

MIRACLES — Walking on Water

Madeline Maloney

John 6:12-24

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Jn 6:16–24.

Before we look at this miracle of walking on water, let us situate it in the context of feeding the 5000. People are starting to follow Jesus en masse — about 20,000 including women and children. Jesus didn't snap his fingers to make this happen, but had the disciples take part in the miracle so they could hold it with their own hands.

It would unsettle us for weeks if we were part of this miracle, and we'd have to process that for weeks. And here is where we are...

We Were In This Together

Right after the disciples handed out the bread and fish, Jesus sent them across the lake by themselves on a boat. Wait what? Why were they part of this miracle only to be sent away across the lake in the opposite direction of the miracle they were a part of?

Madeline recounted her decade of miracles where God opened doors for her to be part of a famous ministry called RZIM. After opportunities to study philosophy at Pepperdine and theology at Oxford and a PhD at Saint Andrews, RZIM was shut down overnight and all those opportunities, dreams, and a future were shut down with it.

Disillusionment is what Madeline felt, and what the disciples might have felt in this moment as they sailed away from the miracle.

Into the Storm

Both the crowd and the disciples were convinced that Jesus was a prophet like Moses, like someone pointing toward an arriving Savior. They saw the sign and thought the signs were pointing elsewhere; they thought the man was the prophet pointing to the Savior rather than the Savior himself.

So what is Jesus up to now? Why put them on a boat and send them into a storm?

We see the detail that the disciples were frightened, and didn't recognize who we was. But when they heard his voice, they got it and were glad to take him into the boat.

What is significant is that no one but God had dominion over the sea. And this miracle was for the disciples to really point them toward seeing who Jesus really is. And Jesus wanted to make sure they got it, so that the disciples would be able to recognize his voice even in a storm.

It's not just for his sake and glory, though that is in large part what miracles are for, but he wants us to be secure in who he is so that we're standing before the Father with confidence.

Disillusioned

Later on, Jesus tries to direct the crowd toward what the miracle of the food was about: He was the bread of life. And this offended everyone and many of his disciples left. They were disillusioned. But the disciples, when he asked if they were going to leave, they said, "where else would we go? You're the Holy One of God!"

And we see that through those experiences, especially with the storm, the disciples got it. They knew who he was.

And we have the same opportunity. Many times through the storm we're so hurt and not wanting Jesus to "be in our boat," even though he is right there and wants us to know him.

And tonight, Madeline's invitation is to not wait as long as she did to confess to Jesus the pain and invite him to get into our boat so that we can see and believe who he really is. When we take Jesus up on that invitation to pour our heart out and let him work a miracle in us, we can learn how to grieve with him and with his family instead of alone, and to begin that journey of healing.

