

Between Us!

By Alan R. Hergert

Overview: Two lives are bound together until He comes into their lives.

Time: 10 to 15 minutes

Characters: Diz (Dysmas*) – repentant thief
Jes (Gestas*) – non repentant thief

* these are the names traditionally given to the thieves on the cross.

Props: None

Costumes: Modern casual clothes – or traditional Biblical time clothes

Lighting: General lighting.

Sound: Two wireless lapel mics (optional).

Scene opens with an empty stage. Jes enters stage right as Diz enters stage left. Each look out over the audience. The dialog is directed to the audience not to each other. As one speaks, the other looks down in a contemplative mood.

Together: I wonder how he is.

Diz: I have known him since, well, since I can remember. When I first met him, I thought, “Here is a rough one. What do I need with him?” His ways were not my ways. He always enjoyed a good fight, using his fists instead of his brain. I was much better at avoiding trouble. If it couldn’t be avoided, I would simply talk my way out. Maybe that’s why I liked him so much. He was so different than me. He was always jumping in. One time, we found ourselves by the Jordan River. It was so hot that day. Well, I don’t know why but he jumped in, head first. That is when his hard head met an even harder rock! I laughed so hard I almost fell in. He was angry with me. I told him maybe it knocked some sense into that thick head of his. Fortunately, I am not only smarter but I am also faster. His anger subsided and we both had a good laugh. He picked me up and carried me back to the waters. We laughed so hard I didn’t think anything of it until after he threw me in. He scolded me and warned me not to laugh at him again. We were so different then. It didn’t matter. He made his way into my heart and...

Together: We became close friends...

Jes: When I met him, I thought, “Here is a thinker. What good is he?” I am a man of action. I leave thinking to the weak. If I see something I want, I take it. No need to think! If there is trouble, my fist will do my talking for me. If my fist doesn’t work, there was always a rock, a stick or a sword nearby. He is different. He enjoys using his tongue. He is good, very good. He is better with his tongue than I am with my fist. There were

many times he got us out of a serious situation with his words or a well placed bribe. Of course, there are times his tongue betrays him. One hot day, we were on the banks of the Jordan. Well, he said, "If you are so hot, why don't you jump in?" So I did. I hit my head on a rock and almost died. He was on the bank laughing at me! I was so mad at him! I chased him down, picked him up and threw him into the water! He is not as fast as he thinks. There was a group across the river with a rabbi getting baptized so I told him, "You laugh at me again and I'll baptize you with my fist!" I don't think he ever did either. He was always coming up with plans. One time, he had a plan to steal the offerings the Jews used and then sell them back. He said, "We'll go down to the money changers, steal the doves then sell them back." It may have worked but he wanted me to dress up like...

Together: A woman.

Diz: I had a plan to dress him up like a woman! It was a simple plan. He would dress up like a woman and talk to the money changers while I stole their doves. Later, we would return and sell them back making a tidy sum of money. It would have worked too. He was an ugly woman but not as ugly as some I've seen near the temple. The very day we were going to make good with our plan, there was some commotion at the temple. All the moneychangers left. Too bad, that was one of my best ideas. It was a lot like the wine selling scheme we had going. We would listen carefully on the street to find out when the local rich were having a feast. We would sneak into the feast and make our way into the kitchen. Once things started to get lively, we would take vats of wine out the back. We had vats half filled with water waiting. We would pour the wine in and when the house ran out, we would sell them their own wine at a good price. He was strong and could carry two vats at once. Our business was doing quite well until...

Together: The wedding...

