those fake luminaries!

TAMAR

This chant dominated the gathering, but few of us in the  
crowd joined them despite their encouragement. Then the  
Teacher began pumping his arm to their chant and called  
out loudly.

DEMAS

**Stay away from those fake luminaries!**

PISCA

We were confused! Was he agreeing with his accusers?

TAMAR

No, he was turning it around. He was against fakes, but  
who were the real fakes?

PISCA

Some of us began to laugh. And then we applauded.

TAMAR

And as the chant of "fake luminaries" died amid the  
applause, the Nazarene took over, explaining.

DEMAS

**Those who make their way toward you...in coverings of  
sheep...**

PISCA

He crouched down and pretended to throw something over  
himself, bah-ing like a sheep. We laughed.

TAMAR

It was as silly as anything he'd done so far.

DEMAS

**Inwardly, however, they are wolves! Clawing!**

PISCA

He leaped toward the crowd, clawing the air with his hands.

TAMAR

But this young Distinguished, Simeon, confronted him.

FESTUS

If our words claw, it is because they prick your guilty consciences. Our clawing bears fruit.

PISCA

The man got in this face, but Teacher ignored him. He moved around him to address the crowd.

DEMAS

**From those fruits of theirs? You are going to find out about them out for yourselves!**

FESTUS

And as you will find out, the sharper our barbs, the sweeter their fruit.

PISCA

The Teacher still ignored him, but he seemed to ponder the Simeon's statement.

DEMAS

**By skill, do they collect from thorn bushes, bunches of grapes?**

TAMAR

He pretended to prick himself while trying to pick something. We giggled. Then he repeated it.

DEMAS

**Or from cacti, figs?**

TAMAR

We laughed, but this just made this man Simeon angrier.

FESTUS

But our fruit performs a public service.

PISCA

The Teacher now addressed the man directly, cheerfully smiling.

DEMAS

**Because every valuable tree has beautiful fruit! It performs!**

PISCA

He made a muscle when he said, "It performs."

DEMAS

**However, the diseased tree has worthless fruit. It performs!**

PISCA

He change his voice to sound theatrical and made little bows right and left when he said, "It performs."

TAMAR

We laughed at the play on words. And the Nazarene's cleverness made Simeon even angrier.

FESTUS

Don't you know who I am? How dare you speak to me that way. My family is powerful!

DEMAS

**It doesn't have the power...**

PISCA

This Simeon got in the Master's face again and interrupted him.

FESTUS

How can you say that? We have money, influence in court, position in society, even armed guards!

TAMAR

As if to demonstrate, he summoned the big guard Boaz to his side.

FESTUS

*(Sneers at DEMAS)*

What power do we lack?

DEMAS

**To have a valuable tree bear worthless fruits...or a rotten tree create beautiful fruits.**

TAMAR

Many of us applauded, hoping that our support for the Teacher would quiet this Simeon. It had the opposite effect.

PISCA

It cause the man to turn his anger on the crowd.

FESTUS

You applaud? Laugh? You are all breaking the law! The temple will condemn you all if you follow this madman!

TAMAR

Now the Nazarene seemed genuinely concerned about the man, reaching out toward him. In response, this Simeon raised his fist. The guard, Boaz, reached out to restrain him from striking the Nazarene.

DEMAS

**Every tree, not wanting to create beautiful fruit? Cuts itself off...**

TAMAR

Then it all happened it just a second, but we will describe it slowly. The Teacher started making a gesture, maybe his chopping off motion, but Simeon interrupted, lunging toward him, shouting.

FESTUS

I'll cut you off!

PISCA

Boaz held him back, grabbing Simeon around the waist.

TAMAR

But, as he did, lightening flashed. A loud crack of thunder.

PISCA

Simeon's arm came loose from Boaz's, seeming to strike the Nazarene in the face.

PISCA

The Master's head snapped back as lightning flashed again.

TAMAR

Or perhaps, the Nazarene evaded the blow, snatching his head back at the last second. Both men fell to the ground. The Teacher backwards. Simeon forwards. The Nazarene's followers rushed forward.

