

SESSION 2

CAPERNAUM: VILLAGE OF COMING CONSOLATION

INTRODUCTION

In the first session, we were introduced to Peter. With his “yes” to Jesus’ invitation to “put out into the deep,” Peter becomes a disciple and apostle of Jesus, and begins the journey of following Jesus closely. In this session we will take a closer look at Peter’s hometown of Capernaum, and we’ll find it is no accident that Jesus makes this city in the heart of Galilee the home base of his Galilean ministry.

In Genesis 12, God called Abraham to leave his home and travel to a land he did not know, a land God promised that Abraham’s descendants would inhabit one day. When God’s people left Egypt during the Exodus and finally entered the Promised Land a generation later, the area was portioned out to each of the twelve tribes.

Key moments of Jesus’ life are intimately connected to particular places throughout Israel.

Often these connections seem like coincidences or circumstantial—the Roman census that took Joseph and the pregnant Mary to Bethlehem, family relationships that cause Jesus to grow up in Nazareth, and so on. Yet, the Gospel writers demonstrate that often seemingly mundane places actually fulfilled ancient prophecy. The Old Testament prophet Micah prophesied that a ruler would come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); and Matthew reminds us how the prophets understood that the Messiah was to be called a “Nazarene” (Matthew 2:23).

In this session and teaching, Dr. Gray will take a closer look at the town of Capernaum, where Peter lived, and the larger area of Galilee, where Jesus grew up and began his ministry. We’ll discover the significance of that geographical area to Jesus’ teaching and works, especially in light of the words of the prophet Isaiah.



CONNECT

First review the last session with your group. Can anyone recite the Memory Verse without assistance? Otherwise, look it up (Luke 5:4) and recite it as a group (page 5). Then bring up any highlights the group may have about the COMMIT reflections.

1. Have you ever moved from one town to another? How did this move affect your life? Your relationships? How has a geographical area—its landscape, weather, industry, etc.—impacted the course of your life? *Today’s session begins with Peter’s move from Bethsaida to Capernaum. While that move may have been disruptive at first for his family and business, it put Peter in the location, not only to meet Jesus, but for Jesus to make Peter’s home his base of operation for his Galilean ministry.*

2. What is the longest you've ever had to wait for a promise to be realized? How, and/or why, did you continue to keep hope that the promise would come true?

Participants can share personal experiences. Oftentimes what causes us to hold out hope for the fulfillment of a promise is the character of the person who made the promise. In this session we'll see God fulfill a key promise spoken through the prophet Isaiah, a promise God's people had to wait hundreds of years to see fulfilled.



Play the video segment, which will last for approximately 45 minutes. The Study Guide provides participants with a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching.



DISCUSS

1. Why does Dr. Gray describe St. Mark's gospel as the "gospel of Peter"?

Some of the reasons Dr. Gray gives...

According to tradition, Mark the Evangelist was Peter's companion in Rome. Several early Church Fathers (for example, Papias, Irenaeus) mention that Mark records St. Peter's preaching.

Peter mentions Mark by name in his first letter, referring to Mark as "my son" (1 Peter 5:13).

Like other ancient writers, Mark brackets the testimony with the identity of his eyewitness, mentioning Peter by name in the first and last chapters of his gospel (Mark 1:36 and 16:7).

Mark, likely having spent several years in Rome with Peter and writing to a Gentile audience, mentions details such as noting the Roman watches (Mark 13:35).

2. According to St. Matthew, Jesus came to Capernaum at the beginning of his ministry to fulfill what prophecies? How does Jesus fulfill them? How did Peter's very ordinary move from Bethsaida to Capernaum prepare Peter for his call to Jesus' mission?

After recounting that Jesus "withdrew into Galilee," Matthew quotes Isaiah 9, "The land of Zeb'ulun and the land of Naph'tali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light dawned" (Matthew 4:15-16), indicating its fulfillment. Matthew also notes not only that Jesus withdrew to Galilee, but specifically to Capernaum, which means "village of consolation," and points to Jesus' bringing the long-awaited consolation prophesied in Isaiah 40:1-3.

