

Jesus was a genius, using the fishing boat on Galilee as a pulpit,
the sea a sounding board, the hills a natural amphitheatre.
Shades of Peasholm Park and the stage on the chilly lake,
with Jesus the ultimate open-air gig, *Elbow* a mere warm-up act.

It was brave and bold of a carpenter to instruct fishermen.

I chat to anglers by the Mere, Geordies perched on the Harbour.
If I told them their job, I'd catch choice language instead of fish.
'Nevertheless at **thy** word I will let down the net.'

And then a ridiculous catch, nets broken, boats sinking,
just like the wedding at Cana, but with fish rather than wine.
Had the Church gone the other way,
we'd be frying fish at 8 am rather than sipping sherry.

'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'

'You've proved yourselves as fishermen now catch men.'

What skills qualified them to catch men and women for Christ?

They had to major in teamwork, rōw together not row together,
pull with each other rather than pull against each other,
or the nets would slip through warring hands and lose the catch.

Their job was crucial, serious, no less than feeding the world.

No catch: hungry mouths and empty bellies and sticks for legs.

They caught God as well as fish, as in Psalm 107:

They that go down to the sea in ships:

and do their business in great waters.

These men see the works of the Lord: his wonders in the deep.

They were good at watching and waiting, rooted in context,

keeping nets in tip-top condition, scanning the waters

watching for shoals for hour after hour after hour.

The meaning is in the waiting.

In Orthodox synagogues they set a man on the door

simply to look out for the Messiah, a veritable Simeon.

They were men of action, few words, direct, to the point.

No essays just terse sentences:

‘Master, we’ve toiled all night and caught nothing.’

Fiercely loyal to the team, the highest of ideals,

feeding the world, watchers and waiters, blunt, telling it as it is.

Galilee and Yorkshire have a lot in common.

‘Have you caught any fish, love,’ she asked her husband after a day by the lakeside. ‘No love, but I think I’ve influenced a few!’

Not anglers but Anglicans

In Matthew 17, Jesus tells Peter to sling his hook, predicting

‘The first fish you catch will have a 4 drachma coin in its mouth - enough to cover the tax the temple levied at Passover time.’

Jesus was miffed, because kings and Tories shouldn’t pay taxes.

But then he ended up paying for the Passover with his life

and sprang us all, because God’s so priceless he comes free.

The cross, the ultimate tax cut: vote Jesus for our next PM.