

# Fishing

*Matthew 28:16-20; Mark  
16:14-18; John 21:1-19*

*Year C Easter 3 ; Year A  
Trinity Sunday (Revised);  
Year A Trinity Sunday  
(Episcopal)*



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## Parts by scene

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

		1	2	3	4	5
▲	<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>Peter</b> - the most headstrong disciple, and the least afraid of a fight, but never the smartest person in the room	▲	■	▲		●
▲	<b>John</b> - the gentlest and most caring of the disciples	▲		▲	▲	●
▲	<b>Nathanael</b> - Phillip's crass bully of an older brother, who joins Jesus in search of redemption and nobler life	▲		▲	▲	▲
●	<b>Thomas</b> - the skeptic, who really wants to believe because of his emotional bond with the others, but can't simply ignore his doubts	▲		●		●
■	<b>Jesus</b>	●	▲	▲	■	
●	<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>Susanna</b> - the more conventionally-minded friend of Joanna, who, like her friend, left her home to become a disciple				▲	
▲	<b>Matthew</b> - a former tax collector (i.e. a agent of the Roman occupation of his own people) who in his repentance from that past life is the most religiously fervent of the disciples				▲	●

## Scene 1

**James , Jesus , John , Nathanael , Peter , Thomas**

*{The disciples are out fishing a couple of weeks or so after the Resurrection.}*

**James**      Peter, this was a great idea! I feel like I haven't seen the sun in weeks!

**Peter**      Ready with the net!

**John** I'll admit it's good to be out of that stuffy house, but I wish we knew what we were supposed to do next.

**James** Thomas, Nathanael, what do you think?

**Nathanael** This is awesome! If I'd known it was so much fun to sail a boat, I might have become a fisherman just like you.

**John** Thomas, are you okay?

**Thomas** *[weakly]* Just. A little. Woozy.

**Peter** Hang in there! You'll get used to it.

**Thomas** Could we...could we...go back?

**James** Come on, Thomas, we haven't even caught anything yet! Tough it out!

**Thomas** Not...me...I'm thinking...about...the rabbi. What if he comes...to the house?

**Peter** Believe me, he'll find us if he wants to. *[to everybody]* Ready to haul! Good, you take that corner. Thomas...just stay out of the way. Now pull!

*{They haul the nets in, but they're empty.}*

**James** The third empty net today!

**John** I guess we've lost track of where the fish are these days.

**Nathanael** What do we do now?

**Peter** *[pointing to another area of the water]* Let's try over there.

**Thomas** No! No more! Please!

**John** Maybe we could take a break. Or maybe we could quit for the day.

**Peter** I've never ended a day of work without any fish!

**John** I know, but it's not like we have to do this for a living any more?

**James** Are you sure about that?

**John** Of course. We're followers of the rabbi now.

**Nathanael** Yeah, but what does that mean now? What exactly are we doing for him? It seems like there's not going to be a revolt now, and he talked about ascending to heaven last time we saw him. Where does that leave us?

**Thomas** Ask him! Next time we see him.

**Peter** And when will that be? Maybe he's already ascended or whatever.

**James** We might need to get good at fishing again, and soon.

**John** Maybe. All right, how about one more cast, and then we take a break and let Thomas get off the boat? Thomas, can you handle another half an hour of this?

**Thomas** I'll try.

**James** The only question is: where do we cast next?

*{Jesus appears on the shore, unrecognized by anybody.}*

**Jesus** Ahoy there! How's the fishing?

**Peter** Terrible! Nothing all morning!

**Jesus** Try over there by the rocks!

**Peter** Thanks!

**James** Who is that?

**John** Must be one of the local fishermen.

**James** Why would any of them help us find the fish? Have we been out of the picture so long no one sees us as competition any longer?

**Peter** We'll give them a big surprise.

**Nathanael** Unless it's just some doofus yanking our chain.

**Thomas** Oh my God, it's him! It's -

*{But before he can go on, Thomas begins retching again.}*

**Nathanael** Hang in there, buddy! They're just casting the nets now, and if it goes like it has so far, we'll be back on the shore in no time.

