

The Sermon

Revision 2

By

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INT. NAVE - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - SUNDAY MORNING 1

Tenuous sunlight illuminates the CONGREGATION as they wait for REVEREND JAMES (40s), a serious, hard tempered family man.

We follow him walking down the main aisle, bible in hand. Some people turn their heads at what they see, others whisper creating an atmosphere of murmurs.

James looks pale, shocked, almost as if he has just witnessed a murder. By the time he reaches the podium, the whole congregation falls silent.

JAMES

Greetings brothers and sisters, may God bless you on this wonderful anniversary, for he has not blessed me...

Strong murmurs all around the nave. Some exhale deeply as if bracing for something big.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Today I have witnessed the face of unforgivable sin. A sin reminiscent of the betrayal of Judas. A betrayal to our congregation and me...

James abruptly falls silent and stares at a woman in her 40s. He has fire in his eyes. The woman is SUSAN, his quiet but friendly wife who sits in the first row.

At the back of the nave we notice one of the ushers, CARL (50s), who slowly settles in his usual place during the sermons.

James looks down at his podium. He opens his bible to reveal a gun encrusted in the back cover. He trembles with fear now. The gun stares back at him.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER ON SCREEN

1 week earlier...

EXT. ENTRANCE - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - MORNING 2

Reverend James, Susan, and their tempered daughter CLAIRE
(15) greet the congregation as they leave the church. *

The last people to come out are a senior couple who
approaches them.

The old man has a cane, his wife follows holding his hand.

OLD MAN

(to James)

You don't know how much we
appreciate what you've done for us.
Thank you reverend for ten
wonderful years.

JAMES

Oh it's nothing, this is God's work
Charles, not mine. God Bless you. *

OLD LADY

It must be wonderful to have such a
beautiful husband, may God bless
you my dear. See you next Wednesday
at the meeting. *

Susan smiles; nothing more. The couple walk outside. James
turns to Susan.

REVEREND JAMES

I need to close the office, wait
for me in the car. *

He gives her the car keys and tries to kiss her cheek. She
hesitates and does not respond. *

CUT TO:

INT. JAMES' OFFICE - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - MOMENTS
LATER 3 *

James packs up his bag and clears his desk which is covered
by scattered christian paraphernalia and his giant Bible. *
DON, 15, shy son of Carl, knocks on the door and silently *
walks in. James rolls his eyes as he sees him. He *
desperately hides the bible in his bag. *

JAMES *

Yes Don... What is it? *

(CONTINUED) *

DON

Uh oh hi sir, I just wanted to tell you something minor... fast.

*

JAMES

Is it really necessary?

DON

Well yes. I, I...

James continues to pack.

JAMES

I hear you, go on...

DON

You see it is actually not a good thing.

JAMES

I can't help you if you don't tell me what's happening kid.

*

Don falls silent as he struggles to look at the reverend in the face.

DON

Well, see it is not an easy thing to say but I think I heard screams inside your office.

JAMES

What kind of screams?

*

DON

I peeked through the door of the office and I, I...

*

*

(weeps)

I saw a couple having sex.

*

James instantly stops cleaning and looks at the kid in the eyes.

JAMES

You must be paranoid or something, how come someone would do such a thing inside our Lord's house. You can't be making this up!

*

*

DON

I did not get to see who they were sir, but I am sure of what I saw.

*

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

Are you completely sure?

DON

Yes sir, I am positive.
Ok kid, I will attend to the matter
as soon as I can; now go home to
your dad. I don't want to hear it
anymore!

Don, steps up and wipes a tear from his face. He leaves.
James looks at the cross in his wall and moves his head in a
disapproving manner.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - JAMES'S HOUSE - SUNDAY NIGHT

4

The family eats at the table. We only hear the clatter of
the forks against the plates as Susan and James finish their
food. James notices Claire is the only one not eating.

JAMES

Don't you want your food Claire?

CLAIRE

I am not hungry.

JAMES

Since when is that...?

SUSAN

Do you want me to save it for
tomorrow Claire?

CLAIRE

Yes mom, I kinda want to go to bed.

Claire gets up and walks toward the door of the room. James
stops her.

JAMES

Aren't you forgetting something
young lady?

CLAIRE

Yes daddy.

Claire hesitantly kisses her dad and leaves. James stares at
her silently. He then looks at Susan, who begins to
clean the table.

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

How about you, how was the youth chapel?

Susan avoids eye contact. *

SUSAN

It was good. You know, the usual. I took care of the kids at the program and got to hear your part of the sermon. *

JAMES

Did you like it?

SUSAN

Yes, really good.