PISCA

For a moment, it was terrifying. We all gasped and cried out, "No!" "No!"

TAMAR

But the Nazarene instantly popped to his feet and smiled. He signalled his followers back. He made light of it, holding up his hands to quiet the crowd. Then he helped Simeon to his feet, signalling Boaz to let him go. The Nazarene smiled warmly at the man and cheerfully offered his other cheek.

PISCA

Simeon looked like he was considering the offer for a moment, balling his fist, but we all shouted, "No!"

TAMAR

At the shout, Simeon looked around as if he was in a daze. The fight had gone out of him. The Nazarene reached out to take his shoulder, perhaps for an embrace, but Simeon pulled away. Boaz helped him back among the other Distinguished.

DEMAS

**And into the fire, he tosses himself.**

TAMAR

That throwing-out-the-trash gesture lightened the mood, but we were all shook up. Ezra tells us that this line about cutting down trees and casting them into the fire was originally from John, the Nazarene's cousin. This condemnation referred to tree of Abraham being replaced. Simeon may have struck because he recognized it before it was completed.

PISCA

And the Distinguished were upset as well. Both at the Nazarene and at this Simeon.

TAMAR

Demas says that some of the younger Distinguished also wanted to physically restrain the Nazarene, maybe take him prisoner to Jerusalem, but the elders knew the crowd wouldn't allow it. Their wiser heads prevailed. Instead, the elders decided that they would walkout.

PISCA

Everything was in turmoil as the Distinguished rose up and began to leave. We didn't know what was happening.

TAMAR

Demas still wanted to hear what else the Nazarene had to say, so he told his elder that he would stay to report what happened. And as we realized that the Distinguished were leaving, most of us were happy to see them go. As they walked out, the Master offered a final observation, repeating an earlier idea.

DEMAS

**Watch! From those fruits of theirs? You are going to find out about them for yourselves!**

TAMAR

Then, someone started clapping. We were applauding the fact that the Distinguished were leaving. We were applauding the victory of the Master over the Distinguished. Victory by offering his cheek. More and

more people were clapping.

PISCA

Then everyone was clapping.

TAMAR

The crowd began bowing toward the Teacher and began shouting his praises.

ULLA

You are our new master!

EZRA

Lead us, Master! We trust only in you!

FESTUS

Master! We will be saved if we just trust in you, won't we?

PISCA

The Master shook his head sadly.

DEMAS

**Not every one saying to me, "Master! Master!"**

TAMAR

The funny voice and bow made many of us laugh.

DEMAS

**Is going to get himself...Into the realm of the skies!**

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

The Teacher then gave a sign to his followers and they repeated another verse from the sayings of our oldest luminary, Moses.

REST OF CAST

You have a Master, that Divine of yours. You will bow down and him alone will you serve.

EZRA

Who WILL get into the realm of the skies?

DEMAS

**Only the one serving that purpose of that Father of mine!  
The one in the skies!**

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

PISCA

And we laughed happily as we joined in. And applauded.

TAMAR

Our mood brightened with the departure of the Distinguished, but the sky was getting darker. Lightning flashed overhead again. Then someone called out.

ULLA

*(From the audience)*

Won't others, like the Distinguished, appoint themselves to enforce this new teaching?

FESTUS

Claiming to act in your name as the Distinguished say they act in the name of Moses?

PISCA

We booed that idea.

TAMAR

But the Teacher surprised us by nodding his agreement.

DEMAS

**Many are going to say to me on that day,  
"Master! Master! Didn't we, by your name, act as  
luminaries?  
And, by your name, personal demons? We tossed them out!  
And, by your name, abilities? Many, we produced!**

TAMAR

He said the last part in a fawning, little voice, while bowing and groveling. We laughed, of course.

PISCA

But the sky got even darker. The lightning flashed again.

DEMAS

**And, at that time, I am going to say the same thing to them. Since I never ever recognized you, you all are cut off from me...you self-employed workers in immorality.**

TAMAR

There was thunder and lightening as he said that, and the black clouds of the storm rolled over us.

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 5

AT RISE: (SOUND OF CHIME)

FESTUS

Which brings us to the only story the man told that day.

