

Remember Me

A play written by Robert Jackson

Original concept by Robert Jackson and Elgin Louis

This is the most major production that I have written and produced. The uni ministry performed it at before the entire church at an invitational service. It runs for about 25 minutes and we rehearsed twice a week for four weeks. It demands a pretty big arsenal of props, costumes and sounds, not to mention the number of different scenes.

We divided the big stage at John Clancy Auditorium into three sections. Stage right was the Galilean home. Stage left was the zealot hang-out, with a fire, plants, weapons etc. That area was then turned into the area outside the walls of Jerusalem by removing the weapons and the fire and adding the ropes etc. The centre of the stage was used for the Judgement scenes, the prison and Golgotha. We made full use of the lighting system to light up only the area of the stage necessary, and maintain darkness for any scene or costume changes that were needed.

The impact of the play depends on the huge realisation in Scene 6: that these brothers are the insurgents crucified with Jesus. They were probably not thieves, since Rome never crucified people for theft, but only more serious crimes like treason. They were quite likely followers of Barabbas – who was released, but the many zealots who took part in his murderous uprising would most likely still have been crucified. This insight gave rise to the play. It was Elgin’s idea to frame the play with the Judgement Day scenes, and they add huge impact to the performance.

The main theme of the play is the Kingdom of God – “Remember me as you come into your Kingdom”. The message of the play is that we need to fight for the right Kingdom – namely the spiritual Kingdom of Christ, which is won by finding Jesus.

Cast Notes

- ✚ **Ethan:** A young man from a Jewish village. A passionate, good hearted craftsman.
- ✚ **Jared:** Ethan’s brother; similar age and occupation, but more devious and cunning.
- ✚ **Miriam:** Mother of Ethan and Jared. A widow. Caring but scarred.
- ✚ **Reuel:** A self-interested and greedy Jewish tax collector.
- ✚ **Soldier 1:** A daft, idiotic Roman guard.
- ✚ **Soldier 2:** A slightly more “with it” Roman guard.
- ✚ **Soldier 3:** (Also Reuel’s guard) A grunty, stern and violent sentry.
- ✚ **Barabbas:** A passionate zealot leader. Violent, strong, not of many words.
- ✚ **Four Zealots:** Followers of Barabbas (2 guys and 2 girls is a good mix).

Original Cast

- ✚ **Ethan:** Kenson Low
- ✚ **Jared:** Minh Nguyen-Hoan
- ✚ **Miriam:** Rachel Boughton
- ✚ **Reuel:** Dave McLeish

- ✚ Soldier 1: James Scandrett
- ✚ Soldier 2: Thai Nguyen
- ✚ Soldier 3: Elgin Louis
- ✚ Barabbas: Robert Jackson
- ✚ Four Zealots: Rowarne Abourjaily, Ondrej Baco, Leida Queddeng, James Satriawan.
- ✚ Director, co-Producer: Robert Jackson
- ✚ Producer, co-Director: Elgin Louis
- ✚ Costumes: Kate Allen, et al.
- ✚ Props and Sounds: James Scandrett, Shu Jie Ng, et al.

Prologue: The Judgement Seat

Ethan and Jared alone on stage. Bright light on them.

Voice of God: Ethan, Jared, it is time.

Jared: Time... time for what?

Voice: Judgment has been passed. Ethan, you may come and enter my rest.

Ethan: But, Lord, I –

Jared: God, why? I have served you wholeheartedly. I have served your people and served your kingdom. I demand an account!

Voice: It is you who must give an account. All things are uncovered before me. I have examined your life and searched your heart... but you will only understand if you see it for yourself. So, watch, both of you – your final days on earth.

Darkness and Exeunt.

Scene 1: A Galilean Home

A small Jewish home in Galilee – it is poor. Jared is there, crafting stuff, as well as his mum, Miriam, who is washing clothes. Ethan enters, carrying some craft-work.

Ethan: Hey Jared, I'm back. Hello mum. (Kisses Miriam – she just gives a smile)

Jared: How'd you go today, my brother?

Ethan: (Sits down with Jared) Well, obviously I'm back early; there was barely anyone at the market in Galilee today. (He places the goods he still has down)

Jared: (Looking at the goods) At least you sold something, I guess.

Ethan: Since dad... since we lost dad, people are saying that it's not the same quality as it used to be, and they offer so little. I just can't accept the prices they offer, we have to live somehow.

