

Scene 8: The resurrection garden

Bible

Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10

Aim

To enable pupils to realise that the crucifixion was not the end, but led to a new beginning when Jesus came back to life again. What sort of king is Jesus? A timeless king and a victorious king.

Setting the scene

The women who followed Jesus wanted to prepare his body for burial according to their tradition, using myrrh and spices. Early on Sunday morning, the day after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb carrying the spices she had prepared. When she arrived, she was horrified to see that the stone had been rolled away, the soldiers had fled and the grave clothes were folded on a slab inside the empty tomb. She ran to fetch Peter and John to show them what had happened. They went home dismayed and puzzled, not knowing what to think. Mary was left alone crying outside the tomb when she had an amazing encounter—the person she thought was the gardener was actually Jesus himself!

Character(s)

Storyteller

Scenery

The children come from the darkened space into the resurrection garden room. There is a painted scene of the tomb on one wall. This can be a simple piece of corrugated card supported by wooden slats with a picture of a cave-type scene. For reference see the website, www.easterjourney.org.uk. A separate stone shape should be rolled to one side. If the room has also been used for Scene 3 (see page xx, the story of the stone that the builders rejected) the basic scenery will already be in place, with a bush shape to conceal the empty tomb, and can now be transformed into the garden background. A piece of cream calico is folded at the base of the tomb.

Props

The main impact of the room comes from the abundance of flowers and colour in the space. If you have used the room for Scene 3, pots of flowers can be placed on very low, flat trolleys and wheeled into the room at the appropriate time. Small pots of seasonal annuals, such as primulas are ideal, together with jars of daffodils and other greenery. It is often possible to get a special deal from a local greengrocer or nursery when buying in bulk. As a rough guide approximately 100 bunches of daffodils and 30 to 40 individual primulas would be ample, but much depends on space and budget. The idea is to create a riot of colour and scent as the children enter the room. If the room has already been used for Scene 3, some tall plants and greenery can be left in the room all the time. A water feature could be used to enhance the atmosphere and a hidden CD player could be playing suitable soothing music such as *Becoming Still* by Simeon Wood (*Celtic Heart CD from www.simeonwood.com*) as the children come in.

NB: It is important to leave the flowers overnight in a cool dark place and keep them well watered if you are expecting them to last for several days. They also make excellent gifts for the team at the end of the experience.

Lighting

The lighting needed depends on the room used. It is important to create a bright and cheerful space. If the space is naturally dark, then add up-lighters and lamps to enhance the natural light.

As the children come into the resurrection room, they should sit in groups of five or six with their leader.

Storyteller: Can you imagine it? On the Saturday of that week everything was very quiet. It was the Sabbath—a day of rest—and people stayed indoors. It was a day of great sadness for Jesus' friends. Their world had come to an end. Their leader had been killed and it seemed that nothing would be the same again. All they could do was to wait in stunned silence. It was as if the world was holding its breath.

But the women who had followed Jesus wanted to be near him one last time. They had seen where his body had been buried—in a cave in a garden. And so, very early on the Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene left the house where she was staying. She carried perfume with her, which in her tradition was used to give those who had died a proper burial.

As Mary Magdalene crept into the garden she was worrying because she knew that a great stone had been rolled across the entrance of the cave. But when she arrived she was surprised to see that the stone had been rolled back.

What's happened? Mary thought. Has someone taken Jesus' body away? She rushed back to tell Peter and John. They ran ahead of her and when they came to the garden Peter even dared to go inside the cave. There were the grave clothes lying neatly folded on the stone slab, but the body wasn't there. Something strange had happened. Worried, puzzled and thinking the worst, Peter and John ran back to tell the other disciples.

Mary was left on her own outside the tomb. She was crying. The person who had changed everything for her was gone and now even his body had been taken away. Through tear-stained eyes she saw a man in the garden. She thought he was the gardener and said, 'Sir, if you have taken his body away, please tell me, so I can go and get him.'

Then, quietly, simply she heard him say her name: 'Mary'. Immediately, Mary knew that it was Jesus. 'My Lord,' she said. Jesus was alive! He had said something about this before but his friends hadn't realized what he meant. 'After three days'... 'The stone that was rejected will become the most important'... Jesus was alive in a new Easter way. Jesus told her to go and tell the others and Mary ran overjoyed at the news that Jesus was alive.

Jesus was alive! The message began to be whispered around the streets of Jerusalem and that same message is still being passed around the streets of the whole world to this very day.

The children are led out from the final scene in groups. They enter the first area and sit on the floor with their group leaders.