TAMAR

My father and I saw the Teacher speak several more times. Some things he repeated, like beginning by calling different groups, "Lucky!" But every time we saw him, he added more stories.

DEMAS

And, more of those stories were acted out. He would narrate, saying all the lines, but his students would act in them.

FESTUS

But that day, early in his career, he did all his own acting. And this story was his last act.

DEMAS

And we sensed it. We could see the rain over the sea. Summer lightning was flashing all around.

ULLA

The crowd was restless. The weather was coming our way. But we were also sad. We would soon be leaving. It had been a special day. We didn't want it to end.

PISCA

My mother and I were specially sad. We would soon be out in the rain. Alone.

TAMAR

A man called out a question. As it turned out, the last of the day. However, since this is the last question, after it, Ezra, Festus, and Ulla will join with Pisca in and I in describing what happen afterward. Ezra?

(SOUND OF GONG)

EZRA

Are your ideas practical given all the problems in the world?

PISCA

We applauded the question.

DEMAS

**Everyone, in fact, anyone, who listens to these ideas of mine, and uses them.**

ULLA

He tapped his temple knowingly.

DEMAS

**He is going to be compared to a practical person! Who constructed his house on a rocky height.**

FESTUS

The Master pointed toward a rock cliff on our left. There was a flash of lightning as he did.

DEMAS

**And, it fell down.**

FESTUS

He said it like it was the end of the story.

ULLA

Most of us laughed. But then he gestured indicating the rain.

DEMAS

**The rain!**

PISCA

We all laughed at the correction. Then he gestured toward the beach below.

DEMAS

**And they showed up...**

DEMAS

Following his gesture towards the shore, we saw the Distinguished, boarding their boat among crashing waves.

ULLA

We groaned.

TAMAR

In my head, I imagined a group of Distinguished showing up at my house during a rain storm. Made me shudder. Again, after the pause, he clarified, making the motion of the waves and got a laugh of surprise.

DEMAS

**The floods! And they blew...**

FESTUS

Who blew? We expected another twist.

DEMAS

**The winds.**

ULLA

He made a motion indicating the winds, which got another laugh. A nervous one since the wind around us rose as he said it. Then the wind motions he was making changed, grabbing something and shaking it.

DEMAS

**And they fell against that house, and...**

TAMAR

He paused, building tension. Then shouted.

DEMAS

**No!**

PISCA

The shout made us all jumped.

TAMAR

He pointed solemnly up toward the cliff and its imaginary house.

DEMAS

**It. Does. Not. Fall! Because? It was built. On. Rock.**

FESTUS

He pointed to a rock at his feet. We laughed.

PISCA

Then we applauded.

DEMAS

**And each one listening to my ideas and not wanting to use them?**

ULLA

He shook his head sadly.

DEMAS

**He is going to be compared to a stupid person: Who constructed his house on a sandy beach.**

PISCA

He made a stupid face and pointed down toward the beach.

TAMAR

We could still see my Distinguished boarding their boat below.

EZRA

Funny coincidence.

DEMAS

**And, it came down.**

PISCA

We knew what was coming. But a few drops of warm rain were also starting to fall.

DEMAS

**The rain! And they showed up...The floods!**

TAMAR

We could still see the waves crashing below as the Distinguished tried to launch their boat.

DEMAS

**And they blew...the winds.**

EZRA

And the wind picked up more around us. Again his wind gestures changed to shaking something.

DEMAS

**And they fell against that house, and?**

ULLA

The Teacher began pretending as though he was being blown this way and that in the wind. We all got quiet. The wind was blowing harder, but the Teacher's struggles were exaggerated. It was raining.

FESTUS

Lightning flashed. Thunder rumbled.

PISCA

Most of us had come to think that he was controlling the wind and weather. It was a little frightening. I clung to my mother.

TAMAR

He pretended he was being blown from one foot to the other.

FESTUS

He pretended he was trying to keep his balance, but it was for show. The wind wasn't blowing that hard.

EZRA

Then the Na Teacher began falling.

FESTUS

So very slowly!

ULLA

We began tittering. He was making it comical.