Jared: Well, God's gotten us this far, and I don't think He's given up on us just yet.

Ethan: (amused) Yeah.

Jared: (pause; seriously) Do you think the tax collector'll come today?

Ethan: I don't even want to think about it. Don't you remember last month?

Jared: How could I forget, and simply because we had no money left... but everyone knows what happens then.

Ethan: But it's the same every time – even when we do meet their quotas, they always say that we have more money, they just want to take everything.

Jared: But that's not the worst of it. The worst thing is just the look on his face. Remember that last guy who came? That greedy miser – he was really short and fat... what was his name? Zacheus! To think that that miser could betray his own people; betray all of us and work for the God-forsaken Romans. For generations, they oppress us, crush us and crucify us... there is no greater crime than working for the Romans; that cursed empire. What's this world coming to? What happened to the glorious kingdom that our forefathers had; that we hear about in synagogue?

Ethan: But it's not like Zacheus is doing badly for himself! He gets a great house in Caesarea, and an armed guard wherever he goes.

Jared: He needs it, because one day he'll get what's coming to him.

Ethan: Oh, who's the tough guy now? (They spar a little – jokingly)... Hang on, do you hear that? (Looks around)

There is bustling from the left – Reuel enters with a Roman guard (Soldier #3). Jared and Ethan scramble to their feet, Miriam looks on, worried.

Jared: You tax collectors just love to come uninvited, don't you?

Reuel: Hmmph, you know why I'm here, and my records show that you are well behind your quota.

Ethan: But we've paid you every last denarius! Didn't Zacheus tell you – where is he anyway?

Reuel: Oh, he left – did a complete back-flip on his career. He mentioned something about... repenting? Anyway, it may well be the case that you *were* up to date, but the Romans have plans to build one of the greatest ports in the empire, right near here – in Caesarea. And considering what a great benefit this will be to every one right across Galilee, taxes are increasing to cover the cost.

Jared: (Seethingly) When have you ever cared about our benefit? All you care about is lining your pockets with our money. (Accusingly) You can take your quotas and go to hell!

One of the soldiers punches him in the gut.

Miriam: Jared! (Runs to help him. The soldier slaps her away, far too violently, and she is hurt)

Reuel: Guard!

Ethan: (Looks at his mother. Then, to Reuel) You wicked betrayer. Take your blood money (Throws him his pouch) and go! Never come back, see if I care!

Reuel: You know I'll be back, and next time... well I hope you'll have learned to cooperate.

Reuel and the guard exits left. Jared is OK, he and Ethan go their mum, who's sobbing, and doesn't want to be comforted.

Jared: (To himself) That's it, Ethan. That's the last straw.

Ethan: Mum, are you all right?; he's gone, it'll be OK.

Miriam: I just don't know what to do anymore. We all work so hard, and it keeps amounting to nothing. I watch you toiling, but we just get less and less. Sometimes I wonder what it's all leading toward, and where we're going, and what's it's for.

Ethan: I'm sure that things will get better; all we can do is hold onto our confidence. I mean, we may not see it now, but who knows what the future could bring?

Miriam: You've always been a good boy, Ethan, and I'm so proud of you, of both of you, because you're all I have. And I think now might be the time for you to really put your heads together, and do your father proud. But I have to hang out these clothes.

She takes her basket and exits right.

Ethan: We can't live like this. We can't fool ourselves that we can just let this go on day after day. And mum's so right, we can't just keep plodding along. We need to do something about this; we need to find an answer.

Jared: You know there's someone who may just have the answer.

Ethan: What are you talking about?

Jared: I wasn't going to mention it, but there's just been, you know, talk of someone who really has... a passion... to see us delivered. Someone who's ready to stand up to the Romans and show them exactly how we feel.

Ethan: You don't mean –

Jared: This guy is ready to give his life so that we can be free; he's fighting for a better kingdom, for freedom from the Romans. And here's right here, in Galilee.

Ethan: You mean, a zealot – one of those crazies who go on suicide missions to try and ambush Romans?

Jared: This guy's different. He really has a plan, and a vision to see this nation be free.

Ethan: Well, if he's everything you make him out to be, then, I guess –

Jared: All I'm saying is that we go and check it out for ourselves.

Ethan: Count me in, I'd love to meet this guy. What was his name?

