



# gracefellowship

Series: In His Steps  
Date: March 26, 2023

Title: A King Who Walks on Water  
Passage: Mark 6:45-52

Scripture: Job 9:1-12 (Andy and Jackie Steffan)

One of the interesting things that happens in the life of the disciples, and is true in our lives as well, is how slow we are to learn who Jesus really is! For the past few weeks we have been talking about following in the steps of Jesus. We have watched Jesus call twelve men to come and follow Him and from the very beginning He lets them see that He isn't like any other Rabbi. Jesus performs miracles that no one else can do and teaches with authority like no one else. And while the disciples think of Jesus as the Messiah they don't truly know what that means. So last week we saw Jesus do some things that opens their eyes even more to what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah. He was showing them His divine power and authority. But even with all this, they still don't fully understand who Jesus is.

That brings us to a passage today in Mark 6 where Jesus removes all doubt of who He is and puts to rest a narrative for who He isn't. That's the two big things we want to look for today:

1. What narrative does Jesus avoid?
2. What narrative does Jesus embrace?

I'm going to read this account to you from Mark's gospel, but then we are also going to pull information from the same event in John's gospel to give us some helpful context.

Before we read this, here's what you need to know has been happening: Jesus just fed 5,000 men, not including women and children! He took 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish and performed a miracle to feed this huge crowd.

If you're seeing this event unfold in real time as a Jewish person being fed in the crowd, there are echoes of Moses being demonstrated here. When God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt and led them into the wilderness they complained because there was no food. What did God do? He provided manna for them in the dessert! And it was always just enough. In fact, they weren't allowed to take more than they needed. They had to trust God to meet their

needs every day by providing more manna. When Jesus fed the 5,000 there was enough food for everyone to eat and be satisfied and then there were 12 baskets left over- one for each disciple! This is a miracle pointing to the divinity of Jesus. And on some level the crowd gets it, but not fully. In fact, if you read about this in John's gospel we are told two important details:

- The Passover Festival was near
- After the people were fed by Jesus they said, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. (John 6:14-15)

The people want Jesus to be their king. It's almost time for the Passover when all the Jewish people will make pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The idea these people have is that this year, when they get to Jerusalem they are going to come with their king who will lead a rebellion and get rid of their Roman occupiers.

But Jesus does not want this to be the story His disciples buy in to. This is a narrative that is about Empire and taking political ground, reestablishing the kingdom of David through military and political might.

What is Jesus' response to that line of thinking?

#### **:: Mark 6:45-52**

**45 Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.**

**46 After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.**

When Jesus sees the direction things are moving as the crowd gets the idea to make him their king, He sends the disciples away so they don't get swept up in this line of thinking. Which would not have been difficult! Let's be honest, the disciples are already thinking of setting up an empire with Jesus as the king. In other stories we won't explore in this series the disciples argue over who is going to be the greatest in Jesus' kingdom when He takes over! They have that conversation multiple times! On another occasion, James and John ask their Mom to go talk to Jesus on their behalf and request that in His kingdom they will get to sit on his left and his right! Can you imagine? It's easy to want an empire- that's why Jesus has to spend so much time teaching them about His Kingdom and how different it is from what they imagine. In fact, after His resurrection we are told Jesus spends 40 days teaching His disciples and the topic is the Kingdom of God! After Easter we are going to take 6 weeks, covering those same 40 days, and look at the way Jesus taught about the Kingdom.

To get the disciples out of that toxic environment where everyone wants to make Him king before His time, Jesus sends them away in a boat out on the Sea of Galilee. Then He goes up on a mountainside by Himself to pray so He doesn't

get swept up in this line of thinking! Jesus demonstrates humility and submission to His Father and spends the night in prayer re-centering Himself on the will of God. Jesus is the King, but it's not His time and this is not the kind of king Jesus came to be.

Jesus sends the disciples away in a boat across the sea and he goes to pray- then we read this:

**47 Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.**

**48 He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them,**

**49 but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out,**

**50 because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."**

**51 Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed,**

**52 for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.**

Last week we talked about the disciples being in a storm on the Sea of Galilee they thought was going to kill them. This storm doesn't seem to have them worried about their lives, but it is bad enough that they have been rowing against the waves all night and are still only half way across the lake! The lake is only about 7 miles across, so from sun down to almost sun up they have rowed about 3 or 4 miles! They have to be exhausted! Have you ever gotten stuck somewhere and you didn't feel like you were moving forward and it was killing you?

- Job
- Relationship

Illustration: My recurring dream of climbing a hill but never moving! I would wake up exhausted from that dream! It was like someone had put 1,000 pounds on me and I couldn't move but I kept struggling against the weight.

Jesus sees the disciples rowing against the waves and in the third watch of the night, between 3-6 a.m., He walks out to them!

**HE WALKS OUT TO THEM!** Sometimes I hate how familiar we get with these stories that we gloss over details like this! And remember, the sea isn't calm- it's incredibly rough waters! When I was in Israel I had a chance to go out onto the Sea of Galilee and I shot some footage from the middle of the lake.