TAMAR

A big flash of lightning. A clap of thunder overhead. He got a look of panic on his face, windmilling his arms.

EZRA

Then another flash. Another crash of thunder! He opened his eyes wide.

DEMAS

**It fellllllll!**

PISCA

He drew out his shout as he fell backwards. We all laughed and applauded

TAMAR

The rain began to fall steadily.

ULLA

But it was just a warm drizzle.

FESTUS

The Nazarene quickly popped back up. Dusted himself off. He seemed to savor his next words.

DEMAS

**And, it was, the crash of it? Huge!**

PISCA

Then we began applauding.

EZRA

More rain began falling. The gathering was clearly over.

DEMAS

Then the Nazarene started embracing the people around him.

PISCA

The Master hugged me and my mother again.

FESTUS

Then the Nazarene pointed to the sky.

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

TAMAR

Most of us tried to get near the Teacher. To meet him.  
But the crowd around him wasn't moving.

PISCA

And it started to rain harder.

ULLA

Most of us headed out, toward some sheltering groves  
nearer the shore.

TAMAR

And as we departed, each in our group, the chant  
continued.

FESTUS

Most of us chanted along.

REST OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!  
Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF SCENE)

SCENE 6

AT RISE:                   SOUND OF CHIME

FESTUS

And that was what it was like that day. Within our poor power to recreate it.

TAMAR

Afterwards, we all went back to our lives, but with our minds changed. My father became an active follower and supporter of the Teacher and later, his heralds, the Ones Sent. I gave up my charity work, but my father encouraged me to offer my testimony about the Teacher to others. He supported our whole group and our travels until his death last year. He left me an inheritance so we could continue our mission.

EZRA

I went back to the Observers, but I resigned my role as their leader, renouncing all my vows. With others in our community, I began collecting the sayings of the Nazarene and copying them instead of the ancient works. Tamar's father gave us a copy of Quintus's record of the sermon. Since I joined her, our travels have allowed me to collect other sayings of the Nazarene. I send them back to my community. Without my leadership, they have gone from poor to prosperous.

DEMAS

I completed my studies to become a lawyer, but I found that I had lost interest in the letter of the law. I was greatly saddened when I heard of the Nazarene's death. Most of the other Distinguished celebrated. I couldn't. Then we heard that he was raised from the dead, and I became a follower, secretly, in my heart. I declined the opportunity to marry my master's daughter. Instead, I invented the job of spying for the Distinguished among the followers. Then I met Tamar and one thing led to another. We were married. The Distinguished fired me as a spy.

TAMAR

And Demas has proven to have a head for business, taking over my father's enterprises. He and Ezra also set up

a new business distributing and selling copies of the Teacher's sayings. That is what has made Ezra's community prosperous.

## ULLA

I went back to my fishing village, and being a widow and grandmother. But now I had a new hunger for life. The appeal of fish is much overrated. When Tamar, Demas, and Ezra came to our village, I asked to join them. And the whole world has opened up to me since in a new life. The only thing I miss about my old life is my grandchildren. But we get back to Galilee now and again so I still get to see them grow up. And, they are excited to have a new grandpa who renounced his silly vow of celibacy. We married as well.

## FESTUS

And I was so impressed by the Master's performance, I immediately wanted to become an actor. How is that for getting it all wrong? Did I mention that I drank too much at the time? I joined a traveling troupe of actors. My parents grieved for me as if I had died. And they were right: actors are, generally speaking, horrible people. But, on the road, we met Tamar's group and, seeing them, I remembered and changed. I joined them. Now, however, much to my parent's joy, I have now become an apprentice copyist, copying the sayings Ezra collects. My parents even send me money for copies of the Nazarene's sayings. They have become followers themselves. It is quite fashionable among our set. They are happy that I have moved from pursuing pleasure to pursuing responsibility.

