

Have you ever seen a photograph and wished you could see what was beyond its borders? To see the big picture? The whole picture?

Sometimes, I see a picture of a person or two, but I wonder
– where are they?

What is happening when this photo was taken?

What time of year was it?

The Bible is like that, isn't it?

Maybe that's why it is so hard to read, sometimes.

It gives us a picture, but there is more to be known.

It tells us a story, but it cannot give us the experience.

I could say to you that Bryce Harper, designated hitter for the Philadelphia Phillies, hit a home run. And that would be true.

- But that fact does not convey the tension as he stands at home plate, gets into batting stance,
- waits for the pitcher and the catcher to agree on the pitch,
- watches every muscle of the pitcher as the ball leaves his glove, sails into the air, the bat swings and connects with the ball – Crack!
- It doesn't convey the anticipation of the crowd as it follows the ball across the field,
- or the hopefulness of Bryce as he runs toward first base,

- until the crowd erupts in cheers as the ball clears the outfield wall and he joyfully rounds the bases, getting high fives as he crosses home plate.

Yet all that action, all that emotion is contained, held, implied, implicit, in the simple statement: Bryce Harper hit a home run.

...

In today's Gospel, we have this kind of statement. And it is easy to simply pass it off as a matter of fact.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

This is the photo, the bones of the story. The summary of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Jesus went throughout Galilee. He walked.

There is a path along the Sea of Galilee that connects Capernaum, and Magdala, Bethsaida and Tiberias and Gerasa and other seaside villages.

The path is stony and dusty, but the lake is right there for rinsing off. Perhaps Jesus and Peter, Andrew, James and John dipped their feet in from time to time.

There is some shade in Capernaum, trees to rest under and have some lunch of bread and cheese, olives, honey and figs.

Doubtless Jesus and the disciples ate together.

But Galilee is a large area spreading north and west from the Sea of Galilee.

As they go away from the lake, the terrain becomes hilly – a lot like York County in places.

It is hard walking to raise the widow's son in Nain,

- to visit Mary and Joseph in Nazareth,
- to preach and teach and heal in Sepphoris and Hazor and Chorazin.

There may have been as many synagogues in Galilee as there are Lutheran churches in York County.

Jesus went throughout Galilee.

Sleeping rough some nights, maybe in caves, maybe in a tree, maybe among some sheep or goats.

Staying with friends and relatives sometimes, or maybe with friends and relatives of the other 4.

Jesus and Andrew and Peter and James and John probably smelled

- of sweat and
- unwashed clothes and skin,
- onions and garlic,
- and goats.

But they went – from town to town – village to village – striking up conversation, letting people know that the Lord God was keeping his promises.

And Jesus healed the sick to prove it.

The kingdom of heaven had begun.

It had begun in Galilee, just as the prophets had foretold.

For Galilee included the territories of Zebulun and Naphtali – two of the 12 sons of Jacob among whom the Promised Land was divvied up.

But this area had not been called that for a long time, because it was an area whose inhabitants had been deported to Assyria over 700 years before and who never returned to the covenant faith.

They had become Gentiles, sitting in spiritual darkness.

So, when Matthew's Gospel calls to mind the prophecy having to do with the Messiah, Immanuel, coming to restore the kingdom of David,

It is to connect Jesus with that promise of God:

*¹⁶the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned."*

Jesus is that light.

Jesus, God with us, is –by his presence, his teaching, his preaching, his healing – revealing himself as the new David – the new king of God's realm.

He is calling the people who turned away from God to turn back and be part of this kingdom.

The light is dawning – turn toward it – repent – for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near.

It is a call to the Gentiles and to us. Jesus is always calling for us to turn toward him as the Light of the world.

As we hear more and more from the Gospel of Matthew, it is good to pay attention to what Jesus is doing in both the Jewish Galilee and the Galilee of the Gentiles.

The goal is reconciliation of the covenant unity that was broken by sin,

- bringing together the peoples that had been divided;
- healing the wounds of unbelief, and
- restoring a single realm with one God, one Lord.

But let us return to this picture of Jesus beginning his public ministry in Capernaum, and then calling Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow him.

They were fishermen – not academy educated, not public speakers in the forum, not politicians or social influencers – but essential workers who lived from their trade and worked with their hands.

I see a lot of hands as I give Communion –

- I see soft hands and hands hardened with callouses;
- I see hands with scars and hands that seem never to have had a scratch.
- I see hands stained with grease and hands with tattoos;
- I see hands gnarled with arthritis and hands that are strong and muscular
- I see hands that are large, and some that are very small.

Jesus places himself into all those hands.

And he chose his disciples from among the ordinary folk, whose hands bore the marks of hauling nets, pulling anchor, and handling fish.

He chooses his disciples still among you and me, ordinary people.

Follow me and I will make you fish for people.

As Jesus went throughout Galilee with Peter, Andrew, James and John, he was casting a net

– a net of light, of revealing himself as God present, a net of faith by which those who believe in him will be drawn up into the kingdom of heaven.

By our Baptism. Jesus has called us to be disciples, to fish for people in his name.

To cast the net of his presence with the people we encounter so that they might come to know Jesus and believe in him.

We are called to go fishing for people, to cast the net of the Gospel, but it is God who gathers in the net and makes the catch.

So we don't have to worry about the results of our fishing – the Holy Spirit will see to that. But we do need to be about the work of casting the net, sharing our faith and the story of Jesus with others.

What is one thing Jesus has taught you, or one instance of healing that you have experienced? Who will you tell about that this week?

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

FOR KIDS: [Gospel Reading and Reflection for Kids - January 22, 2017 - Matthew 4:12-23 - Bing video](#)

[The 12 Disciples Matthew 4, Mark 3, Luke 6, Acts 1 Sunday School Lesson Resource - Bing video](#)

[12 Disciples Song Twelve Disciples Song VBS - Bing video](#)