

## Going home

*The Ascension, from Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 14*

JESUS' FRIENDS WERE AFRAID. So they were hiding in an upstairs room with the door bolted shut.

But that didn't stop Jesus. He just walked straight through the wall.

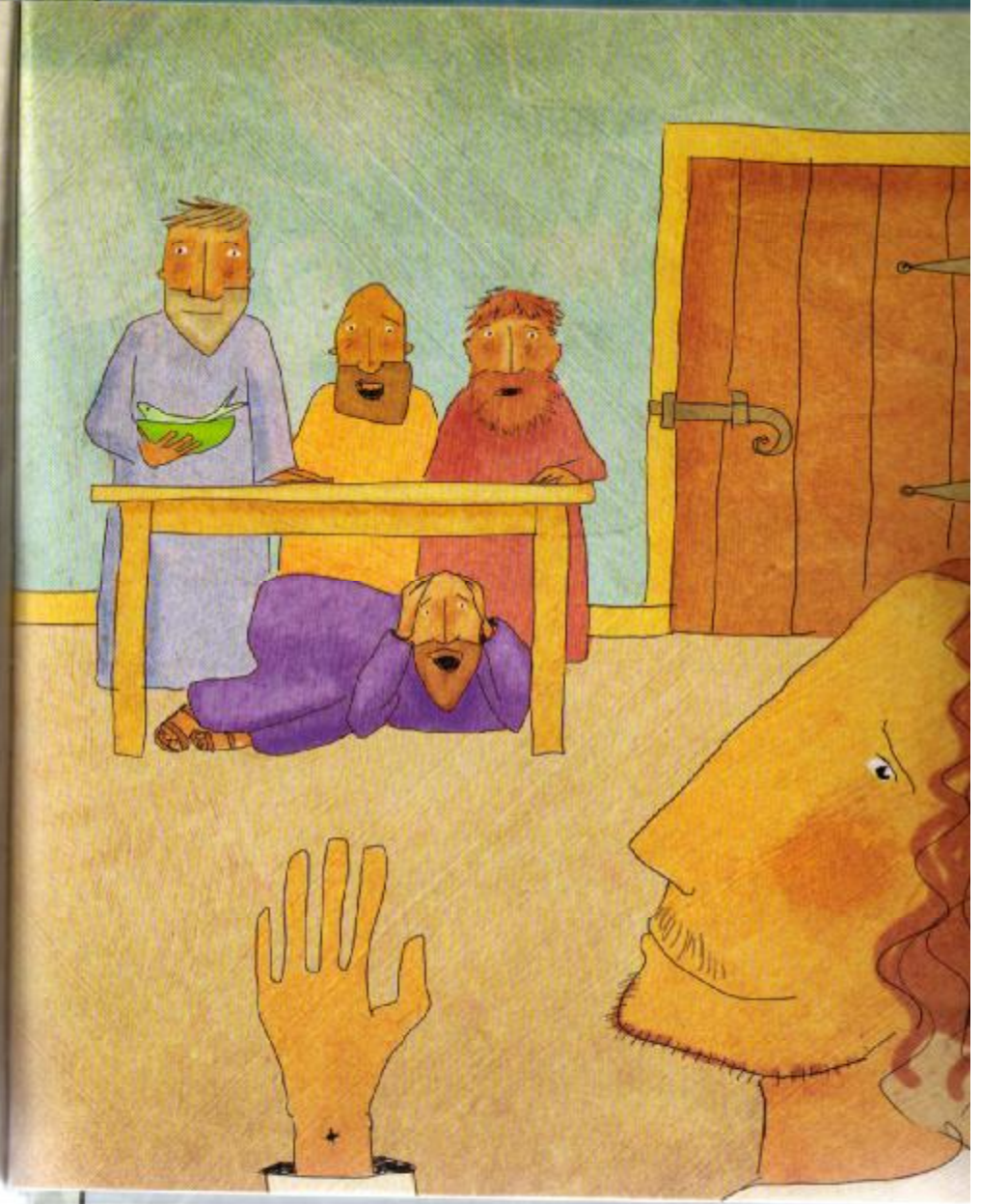
"It's a ghost!" Thomas screamed and hid under the table.

But it wasn't a ghost.