Jared: His name is Barabbas.

Exeunt.

Scene 2: The Zealot Hideout

A cave. Barabbas is there, with his four followers, as well as a stash of extra weapons. They are raggedy, but armed.

Barabbas: (Making a speech) Our numbers are small, but our confidence is strong. We know that it is the Lord's work we are doing, and we stand by Him. (Reading a scroll) "The Lord will deliver his people; He will bring justice to Israel." And we know that a new kingdom awaits us – it's in our hands to...

Ethan and Jared enter. Everyone reaches for their swords.

Barabbas: Who goes there – identify yourselves!

Jared: My name is Jared, and this is my brother Ethan. We are here because we've heard about your passion and your zeal to see us delivered from the tyranny of the Romans. We have come to join you in your struggle. That is, if you really are Barabbas, and if everything they say about you is true.

Barabbas: I am Barabbas, (Jared kneels on one knee – Ethan sees it and then follows) and you have done well to find me. As for what people say about me, I care very

little; my focus is on fighting for justice so as to bring down the Romans. You seem to be fine young men, but how do I know that you are worthy to be my followers? (Jared starts to speak) How do I know that you will be willing to die for this cause, because let me assure you, that may well be the price of the battle we fight!

Jared: We have lived all our lives under the oppression of the Romans. We have seen our father live and die under hardship and toil, and our mother's spirit broken. We will go to any length; we welcome any test.

Barabbas: And you, Ethan, what do you have to say for yourself?

Ethan: (Nervously) I am at your service, sir – what we have come for, (More confidently) we're doing together... all the way, I guess.

Barabbas: Well then, (To the others) I introduce our newest acolytes, Jared and Ethan.

The others all come and give them firm hand shakes and pats on the back, and bid them sit down.

Barabbas: As you all know, there are currently tax collections happening across Galilee, robbing our people of their savings and their livelihood. And for what? Simply to send it to Satan's throne, the cursed city, Rome – the seat of oppression. (Shouts of disapproval) And will we sit idly by while this injustice is perpetrated in our land? Never! We must strike out! And we shall no longer waste our time in this petty region. We shall journey to the true heart of our nation; the one place where we can break the hold of the Romans – we shall journey to Jerusalem. And we shall place an ambush outside the city walls, and lie in wait for the soldiers as they come past. And when they do... we shall do the Lord's bidding. (Silence) Let us depart, we have work to do, and day is drawing near! (The four followers start to leave) Jared, Ethan – a moment.

Jared: What would you have us do?

Barabbas: Just keep up with the rest of us, and remember – (Hands them weapons) you are on probation – I'll be watching your every step. Now go home and get some supplies – you'll need it for the journey to Jerusalem.

Exeunt.

Scene 3: A Sudden Departure

Back at the house. Miriam is alone, looking worried. Ethan and Jared enter. There are some clothes etc. in a pile near where Ethan and Jared enter.

Miriam: Where have you been? I've been worried sick! There was no one to go to the market today.

Jared: Mum, we won't be going back to the market – at least, not soon.

Miriam: What do you mean?

Jared: Well, we just came back from meeting with someone. Someone who knows how to free all of us from oppression. We're going to Jerusalem, to liberate all the Israelites – just like Moses did. We just need to grab some supplies, and mum, we also want to go with your blessing.

Miriam: What? What are you saying? Who have you –

Ethan: Mum, it's OK – Barabbas knows exactly –

Miriam: Barabbas! He's a wild, dangerous man –

Jared: Miriam, we've made our commitment. It's time for us to do our dad proud, and take our destiny into our own hands –

Miriam: Stop right there. I want you two boys to listen to me, and think about what you're doing. If you boys go off with these thugs, you may never come back. You could be arrested, cut down by soldiers – or, worst of all... You know what the Romans do to anyone who rises up against them – they give them the worst death imaginable – (Grabs Jared's wrist and gestures) they nail them up – is that what you want? Is that what you want to put me through? You're all I have left – everything in the whole world, all my hopes are in you. I refuse to let you put your lives on the line like this, and for what? – I refuse it! How will I ever survive with you gone? And you talk about doing your father proud? Do you think this is what he would want? For you to run off with a bunch of savages, and get yourselves killed? I told you to use your heads, and now you're acting like children – both of you. And what do you think you'll achieve? Do you think you'll break the might of the Roman empire? They have hundreds of soldiers – hundreds! I thought you were sensible. No, you don't have my blessing – not for this, never. In fact, I forbid you to go, I forbid it... Ethan (almost in tears) tell me you'll stay. (begging) In the name of God, please stay.