JAMES

How did the kids behave?

Susan hesitates for a moment before leaving for the kitchen with the dishes.

SUSAN

UHM, ... well very well. Nothing out of the ordinary.

She leaves.

INT. KITCHEN - JAMES'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

5

James steps in. He stands besides Susan, who washes the dishes. His expression seems different now.

JAMES

I need to ask you something. Have you noticed anything strange in church lately? *

SUSAN

What do you mean James?

JAMES

I don't know anything out of the ordinary. Don came today to my office; he told me he saw a couple having sex at my office. *

Susan suddenly stops washing her dishes. *

(CONTINUED)

SUSAN

That sounds awful James, but you know Don is a lonely kid. He is probably just looking for attention. Don't let it bother you. After all, he lives alone with his dad.

JAMES

Yeah... I am probably thinking too much of it. No one would dare do that.

SUSAN

Besides, how old is he?

JAMES

14 or so. Your right, I am worrying too much.

James starts to leave when he suddenly stops at the door.

JAMES

Also, one more thing. You should talk to Claire, see if something is wrong with her. She looked weird tonight.

SUSAN

I will...

James leaves the room. Susan sighs and goes back to her dishes. She stares at the window on top of the sink for a while without actually cleaning. We only hear the open tab.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARAGE - JAMES' HOUSE - WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

6

The garage door opens. James gets inside the driver's side. Susan is on the passenger's seat. As the car leaves, Claire runs out of the garage and knocks on her father's window. He lowers the window.

CLAIRE

I want to go with you.

JAMES

Why do you want to come today?

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE

I uhm, want to rehearse the piano
for a while.

James looks at her doubtful.

CLAIRE

Pretty Please

JAMES

Fine.

Claire gets inside. The car leaves the shot. *

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - MOMENTS LATER 7 *

James and his family get out of the car. James is received
by Carl. *

CARL

Great to see you are here for the
meeting sir.

JAMES

As Always, Carl, the church before
anything. *

The two begin to walk towards the meeting rooms. Carl looks
at Susan, who stays back closing the car. *

CARL

I see you brought the ladies with
you as well.

JAMES

Yes, Claire wanted to play the
piano. You know how these kids are. *

Claire catches up to them.

CLAIRE

Hey Carl, is Don here ? *

CARL

Oh hey there Claire, Yes in fact I
think he is playing by the stage
right now.

(CONTINUED)

CLAIRE

Ok thanks.

Claire leaves them in a flash, leaving her dad shocked at the event. Carl laughs.

CARL

"You know how these kids are,"
right? *

As he says this Susan approaches them and looks at the two. She exchanges awkward eye contact with Carl. *

SUSAN

Oh hey there Carl, did not know you
where monitoring the meeting today.

CARL

Yes... I am supposed to run it. *

SUSAN

Glad to have you then. *

Susan smiles. James abruptly breaks the conversation.

JAMES

Shall we?

The three enter the meeting room.

INT. MEETING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

8

The room is circled by a group of chairs occupied by 20 people or so. James (again bible in hand) seems to be wrapping up the final statement. Susan looks at Carl who sits opposite to her. *

JAMES

I entrust you all with the tasks of
maintaining order and respect in
the church. This next Sunday shall
be great. Thanks for coming.

James turns to Susan, who sits right besides him. He looks nervous. *

JAMES

I am going to look for Claire. We
leave after. Wait for me at the
car.

(CONTINUED)

SUSAN

Sure.

He stands and leaves. She discreetly looks at Carl one last time. *

CUT TO:

INT. NAVE - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - MOMENTS LATER 9

James enters the church and looks for Claire. She is nowhere to be found. *

JAMES

CLAIRE! CLAIRE!

He looks in the nave and walks backstage. No sight of her. *

CUT TO:

INT. YOUTH CHAPEL CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS 10

Claire plays board games with Don in one of the classrooms. Claire startles as she hears her dad screaming down the corridors. *

JAMES

Claire where are you ! We are leaving ! If you are not here in...!! *

James stumbles upon the open door of the classroom. He finds Claire sitting on the floor with Don.

JAMES

Claire! What are you doing here, I thought you where out there playing the piano, who gave you permission to be playing with Don alone? GET BACK TO THE CAR.

CLAIRE

But dad, I was about to go outside, we were just playing.

Claire begins to cry and runs straight outside.

DON

Reverend, we were not doing anything wrong. *

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

Listen to me Don, I don' know why you came to me the other day, and I don't know why you are suddenly so interested in my daughter, but I am no fool and I need you to give her space. Understood?

DON

Yes sir.

