

What are your earliest memories of Church? Perhaps it was an Altar Call, the singing of a Hymn or Solo, doughnuts and cookies at Coffee Hour. Among my earliest memories of Christianity were making Plaster of Paris 10 Commandments Tablets; the Inn Keeper at Christmas told Joseph and Mary he had no room for them then made room in a stable; and Jesus first disciples were Fishermen. We had never seen Frankincense or Myrrh; as children in Missouri we were not allowed to drink wine even at weddings; walking on water seemed far-fetched; but "FISHING" this was something where as kids we could identify.

I love the experiential images in this story, Christianity is not philosophy, or Law, this is following Jesus. The Sea of Galilee, here described as Lake Gennesaret, was 7 miles wide, 12 ½ miles long, and fish was the primary industry of Palestine. Jerusalem had one gate designated as The Fish-Gate, the Northern Palestine Capital city of Bethsaida is translated as "House of Fish", and Magdala the home of Mary Magdalene on the Western-shore meant "Processed Fishville", where the eastern shore was Gentile.

Seeing two fishing boats pulled up on shore, while the fishermen are cleaning, drying and repairing nets. Jesus had left the Synagogue where the religious people did not want to accept his message, and as he walked along the shore he gathered a crowd, AND Jesus climbed into one and sits down to teach. For Jesus to sit down to preach from a fishing boat in his hometown of Nazareth, I have to believe he, Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John all had grown up together and at least knew of one another enough that climbing into Simon Peter's means of livelihood was not taken as trespassing.

There is a wonderful contrast here between Jesus sitting down to preach in the Synagogue, and his sitting down in a boat as crowds of people sit on the hillside to listen to him teach the Word of God. There is a similar story in another of the Gospels that the crowd became so large, Jesus was backed into the water, so climbed aboard the boat.

A few years ago, I was gifted a trip to the Holy Lands, so as to possibly return one day with a church group, AND at the Sea of Galilee recognized that according to physics there is an acoustic principle that sound on water is amplified as it rises up this hillside just like a natural speaker amplification/Bandshell.

In the Synagogue, Jesus had been given a scroll of Isaiah from which to teach, I wonder what he taught on the shores of Galilee in a fishing boat? My guess is describing Creation from the Book of Genesis, he spoke of separation of the waters from dry land and the waters teeming with fish.

As Simon began laying the nets in the boat to go out again that evening, Jesus instructed Simon Peter to put out into deeper water and let out your nets for a catch. I don't know your experience, but I have ALWAYS heard Preachers describe Simon reverently reply: **"Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."** But from the rest of the Gospels, I wonder if Simon Peter responded somewhat sarcastically to this Carpenter who imagines he knows more about fishing than professional fishermen who caught nothing. ***"Boss! You think you know better, we worked all night and caught nothing, but what do we know, it's not like we have been doing this every night since we could stand up in a boat. YOU think we should go out, after drying our nets, so clearly your opinion matters."***

All of which is more in keeping with Simon Peter's response when they do catch so many fish that they fill two boats to the point of sinking with fish. Simon Peter fell down at Jesus feet confessing "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Jesus does not tell Simon to repent. He does not tell him to go and sin no more. Nor does he tell Simon to sell all he has. Similar to Isaiah when in a vision he saw Seraphim at the throne of God flying with six pair of wings crying "Holy, Holy, Holy!" Isaiah had a visceral response "Whoa is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, who dwells among a people of unclean lips." AND Immediately one of the seraphim brought a burning coal to cauterize the sin from his lips. THEN God said "Who will go

for us?" and Isaiah responded "Here am I, send me!" In like manner, Jesus says "Do not be afraid, henceforth you will be fishing for women and men."

I wonder which is more historically accurate, and even more wonder what LUKE & JOHN were trying to emphasize differently, because while Luke is unique in telling this story as Jesus' Call of the first Disciples; in John's Gospel the story is told almost word for word, a week after Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection, with the addition of Jesus' asking Simon three times, "Do you love me?" and commissioning them...

About a month ago, we read in John a unique story about Jesus creating a "SUPERABUNDANCE" of Wine. Afterwards I had a number of questions of what happened to over 180 Gallons of the Finest Wine... What I have never heard interpretation of, is what happened to two boatloads of fish in the mid-day sun? Being enterprising, did Zebedee sell the fish to finance Simon, Andrew, James and John becoming Jesus' disciples for 3 years; or do we assume with Simon, Andrew, James and John abandoning their businesses, every person was treated to a FREE FISH Day?

What would it take to provide the world a SUPERABUNDANCE, to give every person a fish?

It took One Hundred Million Years for the human population to reach 1 Billion people. In 1830, 30 years before the Civil War, the population of the planet was 1 Billion.

And 100 years later in 1930, despite Civil War, World War I, and Spanish Flu, we hit 2 Billion.

Just 30 years later in 1960, when Kennedy and Nixon were debating the Presidency we reached 3 Billion.

16 years later, 1976 we celebrated the Bi-Centennial of America, I graduated High School with 4 Billion.

11 years later, 1987 when our children were born, there were 5 Billion people.

According to the United Nations just before the year 2000 there were 6 Billion people on Earth, and today, 22 years later there are 6.2 Billion people all across Creation. If those people each received a fish: Amazing!

The important verb throughout all of this story from Luke was "AMAZED," After a night's work catching nothing Simon Peter was Amazed. Andrew, James and John joined Simon to bring the fish ashore, and were amazed. They brought the catch ashore in two boats and all were amazed. This was not a miracle of bringing ashore some creature no one had ever seen. Not changing the fish into something different. NO, the Miracle is the SUPERABUNDANCE of something ordinary, something that witnessing this is so amazing as to give us GOOSEBUMPS.

Years ago, my wife and I took my parents to a show on Broadway in Manhattan, which happened to be a One-Woman show of the Comedian Lilly Tomlin, called **The Search for Intelligent Life in the Universe**. In the show she plays 3-year-old Edith Anne, and the Telephone Operator Ernestine, but at the end of her performance, Tomlin played a new character of "Trudy the Baglady". Trudy had been hired by Angels from God in Heaven or Aliens from Outer Space to stand at the corner of Walk / Don't Walk to search for Intelligent Life. She records all of the important information for them on Post-it Notes that she covers herself with. At one scene is a Voice coming down to Trudy asking "Before we go to the Heavens, we need to know about Goosebumps." And Trudy says, "Goosebumps? You have come all this way for Goosebumps?" Trudy recalls the last time she felt goosebumps was at a Broadway play, so she takes these two creatures to the theater. The three of them are standing at the back, when about two-thirds the way through the show, Trudy realizes that the strangers are not watching the performers, AND both are covered with goosebumps. Then she notices what they are watching is the people in the theater, watching their laughter and their tears. The final scene is Trudy standing alone outside looking up into the sky, saying "Sometimes they watch us, and they see the funny things, the silly things that we do to each other, and I can hear them laughing." And sometimes, I can hear them crying, because they see the inhumanity. Our violations of one another's human rights, and Civil Rights and People's Rights. And then Trudy looks

out at the audience and says, "MAYBE Someday, you and I will do something so marvelous, that it will give the whole universe goosebumps!"

If we are going to be LIGHT in the midst of darkness...

If we are going to be HOPE in the midst of despair...

If we are going to have COURAGE to go into deeper water, and FAITH to follow Jesus into the world, we are going to have to stop being SINNERS,

and we are going to have to be about giving all the people of this fragile world Goosebumps.