Ethan: (Broken) Mum... I –

Miriam: Don't leave me. Don't leave me with nothing. How will I live? How will I survive with you gone?

Jared: (Incredulous) Mother, I – I thought you'd support us. Why aren't you proud of us? We're doing this for (large gesture) all of us, to have our own kingdom; we're fighting for... for you – and for dad. We're ready to die for you. Can't you see that? But with or without your blessing, we're going to Jerusalem. We have a mission to fulfil – and a kingdom to fight for.

Ethan: Mum, we're... we're in this together.

Miriam breaks down in tears. Jared grabs the clothes nearby.

Jared: (To Ethan) Come on, let's go.

Ethan looks woefully at Miriam. He goes and hugs her (she does not want to be comforted)...

Ethan: Mum, we will come back. We'll... we'll be careful.

Jared: (Leaving) Come on man, we're on a schedule.

They leave. Miriam is left weeping. Lights down.

Scene 4: The Trap

It is night, outside the city walls of Jerusalem. The Four Zealots + Barabbas + Ethan and Jared are waiting in ambush. Everyone is hiding behind something (Ethan is hiding behind a flowery hedge). The zealots have ropes all in position, ready to tie up the guards as they walk through. The trap involves looping three ropes in an ambush, with one zealot on each end. When Barabbas gives the order, each zealot needs to lift and pull at the same time, with the three soldiers (conveniently) standing in the middle.

Barabbas: (Pause. Whispering) Is everyone in place? (muffled positive responses)

Three Roman soldiers come clop-clopping onto stage. Soldier 1 comes to a halt right in the middle of the trap. The others stop as well.

Soldier 1: Whoa boy! (Looking straight at Ethan)

Soldier 2: Why are stopping!?

Soldier 1: Consider the lilies, how they grow.

Soldier 3: You're a complete nut-case, aren't you?

Soldier 1: Arr –

Soldier 2: Gimme that money, before you do something stupid!

Soldier 1: Like what... exactly?

Soldier 3: You idiots, shut up, we're not supposed to talk about that – that money's supposed to be going toward public works.

Barabbas: (Jumping out) NOW!

All of a sudden, the Zealots leap out, and they pull up their rope around the soldiers.

Soldier 1: Halt!, in the name of Caesar.

Soldier 3: An ambush!

Soldier 2: Where's my sword?

Barabbas: (Looking at Ethan and Jared) It's time to prove yourselves.

Jared: (Rushes out) That's for mum (stabs soldier 3), that's for dad (stabs him again) and that's for Jerusalem (stabs again).

Soldier slumps, dead. Ethan stands brandishing his sword – confused and hesitating.

Jared: What are you waiting for?

Barabbas: Do it!, In the name of the kingdom!

Ethan begins making a bold, deathly approach. All of a sudden, there is a great sound of swords; an entire armoured regiment!

Zealot 1: The Romans!

Zealot 2: An entire squadron!

Barabbas: (Drawing his sword) 'Till death!!!

Darkness. A great flourish – grunts, shouts, screams, scampering, falling and clinking of swords. There is silence and exeunt.

Scene 5: In prison

Jared and Ethan are sitting, chained up, alone in a cell.

Jared: (Trying to be confident) Now, it's all in God's hands.

Ethan: I can't believe it's come to this. I promised mum that's we'd be careful... and come back safe. I promised her. But look at us (he's broken) We're condemned – sentenced to be –

Jared: (Interrupting) But the cause will live on. Can't you see that the Lord is with us?

We thought all hope was lost – we thought that all of us were done for. But then, the crowd – they rallied to our side. Remember the way they cried out? “Release Barabbas! Release Barabbas!” It was exultant – everyone supporting our cause.

Ethan: Are you so blind? What do you know about God? What do you know about principles? All you know is blindly following what you think is right. Do you honestly think those people were supporting us? They didn’t care about us; and they certainly didn’t care about Barabbas... you are so blind.

