

# The Waterwalkers



*Matthew 14:22-36; Mark  
6:45-56; John 6:16-24*

*Year A Proper 14 ; Year B  
Proper 12 (Episcopal); Year  
B Proper 12 (Revised)*

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## Parts by scene

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

		1	2	3	4	5	6
▲	<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>Andrew</b> - the younger brother of Peter, one of the youngest disciples	●		●		▲	▲
▲	<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	▲		▲		▲	●
▲	<b>Peter</b> - the most headstrong disciple, and the least afraid of a fight, but never the smartest person in the room		●	▲		▲	■
▲	<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>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>Man</b> - a man with a crushed arm desperately seeking healing				▲		
●	<b>Woman</b> - a woman suffering from debilitating pain				▲		

## Scene 1

**Andrew , Mary , Matthew**

*{Some of the disciples who didn't go with Jesus to the island where he fed the five thousand watch for his return from the shore.}*

- Mary**        There! Is that them?
- Andrew**     Yup, that's the boat. Thank God!
- Matthew**    Two days. Two days! I thought they just crossed over so the rabbi could get some rest.
- Mary**        All those people followed him. They couldn't stay away, and he couldn't refuse them.
- Matthew**    And now the rabbi's going to step right back into it. There are more people on this beach than there were two days ago when he tried to get away from them.
- Andrew**     I think he'll be happy just to reach the shore after last night's winds.
- Mary**        I couldn't sleep worrying about them. And then it seemed like I fell into a dream anyway, a dream of stillness and silence.
- Matthew**    That was no dream. The wind died suddenly just before dawn.
- Andrew**     Yeah, it was like nothing I'd ever seen.
- Mary**        Look! They're landing!
- Andrew**     Let's go help them in.
- Matthew**    Between the wind and how it stopped, and whatever happened on the island, I bet they'll have some great stories to tell!

## **Scene 2**

**Joanna , Judas , Peter**

*{The disciples on the boat prepare to debark.}*

**Peter** Do *not* tell them! Understand?

**Joanna** But Peter, that was the most amazing miracle in a weekend of miracles!

**Peter** No it wasn't!

**Joanna** If I had managed to do what you did - if I were capable of even imagining I might try it - I would be shouting it from the rooftops.

**Peter** But I *didn't* manage to do it!

**Joanna** Think of how inspiring it'll be to the people.

**Judas** Actually, that could be a problem. Some of them are going to try it themselves, and of course they'll fail, and then how will they feel? It could seriously kill the mood of the crowd.

**Joanna** How can you be so sure they'll fail?

**Judas** Even if they succeed, it can't last forever, and once it ends, they'll be kicking themselves like Peter. Look, we have two incredible miracles to report, unequivocal miracles that focus on the rabbi. Let's go with them.

**Peter** Yes! They don't need to hear about me. You all have to promise that you'll never tell anyone! Okay?

### **Scene 3**

**Andrew , Joanna , Judas , Mary , Matthew , Peter**

*{On the shore, the group tells its story to the others.}*

**Andrew** You fed five thousand people? With one basket of food?

**Judas** Well, there was some debate about how much food we really had at the start, but there was no disagreement about the miraculous nature of whatever happened.

**Mary** What does that mean? "Whatever happened"?

**Peter** Some of them think it wasn't the rabbi multiplying the food, but people in the crowd sharing food they already had.

**Matthew** "Some of them?" I'll bet it was Thomas. It's just like him to try explaining away every miracle!

**Joanna** Thomas did propose the idea, but the rabbi didn't come out and say how it really happened.

**Matthew** That's because he was testing your faith! He wanted to see who would believe and who would doubt.

**Judas** I'm on the fence. Not just about what actually happened, but about which would actually be more valuable to the movement, the power to multiply food or the power to change people's hearts, to persuade them to do the selfless, sacrificial thing.

**Mary** Didn't anybody believe purely in the miracle?

**Peter** *[as if confessing, not bragging]* I was the only one. I couldn't understand how we could have fed so many people otherwise, but that was probably just me being stupid.

**Andrew** *[encouragingly]* Or maybe it meant that you had the strongest faith of anybody there.

**Peter** *[with sudden vehemence]* No! My faith is pathetic! *[in a more subdued voice]* It wasn't the strongest.

*{There's a stunned silence.}*

**Judas** *[changing the subject]* Well, the rabbi asked us to wake him when we reached the shore.

**Matthew** The crowd's been waiting two days for him to appear.

**Andrew** Come on, Peter. Let's secure the boat while they rouse the rabbi.

**Peter** *[grimly]* I guess I can handle that.

#### Scene 4

Joanna , Judas , Man , Woman

*{Jesus debarks into the biggest crowd yet. All through this scene, the characters speak in raised voices, to be heard above the crowd.}*

**Man** Son of David! Help me!

**Woman** Please, rabbi! Have pity!

**Judas** *[calling out in a crowd-control voice]* Please, everybody, let him pass! If you want to hear him speak, you're going to have to let him get to the high ground there!

