

# The Spirit of Truth



John 14:15-29, 15:9-17

Year A Easter 6 ; Year B  
Easter 6

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## Parts by scene

■ = large part   ▲ = medium sized part   ● = small part

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
●	<b>Joanna</b> - a wealthy woman with a perceptive and agile intellect who abandons her life as the co-manager of King Herod's household to follow Jesus	●		●				●	
▲	<b>James</b> - the most officious disciple, often the most frustrated with Jesus' unconventional decisions (such as his allowing women to join the group)	●		▲				●	
■	<b>Jesus</b>	■		▲		▲		▲	
●	<b>John</b> - the gentlest and most caring of the disciples	●		●				●	
●	<b>Priest</b> - one of the nervous temple priests		●						●
■	<b>Judas</b> - possibly the deepest thinker and best organizer, the one who usually sees the big picture most clearly, and also the disciple with the best sense of humor		●		▲		■		
▲	<b>Guard</b> - one of the temple guards, a good and honest man				▲				
●	<b>Mary Magdalene</b> - a 'fallen woman' who became the first female disciple, the humblest member of the group due to her shame about her past					▲			
▲	<b>Caiaphas</b> - the suave, completely confident, utterly cynical high priest						■		▲

## Scene 1

James , Jesus , Joanna , John

*{Jesus speaks to the disciples in a garden, but Mary can't stop crying.}*

**Joanna**    Mary, what's the matter? Please tell us what's wrong.

*{Mary continues crying.}*

**James** *[in a harsh whisper to Joanna]* Will you quiet her down? The rabbi's trying to speak!

**Joanna** *[indignantly]* She can cry if she needs to. And she doesn't have to explain herself!

**James** Then get her out of here at least! This is no place for - for a crier.

*{Mary continues crying.}*

**Jesus** If you love me, keep my commands, and I will ask the Father, and he will send a Comforter to help you and be with you forever. He is the Spirit of Truth, and the world can't accept him, because it neither sees nor knows him.

**John** *[gently to Joanna]* What's the matter?

**Joanna** She won't say.

**John** *[to Mary]* Mary? Mary, what is it? Let us help.

*{Mary continues crying.}*

**Joanna** Rabbi, could we take a break? Mary's upset.

**Jesus** *[seeming to ignore her and continue his talk to everybody]* I won't leave you as orphans; I *will* come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me.

*{Mary stops crying.}*

**Joanna** Mary? Are you feeling better?

**Jesus** Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

**James** And that's just us, right? Those of us who believed in you first.

**Jesus** Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

## Scene 2

Judas , Priest

*{Judas knocks on the door of the high priest.}*

**Priest** What do you want?

**Judas** *[calmly]* To see Caiaphas.

**Priest** Are you crazy? No one sees him without an appointment, especially after hours.

**Judas** *[confidently]* He'll see me.

**Priest** *[peering more closely at him]* Who are you?

**Judas** Judas Iscariot, one of the leaders among those who follow the Nazarene.

**Priest** *[suddenly alarmed]* Guard!

**Judas** Don't worry, I'm not about to run away. Why would I have come here in the first place if I was going to run away?

**Priest** All the same... *[to the guard]* Detain him while I fetch the high priest.

## Scene 3

James , Jesus , Joanna , John

*{Jesus continues speaking to the disciples.}*

**Jesus** All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

*{Mary bursts into tears again.}*

**James** Oh, for crying out loud!

**John** James, please! Try to show some sensitivity.

**James** *[in a hissing whisper to John]* This is why I never wanted them in the group! The slightest little problem - we don't even know what it is in this case - and they go to pieces.

**Joanna** *[openly angry at James for the first time]* There's all kinds of ways of going to pieces.

**James** What? You think I'm overreacting? You think I'm being unreasonable? Here we are on the brink of declaring the Kingdom, and the rabbi is giving us maybe the most important talk he'll ever give, and she's just blubbering away over there. Has she even heard a word he's said? Have you?

**John** Rabbi, could you help us out? Mary is really upset over something. Could we take a little break? Maybe you could speak with her and find out what's wrong.