Capernaum is located in the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali. These two tribes of Israel were the first to be conquered by the Assyrians and taken under the darkness of pagan rule. Now when Jesus, who is the Light of the World (John 8:12), begins his ministry in Capernaum, he and his teaching are the "great light" that has dawned after all these years since Isaiah's prophecy.

Bethsaida, as indicated by the meaning of its name, "house or place of fishing," was an active fishing town. Peter's move to Capernaum could have been influenced by economics (maybe land and housing were cheaper in Capernaum), by business (maybe seaside access for his boat was easier away from Philip's capital city), or by spiritual reasons (maybe it was easier to live as a pious Jew in Capernaum, where there was a larger Jewish synagogue and community), or some combination of these or other factors. But this very ordinary decision put Peter in the town where Jesus would begin his ministry so that Peter would hear Jesus' call to follow him, thus beginning his apostolic position, and so that Jesus' ministry and headquarters would be located in the "village of consolation," announcing in its very name the consolation and forgiveness that Jesus was bringing in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies. 2

3. Read Isaiah 43:18-19, 25. Why does the Church match Isaiah 43 with the gospel of the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2? How do memories of "former things" keep us from trying something new or from responding to God's grace?

Through all of the Old Testament, God's desire was to be with his people, but time and time again man's sin separated him from God. Isaiah prophesies that God will do a "new thing" when the promised Messiah comes: God will "blot out transgressions," the Messiah will bring forgiveness of sins. When Jesus heals the paralytic, his initial direction to the paralytic is not, "Rise and walk," but rather, "My son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). In fact, these words immediately bring the condemnation of the scribes, who question, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Who indeed! Jesus is the divine Son of God, who can and who does forgive sins. The "new thing" that God spoke through Isaiah is begun, and at the very beginning of his ministry Jesus does not hesitate in proclaiming it.

Oftentimes we let the ease of routine dictate our actions, or we give in to remembering our past failures and let fear keep us from trying again or trying something new. In this situation, we often don't hear God prompting us to actions that will lead to holiness and charity.

4. Read Isaiah 43:25 and Psalm 103:11-12. How might "forgetting the former things" help us, or someone we know, to trust Jesus' promise of forgiveness and receive more fully the graces of the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Memory is a wonderful gift of God, allowing us to recall cherished relationships and events. But when we sin, our memory now recalls something destructive, to ourselves and to others. Initially, our conscience can use this memory to bring sorrow that leads us to repentance. Once we have repented, received God's forgiveness, and done reparation, God desires to heal us. God remembers our sins no more. But often we doubt God's mercy, and we despair. We need to let the truth of God's Word and his healing grace of forgiveness so flood our heart and soul and mind that any despair and doubt is replaced with the joy of having received God's mercy.

5. What does the background of Isaiah 40:1-2 tell you about the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete? How might these verses deepen your relationship to the Holy Spirit in the future? Has the Holy Spirit ever been a Consoler to you? If so, how?

Isaiah 40 reminds us that God desires to console us and bring us forgiveness and pardon. The Holy Spirit is truly a gift of consolation, restoring our relationship with God and one another by the forgiveness of our sins, and strengthening us to live anew according to God's truth. When there are troubles in life, comfort can sustain us through difficult times. Recalling that the Holy Spirit is "the" promised Consoler, Comforter, and Advocate can encourage us to turn more frequently to the Holy Spirit and seek to walk in the Spirit.



COMMIT

Following are suggested answers to questions in the daily COMMIT reflections.

COMMIT DAY 1 – FROM BETHSAIDA TO CAPERNAUM

Participants will learn about Peter's move from Bethsaida to Capernaum.

