

The Lakeside (1): John 21: 1 – 8



Do you remember Acker Bilk, and the haunting melody of his hit single “Stranger on the Shore”? As I prepared this meditation, the tune kept running through my mind. When the disciples, out in the boat, saw Jesus standing by the lakeside, they thought that was who He was – a stranger.

They had gone to Galilee to wait for their Lord and receive His further instructions, but He was a long time coming. They wanted to do something to pass the time and keep their minds and bodies active (perhaps you have felt like that sometimes during the lockdown). Simon Peter decided to go fishing, and the others all decided to join him. Some of them were fishermen themselves, and the others were probably happy to go along for the ride.

By the end of the night they probably wished they hadn’t bothered. They had caught nothing, they were tired, and the non-fishermen among them may well have been feeling a bit queasy too! But then they saw the stranger on the shore, who called out, as anyone might have done, “Have you caught anything, lads?”

“Not a thing,” they called back, and the man on the beach told them to throw their net out again, on the right side of the boat. The morning sun was low in the sky, reflecting on the water, and maybe they thought the “stranger” could see a shoal of fish that they could not. So they wearily threw the net out again, and could not pull it back in, because they had caught so many fish.

At this point, Simon Peter seems to have recalled the first occasion when Jesus had told him to throw out his net again after an unsuccessful night’s fishing (Luke 5: 1 – 11), and had called him to become one of His disciples. “It’s the Lord!” he exclaimed. On the earlier occasion, he had begged, “Go away from me, Lord! I am a sinful man!” This time, full of joy at seeing Jesus again, with characteristic impetuosity he jumped out of the boat and waded ashore, leaving the others to row to land, pulling the net full of fish.

The risen Lord Jesus often comes to us unexpectedly, through the Scriptures, through other people, through our own thoughts. May those moments bring us joy, too. And may we know that, even when we do not feel aware of His presence, He is still there, because He has promised to be with us, always.

A prayer:

*O Jesus, ever with us stay;
make all our moments calm and bright;
chase the dark night of sin away;
shed on the world your holy light.*

(Singing the Faith 365)

Image: Duccio di Buoninsegna – Appearance on Lake Tiberias.