**Man** I can't work! I can't feed my family!

**Woman** Please, rabbi! The pain is terrible!

**Joanna** Judas! There are tons of people here seeking healing. Maybe we should tend to them first.

**Judas** *[in a sharp voice]* Sir? Sir! You have to let go! Let him by and you'll get your turn!

**Man** I'm healed! He's truly the Christ! Praise God!

**Woman** *[desperately calling after Jesus]* No! Wait for me! Please!

**Judas** *[firmly]* Ma'am, he's going to tend to as many people as he can. Please!

**Joanna** *[to the man]* Sir? Are you all right?

**Man** *[jubilantly]* All right? I'm better than all right! My arm is healed!

**Joanna** Did the rabbi heal you?

**Man** I couldn't even get his attention, but...I did touch him! I grabbed the hem of his cloak! That must have been it!

**Joanna** Judas! Come over here! You've got to hear this!

**Judas** This is crazy! The crowd is out of control!

**Woman** Please, sir! Please let me see him!

**Judas** *[to the woman]* I promise you'll have your chance. But right now -

**Man**        *[to the woman]* Did you reach him?

**Woman**     No! He was too fast, and they wouldn't let me follow!

**Man**        All you have to do is touch his cloak! Look at my arm!

**Woman**     God be praised! *[suddenly despondent]* Oh, I missed my chance!

**Joanna**     Judas, this man says he was healed just by touching the rabbi's cloak.

**Judas**      What? Are you sure? What was wrong with the arm before?

**Man**        You think it's all in my head? It was crushed by a stone! Look at it now!

**Judas**      Amazing!

**Woman**     *[despondently]* And I missed it! I missed it!

**Man**        *[embracing her]* There, there. We'll get you to him somehow!

**Joanna**     Oh my God, look at that!

**Judas**      What's happening? It's like the rabbi's leaving a wake of crazed people in his path as he walks through the crowd.

**Joanna**     It's people being healed! Look at them dancing for joy.

**Man**        Please! Can you call your master back here? My wife is in terrible pain!

**Joanna**     *[to the woman]* I'll take you to him! Can you walk?

**Woman**     Yes, I can just - I can...oh my! The pain is gone!

**Judas**      But you never touched him, did you?

**Joanna**     *[in triumphant realization]* But she did touch *him!*

**Man**        Who, me? But I have no healing powers.

**Joanna**     No, but maybe you have a little of the rabbi's right now.

**Judas**      *[in wonder]* As if it was spilling over.

**Woman** Look! It's happening all over!

**Joanna** You're right! The jubilation is spreading way beyond an arm's reach of the rabbi.

**Judas** It's like a contagion, only healing!

**Joanna** *[coyly]* Well, Judas. You once said that these individual healings could never affect a crowd like the feeding of the five thousand did.

**Judas** Yeah, but I never imagined anything like this!

### Scene 5

Andrew , Joanna , Judas , Mary , Matthew , Peter

*{The disciples gather after the day is over.}*

**Andrew** What an incredible last few days it's been!

**Matthew** One miracle after another, as if the spirit of God were poured out on us until it overflowed.

**Judas** And all that after the last town, where there was nothing but inscrutable parables meant to confuse people.

**Joanna** I must admit, I considered leaving the group around then.

**Mary** Joanna, no!

**Joanna** Don't worry: I'm not going anywhere now!

**Andrew** First we feed five thousand, then we heal hundreds! Can it get any better?

**Judas** Actually, we never even got a chance to tell you about the biggest miracle of all.

**Peter** *[suddenly alarmed]* What?

**Judas** *[gently]* The rabbi coming to the boat in the storm.

**Peter** *[relieved]* Right.

**Mary** The storm that was swallowed up in peace!

**Joanna** Indeed!

**Matthew** What do you mean, "came to the boat"?

**Judas** The rabbi sent us on ahead and told us he'd dismiss the crowds and hitch a ride back in one of their boats. So we set out around dusk without him.

**Andrew** But - he was on the boat when you arrived.

**Joanna** *[continuing the story and ignoring the question]* Then as it got dark, a storm arose out of nowhere. The winds were so strong! I was terrified. But the fishermen kept us afloat, right Peter?

**Peter** What? Yeah, but it was no big deal. We'd all been through worse.

**Judas** Maybe you had, but to me, it was almost another miracle watching you guys work the boat. But the problem was that, though they kept us from sinking, we couldn't make any progress for hours because the wind was against us.