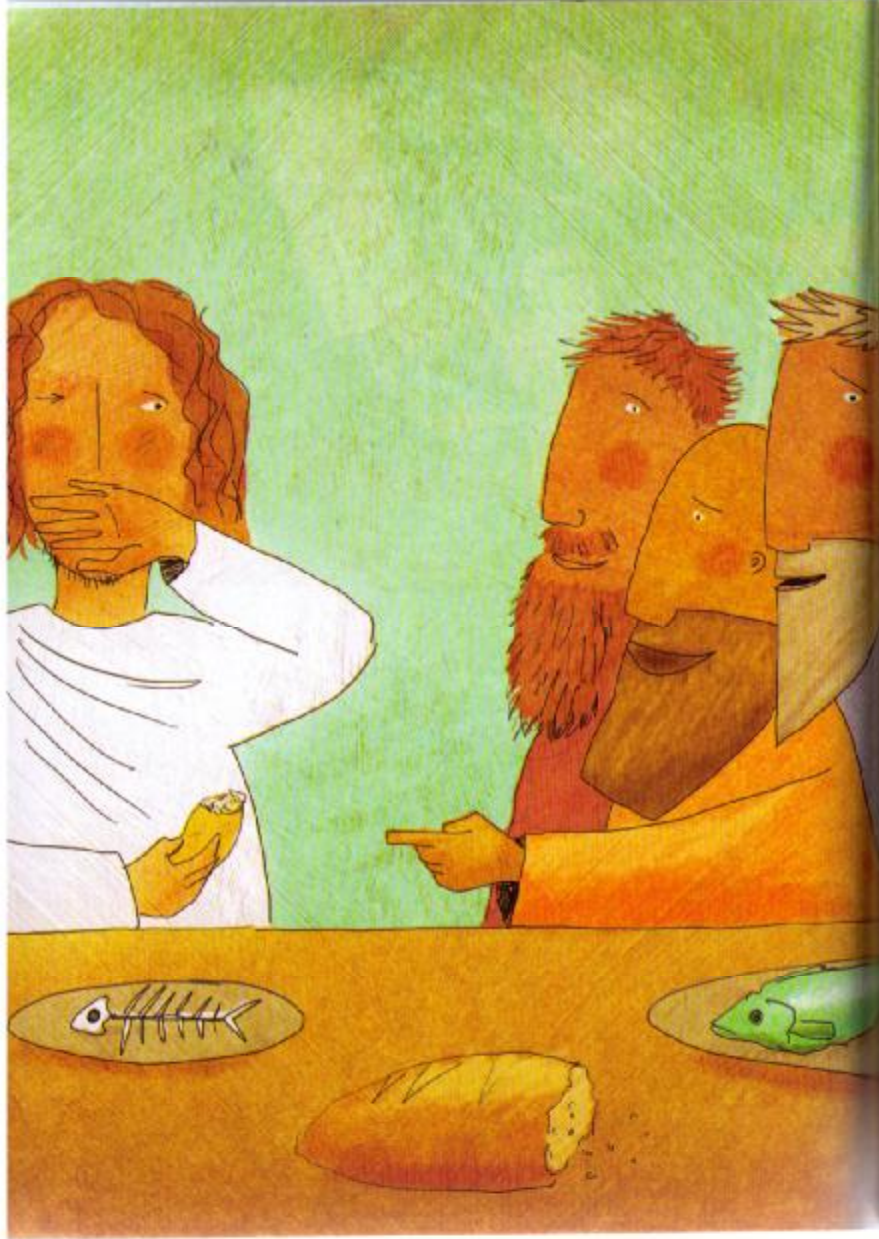
"I'm hungry," Jesus said. "What's for lunch?"

Peter gave him a fish. They all hung back and watched him eat it. *This can't be, they were telling themselves. It's impossible. It's not happening.*

But it was — right in front of them.







"Delicious!" Jesus wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and grinned. "Can a ghost do that?" He winked. And then they all laughed.

"I'm really here!" Jesus said.

And he really was.

Peter's heart leaped with joy and he fell into Jesus' arms, hugging and kissing him. The others followed. They felt their hearts would burst from the happiness.

The friends ate together and chatted happily. And every now and then, they'd just gaze at Jesus, and have to touch him to be sure they weren't dreaming.

Jesus had a real body but this body was better. It had come through death and couldn't get sick or be killed again. This body would live forever. Jesus had come back with a brand new body.

Not only were sad things coming untrue, the friends realized, they were becoming new again. Was God going to make everything new?

Jesus said, "I am the Savior and the Rescuer of the world." And they knew, because he couldn't stay dead, because Jesus had come alive again, that somehow everything would be all right.



A few days later, as they walked together, Jesus told his friends, "It's time for me to go home to my Father."

They all looked worried. And then they remembered what Jesus had told them before he died. "There's a place for you. I'll get it ready," Jesus had said. "You know the way."

Thomas had panicked. "I don't know the way to get there!"

"Yes, you do," Jesus had said. "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life."

When at last they reached the top of the highest hill near Jerusalem, Jesus turned to them and said, "Go everywhere and tell everyone the happy news!"

"Tell them I love them so much that I died for them. It's the Truth that overcomes the terrible lie. God loves his children. Yes, he really does!"

Suddenly the whole sky was filled with a dazzling light.

"Now everyone can come home to God," Jesus said. "Death is not the end of you. You can live forever with your Father in heaven because I have rescued the whole world!"





And something amazing happened: Jesus rose up into the bright air, higher and higher. They shaded their eyes and watched him go, until a cloud hid Jesus so they couldn't see him anymore. They stood looking up into the sky like that for a long time.

Suddenly two shining men appeared. "What are you doing?" they asked. "Jesus has gone up to heaven. But one day he will come back. In the same way you saw him leave. From heaven. And from the sky."

Jesus' friends went back to Jerusalem with a strange gladness inside their hearts. And something Jesus said that stuck in their minds: "Even though you won't be able to see me anymore, I will never leave you. No! Not ever! I will be with you. Yes! Always and forever!"

"How can Jesus be with us and leave us at the same time?" they wondered.

They didn't understand.  
No, but soon they would.

