

I Was There – by John Flokstra

A series of monologues and scenes that blend one into the other, all underscored by a continuous running audio backdrop of selections from The Passion of the Christ soundtrack. Each short scene centers around the concept of being “there” with Jesus or Jesus being “there” with them.

Sc 1: Jesus: I have always been with you.

Sc 2: Anna talking about being there waiting for Jesus and finally seeing him.

Sc 3: Mary’s mother talking about how God was there protecting Jesus

Sc 4: John the Baptizer announcing that Jesus is here!

Sc 5: Woman healed in the crowd, Jesus, and Jairus

Sc 6: Mary Magdalene and Jesus – anointing Jesus feet

Sc 7: Jesus and Martha – unfair that Mary isn’t working with me

Sc 8: Woman caught in adultery, Jesus, Pharisee

Sc 9: Peter in the garden

Sc 10: Simon who carried the cross

Sc 11: Soldier who nailed, Pharisee who watched, Martha’s Mary at the cross

Sc 12: Jesus: I am with you and now nothing can separate you.

Lights dim onstage. In the darkness we hear the music louder and the opening monologue begins. A back and/or top lit spot shows Jesus’ figure onstage. We do not see his face and he is only dimly seen. His words are underscored by the music.

Scene 1: Jesus:

0-1:35

I was there. Before the world was created, the earth formed.

I was there. When Adam first breathed in the cool morning mist of Eden.

And I was there when you fell and knew good and evil and began to die.

I was there.

I was there when my Father’s plan to save you was born.

And I laid down my glory, I laid down my life, for you.

I was there for you.

I have known you before you were born and I was there when you were.

I was there when you walked your first step and blew out your first candle.

When you laughed in the sun in your backyard.

When you felt the wind in your face sledding down those hills.

When you cried when you thought you were all alone...all of those times.

I never left you.

I never will.

Nothing, nothing can separate you from me.

Scene 2: Anna:
(1:36-3:36)

He was here. I held him in these arms.

I think of the years I waited. Waited on God who said, Anna, wait.

(chuckles) I am not a patient woman. I don't like to ... wait.

But I listened.

I was patient.

I waited.

Eighty years and I never left God's house.

Waiting.

Eighty four years with no husband to talk with, to share with, no family.

I had to look to God for His love, to see His smile, to feel His love.

And now, in one day I not only see the face of God, but I am blessed to hold His son.

The baby, who would become a man and save His people. He would now save me.

He was here. Ahhh. He was here.

Scene 3: Mary's Mother: (*talkative Jewish mother, breaking beans in a large bowl*)

(3:38 – 5:56)

I *wasn't* there, I admit, but I should have been. What girl has a baby, her first baby, without her mother there? I told her, I said, Mary, do not go with Joseph for the census. You're going to have that baby boy on the way. I told her. But you know the young people today, am I right, they know better, right. They have all the answers.

And it doesn't help for me to say I told you so. So when we finally see the baby and they tell me about the birth in the cave, a stable, with no blankets, no help. I should have been there. But I wasn't.

He was such a cute baby though, beautiful eyes, lots of hair, big cheeks, the kind of cheeks you can just shngga [she actions pinching cheeks]. And a voice, hoiiy, that boy had a set of lungs. That song, that song, away in a manger, no crying he makes, I don't know who made up that song, but they are not talking about the baby Jesus I held in these arms. He had a temper when he was hungry...oish...

4:46

And just when I'm making plans for them to move in with us, off they go to Egypt, middle of the night, just a note, not even a good-bye. I was mad, hoiiy, I remember. I finally get my kids back into my home where they belong and we have our grandson, Jesus, God's son, under our roof. We were never so blessed. But this is how God wants it I thought. His ways are not my ways.

And it *was* for the best. I cannot imagine our house that next night if they were still here, if he was here. The next night, soldiers came through the village and killed every baby boy two years old and smaller.

5:27

God knew. He knew.

Who am I to tell God what to do? It was a good thing he wasn't here.

Scene 4: John the Baptizer (*rolled up sleeves, a frenzied look in his eyes*)
5:57 – 7:09

He is here! The man I've been talking about, the One whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

Prepare for God's arrival. Make the road smooth and straight.

I am here to get you ready to recognize him as the God-Revealer.

That is why I come here baptizing with water, giving you a good bath and scrubbing sins from your life so you can get a fresh start with God.

But his baptism will change you from the inside out.

