



Conversations along the way... By the lakeside with Jesus

Put out into deep water

Matthew 4. 18-21 and Luke 5. 1-11

Storm on the lake

Mark 4. 35-41

Breakfast at Galilee

John 21. 1-19

Over the three sessions we gather with the disciples and Jesus at Lake Galilee - also known as the Lake of Gennesaret or Lake Tiberius. Galilee is home for the disciples and Jesus – it is the place they leave to follow ‘on the way,’ and it is where they are united once again after the trauma of Jesus’ crucifixion. In a profound sense the stories form a circle of leaving and arriving – a journey of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation.

The idea of the groups is to simply share these stories of Jesus as jumping off points to discuss whatever is sparked by them. There are no right answers to be found, and like every good conversation listening is as important as speaking.

The approach is based on the ancient practice of ‘lectio divina’ (holy reading) where the aim is not to understand *the* meaning of the text but to listen to the Scriptures for God’s word to us. So, the question is not, what does this passage mean, but rather what is its meaning to me, right now, in this moment. It is therefore more like prayer than Bible study. Alongside the Bible passages paintings are offered as an aid to further reflection and, following Ignatian spiritual practice, to invite us to place ourselves in the story.

Revd Becky Bevan July 2020





Week One

Put out into deep water...

A prayer to begin, and to be said together.

**Lord God help us to come closer to you.
Open our hearts to your guiding presence,
open our ears to your living Word,
and open our mouths to bless one another.
Amen.**

Read both passages aloud.

Matthew 4:18-21

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast into the sea with their net, for they were fishermen.

And he said to them, 'Come after me and I will make you fishers of people.'

And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them.

Luke 5.1-11

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ²he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." ⁶When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. ⁷So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" ⁹For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." ¹¹When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Notice the differences between these two accounts.

Read the Luke account (slowly) again. Where is your attention drawn?

You might like to share any words or phrases that catch your eye.

Picture Meditation



You can find out more about the artist Peter Clare at www.peterclaire.co.uk and find links to online versions of this image so that you can see more detail.

The artist composed the scene in a wide circle. Why might he have done this?

In the foreground Jesus is painted wearing a red jumper and trousers, and others are in contemporary dress. The setting is clearly not 1st century Palestine... What do you think the artist is trying to do?

Jesus is beckoning to two fishermen/disciples - one appears to be letting go of the net; the other one in yellow is gripping it tightly. What do you make of this?

Both look tired and disorientated.

Look at the crowd. They don't look happy either. Who are these people?

What do you think is going on in the top left of the painting? What might the artist be exploring?

Can you place yourself in the scene?





Week Two

Storm on the Lake

A prayer to begin, and to be said together.

**Lord God help us to come closer to you.
Open our hearts to your guiding presence,
open our ears to your living Word,
and open our mouths to bless one another.
Amen.**

Read the passage aloud – ideally twice, with different readers, and with enough time between each reading to notice the words or phrases that draw your attention.

Notice the little details Mark chooses to include...

Mark 4:35-41

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” ³⁶ And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. ³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” ³⁹ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” ⁴¹ And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

Where is your attention drawn in this passage? Share any thoughts, feelings, reactions...

The ship was an ancient Christian symbol of the Church tossed about on a sea of disbelief, suffering, worldliness. This drawing is from the catacombs in Rome where it was drawn on a wall where Christians were buried. It was also a useful symbol during times of persecution when Christians could disguise the cross as a ship's mast. Painted on a wall by a grave it speaks of the Christian hope of crossing to 'the other side' through the death and resurrection of Christ.



Picture Meditation

The *Storm on the Sea of Galilee* was painted in 1633 by the Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn. The painting is easy to find online if you want to enlarge it to see more detail.



Notice how many people are in the boat. In addition to the twelve disciples and Jesus there's a *thirteenth person*. *Who is that?*

Rembrandt is known to have painted himself somewhere in his paintings to say something about where he saw himself in the story. The invitation of Ignatian spirituality is to do the same, to imagine ourselves in the Gospel story; not to be remote onlookers studying the Bible, but participants in the narrative.

Look carefully at the people in the boat.

The man right at the top of the boat seems to be entirely focussed on his task, riding the waves and working hard to trim the front sail. He's earnestly doing his bit to save the ship.

Four others are near him; three working frantically, but one appearing to be motionless. Notice that the light is shining on this part of boat, lending an angelic quality to some of the figures... What might the artist be exploring?

One of the ropes has been disconnected from the mast and is swirling in the wind. Look at these men hanging on for dear life.

Now turn your attention to the lower half of the boat. One man is crouched over the edge of the boat looking down at the dark sea and he looks like he is throwing up.

Only two people in the whole boat are looking at Jesus, and they appear to be angry. One is shaking Jesus. Hear the other one saying – ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’

Notice the man in white with his back to Jesus. He is sitting alone and motionless, separated from the frightening storm and the chaos going on around him in the boat. He seems to be looking at a shadowy figure facing him.

A man in a blue shirt is back-to-back with the figure in white. He’s holding onto a guy rope, and, with his other hand is on his forehead, he stares blankly out at the dark sea.

Look carefully at where Rembrandt has painted the shaft of light. What do you notice?

Notice the shape of the mast and how it divides the picture...

Where do you place yourself in the scene?





Week Three

Breakfast at Galilee

A prayer to begin, and to be said together.

**Lord God help us to come closer to you.
Open our hearts to your guiding presence,
open our ears to your living Word,
and open our mouths to bless one another.
Amen.**

Read the passage aloud – ideally twice, with different readers, and with enough time between each reading to notice the words or phrases that draw your attention.

John 21:1-18

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples.

Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.”

They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my

sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you now everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

Where is your attention drawn in this passage? Share any thoughts, feelings, reactions...

Think about the journey Simon Peter has been on with Jesus since that first meeting at Galilee and now back here after he denied even knowing Jesus...

Reflect on why Jesus comes back to them on their home lake as they fish its waters like they used to do before ‘these things’ (his arrest and death).

And what do you make of the breakfast – why is this so carefully included by the writer? Does it have any echoes for you of holy communion?

Picture Meditation

Christ at the Sea of Galilee, c. 1575/1580, was painted in the Late Renaissance by the Italian artist, Jacopo Robusti, also known as Tintoretto (1518-1594). You can find this picture online and enlarge it to see more detail.



Look carefully at the painting. (Try not to get distracted at this point by whether you like it or not!)

Notice the sky, the waves, the hills, the landscape... How would you describe the mood? Where is the light and shade?

What about the composition of the painting – where is the focus?

Do you think that Tintoretto intends the scene to look real or surreal, or what?

Look at the men in the boat. What do you notice?

Peter has one leg over the edge of the boat ready to launch himself into the sea. He is turned, full-figured towards the outstretched arm of the risen Jesus.

Now contemplate the figure of Christ in the foreground. Not in the boat with them as before. And not in red trousers like our first picture! He stands tall and straight, almost princely, reaching out to his disciples in their confusion and tumult. His body has both a solidity and an ethereal quality. Apparently, Tintoretto achieved a kind of transparent effect by stroking white pigment over the canvas with a dry brush. What do you feel the artist is exploring?

Do you like the painting? How might you have chosen to depict this Gospel story?

Does it in any way connect with you right now?

A prayer to finish.

Traditional Prayer of Breton Fishermen

O God, the sea is so great,
and our boat is so small.
Be with us.