Regarding John 14:2-3: How does first-century home design influence your thinking about these verses? As Dr. Gray described, first-century homes often had multiple rooms surrounding a shared open courtyard. The house was shared by multi-generations of the family. When a son was engaged, the father and son would add an additional room for the new couple to live in and join the family. Jesus is the Bridegroom. He has given his life for his bride and has returned to the Father in heaven to prepare the heavenly home for his bride. Each of us is to be that bride of Christ, to live in a deep spousal relationship with him and to join him in heaven in the Father's home.

How do you imagine life in Peter's home with Jesus living there? What do you think it would be like to have Jesus living with you? What would change about your routines and lifestyle?

Personal responses from participants.

What does that mean to you, for "Christ to live in you" and for your heart to "rest in God"? How can you make that a reality in your life as you go through this study?

Personal responses from participants.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church in no. 2565 notes that "the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ."



COMMIT DAY 2 – WHY GALILEE?

Participants will take a closer look at why Jesus chose to begin his ministry specifically in Galilee and how this choice fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 9.

Think about a specific time in your own life when you had to wait for a promise or expectation to be fulfilled (such as waiting for an acceptance letter for college entrance, obtaining a specific position at work, or saving for the purchase of a desired item). How was your patience tested by the wait? How did you feel as the fulfillment of the promise became imminent? If you ever made a long-term goal, what motivated you to stay the course to reach it?

Personal responses from participants.

Look up the following Scripture verses and match them to the correct words:

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|---|--------------|---|
| J | Genesis 1:3 | "Let there be light" |
| K | Exodus 13:21 | "the LORD went before...in a pillar of fire to give them light" |
| L | Psalms 27:1 | "the LORD is my light and my salvation" |
| A | Psalms 36:9 | "in thy light do we see light" |
| H | Isaiah 49:6 | "I will give you as a light to the nations" |
| B | Isaiah 60:20 | "the LORD will be your everlasting light" |
| I | Luke 1:78 | "the day shall dawn upon us from on high" |

F John 8:12	<i>"I am the light of the world"</i>
E 1 Peter 2:9	<i>"into his marvelous light"</i>
C 1 John 1:5	<i>"God is light"</i>
G Revelation 21:23	<i>"the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb"</i>
D Revelation 22:16	<i>"I am... the bright morning star"</i>

Take a moment now to think about the many "wonderful deeds" God has done in your life. List some out below as a reminder of his goodness. Are there any areas in your life where you haven't let God's marvelous light shine? If so, confess these to God (now in prayer, but also in the Sacrament of Reconciliation) and receive his mercy anew. Take a moment to sit in the marvelous light of God and the radiance of his love.

Personal responses for prayer.



COMMIT DAY 3 – WHY CAPERNAUM?

Participants will take a closer look at Jesus' choosing of Capernaum as the location to center his ministry, and how the town's name points to the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:1-3, that Jesus brings in the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Look up the following verses. What is the key message in each of these verses?

Below are the verses, with key message emphasized:

Ezekiel 11:17 – "Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: **I will gather you from the peoples**, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.'"

Ezekiel 37:21 – "Then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will **gather them from all sides**, and bring them to their own land."

Isaiah 11:11-12 – "In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant which is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and **gather the dispersed** of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

Jeremiah 16:14-15 – "Therefore, behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' but 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' For I will **bring them back** to their own land which I gave to their fathers."

Jeremiah 29:14 – "I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and **gather you from all the nations** and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile."

Hosea 3:5 – "Afterward **the children of Israel shall return** and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days."

Zechariah 10:8-10 – "I will signal for them and gather them in, for I have redeemed them, and they shall be as many as of old. Though I scattered them among the nations, yet in far countries they shall remember me, and with their children **they shall live and return. I will bring them home** from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria; and I will bring them to the land of Gilead and to Lebanon, till there is no room for them."

The prophets made it clear that God would one day regather his people that were scattered during the time of exile.

Look up the following verses to get an idea of just what kind of bad news Isaiah had to say:

Following are key sections of the verses, with key message emphasized:

Isaiah 1:2-5 – “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: ‘Sons have I reared and brought up, but **they have rebelled against me**. The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand.’ Ah, sinful nation, **a people laden with iniquity**, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. Why will you still be smitten, that you continue to rebel? **The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.**”

Isaiah 9:19c-10:2 – “No man spares his brother. They snatch on the right, but are still hungry, and they devour on the left, but are not satisfied; each devours his neighbor’s flesh.... Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey!”