**Peter** We're snagged!

**James** Dammit, we're really out of practice.

**John** What's wrong?

**Peter** We're snagged on the rocks.

**James** Is that guy still there?

**John** Yeah, why?

**James** Keep an eye on him! When we get untangled, I'm kicking his ass.

**Thomas** *[weakly]* No! No!

**Nathanael** So he *was* messing with us?

**James** The rock formations must have changed since we were last out here, and he sent us right into them!

**Peter** Help me with the net and analyze it later!

*{The men try to jiggle the net free of the rocks.}*

**John** It's not coming loose!

**Peter** Oh, hell, we're going to have to tear it. Just pull!

**James** That guy still there?

**Thomas** *[in a calm voice]* Yes. He's not going anywhere.

**John** Everybody! One, two, three - pull!

*{They haul up the net, and find it untorn - and full of fish.}*

**Nathanael** Oh my God!

**James** It was just full. How'd it get so full so fast?

**Peter** I've never seen anything like it.

**John** It's him! It must be!

**Peter** Who?

**John** It's the Lord!

*{Peter jumps into the water and begins swimming toward the shore.}*

**James** Peter! What are you doing?

**Nathanael** He's swimming to shore.

**James** Great! As usual, he leaves us to haul in the fish.

**John** Come on, let's get it done then and catch him up. I think it's the rabbi there!

## Scene 2

Jesus , Peter

*{Peter reaches Jesus on the shore.}*

**Peter** *[heartily]* You!

**Jesus** Ah. You still recognize me, then?

**Peter** *[confidently]* Of course! I knew you'd find us.

**Jesus** You left the others to deal with the fish.

**Peter** *[cheerfully]* Sorry. I just couldn't help myself! I didn't want you to disappear again.

**Jesus** I'm touched by your devotion. Would you say it's greater than that of all the others?

**Peter** *[jokingly]* Hey, I'm the one who jumped out of the boat to see you first, right? I'd follow you -

*{Peter is suddenly stricken by where that sentence was about to lead.}*

**Jesus** Follow me where?

**Peter** *[suddenly defensive]* Look, you know I love you. I don't know if it's more or less than anybody else, but you must know that I do!

**Jesus** If you love me, then feed my sheep.

**Peter** *[meekly]* Of course. Anything.

**Jesus** *[after an awkward pause]* Peter?

**Peter** Yes, Lord.

**Jesus** Do you love me?

**Peter** *[painfully]* Of course I do. Not perfectly, I know that. I know I'm not...everything I could be for you. But I tried. I tried my best. I followed you as far as I could. I loved you as well as I could.

**Jesus** If you love me, then feed my sheep.

**Peter** Yes, Lord.

**Jesus** Simon Peter, son of John, do you love me?

**Peter** *[in torment]* Why do you keep asking? All right! You know everything. You know me better than I do. You tell me! Do I love you?

**Jesus** *[after a pause]* Truly I tell you: when you were young and strong, you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted, but the days will come when you'll stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and feed you and lead you where you don't want to go.

**Peter** *[with a shudder]* That's the worst end I could ever think of.

**Jesus** Nevertheless, it's the path I've chosen for you.

**Peter** *[grimly]* Then I'll follow it. To the end this time.

**Jesus** Feed my sheep.

**Peter** *[glumly]* Yes, Lord. *[mischievously]* Lord?

**Jesus** Yes?

**Peter** Do you mean that I should feed the others? Right now?

**Jesus** *[laughing]* I mean a great deal, but yes, let's get a fire ready for those fish!

### Scene 3

James , Jesus , John , Nathanael , Peter , Thomas

*{The others reach the shore and they now sit around eating the fish.}*

**James** *[in a low voice to John]* Is he?

**John** *[uncertainly]* I think so, but...

**Thomas** Is he what? You mean, is he the rabbi? Of course!

**Nathanael** You recognize him?

**Thomas** I recognized him from the boat. Don't you?

**John** Sort of...but...I'm not sure.

**James** It's like he changed again. Or something.

**Nathanael** Has anybody actually asked him if he's the rabbi? Has he said he is? Maybe it's just some random guy puzzled over why we're treating him like royalty.

**John** It's got to be him. Who else could have arranged for the miracle of the fish?

**James** Peter! Peter! Get over here!

**Peter** Hey, guys. Sorry I jumped ship.

**James** Peter, that's the rabbi, right?

**Peter** Of course. What are you talking about?

**Nathanael** Doesn't he look...different to you? I mean: different from the last time you saw him?

**Peter** I little, I suppose. But I don't think he's shaved since - well, since coming back.

**Thomas** They don't believe he's the rabbi.

**Peter** Really?

**James** No, no! We believe. Of course he is. It's just that - he doesn't look quite the same.

**Nathanael** More like: completely different!

**John** When you were talking to him before: he did say who he was, didn't he?

**Peter** Of course! And we talked about things that - *[in a more subdued voice]* well, things that only the rabbi could know about.

**John** Okay, I guess we'll just have to get used to this.

**Nathanael** Maybe. But I'm telling you, there's something fishy going on here, and I'm not talking about breakfast.

**Jesus** Gentlemen! You did a good job hauling in that load!

**Thomas** You did a good job guiding us to it!

**Jesus** Would you like to know where you'll be able to catch more? Not just twice as many or three times as many, but an endless living torrent, year after year and generation after generation without end?

**Peter** That sounds good to me!

**Jesus** I'll tell you. But not just yet, and not here. Go and gather everyone who's ever followed me, and have them assemble...on that mountaintop. I'll meet you there three mornings from now.

