

“Mercy for the Miserables”

by
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What This lighthearted retelling of the story of Jean Valjean from Les Miserables helps demonstrate what mercy is all about.

Themes: Mercy, Redemption, Gospel, Grace, Forgiveness, Pardon

Who One
Two
Three
Four

When Present, but with some 17th Century flashbacks

Wear (Props) A “heavy” chain- can be made out of cardboard or other lighter materials and spray painted
Short stool or chair

Why Ephesians 2:8-10

How This script is a storytelling script meant to be high energy and more fast paced. When the dialogue is back-and-forth narrating, the actors should speak as if one person is speaking, staying on top of their cues.

When actors transition from narrating to the audience and into their characters, the original idea was for the characters (i.e. Jean Valjean, Bishop, police) to speak in a British accent to parody the musical and movie, “Les Miserables”. There should definitely be a difference between being a narrator and being a character if you choose not to use an accent. An idea is use hats or jacket/vest for your characters.

Keep moving. This script should be well choreographed, so each player should know where their spot is throughout. It’s best to have someone who can direct and help with the blocking.

Time Approximately 4 minutes

Actors One, Two, Three and Four enter. One addresses the audience.

One: Let's talk about mercy.

Two: I don't speak French. So, no gracias.

One: No. "Mercy".

Two: Denada.

One: No, the word "mercy". Not merci...mercy. You know, it's when someone wrongs you and you forgive them even when it would be just to punish them.

Two: Oh yeah, like when I took your Flaming Hot Cheetos and ate them all and you didn't get mad?

One: Yeah, like—you did what?

Two: What?

One: *(dejected)* You ate my Cheetos? I was really looking forward to those.

Two: *(smiling because he knows they're about to talk about mercy)* But you forgive me, right?

One: *(glaring at Two; sharply)* I forgive you. This time.

Two: Merci!

Four: *(stepping in, to audience, moving on)* Okay. So speaking of the French, there's a great story—a timeless classic titled "Les Misérables". "MIZ AY ROB" but looks like "Misérables", which is pretty much what it means. "The Miserables". The story was written by a French writer named Victor Hugo and it perfectly illustrates the idea of mercy.

During Three's next line, One becomes Jean Valjean. Four drapes a chain around his neck.

Three: It's the story of a man named Jean Valjean.

One: *(grunts)*

Three: He fell on hard times and stole a loaf of bread to feed his starving family and was thrown in prison for his crime.

Four: Harsh.

Three: Way harsh. He spent nineteen years in prison. Five for stealing the bread, and 14 more for trying to escape multiple times. He was trying to keep his family from starving to death, but the justice system at the time was merciless. You do the crime, you do LOTS of time. Jean Valjean suffers the torture and hardships of life in a 17th century French prison. Hard labor. Chain gang. Heart wrenching songs. Well, in the musical version, at least.

Two: Finally, he was released. But where could he go? He had no home, so he ended up wandering on the streets.

Three: To make matters worse, he was required by law to let everyone know he was a criminal.

Four: Which means no one would help him.

Three: He was an outcast.

Four: An undesirable.

Three: Homeless and hungry.

Two: Sounds miserable.

Three and Four: Exactly.

Three: No one would give poor Valjean the time of day.

Three: Except for one man. Bishop Myriel.

Two becomes the Bishop. He takes the chain from around One's neck and puts his arm around him.

Two: Come in! Come in. Sit and take some rest. Are you hungry?

Two sits One down on a stool or chair.

One: *(surlly and bitter)* What are you playing at, preacher man? What's your angle here? What do you want from me? I ain't got nothing.

Two: No, friend. I only want to help. Life has been so unkind to you, but here you will find rest. Warm yourself by the fire and I will bring you some food.

Four: *(over Two's shoulder, so that One "can't overhear")* Bishop, is this wise? This man is a criminal, this isn't safe. And he smells. Badly.

Two: Nonsense. This is our purpose. To help those in need.

Four: So, the kind Bishop fed and housed Valjean. But, Valjean could not accept that he could be anything more than a criminal.

Two: Goodnight, friend. Sleep well.

One mumbles goodnight as Two "exits" the scene.

Three: Valjean was suspicious of the Bishop's kindness. No one could be truly benevolent. So, he leaves in the night.

Four: But not empty-handed. On his way out, he steals the Bishop's expensive silverware and makes his escape. But he didn't get far.

Three and Four become the police. They stop One as he's trying to hide.

**An idea is for One to try and sneak out through the audience or the aisle. He thinks he's getting away, but Four and Three are right there to stop him.*

Three: Hey! You!

One points to himself in question.

Three: Yeah, you. Where'd ya think you're going? Bein' all sneaky like.

Four: Yeah, bein' all sneaky like.

Three: What is this you have here?

One: Oh these? These are...gifts...from my friend. He gave them to me.

Four: Who gave them to you?

One: The Bishop...Myriel.

Three: He did not! You're stealing! Even worse, you're stealing from the good Bishop Myriel!

Four: From a Bishop. *(gasps and whispers)* You're the devil!

Three: You're coming with us!

Two: *(to the audience)* But when the police march Valjean back to the Bishop's house, things didn't go as expected.

Four: Good Bishop Myriel. We've returned the criminal Valjean who stole your silverware. Now, no need to thank us, we were just doin' our job.

Three: Yeah, we were just doin' our jobs. Bein' heroes and throwin' criminals in jail where they belong.

Two: *(to One)* Ah! Here you are! I am so glad to see you! You took off in such a hurry, you forgot to take the most valuable of my gifts, these silver candlesticks!

Three: That's right, Bishop, throw the book at 'em—wait, what?

Four: Wait what?

One: Yeah, what?

Two: There's been a big misunderstanding here, officers. You see, I gave all of these gifts to my friend. But his business was urgent, and he forgot to take them with him.

Eyeing One to go along with him. One is still confused as to what's happening.

Pause. One, Three, and Four are dumbfounded.

Three: I did not see that coming.

Four: Me neither.

One: Me neither.

Four: So...we should just let him go?

Two: Yes, by all means!

One: I am to be released? Set free then?

Three: *(out of character to audience)* Valjean, overwhelmed and humbled by the bishop's kindness...

Four: *(to audience)* A kindness that he had never known. So he asks the Bishop—

One: *(with great emotion; tearfully)* Why have you done this?

Four: The Bishop looks at Valjean and says—

Two: Your life has been spared for God. Take the candlesticks and sell them. Use the money to make an honest man of yourself. My brother, you no longer belong to evil, but to good. Now go in peace. Oh! And by the way, when you return, my friend, be sure and enter through the main entrance. It is never locked...night or day.

Quiet pause. One is absorbing everything. Two pats One on the shoulder.

Two: *(to audience)* And they lived happily ever after!

- Three:** Nope! No they did not. There is a lot of other stuff that happens. A LOT of really sad stuff, but the point is...
- One:** One man was shown mercy by another. A simple act of kindness. A man's life was changed because of it and it set off a ripple effect of mercy through the rest of the story.
- Four:** This is the gospel of Jesus. Because of our sins, we have earned death and separation from God.
- One:** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,
- Two:** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ
- Three:** —by grace you have been saved—
- Four:** and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
- Three:** so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- One:** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

Lights out.

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