

**Narrator**

*Matthew 26:14 – 16 (Judas)*

**Pastor Doug**

<sup>14</sup>Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup>and said, “What will you give me if I betray him to you?” They paid him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup>And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

**Voice of Judas**

**Sally**

I am Judas, one of the twelve. Jesus chose me, you know. I would have followed him anywhere; I would have died for him. I have seen things you would never believe—the blind, the lame, the deaf healed. The hungry fed, the dead brought back to life. Jesus gave us a vision; he showed us that God was with us. I believed he was the Messiah—the one who would lead the people of Israel to victory. A new age was dawning—where the Romans would be overthrown and the whole world would bow before the glory of Jerusalem.

I watched and waited for three years! When would he fulfill his destiny?

When we arrived in Jerusalem, I knew the time had come. The people came by the thousands to welcome him to the city as their king.

But he didn’t seize his moment!

I knew then I would have to do something. I thought if I handed Jesus over to the chief priests, I could force his hand. How was I to know what would happen? I thought he would declare who he was.

How could he fail to? But what did he do?

Nothing! He just stood there and let them condemn him!

He has turned his back on his own people, and now he’s hanging on a cross!

Why doesn’t he save himself?

This darkness, this unnatural darkness, where has it come from? It reaches out to swallow me and traps me in my broken dreams and despair.

What have I done?

I have betrayed an innocent man; he hangs suffering on a cross. When he dies today, all hope will die with him. Maybe it would be just as well for me to die too. I’ve nothing left to live for now!

**Voice of Limited Vision**

**Thomas**

I am the voice of limited vision. Judas could not see who Jesus was. Judas listened to my voice.

I told him that Jesus, the Messiah, would lead the people to victory and glory. What fine dreams I wove. I made sure that Judas could not see that the Messiah had come to heal and reconcile, not to fulfill nationalist military dreams.

I am the voice of limited vision. I still speak today....Do you hear my voice?

**Narrator**

*Matthew 26:69-75 (Peter)*

**Pastor Doug**

<sup>69</sup>Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” <sup>70</sup>But he denied it before all of them, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” <sup>71</sup>When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” <sup>72</sup>Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” <sup>73</sup>After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.” <sup>74</sup>Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know the man!” At that moment the cock crowed. <sup>75</sup>Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

**Voice of Peter**

**Stella**

I am Peter.

I admit it. I was scared—scared for my life, scared for my family, scared for my friends.

I wanted to be courageous, faithful, loyal, but when I saw what they would do to me, I caved in. I turned my back on my best friend, on my leaders, on Jesus, the one who was, is and always will be faithful to me.

**Voice of Fear**

**Thomas**

I am the voice of fear.

Peter listened to me in the courtyard. Peter knew what he should do; he knew what was right.

I whispered in his ear, stirred up his fears and silenced him.

I am the voice of fear, and I speak today. I will remind you of the ridicule and persecution you will face if you speak out for what is right

Do you hear my voice?

**Narrator**

*Matthew 17:15-26 (Pilate)*

**Pastor Doug**

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. <sup>16</sup>At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. <sup>17</sup>So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” <sup>18</sup>For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. <sup>19</sup>While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.” <sup>20</sup>Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. <sup>21</sup>The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for

you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” <sup>22</sup>Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” All of them said, “Let him be crucified!” <sup>23</sup>Then he asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!” <sup>24</sup>So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” <sup>25</sup>Then the people as a whole answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” <sup>26</sup>So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

**Voice of Pilate**

*Bridget*

I know this Jesus was innocent. I did everything I could to save this man, but a web of politics and religion tied my hands. Someone had really whipped up the mob. I couldn’t afford a riot. It’s my job to keep the peace, make sure the taxes are collected, and destroy anything that even hints of rebellion against Rome.

Well, now he will die.

They tell me he has quite a following. Where were all his followers today? I was willing to let him go free. The crowd was full of rabble-rousers crying out for blood. My wife had a bad dream and told me not to have anything to do with him.

I know he is innocent, but what am I supposed to do. I can’t go to Caesar and tell him, “I’m sorry great Caesar I couldn’t do anything to stop the riot because my wife had a bad dream.”

Better that one man die than have a riot where many more could die.