## PISCA

And of course, both my mother and I were cured. Tah-DAH! No sores! Though we didn't realize we had been cured for days, when the sores began to fade. It was, of course, what we had prayed for. We returned to my father and our tribe of sheep herders. My father hadn't divorced my mother. We had a home again. My mother gave birth to my baby brother, a spotless, vision of the divine. Because we had been cured by the Master, we became local celebrities. Mother and I had described the experience many times to others. When we heard the Nazarene had died and been raised, we became followers. We saw Tamar's group's performance, using Festus's idea of recreating

the event, and it was like being with the Master again. I immediately wanted to join them. Living that day over and over. But my parents refused. It was improper for an unmarried girl. Then Ulla had an evil idea and introduced me to Festus.

FESTUS

And we hated each other at first sight. An educated Greek and a Judean goat girl? We were like oil and water.

PISCA

Oily oil and pure, clean water. As much as I liked the rest of Tamar's group? That is how much I couldn't stand the pompous, egotistical Festus.

TAMAR

And when we saw how strongly they felt about each other, we knew it was inevitable.

DEMAS

Not me, I thought the women were crazy to think they could make it work. I still have a hard time believing in magic.

PISCA

But I was so sick of sheep. As Festus knows, my people herd sheep, not goats. He says goats to tease me, but he barely knows the difference between the two, except by flavor. He was funny and made me laugh. Every since seeing the Master, I do so love to laugh.

ULLA

We all do.

FESTUS

And I never met any city girls that laughed at my jokes like she did. They all have to be so sophisticated you know. So full of themselves. Pisca was so down to earth and humble. As different from city girls as a lamb is from a goat. It made her interesting. We found ourselves spending our time together whenever we could. If only to insult one another and irritate her parents.

PISCA

My parents didn't approve of us at all. He had been an actor. The lowest sort of scum. The more they attacked him, the more I defended him. Festus was a follower now, like they were. He wasn't an actor, but a great storyteller. But the more I defended him, the more they disapproved. It wasn't like I could ever marry him, they said. He wasn't a Judean. I should be spending time with boys with whom I could make a life.

ULLA

So, it was Pisca's parents who raised the issue of marriage, not me or Tamar. I do love it when a plan comes together!

PISCA

And I really hadn't even thought about marriage until my parents brought it up, arguing against it. To marry me, Festus would have to convert.

FESTUS

Do you know what Judean conversion requires? For an adult male? I still shudder at the memory. But there is a romantic nobility in that kind of sacrifice. It was the type of grand gesture that had always appealed to me. I found myself wanting to do it to prove something to Pisca both about myself and about how I felt about her.

PISCA

And I couldn't believe he was willing when he asked me to marry him. It was kind of gross, but also the most romantic thing I'd ever heard.

TAMAR

But among our people, marriages are arranged between the parents. Ezra, as Festus's master, talked to Festus's parents. They were anxious to see Festus settle down.

ULLA

And Pisca's parents couldn't object. Not if Festus was willing to demonstrate such devotion to their daughter. Ezra and Tamar worked out the marriage contract with Pisca's parents and Festus's. Demas did the legal work.

FESTUS

And I did the hard part!

PISCA

And now Festus and I have our own spotless, vision of the divine. Plus another one on the way.

TAMAR

Thank you all for inviting us to tell you our story.  
Working in the dark like this was a unique experience.  
Tell others about us. And remember, as the Teacher says:

All OF THE CAST

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

Change your minds! It has gotten near.  
What? The realm of the skies!

(SOUND OF CHIME)

(END OF ACT)

(END OF PLAY)

## Jesus's Words in This Work

This work demonstrates how entertaining Jesus was as a teacher. It grew out of over a decade of daily effort translating the words of Jesus from the original ancient Greek. What I found was full of humor, wordplay, double meanings, and even rhymes. It is difficult to describe what Jesus's words are like. Humor can't be reduced to explanations. Hearing Jesus speak would have been very entertaining, and his words should still entertain us today.

The translation used here is different than most standard English translations. It follows the original Greek almost word-by-word. Biblical translation renders Jesus's spoken words into proper written English sentences. This work assumes Jesus's words were spoken. The goal is to present how Jesus spoke and how he would have sounded to people of his time.

Unlike most Biblical translations, this version does not rearrange phrases so they sound like they were written as opposed to spoken. Nor does it add words to explain what Jesus may have meant. It offers the words, as much as possible, in the order they were spoken. The meaning of those words is shaped by the fictional context, the questions asked, rather than changing the words themselves. The context was created based upon the words as recorded.