CUT TO: *

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

11

Claire sobs heavily in the back of the car. James and Susan engage in a heated discussion up front.

SUSAN

She was not doing anything James!

JAMES

What do you mean anything, she was alone with a boy inside one of the rooms. Think of all the things she could have done.

*
*

SUSAN

Listen, James this is only making it worse for Claire, please let it go. Nothing happened. You are being overprotective!

JAMES

(to CLAIRE)

I don't want you near that boy anymore. End of the story you got me little girl?

No response.

JAMES

I asked a question.

CLAIRE

Yes... dad.

JAMES

Good, no church till Sunday for you then.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - JAMES' HOUSE - WEDNESDAY NIGHT

12 *

James washes his teeth in front of the mirror as Susan enters the bathroom with an angry look.

SUSAN

I think you overreacted today.

Susan grabs her blower and starts drying her hair.

JAMES

Oh please Susan I only worry about our daughter, you know that kid is a psycho, you said it well.

SUSAN

Yes, but I didn't mean it that way. Ever since he told you the couple in your office you've been acting weird. Besides you are wrong in treating us this way!

*
*
*
*
*

JAMES

Oh me, right me, the worst. Listen to you, making yourself the victim.

SUSAN

James I am tired of this, I need you to stop treating us like this!

JAMES

Treating you how Susan, please enlighten me! I put too much effort on the church and this family for you to ask me how to behave!

*

SUSAN

You need to worry less about Claire and me that's all. It seems as if you have two faces, one for the church and for us! This is wrong James!

Susan throws the blower at the floor breaking it in a thousand pieces. She leaves the bathroom. James stares at the mirror.

JAMES

(whispers)

I am never wrong.

INT. NAVE - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - AFTERNOON

13

James prepares the church's interiors for this Sunday's service. There are ladders set up besides the windows and a couple of ushers decorating the walls with attractive ornaments. A large golden "10" hangs in the main stage.

JAMES

I need that a little bit to the left MARK. Oh and the cross, we will need to move it because it is blocked by the 10th anniversary numbers.

*

*

The ushers comply.

*

JAMES (CONT'D)

Carl!, where is my wife? I need her for something.

Carl answers while writing on a notebook.

CARL

I don't know I think I saw her over by the classrooms.

James walks towards one of the church windows and looks outside to the parking lot where he notices Susan talking to Don. She makes some aggressive gestures as she talks. James stares with anger in his eyes.

*

JAMES

Nevermind, I found her...

CARL

Sorry what's that?

James walks to the center of the nave. He stares at the stage.

JAMES

Nothing, I said everything is looking good. This is going to be a wonderful anniversary.

*

James looks again at the parking lot, Susan is gone.

Church hymn plays in the b.g.

Screen fades to black.

INT. STAGE - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - SUNDAY PRESENT DAY
14

The choir continues to sing as the youth program leaves the church with Susan in front. James seats near the altar with his bible in hand. He looks a bit worried as he stares at both his wife and his daughter for a moment.

JAMES POV:

Susan wears a worrisome look on her face. She subtly has eye contact with Carl, who stands by the entrance. He gives her a discreet gesture of approval. Claire looks at Don who walks next to her as they leave with the group.

The CO PASTOR (50s), who sits right besides James, cuts him off from the visual moment.

CO PASTOR
Is something wrong sir?

JAMES
Why?

CO PASTOR
Your leg sir, it's shaking.

James notices his involuntarily tremors. He stops as soon as he notices. BEAT.

JAMES
I need to take a minute, can you extend the hymns for a moment?

CO PASTOR
Sure.

The co pastor signals the choir director as we follow James, who leaves the altar in a hurry through the backstairs. The hymn continues in the b.g.

EXT. CORRIDOR BETWEEN CLASSROOMS AND TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS 15

James hurries down the corridor, bible in hand, worried look in his face. He reaches the classrooms and stops in front of the first open door he sees.

Nothing.

He walks towards the next classroom and finds the door closed. He opens it.

Nothing.

(CONTINUED)

He sprints to the last classroom in the corridor and finds the door open. The hymn in the b.g. stops playing. *

A group of teenagers fills the room as they play board games and read the bible.

INT. CLASSROOM - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - CONTINUOUS 16

ANA, 20s, takes care of the children. James spaces around the room in search of his daughter. His eyes find Don first, then Claire talking to him. *

JAMES

There you are...

He suddenly looks incredulously at the situation at hand. He frowns as if over thinking the problem.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Don, Claire, Ana, Sus...

His voice cuts as he mentions these words. He walks towards Ana, who seats staring at him in front of the classroom.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Where is my wife?