**Jesus** *[to everybody, as if ignoring John]* Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

#### Scene 4

Guard , Judas

*{The guard watching Judas engages in a conversation with him.}*

**Guard** So you're a follower of that teacher everyone's talking about.

**Judas** Yes, I guess I still am, technically.

**Guard** Is it true what they say about him?

**Judas** They say a lot of things about him.

**Guard** Is it true he has...powers?

**Judas** *[after a pause]* Yes. That much is true. I've seen him heal the sick, and even raise the dead. I've seen him still a storm with a word.

**Guard** Wow! So he really is sent from God!

**Judas** *[after a long pause]* He might be. It's impossible to say just how God might work. All we can do is judge as well as we can, and act.

**Guard** What's he like? You know, as a person?

**Judas** *[after a pause]* He's a good man. Intelligent, honorable, kind. He's a good man.

**Guard** Nothing against my bosses here, but I'd love to serve a man like

that. I did once, before I joined the police. I was apprentice to an old cobbler. It broke my heart to leave him, but I had to get on with my life. I still visit him from time to time. Say, I'd love to meet *your* boss! I've heard so much about him, and now meeting you here seems like a sign from God.

**Judas** Maybe you will. But tell me something: suppose the circumstances under which you met my boss were you being ordered to arrest him? Would you be able to go through with it?

**Guard** Is that why you're here?

**Judas** It is. I believe my boss, for all his good qualities and powers, is a danger to the nation. If *your* bosses agree with me and order you to arrest him, will you do it?

**Guard** [*deeply troubled*] That's a tough one. [*after a pause*] I suppose I'd have to put my duty to the nation first.

## Scene 5

Jesus , Mary

*{Jesus finally speaks directly with Mary, who stubbornly refuses to be consoled.}*

**Jesus** You heard me say, "I am going away and I am coming back to you," didn't you?

**Mary** [*petulantly*] I heard you say you're going away!

**Jesus** And coming back. You *will* see me again.

**Mary** Only like we'll see the Father. "You in him and him in us and us in you" - it means nothing!

**Jesus** It means everything!

**Mary** It won't be the same! It won't be *you*.

**Jesus** If you loved me, you would be glad that I'm going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

**Mary** [*quietly and sincerely*] I do. I am.

**Jesus** I know. I'm going soon, to a place you can't follow, but I'll be back - for a time. And then - you're right - I'll be gone again, but the Spirit who'll come in my place...well, trust me that you *will* be comforted - and more. This is everything that's going to happen. I'm telling you

now so when it does, you'll know it.

**Mary** No one else understands what's going to happen.

**Jesus** They hear only what they're ready to hear. But they'll understand everything eventually. You'll help them.

**Mary** They'll never listen to *me*.

**Jesus** Didn't I tell you to trust me? The Spirit will come upon you, and you will speak all that needs to be said. Do you believe that?

**Mary** I'll try.

## Scene 6

Caiaphas , Judas

*{Judas speaks with the high priest.}*

**Caiaphas** I'm told you've come to offer us a deal.

**Judas** I've come to offer my help with arresting my master.

**Caiaphas** What makes you think we even want to arrest him?

**Judas** Was that question just a negotiating tactic, or are you serious? Do we really have to waste time discussing why you'd be a fool *not* to arrest him - and as soon as possible?

**Caiaphas** I'll concede the point to raise another: assuming we do want to arrest him, why would we need your help?

**Judas** Because, as you well know, you can't just arrest him in the streets! If you could, you'd already have done it. But you can't afford to create any kind of public stir, because that could trigger the very revolt - and the very Roman response - you're trying to suppress!

**Caiaphas** And you want me to believe that you're *against* the idea of a revolt? We have a pretty thick dossier on you, you know.

**Judas** I'm dead set against the idea of a revolt *that doesn't succeed*. Believe me, if I thought it would succeed, if I thought this man was truly the Messiah, I'd be slitting your throat right now instead of offering to save your neck.

**Caiaphas** I'm impressed with your patriotism. Very well: you're correct that we'd like to arrest your master, but can't do it in broad daylight.