Jared: Then why were they –

Ethan: Because of that other guy – you saw him, Jesus, the one they call Christ. Everyone hates him, he keeps making trouble for the Pharisees, but Pilate wanted to release him. The only reason they were saying to release Barabbas was to make sure that Jesus would be condemned. It’s that simple. And now we’re going to die, and leave mum childless – and you’re acting like this is some kind of victory. It isn’t. It’s a failure; a tragic, terrible failure that should never have happened. We should have listened; we should have thought. (Exasperated) We should never have let this happen!

Jared: What are you talking about? Are you saying that we should have just gone on living like we were – poor pitiful wretches, without a hope, without a say? Would you rather have been a victim your whole life, like dad was –

Ethan: Don’t talk about dad like that! What’s come over you? Ever since you heard about Barabbas you’ve been so... different. You’ve forgotten what’s important, you’ve –

Jared: I thought we were in this together. I thought you supported me. Obviously I was wrong. Obviously you were never with me in the first place. You’re the betrayer – you can go to –

Ethan: Jared! I didn’t mean to; please, don’t –

Jared: Listen, I don’t even want to talk about it anymore. Go to sleep. We’ve got a hard day ahead of us. (Sleeps)

Ethan: God... I can’t imagine how distant you are right now. From me, from all of us. I’m sure that you didn’t want things to turn out like this, but I know in everything, through everything, you are working. Working to deliver your people, to free all of us, to set up your kingdom. I confess all of my sin before you. I confess to taking things into my own hands; to forgetting you, forgetting your plan, forgetting to trust in you. I know that tomorrow it will be your justice at work. How I dread the day!... All my life, I see those wretches, crucified, hanging on for one last breath, and I said “Never! Never me!”, dear God! Deliver me, deliver all of us... I hoped so much today that Jesus would have been the one freed. Barabbas deserved every bit of what was coming to him. But what did Jesus do? Why, God, is he condemned? You know his works better than I! But everyone in Galilee knew of him. For years he’s been working miracles all over. And many times, I saw and heard him, from afar. Sometimes I longed to draw closer... longed to... but now it’s too late, it is all up to you. I can do nothing but accept my fate. It makes me think that maybe, just maybe, I’ve been fighting for the wrong Kingdom. Jesus, he never took up arms, he never even talked about countries and armies. But maybe he was fighting for a greater Kingdom – greater than I ever imagined. But I’ll never know, all hope is lost... Into your hands, God, I commit myself. (Sleeps)

Darkness

Scene 6: Golgotha

Jared and Ethan being crucified – Jared on the left and Ethan on the right. There is an empty space between them – that's it! ... Sounds of the mocking crowd "Save yourself", "Come down", "If you're the Christ, save yourself!" etc.

Ethan: (To himself) Why are they cursing him? He... he's done nothing wrong. But me... God knows I'm getting exactly what I deserve.

Jared: (To "Jesus") Yeah – aren't you the Christ? Go on, save yourself and us!

Ethan: (To Jared) Don't you fear God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. (To Jesus) Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. (Pause) Paradise? I... I'll be with you?... Jesus, I knew it was you. This pain. I'm so weary. Lord, be with me. (Dies)

Dark and exeunt

Epilogue: The Judgment Seat

Ethan and Jared alone on stage. Ethan is hanging back and afraid.

Jared: No. I don't understand it. What's *he* (Points to Ethan) done to deserve it – to deserve paradise? He's sinned just as much as me! Where's the justice in this?

Voice: Still, you have failed to understand, even though it is so clear. Jared, the only way to me is through My Son, whom I sent. Your brother realised, even at the last moment, that Jesus was the way to Me, and that the true Kingdom is won by finding me, and not by taking up arms in battle. This is because my Kingdom is an eternal one.

Jared: But God, I... I prayed, I –

Voice: I never knew you! Depart from me!

Jared falls off into the darkness. Ethan is petrified!

Voice: Ethan, why are you afraid? Come.

Ethan: But Lord, what have I done... to deserve this? I, I'm so unworthy. I committed so much treachery, I always forgot you, I was so... Why do you forgive me, Lord? How could you...?

Voice: You never knew why Jesus was condemned, did you Ethan? You never understood why He had to die. But He was dying for you, Ethan, to pay the price, so you could be set free. And you accepted Him, Ethan, as your Lord, and left your former life behind you. And so, I declare you innocent of every transgression. Now come, I have prepared a place for you.

Ethan walks confidently into the light.