### (Sea of Galilee Video)

It's beautiful out there on the lake- or at least it was the day we were out there. But that's not the same experience the disciples were having! Things were out of control for them, but luckily, Jesus is about to step into the middle of their storm...sort of! Notice at a detail Mark tells us in the story:

**48 ...Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them...**

Let's stop right there for a minute. What's that all about? Jesus sees His disciples struggling on the water, knowing they've been out there for hours, and when he gets to where they are, He's just going to keep walking passed them?

Mark is writing this in a way that keeps our focus on Jesus and who He is. If you are familiar with this story of Jesus walking on the water from Matthew's gospel there's another detail we are not seeing here- Peter also walked on the water. Mark is not an eyewitness to these events. Most of Mark's gospel traditionally is thought to have come through conversations with Peter. So why doesn't Mark include the part of the story where Peter joins Jesus on the water?

Two possibilities:

1. Peter doesn't like that story because even though he walked with Jesus on the water, he also demonstrated shaky faith that caused him to sink. Maybe Peter didn't like to talk about it!
2. Peter doesn't want any part of this story to focus on him! He wants everything to point to Jesus! He wants us to look at Jesus in light of his divinity!

To really get the significance of this moment and what the disciples are seeing in Jesus right now you have to think back to the Old Testament. In Exodus 33 Moses is having a conversation with God about moving toward the Promised Land and he tells God that he doesn't want to go if God doesn't promise to go with them. When God affirms with Moses that He is going to lead His chosen people into the land He has promised them and that Moses has found favor in God's eyes, Moses asks God one of the most bold questions in all the Bible: "Will you show me your glory?" Listen to God's reply...

**:: Exodus 33:19**

**19 And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.**

**20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."**

**21 Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock.**

**22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.**

**23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”**

God tells Moses He will let His glory pass by him and He will proclaim His name in Moses' presence. What is the name God has given to Moses when he was at the burning bush? I AM.

Let's go back to Jesus on the water. What does Mark tell us Jesus is going to do? He is going to pass by the disciples and when they cry out in fear what does Jesus say? "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." The Hebrew translation for "It is I," would be "I AM!"

Jesus is going to pass by His disciples walking on water and then when they see Him, He tells them His name! No wonder Peter says, don't include me in this story! It's not about me! It's about Jesus- keep all the focus on Him! We need to figure out more of who He is!

This is why I love piecing different passages in the Bible together; when you look at it all together the story just makes sense! This morning we had a passage from Job read to us. Let's look at that again.

**:: Job 9:1-12**

**1 Then Job replied:**

**2 “Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can mere mortals prove their innocence before God?**

**3 Though they wished to dispute with him, they could not answer him one time out of a thousand.**

**4 His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?**

**5 He moves mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in his anger.**

**6 He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble.**

**7 He speaks to the sun and it does not shine; he seals off the light of the stars.**

**8 He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.**

**9 He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south.**

**10 He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted.**

**11 When he passes me, I cannot see him; when he goes by, I cannot perceive him.**

## **12 If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?'**

If God alone treads on the waves of the sea, according to Job, and Mark tells us that Jesus comes walking out on the water to the disciples in the middle of a storm, we are meant to draw the same conclusions the disciples are drawing- Jesus is God! They have been walking in step with Him for 2 years at this point. Little by little He has been showing them who He really is. Now Jesus pulls out all the stops and shows them exactly who He is.

- He is the One who finds favor in His followers.
- He passes by them to demonstrate His glory.
- He announces His Name.
- He is not just a king, He is the King of kings!

And He's a King who walks on water.

Matthew was there as an eyewitness. He's the only person of the four gospels that does tell the story of Peter walking on water. And here's what I love about this for an application point for our lives today: the story is absolutely about Jesus, but He invites Peter to walk in His steps even in the middle of this storm. Jesus doesn't calm the storm and then invite Peter to join Him; He just says, "I'll be out here with you- the God of the Universe standing in your storm. Come follow Me and walk in my steps!"

His glory is the focus and His presence is enough. Don't be afraid of what you're going through. If you're walking with Jesus, He is with you in the storm and He has power over everything! Even if your faith wavers- like Peter's did- Jesus steps forward and reaches down to pull you back up on top of the water!

Sometimes in your storm Jesus is saying, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid," and we aren't listening. You're more focused on your storm than you are on walking in step with Jesus. The closer you get to Him the more calm you become, and it's all about His presence with you!

- Jesus is faithful to see us in our storms and invite us into deeper intimacy, walking with Him.

The past two weeks we have seen how Jesus deals with storms. Last week the disciples thought they were going to die in the storm and they immediately went to Jesus and woke Him up asking Him to save them. Jesus stopped the storm instantaneously. Today we see Jesus send His disciples out into a storm and He leaves them there all night. Then we He caught up to them He had in mind to just walk passed them! It wasn't until they called out to Him that He stopped and acknowledged their need. But He still didn't make the storm stop. Instead, Jesus invited Peter to join Him on the water! He made Peter walk on rough waters and all He asked was that Peter keep His eyes focused on Him. As long

as Jesus is the focus Peter is okay in the storm. When he took his eyes off Jesus, Peter sank! Jesus has to be the focus of every aspect of our lives because He is God and He alone is worthy.

Do you know that Jesus is with you today? Do you know He is God? There is even more to Jesus than you know right now!