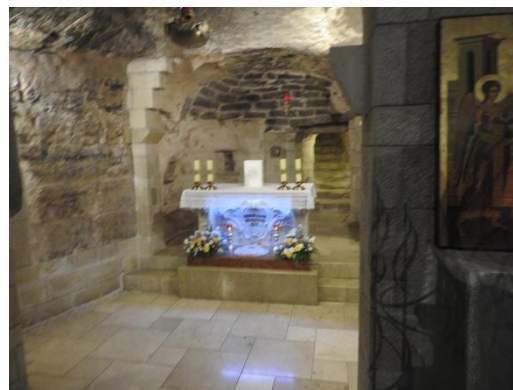


February 23 – Walking with Jesus
Scripture: Matthew 4:12-23

The region of Galilee was central to Jesus' ministry. When you are there it is almost as if time has come to a stand-still. In many places it does not look a lot different from when Jesus was alive. It was a thrill to see again the green hills of Galilee slope down to the most famous lake in the Bible, the Sea of Galilee. This body of water has other names. If you were Roman it was called the Sea of Tiberias. Many called it Lake Kinneret from the Jewish word for harp because it looks a bit like a Jewish Harp, wide at the top and skinny at the bottom. You don't have to close your eyes to picture Jesus here – you have to open them. The stories in the Bible come alive. We read how Jesus went, at the beginning of his ministry, from Nazareth, in the heart of Galilee to Capernaum, a city by the shore of the lake.

(pictures of Nazareth, Cana, Capernaum and the Sea)



Some wonder why Jesus would choose to make the region around the Sea of Galilee the base for his ministry. Jerusalem was bigger and more important. John the Baptist had chosen a site near a major trade route to the east, so why here? In New Testament times, the Sea of Galilee was an important commercial area surrounded by Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Magdala, and Tiberias.

(pictures of Magdala)



A major Roman road linked the Port of Caesarea with Damascus. Capernaum was the Roman capital for the region. Many travelers crossed the Jordan River there. Being the only significant freshwater lake in the region, the Sea of Galilee supported a flourishing fishing industry, which still is in operation today. Capernaum, a dominant setting in the ministry of Jesus, was the center of that fishing industry. Major trade routes with Syria came through here. It was a strategic place to use to have your message heard by a large number of people. You would touch the world through a ministry in the northern region of Galilee. Also, Jesus was familiar with the area because Nazareth was just a short distance away.

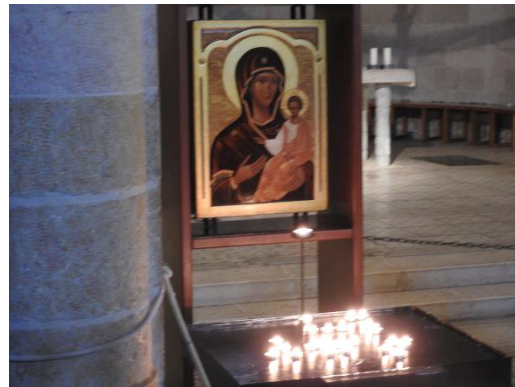
(pictures of boat and fish dinner)



Many momentous events in the life of Jesus took place around the Sea of Galilee, including the calling of several disciples. Peter, Andrew, James, and John had all been working as fishermen earning a living on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus also called Matthew the tax collector from the town of Capernaum on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee. Due to geological features on either side of the Sea of Galilee, sudden and severe storms occur regularly on its waters. The Gospels record one episode of Jesus calming a violent storm: In one of the most spectacular miracles of the Gospels,

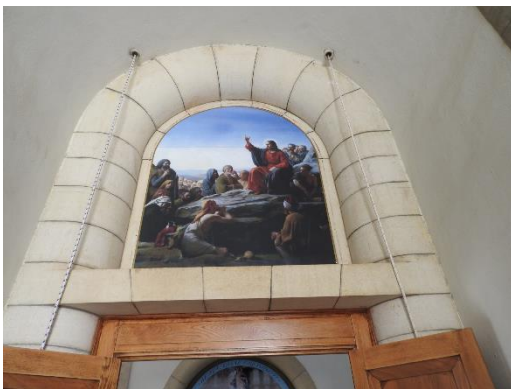
Jesus walks on the surface of the Sea of Galilee and also along the sea Jesus feeds five thousand.

(pictures of loaves and fishes)



Jesus taught the crowds by the shore and preached while standing in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. And the Lord is believed to have delivered His famous Sermon on the Mount on its shores of the sea.

(pictures of Beatitudes)



And before His ascension, Jesus appeared in His resurrected body to several of his disciples for a final miracle catch of fish by the Sea of Galilee. He cooked and ate breakfast with them and then forgave Peter.



(pictures of site of Forgiveness of Peter)

All of this reminded me anew the importance of place for ministry. Jesus had grown up in the province of Galilee, for Nazareth was in that region. His father had been a craftsman and so most of those he called were in “the trades.” He spent time in a place he knew, with people he understood, and shook and changed the world!

Now, let’s get a little uncomfortable. How would that logic play out for you? What I mean is that we often give excuses why we can’t ... when it comes to being more effective in our ministry. Yet, think about where you are living. We have people from all over the world wander through our town on their way to the Olympic National Park or Victoria. We have people from all over the region who attend our Lavender Festival. You might say we are as much of a crossroads as Capernaum was. Many of those who visit are retired and I think we have some affinity with that group. Is it just possible that God would like you, as a disciple of Jesus, to take advantage of the opportunities that come to you, because you live in this place, to share the good news? Is it possible that you could “change the world?” Maybe that isn’t possible but you might change a person’s life.

So, think about the next time you are at a restaurant and notice someone who is obviously not from around here. They are kind of easy to spot, aren’t they? Instead of walking by, greet them with love. If you are downtown and see a group who are window shopping, take a moment to welcome them. And of course when the festivals happen, make sure and reach out in love to all those you meet, especially those retired people. Last year we shared a table at the festival with a woman while eating lunch. We found out that she was really struggling with where she was in life at that moment. We talked a little, we were compassionate and at least at that moment she knew someone cared. Each of us is called to use the places we live, the people we are comfortable with to be faithful disciples. We are not asked to go that far out of our comfort zones to be faithful but we are called to stretch ourselves in the places we are living.

Now, let me share just a few more pictures of some of the other sites. I will try to get our pictures organized soon and have a slide show after church next month. I appreciate Curt having put some up for you to see while we were gone.