He fixes his expression with a slight head twist.

ANA

I don't know, she usually gives me some rules and leaves early to catch your sermon. Why? Are you alright reverend? You look... *

Muffled noise fills the scene. The reverend sweats. He exchanges eye contact with his daughter before his eyes drift at nothing in specific and his mouth goes open. He knows everything now. *

CUT TO MONTAGE: *

INT/EXT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - MONTAGE - (FLASHBACK)
17

Susan hesitates to kiss James at the entrance.

Don reveals the truth to James.

INT. JAMES HOUSE - MONTAGE - (FLASHBACK) 18

Susan silent at the dinner table.

Susan evades the question of the chapel program at the dinner table.

Susan discards Don's truth at the kitchen.

EXT. PARKING - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - (FLASHBACK) 19

Susan and Carl awkwardly meet and smile at each other.

INT. MEETING ROOM - (FLASHBACK) 20

Susan stares constantly at Carl who is seating opposite to her.

INT. CAR - (FLASHBACK) 21

Susan argues with Don in the car.

INT. JAMES HOUSE - MONTAGE - (FLASHBACK) 22

Susan throws the blower on the bathroom floor.

INT/EXT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - MONTAGE - (FLASHBACK)
23

Susan is in the parking lot talking to Don.

Susan leaves the temple with the youth program, as she leaves she establishes eye contact with Carl at the back. Carl approves.

*
*

END MONTAGE

INT. CLASSROOM - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - PRESENT 24

James snaps out of it. Slow tears form inside his eyes.

ANA
REVEREND! REVEREND!

He seems isolated, blank stare.

*

(CONTINUED)

JAMES

It can't...

(WHISPERS)

Would you betray the son of man for
a kiss?

ANA

Excuse me?

JAMES

Luke 22:48, Would you betray for a
kiss? How could I have been so
stupid!

He suddenly shakes it off and leaves the room hastily
slamming the classroom door.

EXT. CORRIDOR BETWEEN CLASSROOMS AND TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS 25

James walks to his office. He stops in front of the last
door as he hears distinct moans. He drops his bible, which
falls as slowly as his spite and frustration build up. It
lands open. We see the encrusted gun in the back cover.

James grins his teeth and cries. We hear the sounds of
pleasant sex in the b.g. He hits the wall next to him as
hard as he can with his fist. Nothing.

He starts inhaling and exhaling frantically and places his
hand on the door knob slightly opening it. He peeks through.
We see Carl and Susan from the back.

CLOSE UP JAMES' FACE:

We hear Susan as she reaches the peak of her orgasm. James
exhales one last time and closes his eyes resting his
forehead against the door.

He opens them. He notices the gun staring back at him on the
floor. He is angry now.

SCREEN FADES TO BLACK.

INT. NAVE - CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY - MOMENTS LATER 26

James' red eyes follow Susan as she sits in the front row.
Whispers fill the nave as most people look at the her.

We are back at the beginning. The gun looks at James
invitingly. He hesitates and picks it up.

(CONTINUED)

He continues to speak. The congregation falls silent.

JAMES

But no, I am wrong ladies and gentlemen. No sin is unforgivable for God; not even that of JUDAS who betrayed our holy father. However, I am no God, and I believe that the sins carried against my church will have costly consequences.

James catches his breath. He sends a dagger across the eyes of his wife who looks worried. She shakes and looks everywhere but towards her husband's penetrating eyes. He lines the gun to the right side of his body.

JAMES (CONT'D)

...believe me when I say; the same way I forgive Judas for betraying Jesus I may forgive you, but I will never forget. "For he who breathes out lies will not escape". PROVERBS 19:5...

As he finishes, a worried Claire walks inside the nave. She runs towards Susan who barely notices her. Claire looks at her distressed mom, then at her dad.

James continues to move the gun upward until he sees Claire. His face tears. His hand trembles with the gun.

Whispers all around the congregation. Carl is shocked, he frowns not understanding what is happening.

James looks at the gun in his hand. He sighs and stares back at his family. He finally attempts to put the gun inside the bible before somebody sees it. The gun reaches the back cover. He closes the bible with a bang.

James extends his arms in a robotic manner signaling the congregation to stand up. They comply with a mixture of murmurs and discontent. He discretely looks at Carl; then locks eyes with his wife.

Susan is the only one who stays seated.

JAMES

May he bless and guide you all on this wonderful anniversary, AMEN!

Susan drops a tear down her left cheek. We see her face as she tries to escape James' stare. She looks down. The congregation answers in unison approval.

(CONTINUED)

AMEN!
CONGREGATION