



The Sea of Galilee

Beginning

A reflection for the 3rd Sunday of Easter, 2022

Their experience of the Resurrection presented Jesus' disciples with a paradox: how would they move forward into unknown territory now that everything familiar, safe and secure had permanently changed for them and how would they respond to this insistent call of Love to follow him.

In 1986, archaeologists discovered the remains of an ancient boat which carbon dating has established, could have been a fishing vessel in operation between 120 BCE and 40 CE: a period spanning the time that Jesus spent on the Sea of Galilee. It was constructed in the style typical of ancient boats in the Mediterranean region. Besides cedar planking and oak frames, five other woods were used in its construction: Aleppo pine, cedar, hawthorn, willow and redbud.

As I walked by the sea of Galilee at dawn, I wondered if the ancient boat could have carried Peter and the other disciples as they met Jesus after his resurrection. As the sound of lapping water barely concealed their sighs, they would have looked towards the horizon and wondered: Are we going back to our nets now? This morning, we have cast our nets and caught nothing. Jesus has called us to come on this tremendous journey; to bring new hope, and love; to reveal him to everyone. Yet, after the events of the past days, what would the future hold?



*Ancient Galilee boat - 120 BCE - 40 CE
Yigal Allon Museum, Kibbutz Ginosar, Israel*

Their world was upended; much like ours has been through our experience of the pandemic. After undergoing the anguish of betrayal, and passing through suffering and death into life, Jesus meets them again by the sea of Galilee where he had first called them to follow him several years earlier.

He invites them to discover their call anew for:

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
and know the place for the first time.*

TS Eliot: 'The Four Quartets'

His seemingly random suggestion to cast their nets on the starboard side leads to an unexpectedly overwhelming result. They recognise him in that instant.

When we experience his voice in unforeseen moments, something stirs within us and we experience him anew within the leaky, fragile net of our humanity. He is here with us, as he appeared to Peter and the other disciples in the faint light of dawn. We dare to move from fear and dejection towards love for we realise that we and indeed everyone for whom he died and rose, are loved - truly, undeniably, unconditionally.

Jesus invites them to bring their fish to the fire already prepared on the shore. He shares a meal together with them and he calls them to imagine what the journey ahead may look like, as:

*Though we live in a world that dreams of ending
that always seems about to give in,
something that will not acknowledge conclusion
insists that we forever begin.*

Brendan Kennelly: 'Begin'

Jesus' three-fold question to Peter "do you love me?" redeems and consecrates Peter for everything he will yet accomplish. Jesus stands in our midst and consecrates us with a love stronger than death. He invites us to be open to an ever deeper love which encompasses seeing him not just in our own journeys but in all of humanity's. It is not an end but a beginning.