I watched the Spirit, like a dove flying down out of the sky, making himself at home in him. The One who authorized me to baptize with water told me, "The One on whom you see the Spirit come down and stay, this One will baptize with the Holy Spirit." That's exactly what I saw happen.

There's no question about it. This is the Son of God and He is here!

He is here.

Scene 5: Woman [healed of hemorrhaging]
(7:10 – 11:00)

The Woman:

I was there...in the shadows. I heard that the Teacher, the Healer, had returned to our village. God's grace, God's gift to us was walking on my streets. Everyone was there. He had the power to heal.

Jairus:

I fell at his feet.
I begged him to come and heal my daughter.
I didn't care what people thought. The meeting place president on the ground...begging.
She is my daughter. She is dying. She is only twelve years old.

The Woman:

Twelve years I have been bleeding. Twelve years being unclean. Blood. Every day.
Twelve years and no touch... no one to just touch my hand, my hair, my cheek.

Jairus:

Even when we touched her, her face, her hand, she didn't respond. My little girl...

The Woman and Jairus together:

I spent everything I had on doctors.
There was nothing else I could do.
I (she) was dying.

8:27

[Jairus joins Jesus]

Jesus:

Who touched me?

Jairus:

Master, there are crowds of people here touching you, crowding in on you.

Jesus:

Someone touched me. I felt power go out from me.
[Jesus sees The Woman. He walks towards her.]

8:58

The Woman:

He saw me. I was trembling. I couldn't hide any more.
Suddenly I was telling him everything, in front of everyone, and why I touched him and how I was instantly healed when I did.

[She stands, healed]

Jesus:

Daughter, you took a risk trusting me, and now you are not broken. You're healed and whole.

[The Woman turns as Jairus comes to Jesus]

Jairus:

Teacher, my daughter ...

Jesus:

I know. Just trust me and everything will be all right.

[Jesus turns]

9:46

Jairus:

He turned and kept walking to my house. I didn't know. My servant had told me that she had died as we were on our way ... to her. I had to push my way through the crowd to catch up with him again and when we got to our house,

10:00

...the mourners ...the mourners told the story.

She was dead. But he didn't stop. He left the crowds at the gate and went into her room.

Jesus:

Don't cry. She didn't die. She's sleeping.

Jairus:

Part of me was angry, why we couldn't be there sooner. Just minutes before. But a bigger part of me trusted him. He took her hand in His and he said,

Jesus and Jairus together:

My dear child, get up.

10:40

Jairus:

She did. He was there.

Scene 6: Mary Magdelene: *(with a mix of laughter and sorrow, of guilt and freedom)*

11:02- 15:27

Mary M:

I don't know why I went there.

I've done too much. Pretty bad stuff.

It was too much to forgive.

But when I heard that Jesus would be there, at Simon's house...

He was there at the head of the table. Rich men around him, many of them men

I've known. I wanted to leave.

I don't remember how I got in but I went right to him. And I wanted to say something but I couldn't. I just started crying, like a crybaby. At his feet.

They were talking about me, I knew it, whispering about me, but what did they expect? Just days before He cast evil out of me, a darkness, a heaviness that weighed me like a thousand millstones.

13:05

And when he did, when he took that away, after that I was lighter. The sky was bluer, I just stayed in my room alone, on my bed, laughing and crying.

Alone but so warm, so free.

I don't know why I went.

I could feel their eyes, their looks.

I washed his feet, poured oil...

Then he was talking to Simon, whose house... but he was looking at me.

14:00

Jesus:

Do you see this woman? I came to your home and you provided no water for my feet but this woman rained tears on my feet and dried them with her hair. You gave me no greeting but from the time I arrived she hasn't quit kissing my feet. You provided nothing to freshen up, but she has soothed my feet with perfume. She was forgiven many many sins and so she is very grateful.

Mary M:

Then he looked right at me and said,

Jesus:

I forgive your sins.

Mary M:

The house didn't like that, saying, who does he think he is? But he ignored them and kept looking at me. His eyes... I was. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. I didn't leave. I know why I came. Because He was there.

Scene 7:

Martha (*busy folding laundry*):

15:28 – 17:50

I was there.

In the kitchen where it seemed I always was when Jesus came over.

I love when he comes over. Lazarus is easier to live with and Mary does her work quicker. They love his stories. I do. But they hang on his every word. Or just sit with him for hours in the courtyard.

They can both do that quite well. Sit with him.

Sit and do nothing.