As spoken, Jesus's words are often clearly meant to make people laugh. Greek sentence structure puts the most important words first. However, all humor, in every language, has the punch lines at the end of phrases. This structure is necessary to create surprise and make us laugh. Jesus habitually puts key words at the end of phrases.

Do not be surprised if many familiar verses are difficult to find here. There is no "love your enemy" for example. Different Greek words are translated as "love" in the Gospels and none of them are much like our English word, "love". One means "embrace". Another means "welcome". This translation uses the primary meaning of the Greek words, not their religious or philosophical interpretations.

If any of Jesus's lines seem cumbersome--and some will--think

of their possibilities for humor. They can be smoothed out in rewriting, but the initial goal is to let the players find the humor in the original, as we find humor in Shakespeare lines. If we fixed Henny Youngman's, "Take my wife...please" into the more grammatical, "Please...take my wife", we would never find the humor in it.

To view the research into the Greek for specific verses, go to <http://christswords.com/witness-list/>. This list links to the individual articles that explain Greek verse.

The words themselves dictated the events in this play. Some of these elements are visible in English translation. For example, in the Sermon there are many sudden shifts in the topic. The events in the play explain this simply. Questions from the audience drive most topic changes. The questions are in context, so the changes in topic flow naturally.

Some of the elements dictating the play's events cannot be seen in English translation. For example, there are shifts in Greek from the plural "you" to the singular "you". In the play, this is captured by Jesus shifting from addressing the audience to talking to an individual. The text also has places where Jesus seems to be repeating questions, but, in translation, the questions are turned into statements.

There are also many words that are changed in translation because they don't make sense without the larger context. For example, in English translation those who mourn are "comforted", while in the Greek, those who mourn are being "called upon" or "called near". This, however, is confusing. "Called near" to what? Where? In the play, the context is provided to explain that meaning.

Finally, many of Jesus's words are highly descriptive of actions, inviting the sense they were acted out. Some of this active nature is hidden by translation, making the words seem more philosophical. For example, the word meaning "embrace" is translated as "love", and the word meaning "tripped up" is translated as "being offended". The originals are more easily acted out in a humorous way. If we assume Jesus acted out his words, some of the sayings that seem ridiculously harsh, even crazy, such as plucking out eyes, and chopping off hands, are just entertaining exaggerations.

Production Notes

**Audience Participation:** The audience should be encouraged to join into the production. This primarily means getting the audience to join the cast in the "realm of the skies" chorus and encouraging them to applaud where the crowd at the original sermon applauded. The players can get various parts of the audience to play different roles as well. In this version, only the Distinguished section is clearly identified, but the play is designed to that there can be parts for other audience sections as well: followers, foreigners, outcasts, ascetics, and so on.

**Laughter:** The most difficult aspect of the play is laughter. You can direct an audience to applaud, but not to laugh. There are many lines describing the audience laughing during the original sermon, but these can be dropped or added. These lines are more numerous during the beginning of the play. Their purpose is to let the audience know that it is okay to laugh and, ideally, get them laughing. Of course, audiences and performances differ. If the audience is laughing during a performance, these lines can be dropped or changed to "We laughed too!" lines. If the audience isn't laughing, the players can add more "we laughed" lines, and even make a joke of the audience not laughing.

**Player Skills:** The witnesses in the play are not skilled actors and they are proud of it. This means that the actors playing their roles can be amateurs as well. They are allowed a certain amount of clumsiness. Even the recognition of their mistakes by others in the play should work well. However, skilled actors can change their voice and play different characters from the audience. The play is also designed so the number of characters can be increased or decreased by reassigning lines. I have done this constantly in writing the play. It originally started with twelve characters instead of its current six.

**Acting out Words** The words Jesus uses often describe actions. These words are meant to be acted out. Descriptions of such actions are provided more in the first act, especially when the same actions are used later in the play. However, as the play goes on, the stage direction is simply, "Acting out his words". This action should always be humorous and entertaining. Clumsiness also works here.