Jes: Oh, we had a great business until the wedding. We would wait until one of the local merchants would have a feast then we'd sneak into the kitchen and steal the wine. I could carry two vats at once! It was my idea to carry water in. Then if anyone got nosey, we had an excuse. See he is not the only one with brains. We made quite a lot of money. When the head of the house found out he no longer had wine, he would pay handsomely! We always thinned the wine with water. It went further and the guests always were too drunk to notice. We were doing a brisk business until we went to the wedding. At first, everything was fine. I brought in the water and took out the wine but when we came back to make our sell, the servants said they had plenty of good wine! Good wine? Who saves the good wine? I heard later that someone had actually turned the water we left into wine. That is absurd! That was just the start of those stories! Miracles, miracles! Everyone was talking about miracles! We decided to have our own little miracle business. It was simple. I would act lame and he would heal me. He could talk to a crowd like no other that is for sure. They would pay anything for a miracle in those days. We made out like bandits. Well, we were bandits! He had it all figured out too. If the miracle did not work, he would simply say...

Together: “You do not believe”.

Diz: That’s what I would when my miracles didn’t work. “But we do, rabbi!” they would say. Rabbi? I have been called a lot of things in my life but I never got used to “rabbi”. I thought of myself more as a “shepherd shearing his sheep” than a rabbi. It was easy. He would be lame and I would make him walk. He would collect my fees while I healed the weak. “The weak”. Their only weakness was in their minds. If they knew who I was, they surely would have thought twice before they handed over their last mite to me for something I could not do. We did this little act for quite some time. It was going well until people started asking for more. You know, “heal my son, the leper” or “make my blind daughter see”. We didn’t know where they got these crazy ideas! One time, we were in Bethany and heard about a man who was very sick. He was so sick that he finally died. Now his sisters knew a certain rabbi who could heal the sick so they sent for him but he could not come until after the brother died. Do you know what that rabbi did? He raised the brother from the dead! Now, how was I to compete with that! After that we couldn’t get anyone to believe our story. We had nothing. Nothing but each other. There were many times we found ourselves begging for just a simple bite to eat. One such time, we found ourselves on top of a hill. People started gathering. We decided to get a closer look. The crowd was large, maybe the largest we’ve ever seen. There must have over 5,000 gathered there. We found it easy to mingle in the crowd. “This would be any easy day for stealing a purse or grabbing a lunch”, we thought. We were wrong. These people, all 5,000 of them, were worse off than we were. They had no money. They had no food. We were a little confused as to why they were there. Then we saw some men passing through the crowd.

Together: They were handing out fish and bread.

Jes: Fish and bread? If I hadn’t been so hungry, would have passed on that meal. But even a strong man like me needs to eat even if it is fish. We could not figure out how they had enough to feed us all but they did. They even had some left over. Now this is the type of men we needed to be with! They must have been rich to feed so many. And with all that money they would not miss what little we would take from them. We asked those in the crowd who these men were but no one seemed to know. We asked if they were rich and found out they were as poor as we were. We asked where they got all the fish and bread. A boy told us he had given them five loaves and two fish. “Five loaves and two fish?” I said, “To feed this crowd?” “Yes”, he replied and disappeared into the crowd. It was strange but not as strange as our next adventure. He got to thinking that if we were hungry, we should go to where there is food. He said we could have all the food we could eat if we went to the sea. Food!?! He meant fish! Oh, how I hate fish. It’s so... well, fishy. Anyway, we went down by the sea and he talked a fisherman right out of his boat. He is good, isn’t he? We decided to give up crime and make an honest living. We hadn’t tried that before so what could we lose? It seemed simple enough.

Toghether: You throw your net into the water and pull out the fish.

Diz: What could be simpler than that, right? Of all his crazy ideas, this was the craziest! He didn't even like fish! "It's so fishy", he'd say. Ugh, me – an honest fisherman. Can you believe that? We wouldn't even have gotten a boat if I hadn't told that fisherman I was a Roman boat inspector. He figured it couldn't be that hard and at least we would have some food. Boy, was he wrong. Our first night out, our first night out, we ran into a storm! The waves were hitting the boat and we were going up and down, up and down. Well, he got sick so I helped him lean over the edge of the boat to, well, you know and I saw the strangest thing. I saw... I saw... well, it had to be a ghost walking on the water out to a nearby boat. Then I saw a sailor from that boat get out and walk on the water too. It was hard to see but I think the sailor began to sink. Then they both got into the boat and the storm stopped. They went to the other side so I followed them to Gennesaret. It took us a little longer because he was still sick and I was rowing all alone. I never did find those sailors. Oh, well, the storm was probably playing tricks on me... We never did go out on the water again. Which is a good thing, he wasn't good on the water anyway. Last week, we came back to here to Jerusalem. There is always something going on. Always a lot of people - a lot of action - a lot of opportunity if you know what I mean. Well, we were mingling in the crowd making the most of the situation when all of a sudden people started throwing palm leaves into the street. We didn't know Caesar was arriving so we tried to get a closer look and we saw a rabbi...