Do you know anyone like that? They enjoy a well-prepared meal that you've worked on for hours and then leave you to clear the table and do the dishes. Someone has to do the work. If we all sat around ... the place would be a disaster.

So one day I had had enough. After a dinner that would get me accolades in the King's palace, I am left scraping the burnt chicken skin off the iron shelf. I look out and there is Mary, again sitting at his feet, drinking in his words.

[tossing down the towel in her hands, she walks] I walked over. I interrupted, Master, don't you care that my sister has abandoned the kitchen to me? Tell her to lend me a hand.

Jesus: Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it—it's the main course, and it won't be taken from her.

Martha: I wanted to say so much when he said those words. Mary is lazy. She needs to help. I'm doing it all. Why is it always me? Why can she listen ... and not me... Then I heard his heart.

Jesus: You struggle so hard to control your life yourself instead of giving it over to me. Why do you stress so much over making your life work your way? Instead focus on the One who can take that worry, that pain, that past and give you hope and a future? I am the Way. And I am here.

Scene 8: Woman caught in adultery:

17:51 – 21:43

Where was he?

Where was he when my husband stopped looking at me with love? His eyes turning grey when he looked at me.

Where was he when each week I saw him distance himself further and further from me and I was left at home at night alone with the kids?

And where was he when I found out and my husband left me for another woman?

Where was he then? Why didn't he come then? Through that? Through those years?

A loving God who cares about me and loves me but allows all of that to happen? Why wouldn't He keep my marriage together? What God has brought together, let no man break apart.

Why would He let it fall apart?

So when they brought me to Jesus, I didn't care.

I cared as much about Him and what he said as the man they caught me with.

A prophet, a healer, a saviour, I didn't care. I could die.

[Jesus has come and, bending down, started drawing on the ground. Pharisee comes forward on the other side of Jesus.]

Pharisee:

This woman was caught red-handed in the act of adultery. Moses, in the Law, gives orders to stone people like this. What do you say?

Woman:

People had said he was a good speaker, a wise teacher, a prophet, but he said nothing. Just knelt down and wrote in the sand with his finger. Some said "God's Son"... he had nothing to say to me.

He had looked at me. I saw him. Maybe he saw I didn't care. They kept at him--

Pharisee:

--She was with another woman's husband. She has sinned against the Law of Moses. Do you uphold the Law or not? What do you say, *Teacher?*

[Jesus stands.]

Jesus:

The sinless among you, go first. Throw the first stone.

[Jesus goes back to his writing. Pharisee finally sees what Jesus is writing and decides to back away as he "sees others" doing the same.]

Woman:

The leaders backed away, the accusers let go. Stones people had carried with them dropped. And they all left without a word. Soon it was just me. And he was there.

Jesus:

Where are they? Does no one condemn you?

Woman:

No one.

Jesus:

Neither do I. Go on your way. And from now on, don't sin.

Woman:

So I walked. Free.

He saved my life.

Ten words and I don't have to pay any more for what I've done, the lives I've ruined, the ways I've screwed up.

All those years I asked where.

He was there. Here.

Sc 9: Peter in the garden

21:44—24:16

Jesus:

Before this night is over, you will all fall to pieces because of what happens to me.

Peter:

Not me. Even if they all fall away I won't.

Jesus:

This night you will deny you know me three times. Before the rooster—

Peter:

I won't. Even if I have to die with you, I would never deny you.

We all agreed. We wouldn't leave him. All the way to the garden, Gethsemane, he was silent but we told him we were with him, to the end.

Jesus:

This sorrow is crushing my life out. Stay here and keep vigil with me as I pray.
22:23

Peter:

He walked steps away and prayed, pleading that if there was any way to not go through with it that it might be so. On his face in the dirt, he sweat tears of blood. But when he came back to us, me and James and John. We were sleeping. He woke us and told us to stay awake with him. He prayed again and returned but again we had fallen asleep. He asked, "can't you stick it out with me for a single hour? Stay alert with me and pray." So he left again. How could we do that to him? His closest friends in his toughest hour. We were there. He was there. We just couldn't keep our eyes open. Then he returned the third time. He walked up to us, the three of us...

23:31

We were sleeping.

Jesus:

Are you going to sleep on and make a night of it? My time is up. I'll be handed over. Let's go. My betrayer is here.

Peter:

So Judas came, and the guards. They hit him with heavy clubs. He wasn't putting up a fight. They drew blood, cutting him as they bound him. And then they took him. And we fell apart ... and ran. We left him.

