

THOUGHTS FOR EACH DAY - SEA OF GALILEE

Some of us may feel it is unwise to go to the sea-side right now but via the Gospels of Matthew and John we can at least visit the Sea of Galilee. Here are a few thoughts based on the devotions I led for Christian holiday-makers in Paignton. My visual aid then was Torbay, visible through the hotel window but this link - <https://youtu.be/-pzDegkph4w> will take you directly to the Sea of Galilee.

Day 1 - Matthew 4 verses 18 & 21

18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake for they were fishermen. v21 Going on from there he saw two other brothers James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee preparing their nets

These fishermen were busy at work as Jesus approached them. Did they notice Jesus looking at them before hearing his call? This we do not know. We just know that these two pairs of brothers stopped what they were doing immediately v20 & v22 and followed him. Help us Lord no matter how busy we are, to be mindful of your presence and when called, be willing to respond.

Day 2 - Matthew 8 verse 18 & 23 - 24

18 When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. 23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Without warning a furious storm came up over the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping.

Here we are shown the humanity of Jesus. He had been busy teaching and preaching to the crowd and needed to escape and rest – soon he was sound asleep. Unless we live with or know someone involved in Church leadership and ministry, few can fully appreciate how hard they work and of how important it is for them to take time out to relax, rest and recuperate. If Jesus needed to rest – then so should they. Help us Lord to remember to pray for our Church leaders, here in TBC and beyond, particularly while they seek ways to ensure that all ‘church families’ are kept safe.

Day 3 - Matthew 8 verses 25 – 27

25 The disciples went and woke him (Jesus) saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” 26 He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. 27 The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

What a day! So much for the disciples to ‘process’. To say they were ‘amazed’ seems an understatement. They had witnessed and listened to Jesus preaching to the crowd. They had witnessed a storm which even the seasoned sailors amongst them were scared of. Their faith had been challenged by Jesus when they woke Him up. Then, they had witnessed him rebuke the winds and waves and had seen yet another miracle when all became calm again. What a ‘steep learning curve’! Help us Lord never to forget just how Almighty and Wonderful You are. Praise be to God!

Day 4 - Matthew 13 verses 1- 3a & 47

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered round him that he got into a boat and sat in it while all the people stood on the shore. 3a Then he

told them many things in parables, 47 "Once again the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish".

Apparently not only did getting into a boat help keep the crowds at bay but from that position the shoreline rose creating the effect of a natural amphitheatre. This enabled Jesus' words, according to acoustical research, to be heard by as many as 7000 people. He spoke in parables using both the fertile and barren land nearby as visual aids. We also see as in v47 Jesus use familiar situations to illustrate the points he was making. We give thanks Lord for all those called to make your word clear to us today. Lord we also pray that we may always have the 'ears to hear'.

Day 5 - Matthew 14 verse 22a & 25 – 27

22 Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, 25 During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said and cried out in fear. 27 But Jesus immediately said to them "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

Jesus had needed to be alone - to climb a mountain and commune with his heavenly Father. All through his ministry he listened to his Father, keen to carry out His will. On returning to his disciples, walking on the water towards the boat, Jesus once again sees them struggling with his identity. It must have been a terrifying experience for them, never mind Peter! Once all aboard the disciples *32b worshipped him saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."* How good it is to know that Jesus comes to meet us wherever we are, bringing words of hope and encouragement.

Day 6 - John 21 verses 4, 9 & 12a

4. Early in the morning Jesus stood on the shore but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. 9. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there was fish on it, and some bread. 12a. Jesus said to them "Come and have breakfast."

We find, in these post-resurrection days, Jesus once again on the sea-shore calling out to his disciples who are unsuccessfully fishing on, as John describes it, the Sea of Tiberias. He can see that they don't recognise him so he gives them a clue in verse 6 *He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."* When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Not only did Jesus provide their greatest 'catch of the day' but he had also prepared breakfast for them. We pray that as followers of Christ we too can offer practical support to those in need of a helping hand.

Day 7 – John 21 verses 12b – 14

12b. None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

What a precious and joyful time this was for the disciples - sitting and sharing breakfast with Jesus and enjoying each other's company. Although we have missed being together inside our Church building, help us Lord to build each other up and to feel united when we pray. Amen