

Rev. Derek Fairman

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time A

In the Gospel, we hear that the Lord Jesus went to live in Capernaum, by the Sea of Galilee, or the Sea of Tiberius, in the region of Naphtali and Zebulun. This was in the region of Galilee, far from the Temple and the city of Jerusalem, but still within the boundaries of the ancient Holy Land. This area had been claimed by different empires and kingdoms over the years. Galilee was a place where some of the Jewish exiles resettled. It was not the center of power, like Judea and Jerusalem, but it had been part of the old Kingdom of David.

The Lord performed many miracles in Galilee. The Lord preached in many synagogues in Galilee, and showed the people that they were not forgotten. The people in Galilee were not part of the elite, or at the center of power in the country. They were simple, but like the members of the Holy Family, there were those who were faithful, and they made the long journey to the Temple and to Jerusalem at the appointed times. It was to them that the Lord Jesus came, and except in His native place of Nazareth, it was where He found faith among the people.

Whenever the Lord Jesus came down from Heaven, He emptied Himself or poured Himself out in love for His Father and the people. He came in humility, and in poverty. He came in hiddenness and obscurity. Part of this abasement was coming among a people and a place that was away from the hustle and bustle of what was happening in the center of power in the region. Until He began His Public Ministry, He chose a hidden life, and when He did begin His Public Ministry at His Baptism, it was not to make Himself a celebrity or for the singular purpose of drawing attention to Himself. He chose to work where He could be welcomed and appreciated.

The Lord Jesus did not choose His apostles from the powerful and elite in Jerusalem, but among the simple people of Galilee. The apostles were not considered much of anything, in the worldly sense, but the Lord Jesus saw something in them that worldly men and women would have likely missed. He saw that their simplicity could serve the Gospel well, since they would only relate what they witnessed. They would not try to obscure the Gospel with their own philosophies or ideas.

There are parts of our lives which are hidden, which may not grab our attention very often. So often we are caught up in this thing or that thing, and we miss the opportunities to hear what the Lord Jesus wants to tell us in our hearts. It takes a certain quiet, and a certain attention to the hidden parts of our lives, to discover what the Lord has in store for us. We might think

about the apostles which the Lord Jesus chose. The Lord Jesus saw a hidden potential in them, and maybe they did not see that potential in themselves.

The apostles had many hidden things going on in their hearts. Something was stirring in their hearts before they first heard the Lord Jesus. Maybe they could identify it, or maybe they could not. Maybe they knew that something was there, or maybe they did not. Whatever the case, when they first heard the Lord Jesus speaking at their local synagogue or perhaps at the seashore, the Lord Jesus woke something in their hearts. Whatever had been stirring in their hearts had found its home in the Lord. When the Lord Jesus called them to leave what they had known, there had been so much going on in the hidden depths, that they were ready to follow Him.

Our consciences are useful for listening to the voice of the Lord. Yes, our consciences teach us right from wrong, urge us to do what is right, and drive us to seek reconciliation when we do what is wrong. Yet there is more to life than just what is right or wrong. The voice of the Lord can speak to us in our hearts to show us a vocation in life. The voice of the Lord can draw us to see others in a new light. The voice of the Lord can lead us to find joy in prayer.

For those called to the priesthood, we remember that the Lord Jesus did not call the elite living in Jerusalem or Judea. The Lord called those who were forgotten, those whose lives were hidden from the rest of the world. The Lord called them, because the Lord saw a hidden potential that others overlooked.

That does not mean that they were perfect. The apostles were flawed, and those flaws frequently present themselves in the Gospel. They argued with each other about who was the greatest among them, they had moments of doubt, they were slow to understand. They abandoned the Lord during His trial and Crucifixion, except one. Yet they also had moments in which they faithfully followed the Lord, and shared in the Lord's ministry to the people. After Pentecost, the apostles would bring the Catholic faith to far-off nations and give their lives in witness to the Lord Jesus' Resurrection. Those flaws became an occasion for the Lord to show that all these wonderful things were done by His power.

As we approach the altar, we pray for those who are called to the priesthood and religious life, those who are called to follow the Lord Jesus more closely and share in His work. In the hearts of our young people, perhaps there are things stirring, and there is the need to figure out what that stirring might be. We also pray for those who feel forgotten, or those whose lives are hidden from others, that they may know and experience God's love.