

Day 3

We began the day with Rula reminding us that today marks the beginning of Purim, a celebration of Jewish deliverance as told in the Book of Ester. It is a day of fasting the day before Purim, and then celebration exchanging gifts and making donations to the poor.

We checked out of our hotel in Tiberius after breakfast and begin the day moving towards Capernaum. We will spend the day in areas surrounding the Sea of Galilee as Jesus spent 85% of his ministry here. The other 15% was spent in Jerusalem during the passion. During the time Jesus lived here, the area south of Tiberius was controlled by the Romans. From Tiberius north, control was in Jewish hands. The trade route running north-south was used by both Jew and gentile, which caused considerable tension. Rula explained that fish for the Galilean Sea were a primary source of food in this time period. For Jewish members to remain kosher (clean) they could only eat clean fish [with scales ex. Tilapia]. Unclean fish [without scales ex catfish] had to be throw back if caught. But ... both fish were produced in and shared the same body of water. This was a lesson in unity for the church for all of us.

A 30-minute bus ride, ascending but still below sea level, we arrived at our first stop, the Mount of Beatitudes which is the site of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. A Byzantine church was erected lower down the slope from the current site in the 4th century, and it was used until the 7th century. The current Roman Catholic Franciscan chapel was built in 1938. The site contains lovely gardens with lots of spots to sit, read portions of the beatitudes engraved on stones, and engage in contemplative prayer.





We gathered in front of the chapel where The Rev. Ray Teague, serving as our chaplain for the day, read the Beatitudes from the book of Matthew. Laura Katherine led us in prayer and we had about 30 minutes to explore the grounds and visit the chapel.



We left the chapel – a short 10-minute ride – and arrived at Tabgha. This is a shortened version of the Hebrew word for the ‘seven springs’ area where the multiplication of the loaves and fishes occurred, and where the risen Christ appeared to Peter after the crucifixion. A chapel was built in the 18th century by a Franciscan order over the actual rock upon which Jesus cooked breakfast that morning for his disciples. A portion of the rock is inside – the other section is outside the building. The grounds contain a retreat but it is open to the public from 8 -5 each day.



Rula gave us the history of the site, and we gathered in front of the Franciscan church which marks the spot where Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection. Laura Katherine read the story from John 21 – Peter had been fishing all night with no luck, Jesus appeared and told Peter to cast his nets on the other side of the boat. Catching 153 fish, Jesus cooked food for the disciples, which opened their eyes to the realization that this was the risen Christ. This is also the place where Jesus asked of Peter, 3 times, if he loved him. Laura Katherine shared the three things most people long to hear – I love you, I'm sorry, and dinner is ready 😊. And three times Jesus told Peter to care for his people. The rock on which the church sits is called the 'Table of the Lord' [*Mensa Christi* in Latin which can be seen on the sign in the photograph].



Leaving the church, a 10-minute ride took us to Capernaum, the village home of Jesus for most of his 3-year ministry on earth. After being rejected by his home village of Nazareth, where he was almost thrown from a cliff, he moved to Capernaum which is where many of his disciples lived, certainly Peter as we know the story of Jesus healing her at her home. As we entered the village, there is a statue of the Homeless Jesus, based on Matt 8:20 “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head”.



Rula shared that coming to Capernaum greatly increased the spread Jesus’ ministry. As a crossroads for the trade route – part of the Via Maris, Way of the Sea – many non-Jews were exposed to the teachings. And they were more willing to accept Jesus than his own people if he had remained in Nazareth.

A synagogue was constructed in the 4th century on top of another synagogue constructed in the 1st century. The ruins were discovered in 1901 and restoration has continued by several different groups. The recovered carved stones surround the area and displays extensive symbolism. The seven species of food available from the time of Jesus are carved into limestone panels, as are the six attributes of God. Two different stars are carved – the 6-point Star of David [which is now the national symbol of the State of Israel], and the 5-point star, originally from the ring of Solomon, and later named the Star of Bethlehem. Many other symbols of the temple are carved in the stones, including an early depiction of the 7-branch menorah.



Rula explained the difference between a temple (contains the Holy of Holies) designed for worship. A synagogue is a local facility for teaching and instruction. In Jesus's day, devote Jews were required to physically go to the temple – located in Jerusalem - to worship on the four holy holidays. From Capernaum to Jerusalem took about 15 days journeying by camel, donkey, and one foot. Feast and sacrifice days lasted an average of 10 days, and then 15 days to return home. 40 days per holiday times 4 – 120 days a year spent away from home to worship.