In that respect, his current disappearance from the public eye is a golden window of opportunity, if we could only get some advance intelligence about his movements. Is that what you're offering to supply?

**Judas** I can do more. This might not be in *his* dossier, but I happen to know he's a little bipolar. He swings back and forth - more and more lately - between talking about ruling a new Kingdom and talking about dying. In addition to catching him alone in an out of the way place, wouldn't it be nice to also catch him when he's in one of his down moods?

**Caiaphas** *[with newfound respect]* Yes!

**Judas** Good. Then I'll be in touch. Soon, probably, since our time is short. I can tell you he's been engaged in some really alarming talk to the group lately. If and when he decides to reappear in public, you could have a madman on your hands.

**Caiaphas** Well, you clearly have us over a barrel, so I suppose we should talk price now.

**Judas** *[in disgust]* Price? I'm not asking for anything! I'm doing this for the good of the nation.

**Caiaphas** *[reasonably]* But surely, engineering just the right circumstances for us to arrest him could involve some expenses. Bribes, hush money, etc.?

**Judas** *[indignantly]* These are good men and women. Bribes aren't going to affect anything. But if you want me to name a price, it's this: that you don't arrest any of the others, and that you don't kill him.

**Caiaphas** Agreed.

**Judas** *[suspiciously]* That was pretty easy. Can I take that as a sign you're lying to me.

**Caiaphas** Don't be ridiculous! You and I both know why I can't kill him, however much I might want to. That would invite the very revolt I'm trying to suppress! And I couldn't care less about the others.

**Judas** All right, then. We have a deal.

**Caiaphas** Not so fast. I have a condition of my own.

**Judas** *[suspiciously]* All right.

**Caiaphas** Thirty pieces of silver.

**Judas** I already told you, I don't want any money! You're negotiating against nobody.

**Caiaphas** You misunderstand. *My* condition is that you take the money. Those are *my* terms!

**Judas** Why?

**Caiaphas** *[suddenly harshly]* You may be a patriot, but you're also a traitor, and traitors always have a price. If you're too proud or self-righteous to think of yourself as a traitor, well then that's just too bad. It's too bad you weren't up to what your patriotism was calling you to. I suppose if it was only calling you to sacrifice your life, it would be a different story. But your *honor*? Your integrity? Choose you this day whom you will serve! The common good - or your idea of your own goodness.

## Scene 7

James , Jesus , Joanna , John

*{Jesus speaks some more to the group.}*

**Jesus** As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I've told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

*{Mary starts crying again.}*

**Joanna** Mary!

**John** Rabbi, can we take another break?

**Jesus** It's all right. I'm almost done, and she's hearing every word.

**James** We are, too, you know! We're getting this all down.

**Jesus** Good! *[resuming the speech]* You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so



that you might go and bear fruit-fruit that will last-and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love one another.

## Scene 8

Caiaphas , Priest

*{Meanwhile, back at the Temple.}*

**Priest**      *[incredulously]* We're going to work with him?

**Caiaphas**    He offers us some value.

**Priest**      Well, I hope he came cheap, at least.

**Caiaphas**    Really? You should rather hope he came dear.

**Priest**      Why pay more than you have to for a filthy turncoat?

**Caiaphas**    You're right about that. It's far better to pay a premium for a true patriot.

**Priest**      *[suspiciously]* Exactly how much are we paying him?

**Caiaphas**    Thirty pieces of silver.

**Priest**      That's outrageous! How dare he demand so much!

**Caiaphas**    Actually, he was willing to do it for free. It was I who insisted on the thirty pieces.

**Priest**      *[incredulously]* Why?

**Caiaphas**    Our man Judas is an idealist. His devotion is to the truth. But what is the truth? It can change; new facts can come in. Perceptions can be corrected. It would be most perilous to rely solely on his idealism to achieve our ends. Money, on the other hand, seals the deal. It leaves no room for ambivalence or ambiguity. It's the greatest power yet to arise in this world: greater than patriotism, greater than religion. Greater even than love!

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