

## ... they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat

The second tale, that of calming storms and walking on the waters is told three times. You can read the stories in Matthew, Mark and John. There are some differing details. The Evangelists may well be recording separate but similar events.

### The Feedings

For the first Christians, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes was the consummation of the prophecy that they heard in Isaiah 25:<sup>6-8</sup>. In their eyes, Isaiah foreshadowed the Eucharist with a banquet on the mountain: Christ who made food for many, then, *himself*, became Eucharistic food for all.

Even as we do, earlier Christian generations used artistic representations to witness their belief in Holy Things. Their pictures of Eucharistic elements were more likely to illustrate bread and *fish* rather than picture bread and *wine*.

You may remember that we quoted Isaiah's passage six weeks ago in a different context: <sup>3</sup> Meditate upon it.

6 On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained  
clear.

7 And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

8 he will swallow up death for ever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the  
earth, for the Lord has spoken.

To reiterate, for the early Christian, the Eucharist, symbolized in feeding of the multitude, was the fruition and culmination of Isaiah's words.

**Please prepare John 6:1-21 for next Sunday.**

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### **An Ancient Galilee Boat**

(the so-called *Jesus boat*)

**1st century AD; discovered 1986**

**Yigal Alon Museum in Kibbutz Ginosar**

In 1986, an ancient boat was pulled from the mud along the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was a unique and exciting find that gives us an idea of the sort of boat used during the time of Jesus. The boat appeared because in a period of great drought the waters of the lake had receded. It was discovered by the brothers Moshe and Yuval Lufan, second-generation fishermen from Kibbutz Ginosar.

The subsequent archaeological dig was undertaken by members of the Kibbutz Ginosar, the Antiquities Authority, and many volunteers. Pulling the boat from the mud without damaging it — yet quickly enough to extract it before the water rose again — was a delicate process, lasting 12 days and nights. The boat then had to be submerged in a chemical bath for 7 years before it could be displayed.

The boat has been dated to the 1st century AD through pottery and nails found in association with the boat, plus radiocarbon dating, and analysis of hull construction techniques. Evidence of

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<sup>3</sup> A passage we'll also consider next Sunday.

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repeated repairs indicates the boat was used for several decades, perhaps nearly a century. When it was considered beyond repair all useful wooden parts were removed and the remaining hull sunk to the bottom of the lake.

The Galilee Boat is apparently the type of boat that was used on the Sea of Galilee both for fishing and also for transportation across the lake. It is likely that this sort of boat was used by Jesus and his disciples, most of whom were fishermen. Boats played a large role in Jesus' life and ministry; they are mentioned 50 times in the Gospels! There is of course no evidence connecting the boat to Jesus or his disciples, but it is certainly tantalizing to think that Jesus may have seen the boat sail by out on the Sea of Galilee or even used it himself. But regardless of its history, the "Jesus boat" is a fascinating artifact that brings to life many of the Gospel accounts.

The boat is displayed in the Yigal Allon Museum on the grounds of Kibbutz Ginosar, one of several communal farms in Israel. Founded in 1937, the kibbutz is noted for its out-of-season fruit and vegetables.

The boat contains 12 different types of wood and measures 25.5 ft. (8.2 m) long, 7.5 ft. (2.3 m) wide, and 4.1 ft (1.25 m) high. It would have had a crew of five (four rowers and a helmsman) and could carry about 15 additional persons. This seems like a lot for such a humble boat, but men were smaller 2,000 years ago — about 5'5" and 140 pounds.

### Today's Gospel: Mark 6:30-34; 53-56

✠ THE APOSTLES GATHERED AROUND JESUS, AND TOLD HIM ALL THAT THEY had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because *they were like sheep without a shepherd*; and he began to teach them many things. [*the "gap", see below*] When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he

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was. And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, **they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.** [© NRSV]

### Jesus the Pastor

You may recall that the early church did not use the crucifix as a devotional object, or, in the very early days, even the cross. When that macabre method of execution was still in use it would be as impossible for the church to find comfort in the cross as it would for a French congregation to kneel before a Guillotine or for us today to pray before an electric chair. The early church instead used statues or painted representations of the Good Shepherd. In John's Gospel, Christ in fact says three times, "*I am the Good Shepherd.*"<sup>1</sup> Today we see him fulfilling that role. He leads his flock, because people *were like sheep without a shepherd*. The he crosses the lake and other "sheep" flock to the Shepherd for healing. .... *they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.*

### The "Gap" in our Gospel passage

Unfortunately, two actions of the Good Shepherd are omitted (what is termed *the "gap"*) from today's readings. One will be heard next week using the version found in the Gospel of John. Our Gospel from Mark today leaves out both (1) the feeding of the multitude and (2) Christ's walking on the stormy waters and calming the storm.

The first, the feeding, is the most repeated story of the Master's life. It is told in two versions in Matthew, two in Mark, and one each in Luke and John, plus, in John's final chapter, 21, it is "repeated", in the Resurrected Christ's feeding of seven disciples, who, having caught 153 huge fish *at Jesus' direction*,<sup>2</sup> came ashore. The excited Peter jumped in and got to the beach first, swimming about 100 yards. When all were ashore the group was fed by The Good Shepherd. At his hand they received bread and fish that he had cooked over the fire he had built on the beach.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, John 10:11: 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps a symbolic fishing for men?