Sc 10: Simon who carried the cross

24:17 – 27:50

I was there. Coming in from the country, when I saw the crowds on the road I figured half as much that it was another crucifixion parade. The Romans with their horses and flags dragging their prisoners with crosses on their backs, whipped, carrying the beams they'd hang on to die. This time there were a whole lot more people, crazed pack, hundreds of them yelling and throwing things, cursing, flowing out of the city gates like an un-dammed river.

The foot soldiers could barely hold them all back. We could see three crosses in the middle of them and three men dragging their feet to die.

When we cleared the road we saw more than we wanted.

25:20

I covered my son's eyes.

One of them, Jesus, they said, was beaten, whipped beyond recognition. His eyes puffed shut, his face and body bloody and flesh torn. He was falling. How he could even walk, let alone carry that beam... but no one helped him.

Instead they cursed him at the top of their lungs. Their words with such hate rained on him. Die! Die! I wanted to look away but I didn't. This had nothing to do with me. And he fell again and then the soldiers pulled me in and told me to carry his cross. No, I said, I have my son and our bags.

If you want to see your son again, you'll do it. Now! And he cracked his whip on my boy. Stop Stop. I will! They threw my boy aside. Go home I yelled. They threw me into him. Pick it up! I helped him up and felt the cuts in his body, his flesh in my fingers. The crown of thorns they'd jammed into his head ran blood like water over his face. How he could even stand I didn't know. The whip cracked on my back. Move! I went behind him, carrying his cross stepping in the trail of blood he left... until we got there...

26:52

Golgotha, the place of the skull.

The sound of chains and armor, yelling and swearing. There was a blackness on that hill, the dark blood stained gravel, old spikes, split wood. This was a place of sacrifice, a condemned hill of torture. They threw the cross off me and took him. I turned and ran. His cries and the hammer spike still haunt me. I left him there. I left him there.

Sc 11: Soldier who nailed, Pharisee who watched, Martha's Mary at the cross
27:51—34:29

Soldier:

He was there. The man Jesus, if you can him a man, what was left of him. I've never seen a man so cut and broken as I did before we hung him. And I've seen my share, done my part too in preparing them for their stretch of hell on earth. This one, he didn't say a word. Usually, they're crying, grown men blubbering like babies. Or mad, mad as hell I'm driving seven inch spikes into their hands and feet. But this one, not a word. No fight. No breath. But he was already half dead even before we spat in his face and pulled him up in place. This Jesus, just days ago gets a king's welcome into the city, people laughing, crying for joy, they're saved! Those same ones cursed him to this death. Now he was here. And what kind of saving would he be doing now? Yah, the one who would 'set his people free,' now, he is here. (looking)

Pharisee:

(looking, mocking) We are here! Show us your stuff! Save yourself. If you really are God's Son, come down from that cross!

He saved others—he can't save himself! King of Israel, is he?

Then let him get down off that cross. We'll ... we'll *all* become believers then.

He was so sure of God—well, let him rescue his "Son" now—if he wants him.

Fake!

All you, you who follow this Teacher, this Healer. Come listen to this dead man.

I'm sure he'll forgive your sins now. Here he is!

Martha's Mary

31:48

I didn't want to be there. None of us did.

(*head shaking "no"*) It was too much.

We couldn't believe this was really happening.

There was so much yelling and pushing.

The horses and soldiers. The screams of pain. And then the quiet when they pulled him up. Just hanging by his arms, his hands... How someone could do that to another man...

32:50

We followed him for years. No one spoke like him. We dedicated our lives to his teaching. Wherever he went we went and now, now that would stop. Hanging, he struggled to take in each breath. I held mine each time...like I wanted to help him. It didn't. We sat farther off and could only watch. He called out to God, Father, why have you forsaken me?

33:35

It got dark and there was thunder in the middle of the day.

But people still mocked him. Cat-calling. Leave him! Leave him alone! Let him die in peace. But they wouldn't. Their hate was deep. They wouldn't accept him, they

wouldn't listen to him. And now they could get back at him. He would pay. He would pay.
For nothing he did.

Sc 12: Jesus:
34:30 – 36:07

I will be with you to the end of the age.
Not death or life,
angels or demons,
the present or the future.
Nothing
Nothing
Nothing can separate you from the love of our heavenly Father.
I am here for you. I am here to be found.
I've picked you. I haven't dropped you.
There's no need to fear for I'm your God.
I'll give you strength. I'll help you. I'll hold you steady and keep a firm grip on you. I have been with you from the beginning of time and I'm not going to leave you.

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