

Dear all, to my surprise, I am on a beach by the Sea of Galilee. A fire is crackling, the smell of cooking bread permeates the air. Far off in the dawn mist a fishing boat, well laden, can just be discerned. It is a peaceful scene, the air still, just a few birds finishing off their dawn chorus, gentle lapping of wavelets, the crackling flames, the mist throwing a blanket over the sounds. On the beach, Jesus, fully man and fully God, through whom everything was made. The safest place in the world just at that moment.

Moments after the time represented by the painting, Jesus' voice cuts across the peaceful dawn. The resurrected Jesus. Through whom not only was everything made, but all things are held together (Col 1:17). Cooking bread on an anonymous beach.

"Children, You have caught nothing to go with my bread have you?"

A fascinating sentence.

Children... Only used in two places in the new testament, in both cases by John, here and in 1 John 2:13 and 18. The only time Jesus calls the disciples, yet to experience Pentecost, children. They were perhaps more vulnerable at this time than at any other and Jesus, who loved each one of them as much as he loves each one of us, knew how frightened they were, how humble, how ordinary.

I love this passage. At dawn, for a week in the summer, my father and I used to go fishing for mackerel off the south Devon coast in a little sailing boat. We would catch a few, bring them back to the beach, hot-smoke them in a little metal box and eat them straight from the smoker, with fresh bread from the baker we passed on the way to the beach. It took me years to realise how much he loved me. I was a horrible teenager and he was overworked and bad tempered. But on that beach there was a truce as the fish cooked. And he loved me so much.

My father died long ago, and I am crying as I write this. But I am crying tears of love. My father loved me. And Jesus loves me. Jesus, who has so much love that he can love everyone. Even you.

This painting depicts the peace before Jesus' call. Just the mist, the tiny murmur of waves, the tail end of the dawn chorus and the gentle crackling of flames on a wood fire. The painting that formed in my head as the afternoon progressed is, as near as I can tell, identical to the one I have persuaded the computer to paint for us. It is based on a public domain image of the Sea of Galilee. I love these unexpected paintings most of all. Love from Rick