Together: Riding a donkey! (Both continue with heads up...)

Jes: What king rides a donkey! A king rides a steed!

Diz: A king upon a steed never had a more joyous welcome!

Jes: He was weak! He was no king at all! He was a fool and He fooled them all! But the crowd cried out...

Diz: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Jes: There were those in the crowd who plotted against him.

Diz: We tried to follow...

Jes: But the crowd was too large.

Diz: We went back into town...

Jes: But He was not there.

Diz: We went to the temple...

Jes: But they had not seen Him.

Together: They called Him Jesus.

Diz: This was the rabbi we had seen at the Jordan.

Jes: He was the one who had chased out the money changers...

Diz: The One who had changed the water into wine...

Jes: The One who had raised the dead...

Diz: The One who fed the 5,000...

Jes: The One who walked on the water...

Diz: The One who rode the donkey...

Jes: The One who I never wanted to see again!

Diz: The One who I had to see again!

Jes: I strongly protested but we looked for Him the next day,

Diz: We found only crowds.

Jes: And the next...

Diz: Faceless crowds...

Jes: And the next.

Diz: In hopes of seeing Him again.

Jes: Then one day, someone tapped us on the shoulder.

Diz: It was the Roman guards...

Jes: I tried to fight!

Diz: I tried to run!

Together: But our deeds caught up with us...

Diz: We went before Pilate...

Jes: We were in trouble...

Diz: I couldn't talk our way out of this one...

Jes: We were in BIG trouble...

Diz: We were scheduled for...

Together: Execution...

Jes: Death on a cross!

Diz: Like a common criminal... I had one request...

Jes: Our last meal was...

Diz: That we go together.

Jes: Fish!

Diz: We never let anything

Jes: Why did it have to be...

Diz: Or anyone come between us before.

Jes: Fish?

Diz: When it came time...

Jes: They nailed us each to a cross.

Diz : I could run no more...

Jes: I could fight again...

Diz : I was so tired of running...

Jes: I would fight to the end!

Diz: I turned to look at my friend and saw...

Jes: You fool! (*Defiantly*)

Diz: You, rabbi? (*Questioning*)

Jes: The fool...

Diz: The rabbi ...

Together: Who rode the donkey was on a cross next to me!

Diz: For the first time in my life, I saw the Truth...

Jes: He was the only thing that had ever come between us! I couldn't take it anymore. With my last breath, I fought... (*Shouting.*) Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!

Diz: (*Shouting back...*) Don't you fear God since you are under the same sentence? We are being punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. (*Pause for effect.*)

Jes: (*Almost a whisper*) And then He did it...

Diz: (*Head down*) He forgave me.

Jes: He forgave him.

Diz: Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom...

Jes: Jesus answered him...

Together: I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise... (*Jes loud, Diz whisper. Pause*)

Diz: (*Triumphantly*) Today, I will be with You in paradise... (Head up)

Jes: (*Rejected*) Today, he will be with You in paradise... (Head down)

Diz: Today, I will be with You in paradise...

Jes: Today, he will be with You in paradise...

Diz: Today, I will be with You in paradise...

Jes: Today, he will be with You in paradise...

(Keeping repeating and fading as Jes exits backstage and Diz exits stage into audience. Pause at center stage to look at each other one last time then continue on)

Fade to black.

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