

It was just an ordinary day in Galilee – hot and hazy. I had gotten up really early, before the sun. To get to the sea. To get fishing. I love fishing. The quiet stillness of the Sea of Galilee. The time to just be on my own, to be myself - no distractions, no expectations, no siblings making noise and being annoying, no one to bug you or put you down... and usually, no fish either. That's not a problem. I'm not there to "catch" fish. I'm really there to be away from everything else. But today was different, I had a few nibbles to start with, and then just as the sun was rising, I caught one, and, then, a second soon after. They were two good, clean fish and looked like they were going to make excellent lunch.

As the sun rose higher, I knew I had to get back home. I didn't want to leave the sea and the peace. But, my mother had told me to be back home. She wanted me to help with the chaos that always happens just before Passover as everyone is getting ready. The Passover... ugh. I know, I know... they keep saying how important the history is to remember – 'for our identity' they say. But, we always hear the same stories: the Passover in Egypt when we marked the doorposts, the escape across the Red Sea with the unleavened bread, and the way God provided in the wilderness, sending manna from heaven every morning.

Bread, bread, bread... There's so much bread in the stories that I usually get hungry listening. I knew that today was the last day for me to get my hands on some regular warm fresh bread before the flatbread of Passover – so, while mom wasn't looking, I grabbed five small loaves and stuffed them in my satchel. Now, combined with my two fish, this *was* going to be a good lunch.

I had just scooped up my fish and was heading back home when I saw the crowd over the hill. It was like a sea of people! All of them - there must have been thousands! I'd seen lots of people once in the city, all crammed into streets and around market stalls. But here they were – in the middle of no-where where I like to hide out and be alone.

As I looked at the crowd, I noticed that it seemed to be focused on one point. And, as I looked closer, I could see that they were all paying attention to one man. Standing on a high spot, he commanded the attention of thousands and thousands of eyes. Every word that was being murmured by that crowd was about him! And, if that wasn't enough, they seemed to press closer and closer to him all the time. That kind of attention would have made me run screaming.

Yet, this man was totally calm. As calm as the sea in the morning. Instead of running away and hiding (which would have been my choice), he was talking and praying and touching what looked like sick people. The more he spoke and prayed and touched, the closer they pressed in and the more hands that reached out for him. In this sea of churning bodies and hands and eyes and ears, he remained a point of peace. It was amazing, and terrifying, to see!

Curious about him and against my own instincts, I got closer. I pressed my way through the crowd to see who this man was. As I got close to him, I noticed a group of individuals who were always standing beside him. They helped keep the crowd managed and paid very close attention to what the man said. All of a sudden, the man smiled a bit and asked in a loud voice about how they were going to buy bread for all these people to eat. You should have seen his little group! They looked at each other in complete panic. You could see it in their eyes... there were so many people! How was he going to get enough money? Even if you had the coin, it's not like there is a bakery out there. The friends would have had to run back into town, buy out ALL the bread, and then run back out to the crowd.

As they panicked, he stood there calm and with that small smile on his face. It seemed like he had a plan and that his friends were a part of it. His little crew started to look around desperately, trying to find a solution to this massive problem. It wasn't long before their eyes fell upon my little satchel, which had a bit of bread and a fish tail poking out from the flap. They looked at each other, shrugged, and gently took the satchel from my shoulder. They opened it up and showed my two fish and five loaves to the man. I couldn't hear the exchange

between them clearly, but it looked like they were trying to convince him that there just wasn't enough food. From where I stood, it was a pretty convincing case. My small lunch looked terribly small and humble in comparison to the thousands of hungry mouths all around.

The man appeared unconcerned. In fact, that little smile he was wearing only seemed to grow bigger as he saw what his friends had found. Without many words, he took the fish and bread from them. Then, in a powerful and gentle way, he made everyone sit down in the grass. The whole crowd slowly complied. When the rustling of the crowd was done, he did what I least expected... he prayed. Taking the fish and loaves, he raised them to the sky and started to pray with them in his hands. I could barely make out the words. They reminded me of all those Passover prayers the adults do. He called God blessed and thanked God for giving us life. Then he thanked God for everything that God gives us. It seemed like a strange prayer considering he was holding such a small meal in front of so many people. And, yet, it was beautiful the way the words flowed from his mouth and to the ears of the thousands who strained to hear.

Then, as he was finishing the prayer, he broke the bread. He handed the broken pieces to his friends, who stood around him wide-eyed and staring. Then, borrowing a small knife from one of his friends, he divided up my two fish and passed them to his friends also. They continued to stare at him confused and dumbfounded. Honestly, they looked like a bunch of fish that had been caught in a net. But, he smiled at them all the more and gently urged them to go into the crowd and hand out the bread and fish.

They started to slowly pass the bread and the fish down the rows. You could see that they were convinced that they were going to run out at any moment. But, as I watched them, they began to speed up. And as their hands moved quicker and quicker, they began to laugh! Laughter rippled through the crowd as food passed from hand to hand.

At that point, I kind of lost track of time. I ended up with some bread and fish in my hands and ate till I was content. Then, one of the man's friends found me and gave me a basket to gather

up the leftovers. Before I knew it, my basket was too full for me to carry and I set it alongside 11 other baskets, all full to their lids.

I'd never seen anything like it. My peaceful retreat filled with thousands of people, laughing and full of good food. I don't know what all happened that day or who that man was. But, from that day on, I have always been thankful for my bread, my family, and our Passover celebration of God's care.