

“Not Just a Memory”: a Holy Week sketch for two players by Robin Hill

*Inspired by Frederick Buechner’s book, “Wishful thinking”
and by the writings of Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan*

Scene: A PR executive’s office

*Cast: Jones (A potential client, carrying a small wooden cross)
Smith (a smart-suited PR executive, sitting at a desk, an empty
chair opposite)*

[Jones enters.]

J: Mr Smith?

S: Mrs Jones! How good to see you. Do come in! Welcome to Weatherby, Willoughby, Dechmont and Phipps: Public Relations specialists. At your service!

[Jones sits.]

J: Thank you very much. It’s kind of you to see me.

S: Not at all. Not at all. We at Weatherby, Willoughby, Dechmont and Phipps are always keen to help in any way we can. Remember our motto: “WWD&P: helping you be what you want to be.”

J: Very catchy.

S: I like to think so. It seems you have an idea to promote.

J: Well, I reckon I might. I’ve decided to call it “Christianity”.

S: “Christianity”, eh? That’s a new one. What’s it all about Mrs Jones?

J: Well, it’s a religion.

S: Ah, there’s a big market out there for that kind of thing. Tell me more.

J: Basically, it’s about a baby boy called Jesus, who is born into poverty and who grows up under the cruelty and domination of the Roman Empire.

S: Human interest, and a bit of drama too. I like it already. You’re speaking my kind of language, Mrs Jones. Pray continue.

J: This Jesus brings good news that God is very near. And more than this, Jesus tells folk that God’s presence can be found in the lives of very ordinary people,

sometimes when they least expect it. If they get close to God, then God can change them – and also change the world.

S: Hmm. Sounds a bit ... “theological” to me.

J: Oh very! You see, the argument goes like this. If God exists, and if God loves not just the great and the good, then it kind of follows that the whole world should know all about it. Men, women, girls, boys. Everyone, really.

S: Everyone! How utterly fabulous! What a God-given public relations opportunity. So, tell me more about this Jesus of yours?

J: OK. Jesus knows he’s kind of different from you and me. He comes to see that God is his heavenly Father, and that he is being called by God to change the world. While Rome’s Empire is all about cruelty and brutality and violence to keep the rich rich, and poor poor, God’s Kingdom is about grace and openness and equality and community and compassion.

S: Let me guess: that message didn’t go down well with Rome.

J: Correct. Lots of people thought Jesus was a trouble maker.

S: And was he?

J: Of course he was! He told everyone that in God’s Kingdom poor folk and weak folk and rejected folk actually find a place of acceptance. That kind of thinking can make you lots of powerful enemies you know.

S: Let me get this straight: you want us to tell all the world about this chap who takes on the power of the Roman Empire ... and wins!

J: To tell the truth, it’s a bit more complicated than that. He actually takes on the power of the Roman Empire ... and loses.

S: Loses?

J: Yes, loses.

S: Hmm. I think I need to know more about this. Tease it out for me just a tad, if you will.

J: Quite simply, they kill him. Crucified, dead and buried. That was on the Friday. But, then on the *Sunday* ...

S: Go on ...

- J: Well, on the Sunday, everything changes. People who'd seen him dying on the Friday say they've seen Jesus again – maybe not exactly as he was before, but nonetheless there's something that completely convinces those friends of Jesus that he's back – back on Easter Sunday.
- S: A dead human being coming back to life, eh? That's quite a story.
- J: Oh it is! In the days after Easter, Jesus' friends turn around from being a sad, scared bunch of no-hopers into being changed people: changed people who are fired up and ready to work for the Risen Jesus towards a better world.
- S: "A better world". That would be the world to come, I take it. The heavenly world up in the sky? Angels? Harps? Clouds? That sort of stuff?
- J: No, no! Not at all. The message of Jesus is that change starts with *this* world. Political change. Economic change. Real change for those folk who are oppressed or ignored by the world, but who are loved by God. Let's call it "justice": justice in the here and now. Justice that this crucified Jesus lived for, and died for ... and rose again for.
- S: And how do you plan to promote this religion of yours?
- J: Well, we think the cross that killed Jesus could be a really powerful symbol for us. The cross of Jesus says that nothing – nothing at all – can ever silence God's passion for the world – even for the people who crucified him. And that, Mr Smith, is why we are wondering if you might use your PR skills to help us promote our faith through the cross: [*holds up cross*] a symbol of God's dying and undying love in the face of all the terrible cruelty that's in our world.
- S: Just a moment. You want to set up a world religion using a symbol of *death and despair*? Surely not, Mrs Jones. If you want to win yourself supporters, you need to start off with a *proper* symbol. Something that conveys a *proper* message. Something nice. Something easy. Something recognisable. Something like a twinkling star, or a bright sun, or a shining moon, or a beautiful flower. Something folk can feel good about. But this [*points to cross*] ... this cross thing: it's horrible; it's repulsive; it's an instrument of torture, a chilling reminder of one man's agony and abandonment and defeat. As a symbol of your faith, *what on earth could it possibly stand for?*
- J: [*Pause*] Well, Mr Smith, if we're anywhere near right about Jesus and Easter, then, at the very least, [*points to cross*] this cross ... stands for *hope*.

[*Pause*]

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If you use the sketch, have fun, and let me know how it goes.

All the best!

Robin

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