**Voice of Expedience**

*Thomas*

I am the voice of expedience.

I reminded Pilate that his career would be over if he allowed Jesus to live. I whispered all the excuses, rationalizations, and justifications to Pilate.

I made sure that Pilate’s guilty conscience was soothed.

I am the voice of expedience. Do you hear my voice?

**Narrator**

*Luke 23:39-43*

*Pastor Doug*

<sup>39</sup>One of the rebels who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” <sup>40</sup>But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?” <sup>41</sup>And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” <sup>42</sup>Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” <sup>43</sup>He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

**Voice of the Rebel**

***Michael***

Death is near. It's hard to breathe. I'm afraid. Everyone has to die sometime, but I'm staring right into the face of death. It's dark.

If only.....No.....It's too late for regrets. What's done is done!

I thought we could start an uprising and the people would join us and support us and we could get rid of the Romans. But that didn't happen, and the Romans arrested me as a ringleader and now I'm dying on a hated Roman cross.

There are others hanging with me. One I know. He's a rebel like me.

The other I've heard of. He's no rebel. Some say that he is from God, that he can heal the sick and raise people from the dead. Is that his crime?

On the streets I heard it said that his teaching upset the religious leaders.

But surely that is not enough to kill a man?

Listen to the crowds mock him now. "He saved others, let him save himself." I don't understand why people hate him so?

He said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" Are those the words of a criminal?

I have to speak out! "Leave him alone! Don't you fear God? We are getting what we deserve; but this fellow has done no wrong."

What's happening to me? I've never stood up for anyone in my life! It's this man Jesus.

They say he forgave people their sins. Is it possible that I might find forgiveness?

Remember me, Jesus when you come as king.

His lips are moving. He is trying to speak. What's that?

"Today you will be with me in Paradise."

It's so dark, but my soul is full of light. I'm forgiven. Soon I will be dead, but suddenly I feel more alive than I have ever felt. I'm not afraid. He said I will be with him. ....In Paradise.

I believe him.

**Voice of Grace**

***Thomas***

I am the voice of grace. I was sent by God's spirit to whisper the message of good news into the ear of the rebel. I was sent to tell a condemned man that God loved him and longed to forgive him.

In that place of shame, suffering, and darkness, God's light shone brightly.

I am the voice of grace. I speak softly, but I conquer doubts and fears with the good news of God's love and forgiveness. I overcome limited vision and expediency.

Do you hear my voice?

**Narrator**

*Matthew 27:45-54 (Centurion)*

**Pastor Doug**

<sup>45</sup>From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>46</sup>And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>47</sup>When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." <sup>48</sup>At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. <sup>49</sup>But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

<sup>50</sup>Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. <sup>51</sup>At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split....<sup>54</sup>Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

**Voice of the Centurion**

**Jordan**

I'm a Roman Centurion, and the Roman Empire was built on the likes of me. I do as I'm told.

I was in charge of an execution detail, and it was my job to supervise the crucifixion of three criminals. I'm no stranger to violent death. Over the years I've hardened my heart to the screams of those I've killed, but today—well, today was different. For the first time in my life I questioned my orders. I have never seen anyone die like this Jesus. I know one thing for sure: this man was no criminal.

I found myself drawn to this Jesus, strangely moved by his courage in the face of such suffering.

When he died, I found myself saying, "Surely this was a righteous man!"

I don't understand it. Why does this man's death haunt me so? Watching Jesus die on the cross has changed me somehow. I'm not sure how. He is dead now—dead and buried.

Yet I know I'm not the person I once was.

For some strange reason I'm certain that this isn't the end of the story.

**Voice of Faith**

**Thomas**

I am the voice of faith. I am a gift from God's spirit.

I move within people's hearts. I spoke to the heart of the centurion. I told him that Jesus was no ordinary man. I told him that Jesus' death was not the end of the story.

Like Grace, I speak softly, but I can do great things.

I am the voice of faith. I will speak to your heart if you will listen. Know that God loves you more than you can even begin to imagine.

Do you hear my voice?

*“Voices from the Cross”*

*Palm Sunday, March 20 2016*

*[With thanks to the author of the script, the Rev. Susan Gibson, and to the members of the confirmation class who performed this script, under the direction of Pastor Doug.]*