Type: Joy Through Reading
Theme: Forgiveness
Scripture: Luke

Scripture: Luke 23:32-43; Romans 6:23
Duration: 5 min
Participants: 3
Memorization: No

Characters

Narrator

Thief 1("Guilty") - The unrepentant thief

Thief 2 ("Guilty") - The repentant thief whose sign is taken by the Reader

THE TWO THIEVES

PURPOSE: Through the perspective of the two thieves crucified alongside Jesus, this story reveals two very different responses—one rejects Him, while the other turns to Him in faith. It reminds us that we are all sinners deserving of death, yet Jesus willingly took our place on the cross, offering forgiveness and the gift of eternal life to all who trust in Him. *(Luke 23:32–43)*

Notes

- **Simply read the script sitting on stools** OR **Act out** the story as seen illustrated in parentheses below. (The residents will be able to see more clearly on a stool rather than a chair.)
- **Actions in parentheses** are not to be read, they are stage directions only.
- **Eye focus:** Unless otherwise noted, readers look outward to the audience.
- **Pacing:** Speak slowly, loudly, and clearly. Allow intentional pauses for reflection.
- The **Narrators**: Read with strong dramatic expression, varying tone and volume.

Readers

- **Narrator**
- **Thief 1** — “Guilty” (Unrepentant Thief)
- **Thief 2** — “Guilty” (Repentant Thief)

Props

- **Two Signs reading “GUILTY”**

SCRIPT:

Narrator:

No one likes to admit they are guilty. *(Pause.)*

But before a holy God— who created us and is without sin— *(Pause.)*

how can we deny that we are guilty?

(Slowly.)

When Jesus was persecuted and led to the cross to be crucified, *(Pause.)*

“Two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed with Him. When they came to a place called *The Skull*, *(Pause.)* they nailed Him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified— one on His right and one on His left.”

Thief 1

*(Steps out from behind the divider wearing a sign that reads **GUILTY** in bold letters. Moves deliberately. Stops to the right of the Narrator. Faces the audience. Stands rigid, defiant.)*

Thief 2

*(Steps out from behind the divider wearing a sign that reads **GUILTY**. Moves more slowly. Stops to the left of the Narrator. Head slightly lowered.)*

Narrator:

(Looks right, left and then forward – voice heavy with sorrow.)

Brutally beaten and weak, *(Pause.)*

Jesus said:

“Father, forgive those who are persecuting me, for they don’t know what they are doing.’”

(Pause. Slight shift in tone.)

“The crowd watched. The leaders scoffed. *(Pause.)*

‘He saved others,’ they said. ‘Let Him save Himself if He is really God’s Messiah, *(Pause.)*

the Chosen One.’”

Thief 1 (angrily)

(Voice sharp, mocking.)

“So you’re the Messiah, are you? *(Pause.)*

Prove it. Save yourself— *(Pause.)*

and us too, while you’re at it!”

(Turns slightly away, arms crossed.)

Thief 2 (humbly)

(Takes a breath. Voice quieter, sincere. Lifts head.)

“Don’t you fear God *(Pause.)*

even when you have been sentenced to die?

(Pause. Turns slightly toward Actor 1, then back to audience.)

We deserve to die for what we’ve done wrong. *(Pause.)*

But this man hasn’t done anything wrong.”

(Looks directly at the audience, then upward.)

Jesus, *(Pause.)*

remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.”

Narrator:

*(Narrator walks slowly toward Thief 2. Gently removes Thief 2’s **GUILTY** sign and places it around his own neck. Holds the weight of that moment – assuming the position of Jesus. Long pause.)*

(Hands open and facing upward) Jesus said,

‘I assure you, *(Pause.)*

today *(Pause.)*

you will be with Me in paradise.’”

(Both Thieves bow their heads.)

Narrator:

(Steps forward slightly. Addresses the audience directly.)

We have sinned *(Pause*) done wrong. *(Pause)* and failed to please God. *(Pause.)*

The Bible says sin pays us off with death. *(Romans 6:23.)*

But Jesus,

chose to die *(Pause.)*

in our place.

(Long reflective pause.)

Guided Prayer

(Speaks slowly, leaving space between phrases.)

Let us pray together.

(Pause.)

Lord Jesus,

We come to You just as we are.

(Pause.)

We bring You our fears,
our worries,
and the things we do not understand.

(Pause.)

Because of our sins, we were the ones who deserved to die.

(Pause.)

Thank You for taking our punishment
and giving us the promise of new life. Thank you for loving us.

(Pause.)

We place our trust in You today.

We receive Your peace.

(Pause.)

Walk with us,
stay with us,
and help us.

We rest in Your care, now and always.

(Inviting but unhurried.)

If this prayer is yours,
and you agree in your heart that Jesus died to take away your sins and then He rose again,
would you softly say, **“In Jesus name, Amen.”**

(Pause long enough for response.)

(Concludes)

Amen.

Props

- Divider
- Two signs reading "GUILTY"

Staging

Reader and Actors do not interact verbally; lines directed to audience.
Strong dramatic expression.
Slow pacing with intentional pauses.
Powerful symbolic moment when Reader takes Actor 2's "GUILTY" sign.