One of the most interesting artifacts is the olive press, which sits under a large olive tree. Rula shared the process for harvesting the olives, and then the pressing process to obtain the oil. After crushing with a grinding stone, the olives are placed in stacked sacks and pressed by heavy stones for 2 hours each for four presses. 1st produces virgin oil used for religious rituals, 2nd is used for food, 3rd produced for lamp oil, and the 4th for making soap. The remainder is fed to the animals, and the pits are dried and used for fuel to heat households. The trees are trimmed after harvest and even the trimmings are not wasted. They are stacks dried for 7 years and used for olive wood carving.

We gathered in a seated circle to hear Laura Katherine read aloud the Mark 2 story of Jesus healing the paralytic man lowered through the roof of Peter's home. Her closing remarks centered on the fact the healing was accomplished based on the faith of the friends who brought the paralytic to Jesus – not the man's own faith. Her prayer for us was that we all have those people in our lives who care deeply enough about us to bring us for healing.



Adjacent to the synagogue is the excavated structure identified as the home of Peter as found in Mark 2. Owned and maintained by Franciscans, a church was built on top of the house of Peter, with a glass floor to provide a view of the rooms. The church, constructed in 1980, is designed to resemble a casted fishing net.





Laura Katherine visited this site 10 years ago, and was so happy to return today. On her last visit, it was rainy and overcast, and so crowded she could hardly move. We were so blessed to be the only group inside the synagogue area, mostly the only group inside the church, and the weather could not have been any better! We truly had a blessed experience!



Our next stop – lunch! – was at a famous restaurant – known for its fried fish – caught fresh from the Sea of Galilee. Very interesting presentation – prepared with the head and tail attached – the entire fish was flash fried. While tasty - lots of discussions about the meal!





Continuing moving higher, we arrived at the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish. The church is maintained and overseen by the Benedictine Order. It was constructed in 1984 atop the remains of two previous churches, the first dating back to around the year 350.

Biblical Memories in Tabgha and the "Evangelical Triangle"

- (1) The Calling of the First Apostles (Mark 1:16-20)
- (2) The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1ff)
- (3) Healing of the "Hemorrhoid" (Mark 5:24-34)
- (4) Healing of the Leper (Matthew 8:1-4)
- (5) The Miracle of the Multiplication (see above)
- (6) Jesus' Walk on the Waters (Mark 6:45-52)
- (7) Jesus' Preaching and Healing in Capernaum (John 6 and more)
- (8) Woes to Unrepentant Cities (Luke 10:13-16)
- (9) Meeting with Peter and his Companions after the Resurrection (John 21:1ff)
- (10) Last Appearance of Jesus in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20)

It commemorates the two multiplications of food used by Jesus to feed his followers while he was preaching on the hills surround Tabgha. The 1st feeding was on the north shore of the Sea, and that means it was primarily Jews from Galilee. However, the second was on the south shore and most likely were pagan gentiles who were much more receptive to his teachings than his own people. The church contains intricate mosaics with much religious symbolism. Two of the most beautiful are floor designs of peacocks on each side of the altar, representing eternity.











Our arrival at the church was again fortunately timed so that we were the only group inside the church. The silence was moving, and the emotion palpable. Todd's incredible voice was joined by others as we sang *Surely the Presence of the Lord is in This Place*. A most fitting end to the visit.

A 30-minute ride took us to the Yigal Alon Museum, in Kibbutz Ginosar. We watched a short film on the 1986 discovery, recovery, and preservation of a 1st century fishing boat, dubbed the Jesus Boat because it has been carbon-dated to the time Jesus was preaching in this area.



The highlight of the day for many was our final event, a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee aboard the boat Abraham. The captain welcomed us aboard by presenting a US flag to Laura Katherine who raised the flag while the National anthem was played. Rula provided us with much information about this body of water – 17 miles long – shaped like the Harp of David – 141 feet at its deepest. We motored to the center of the lake, and the engines were silenced.





Laura Katherine opened our time together with prayer and then preached from the Gospel of Matthew 14:22-33 – Jesus walking on the water and Peter’s sinking. She talked about the power of a story – and the incredible power of this story – in this place – for us. Peter’s calling out for Jesus to save him gives us wonderful assurance that we too can call on Jesus in our time of need and he will respond. We cannot save ourselves – we need God. However, she closed with repeating the opening of the story - *Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. Jesus went to Peter, even before Peter called out – even before Peter knew he needed saving. Christ comes to us when we need him – but he is also already there – we are never alone. Amen*



To close the boat trip, the crew provided recorded hymns which increased in timing and tone – leading us to some happy spirituals! And then – we were asked to stand, forms circles and were taught the traditional Hebrew dance to Hava Nagila. Certainly, a fun ending to a long and emotionally gratifying day!



We traveled another 45 minutes to arrive in Nazareth for our third night. After the most incredible meal yet – wow at the variety of foods!!! – we turned in early to be prepared for a 7:00 departure tomorrow.

