

WITH ME IN PARADISE

by JOHN COSPER

GENRE: Comedy/Light Drama

SYNOPSIS: The penitent thief reflects on his unlikely conversion and reminds us that no one is beyond God's power to forgive.

DIRECTOR'S TIP: Simple staging and lighting are best. Draw the audience in visually on the thief and give them a real moment to remember.

TIME: 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 3M

THEME: Easter, Forgiveness, Heaven

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Luke 23:32-43

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Easter

SUGGESTED USE: Easter services

CHARACTERS:

THE REPENTANT THIEF FROM THE CROSS

PROPS: None

COSTUMES: Clean Biblical attire

SOUND: Wireless mics if desired

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: Heaven

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The THIEF enters, dressed in Biblical attire - nothing fancy.

THIEF: It's always neat to see a new person show up in Heaven. They're blown away by the beauty of this place. They're humbled when they meet Jesus face to face. And they're so excited when they start to realize all their heroes are up here. Everyone has their favorite, and they're just dying to meet them.

Hey, where's Noah? Where's Elijah? Has anybody seen Peter? Where's David?

David, did you really kill the giant with a slingshot?

Jonah, what was it like being inside the whale?

Noah, how bad did it smell on the ark, really?

I've heard their stories a hundred times. Trust me, the inside of the whale was much worse than the ark!

Pause, shifting from a lighter tone to more serious.

No one ever asks to see me when they get here. Not that I expect it. I'm not a big name like Noah or Jonah. I'm certainly not a big hero. You won't even find my name in the Book. I'm known by one word, and that word pretty much defines my entire life. I am a thief.

I didn't choose to be a thief because I was bad. I did it to survive. I was hungry. My family was hungry. Stealing was the only way to change that. The Romans tossed me in jail a few times as a young child to teach me a lesson. But tossing me in jail with hardened criminals only taught me how to be a better thief. I learned that I could do more than just survive by stealing. I learned how to break into secure buildings and where to search for valuables. I learned where to sell those valuables and get money - real money for my family.

I learned the art of theft like some children learn carpentry or pottery. I hooked up with a partner, and I took good care of my family - until they learned where the money was coming from and kicked me out.

My dad told me to get out of the racket, to find a real job. But what kind of job was I supposed to get? Stealing was the only life I knew. It was my only real skill. I couldn't do anything else, and I certainly couldn't leave my buddy.

Then it happened. We were doing a job inside a house one night when the master woke up. We didn't mean to kill him, but it happened. We defended ourselves, and we left a man to die. Two days later we were back in jail with a death sentence on our own heads.