**Mary** That's exactly what I imagined, all night! I kept seeing the boat out there in the storm, tossed up and down but not moving, and all of you hanging on for your lives. It was so clear that I thought it might be a vision from God, but I saw the rabbi with you, too, and now I know he wasn't there.

**Andrew** I don't get it. If the wind was against you, why didn't you turn around and go back to the island?

*{There's an awkward silence at that.}*

**Judas** There was some debate about whether to do that.

**Joanna** I think we all wanted to turn back, but John kept insisting that if the rabbi commanded us to cross over, we should keep trying.

**Matthew** He had more faith than the rest of you!

*{There's another awkward silence.}*

**Peter** Yeah, he did.

**Judas** And he persuaded us to keep at it, though I think we were on the verge of a mutiny when the miracle occurred.

**Andrew** *[with relish]* The storm mysteriously stopped.

**Joanna** That wasn't the miracle!

**Mary** The rabbi *was* there! Wasn't he?

**Judas** Yup. But you'll never believe how he got there. John starting screaming and pointing, and - I swear to God this is true, and everybody on that boat will back me up - we saw the rabbi *walking across the water* toward us.

**Andrew** What?

**Joanna** Walking on the water. Just...walking, like it was a rolling green hill, rising and falling with the swells.

**Matthew** Glory be to God, I wish I'd been there!

**Judas** You might wish that, and maybe you would have rejoiced at the sight. But maybe you would have been freaked out like we were.

**Mary** How could you be afraid of the rabbi?

**Joanna** We weren't even sure it was him at first. Except for - except for Peter. Peter recognized him right off.

**Andrew** Way to go, big brother!

**Peter** *[firmly, and in some distress]* It was nothing. I'm sure John recognized him, too.

**Judas** *[awkwardly]* Anyway...at that point...

**Joanna** *[gently]* Peter, why don't you continue the story?

**Peter** *[after a pause]* He commanded the storm to stop. And it did. And then he walked up to the boat and climbed aboard. And we sailed on in to the shore.

*{There's another pause.}*

**Matthew** What a wonderful story to end a day of miracles on!

**Judas** Well, we'd better go get the rest of our stuff from the boat. We should probably start making camp.

**Peter** Andrew, come give me a hand.

**Andrew** Right. *[to Peter as they walk off]* So tell me about the storm again!

*{Everybody exits except Mary.}*

**Mary** Joanna!

*{Joanna comes back to Mary while the other continue to the boat.}*

**Joanna** Yes?

**Mary** *[to Joanna]* What's wrong with Peter? Did something happen to him?

## Scene 6

Andrew , Mary , Matthew , Peter

*{That night, Peter and Mary sit by the campfire.}*

**Peter** *[getting up]* Looks like everyone's gone to bed. I'm turning in, too.

**Mary** Goodnight, Peter.

**Peter** Goodnight.

**Mary** Peter?

**Peter** Uh huh?

**Mary** *[a pause while summoning her courage]* What did it feel like to walk on water?

**Peter** What? How'd you find out?

**Mary** I'm sorry! I saw something was bothering you today, and made Joanna tell me.

**Peter** *[relieved]* I guess that's okay. Just don't tell anyone else, okay?

**Mary** Of course. But I don't understand why you feel so bad about it. It must have been a wonderful thing.

**Peter** Because I only made it a few steps and then, plop! Into the water I went!

*{Matthew and Andrew enter.}*

**Matthew** What? You walked on the water?

**Andrew** Awesome!

**Peter** No, no, no! Now it's out! Look: you can't tell anybody.

**Andrew** Why not? It's amazing!

**Peter** Because the real story is that I *failed* to walk on the water! *[after a sigh]* All right, here's what happened. We were battling the storm like we said, and the rabbi comes walking across the water. But before he stilled the wind, I called out to him that if he really was the rabbi, to let me walk out onto the water with him. And he did. And I got out of the boat...and walked! For three steps. Then I sank.

**Matthew** What went wrong?

**Peter** I just started freaking out! I saw the waves and the wind and...just freaked out.

**Matthew** You lost faith.

**Peter** That was it exactly.

**Matthew** You should have kept your eyes on the rabbi instead of the waves.

**Peter** I know! I'm kicking myself for that.

**Andrew** *[unable to contain himself any longer]* Dude! *You walked on water!* How many people have done that in the history of the world? Did Abraham? Did Moses? Did Elijah? Did anybody else on the boat even try???

*{There's a short pause.}*

**Mary** You never answered my question. How did it feel?

**Peter** *[after a long pause and then a chuckle]* It was awesome! It was like...you know how you can practice something until you're really good at it? It felt like that. Like I suddenly got super good at walking on water. Like those guys who balance on logs, only no log! For three steps, I was better at it than I am at anything else I do. That's the worst part of it. I'm never going to have that feeling again.

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