

Signs
Walking on Water
John 6:15-21

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HDBC

December, 1995 I took my first trip to Israel. I spent two nights in the town of Tiberias on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee. Each night I stood on my balcony looking over that body of water trying to imagine the world-changing events that took place on and around that lake.

75 percent of the ministry of Jesus took place along those shores. He preached the Sermon on the Mount within sight of that lake. Fed 5,000 men near its shores. Preached in synagogue of Capernaum in that area. It was on the shores of that lake that many of the disciples were called to follow Jesus.

But not everything happened around the lake. There were also significant events that happened on the lake. One occurred during the predawn darkness after a long day of ministry and night of prayer. **Jesus walked on water.**

I've **skied** on water, but not walked. I've **swam** in water, but never walked on it. I've **float**ed in water, but never have I put one foot in front of the other and walked across the surface of the water as if it were dry ground. Jesus did.

Only God can do miracles. Jesus did miracles. Therefore, Jesus must be God.

Jesus turned **water into wine** during a wedding in Cana.

Jesus **healed a man's son** who was sick with a serious fever.

Jesus **healed a man** who had been an invalid for 38 years.

Jesus **fed 5000 men** with a boy's lunch

Once again we find Jesus doing the supernatural. John 6:15-26

John's purpose in writing his gospel is stated in John 20:30-31

*Many other **signs** therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing you may have life in His name.*

Signs give direction. John wrote that people would know that Jesus is the divine son of God. The miracles He performed were signs pointing to that reality. That is the first step toward eternal life. Knowing and believing who Jesus is.

Read the Text: John 6:15-21

1. The Desire of the People (15)

Jesus has just fed the multitude through a miraculous act and there was a curiosity among them that Jesus might be the promised Messiah. However, their concept of Messiah was distorted. They were looking for a military leader who could lead them in throwing off the oppressive yoke of Roman rule.

Their beloved prophet John has been beheaded. Life is hard and now Jesus comes along proving to be different from all who have come before him. They were ready to crown Him Messiah. He knew this. But it was not the right time. **So, he sent** his disciples to go ahead of him while he sent the crowds away.

Matthew tells us he went further up the mountain to spend time alone in prayer.

2. The Crisis of the Disciples (16-19)

Jesus had instructed them to go without Him. But they found themselves in a serious crisis. **Great victories are often a prelude to great challenges.** Whenever you have a great spiritual experience, you can expect the warfare to increase and you can expect some challenges to your faith.

Note three things the disciples experienced.

A. The Darkness

John seems to go out of his way to make sure we understand that this happened at night, when it was dark. Matthew points out that Jesus was alone on the mountain praying. It would have been dark on the mountain, but it was also dark on the lake.

Things are always more frightening at night. Some people are very much afraid of the dark. More afraid of what they cannot see than of what they can see. I figure some things are better left unseen.

And they were on water at night. Being on water at night can be a frightening experience. But not to these veteran fishermen.

B. The Storm

With little warning their simple trip across the lake turned into a fight for their lives. A storm came up suddenly that churned that little lake into a boiling sea.

The lake is 6 ½ miles wide at widest point and 12 miles long. Surface is nearly 700 feet below sea level. The hills on the eastern shore rise to 2,000 feet above sea level. Winds come off those hills and dip 1700 feet into the sea, causing short, but violent storms to come and go suddenly. Even today boats capsize every year because of these storms.

John gives very little details about what happened that night.

Matthew tells us the boat was battered by waves.

Mark tells us they were straining at the oars.

They were in a fight for their lives. This was not the first time with a storm like this. The other time Jesus was with them in the boat, but was sleeping. Awakened him and he called the storm to cease. Jesus is not with them now. This is a battle that they are going to have to win alone.

C. The Savior

John tells us they had traveled three or four miles. Matthew and Mark tell us it was during the fourth watch, 3-6 a.m. They've been rowing hard for several hours and making little progress against the wind.

It was during the early morning hours after many hours of struggle that they saw a lone figure coming toward them walking on the water. **For the first time, John tells us they were afraid.** Matthew wrote that they cried out. This was serious fear. No mention of fear of the darkness. No mention of fear of the storm. Now they are afraid.

Interesting that the **source of their greatest fear was also the source of their greatest hope.** Many lost people are afraid of trusting Jesus. Afraid of what might be required of them. Afraid of how it might change their lives. For some, Jesus is a source of fear. But He is also their greatest hope.

3. The Words of Jesus (20)

Seven words in John's account. ***It is I. Do not be afraid.***

Great words. Especially when they are spoken by Jesus. Where Jesus is, there is no need for fear. His very presence is enough to calm the *storms within* because no *storm from without* has power greater than His.

When Jesus is there, the governor of the universe is there. The one who sees all and knows all and can do all is present. Mark tells us ***Jesus saw the***

disciples while he was still on land. You are never out of His sight. He sees and knows.

Only Matthew adds about Peter stepping out and walking to Jesus. Much is said about the lack of faith that caused him to look from Jesus to the waves and to sink. But at least he was willing to get out of the boat. The rest stayed put. And when he began to sink, at least he knew to call on Jesus for salvation.

The central point of the text is the comforting presence of Jesus. His presence makes everything OK. **Like the presence of a lifeguard comforts the swimmer, only better. Like presence of parent comforts a child, only better.**

4. The Faith of the Disciples (21)

The disciples welcomed him into the boat. With Jesus' presence their fear quickly turned to faith. They knew who he was and wanted him in the boat with them. **John's language indicates that they invited Jesus to join them.**

Why would they need to invite Jesus into the boat? **Mark offers** the interesting insight that Jesus intended to walk past the disciples.

Jesus will not force His way into your boat. If you want to work your way through your storm on your own, He will let you. He comes, offering help, but waits upon an invitation. At least the disciples were wise enough to ask Jesus to join them. Have you done that with the storms of your life? Or do you simply let him walk by.

Side notes:

Matthew and Mark both add that the moment Jesus stepped into the boat the storm ceased. Immediately. I'd like to make the application that whenever Jesus steps into your boat the storm has been defeated.

From our perspective, **we may still see the wind and may even still struggle** with the oars, but from God's perspective it is over. The storm is powerless because he has taken the wheel.

John offers another sometimes overlooked statement. Immediately they were on the other side. Jesus got into the boat, the disciples blinked and the storm ceased. They blinked again and found themselves docked on the other side.