#### Scene 4

Jesus , Joanna , John , Matthew , Nathanael , Susanna

*{Three days later, the disciples wait on the mountaintop for Jesus.}*

**Joanna** You didn't recognize him again?

**John** Not quite, no.

**Susanna** Isn't that what happened the first time you saw him?

**John** Yeah, but as soon as I realized it was him, I recognized him right away. Cleophas compared it to one of those optical illusions. The picture doesn't change; just your way of looking at it.

**Matthew** It was the same for me. But I would say it was more like one of those blind men the rabbi healed. It seemed like scales fell away from my eyes, and I could see properly at last.



**Joanna** But that didn't happen this time.

**John** No.

**Susanna** *[to Joanna]* But *you* recognized him right away with no problem.

**Matthew** Yes, but she met the angel first, and maybe that prepared her somehow.

**Susanna** *[to Nathanael]* And you. You don't believe in him at all anymore?

**Nathanael** I didn't say that! I'm just...on the fence again. I want to see him again and hear what he has to say, and then I'll make up my mind.

**Matthew** *[to Nathanael]* You were once absolutely certain he was the rabbi, even after not recognizing him at first on the road.

**Nathanael** Yeah, well I've been thinking about that. The light was pretty dim in the room that night, and maybe I got caught up a little too much in Cleophas' reaction. It was the same with everyone else: we all saw him for the first time at night, outdoors or in dimly lit rooms. Three days ago at the lake the was first time we saw him in broad daylight.

**Joanna** I saw him in broad daylight, and I recognized him instantly.

**Nathanael** Yeah, but you're -  
*{An awkward pause.}*

**Susanna** You don't have to say it! You men infuriate me.

**Matthew** What about Peter and Thomas? True, they both saw him for the first time at night, but they recognized him instantly like Joanna.

**Nathanael** First of all, we only have Peter's word that he recognized him right off, and we all know what a braggart he is. And Thomas? The guy who was so desperate to belong that he was ready to die with us even though he didn't believe? He's still trying to belong, is all.

**John** I don't think that's the case with Thomas. In many ways, he's the strongest believer among us. Maybe he recognized the rabbi when we didn't because he's less dependent on things like physical appearances or inner moods to see the truth. Maybe what's happening to the rest of us is a change in our feelings

toward the rabbi, or in his feelings toward us, or in the world itself.

*{Jesus appears among them.}*

**Jesus** Peace be with you!

**Matthew** *[to John]* My God, you're right. He *has* changed, even more than last time.

**John** But you do see that it's him?

**Matthew** Yes. I think.

**Nathanael** You're crazy! It's so obvious now. This is some imposter!

**Susanna** Where is he? Who are you talking about?

**Joanna** He's standing right over there by that olive tree. Don't you see him?

**Susanna** That man in white? That's the rabbi?

**John** *[uncertainly]* It's him. I know it. I'm sure I know it.

**Matthew** Rabbi!

**Jesus** *[cheerfully]* Matthew, it's good to see you. I didn't *think* they'd be able to persuade you to get on that boat! *[to John in loving tones]* John, my beloved. The world is indeed changing. You will live to see much of it. *[to Nathanael somewhat wistfully]* Nathanael, the man without guile! Perhaps we'll meet again under a fig tree some day. *[to Joanna, business-like]* Joanna. Do you recognize me?

**Joanna** *[in some surprise]* Yes!

**Jesus** *[to Susanna]* Susanna. It's been a long time since we saw each other. Have I changed much?

**Susanna** *[disconcerted]* Um, yes...I think you have.

**Jesus** *[to the whole group]* Hear me! I will now show you the waters you'll fish from this day forward, waters you'll never exhaust though you ply them for a thousand years. Cast your eyes to the Sea of Galilee yonder! Look beyond it now, to the unseen shores, lands, and seas that you can only now imagine. Now turn to the north and do the same thing. And now the east. And now the south. *This is your new fishing ground. This is your Kingdom. Go into*

all the world and make disciples of every nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands and drink deadly poison; they will lay hands on the sick to heal them. Go and preach the gospel to all creation, and lo! I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

## Scene 5

James , John , Matthew , Nathanael , Peter , Thomas

*{Jesus having disappeared again, the disciples discuss what they're going to do next.}*

**John** It's a new world.

**James** Not the one we expected, but hey, at least we're still in on the ground floor!

**Peter** "Fishers of men." That's what he called us to be, way back in the beginning. Remember?

**Matthew** "The Kingdom is within you." He said that, too.

**Thomas** Nathanael, won't you reconsider?

**Nathanael** You guys are nuts if you think that imposter was the rabbi. He's dead! He died and it was insanity that we ever thought otherwise. You'd better face the facts and get on with your lives! That's what I'm going to do.

*{Nathanael exits.}*

**John** Susanna didn't recognize him, either. She no longer believes.

**Thomas** We can't depend on that any more. It's all on us now.

**Matthew** With his help.

*{There's a long pause.}*

**Peter** Well, men? Let's go fishing!

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