Isaiah 24:5-6 – “The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left.”

Isaiah 30:9-13 – “For they are a rebellious people, lying sons, sons who will not hear the instruction of the LORD; who say to the seers, ‘See not’; and to the prophets, ‘Prophecy not to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more of the Holy One of Israel.’ Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, ‘Because you despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and rely on them; therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a break in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose crash comes suddenly, in an instant.’”

Isaiah 39:6-7 – “Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the LORD. And some of your own sons, who are born to you, shall be taken away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

While there are intermittent sections of hope in Isaiah 1–39, the bulk of these chapters detail that Israel and the nations are going to reap what they sowed by their rebellious, prideful actions.



COMMIT DAY 4 – MARK: THE GOSPEL OF PETER

Participants will take a closer look at the Gospel of Mark as a recording of Peter’s preaching.

Fill in the chart below: The right column contains suggested answers, but participants may have additional items.

Author’s Name	Author’s Relationship to Jesus or Apostles	Number of Chapters	Can you name something unique about each Gospel?
Matthew	Apostle	28	Records Visit of the Magi (Mt 2); Great Commission (Mt 28)
Mark	Disciple of Peter	16	Shortest Gospel; Records Healing of Blind Man in Bethsaida (Mk 8)
Luke	Disciple of Paul	24	Records Annunciation to Blessed Virgin Mary (Lk 1); Records the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24)
John	Apostle	21	Records miracle at the Wedding of Cana (Jn 2); Records extended discourse between Jesus and the Apostles at the Last Supper (Jn 13-17)

Look up the following verses, and note who is mentioned in each:

Mark 1:36 – “And **Simon** and those who were with him...”

Mark 16:7 – “But go, tell his disciples and **Peter** that he is going before you to Galilee...”

Mark names Peter both in the opening and closing chapters of his gospel, bracketing his writing with the name of the person who is the eyewitness of the events recorded in the gospel.

Mark likely spent several years in Rome with St. Peter, which explains his references to subtleties of Latin and Roman culture. For example, Mark’s gospel references the various Roman watches of the night. See for yourself in the following verses:

The watches are noted in the following verses:

Mark 6:48 – “And about the **fourth watch** of the night he came to them, walking on the sea.”

Mark 13:35 – “Watch therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the **evening**, or at **midnight**, or at **cockcrow**, or in the **morning**—” (Here are listed the four Roman watches of the night.)

Mark also uses several Latin words:

The Latin words are highlighted in the following verses:

Mark 5:9 – “And Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ He replied, ‘My name is **Legion**; for we are many.’”

Mark 15:16 – “And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the **praetorium**); and they called together the whole battalion.”

Mark 15:39 – “And when the **centurion**, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’”

In addition, Mark’s gospel is written for a Gentile audience, likely those who had become Christians from Peter’s preaching. As a result, Mark explains Hebrew/Aramaic words that his Gentile audience might not know. See some examples in the following verses:

The Hebrew/Aramaic words are highlighted in the following verses:

Mark 5:41 – “Taking her by the hand he said to her, ‘**Tal’itha cu’mi**’; which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”

Mark 7:11 – “But you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is **Corban**’ (that is, given to God).”

Mark 7:34 – “And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, ‘**Eph’phatha**,’ that is, “Be opened.”

Mark 14:36 – “And he said, ‘**Abba**, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.’”



COMMIT DAY 5 – TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Participants will reflect on the mosaic of the Healing of the Paralytic, which is found in the Basilica of St. Mark in Venice, Italy.

Read Mark 2:1-12. Who are the three groups of people depicted in the mosaic?

The three groups depicted from left to right are: (1) Jesus and two Apostles, (2) the paralytic and his friends, and (3) the crowd.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.