

3 Ordinal 2023  
22 January 2023

What is going on at the Sea of Galilee?  
Why would four grown men, adults  
leave behind their families, their father,  
their livelihood,  
what they were born into  
and thought that they would do forever?  
Why this response to someone whom  
they may have come across, encountered here and there,  
maybe heard in the synagogue,  
but probably, at this point, don't know, at least not deeply?

Perhaps the cynical side of us  
could just dismiss the whole scene  
and chalk it up to the Scripture exaggerating,  
that this doesn't really reflect a true-to-life event.  
Or on the other side,  
we can employ our piety and say,  
"Well, it's God-in-the-flesh, speaking ...  
what else were they to do?  
Jesus speaks, people listen!

Cynicism always undermines the divine power we hold onto,  
and the divine power of who we truly are.  
Piety, can sometimes suck out the relevance of a situation  
for our times today.

What is going on at the Sea of Galilee?  
I think this...  
Those fishermen ... Peter and Andrew; James and John...  
They were invited to make a decision ... two decisions actually...  
a decision about Jesus and a decision about themselves...  
and in the decisions made,  
real relationship is formed.

There is another point in the Gospel

that we read at another time...  
where Jesus called a young man to follow him.  
He did not respond with immediacy...  
he responded by saying nothing and simply walked away.  
So, Jesus was not always successful in making disciples...  
he wasn't always successful with those he did call...  
Peter didn't always understand,  
James and John wanted violence,  
Thomas Doubted,  
Judas betrayed.

Every step of the way they had to make a decision  
about Jesus and about themselves  
and in those decisions a relationship was formed.

They could have walked away.  
They would remain then who they always were: mere fisherman,  
and gone about their business.  
Or  
they could do this...  
on the shores of that sea...  
they could decide  
to step out of their ways and wants,  
to step away from maintaining and managing,  
and come into a relationship  
that goes beyond friendship,  
that goes into Jesus being more...  
no longer a Messiah to be sought ... but a Messiah found.  
It's a risky path...never really forged before...  
never really traveled...  
until them, for us now.

The reality is...  
Jesus calls... every day  
and a decision has to be made, two actually...  
who is Jesus and who am I?  
And then a relationship grows.

When we experience a life decision for our future...  
what to do with our life, where to go, where to make our mark,  
how to use our gifts...  
we must find ourselves on the Sea of Galilee  
hearing Jesus say, "Follow."  
We can decide ... Jesus, I've got this,  
it's all figured out,  
stay there as a friend, as a fellow beach comber  
or we can risk, surrender, and give ourselves over to him,  
to say Jesus... I'll follow and trust that you will take me  
to where I need to go.

When we experience something life altering,  
something unexpected, something terrible even ...  
the end of a relationship, the loss of a job,  
the unsettling of our health to cancer, age, or accidents,  
the death of a loved one...  
even in these situations we must find ourselves on the Sea of Galilee  
hearing Jesus say, "Follow."  
And then we decide ... to blame him for our misery,  
grow weary and burdened  
because we did everything right but were repaid nothing,  
we can even grow angry and some may even decide to walk away...  
or we can risk and say even in these horrible moments  
wherever he takes me that's where I need to go.

When we experience our everyday life...  
our routine, our status quo, our schedules to be planned and carried out,  
our lived experience of family, friends, work, and play...  
Even in the mundane, the ordinary, the dull,  
Even here, we must find ourselves on the shore of Galilee  
hearing Jesus say, "Follow."  
Then we need to decide ... let's keep things safe,  
let's do this the way we have always done it  
or we can risk and do what the disciples did,  
rather than catch food needed to nourish others,  
they would become for others the nourishment needed.

May we hear Him call from moment to moment,  
experience to experience,  
day to day ...

May we take leave of what must be left behind...  
our attitudes, what we think best,  
what has always been done...  
even, if we dare, leave behind, "my will be done."

And may we follow ...  
yes, it's risky,  
but if he is more than just a friend to us,  
more than just some rabbi and teacher to us ...  
if, he is for us  
a Messiah not to be sought,  
but a Messiah found...  
then ... may we follow  
knowing that where he takes us  
is where we need to be.