



The Gospel of John: *Know Jesus and Live*

Part 16
John 6:16-25

I. The Reason

- If you have read all of chapter six, you will have noticed that today's passage seems a bit awkward. Without a doubt this chapter is all about how the feeding of the 5,000 shows us that Jesus is the bread of life! Through the ministry of Moses, God's people were fed manna and their physical bodies were nourished. Through Jesus, God's people receive bread from heaven and are given eternal life! This is the point! So why in the world is this miracle of Jesus interjected right in the middle of this glorious chapter?
- To understand we must remember that last week, in our study of the feeding of the 5,000, we saw some of the disciples mock Jesus for wanting to do the impossible (Philip). We saw some of the disciples ignore Jesus's infinite power because of an inflated sense of their own ability to get stuff done (Andrew).
- What we didn't see is just how they reacted to Jesus showing them both up. Did they immediately repent and stand in awe? John's gospel doesn't say anything about their reaction. However, Mark's gospel does...
 - ❖ Mark 6:52--*they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.*
- I believe this is why this miracle is interjected into the middle of chapter 6. Before preaching in the synagogue at Capernaum that he is the bread of life, he is going to deal with this attitude problem that the disciples are having. He is going to bring about repentance in their lives and reveal to them something glorious about himself so that they are in awe once more.

II. The Story

- Today we will begin the story with the end.
- ❖ John 6:22-25--*On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. 23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. 25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here?*
 - The significance of this passage to the story is that it reveals to us that no one saw what we are about to read about. They all saw Jesus turn 5 loaves and 2 fish into bread that would feed thousands, but only his disciples saw him do what he is about to do. This reality reaffirms what we have already hinted at, that this miracle was just for his disciples.
- ❖ John 6:16-17--*When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum.*
 - At first glance, it kinda looks like the disciples abandoned Jesus. Verse 15 tells us that...
 - ❖ John 6:15--*Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*
 - Verses 16-17 make it look like the disciples waited for a while, grew impatient, and left without him. Almost as if to say, "Is he EVER coming down!? if he is going to stay up there on the mountain all night, he can find his own stinking ride!"



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- Though it might look like this from a distance, the disciples have an alibi. Matthews gospel records the beginning of this story this way...
 - ❖ Matthew 14:22-23--*Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.*
- So it turns out they didn't abandon Jesus. They were just doing what they were told. Knowing this brings up an interesting point. If Jesus is the omniscient Lord (which he is) then he knew that there would be a storm that night and he chose to send them anyway. More on this later in the sermon...
- ❖ John 6:17-19a--*It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles,*
 - Three things to see here...
 1. **Considerable time had past.** It was evening when the disciples shoved off (maybe between 5-7pm) and now night time was fully upon them. In fact, Matthew's gospel (Matthew 14:25) let's us know that it wasn't until the fourth watch of the night (between 3-6 am) had come and they still weren't at their destination.
 2. **They were alone.** John's little remark, "*and Jesus had not come to them,*" is curious. Did they expect Jesus to join them out on the sea? I don't think so. Otherwise they would not have been afraid when they saw him on the water (which of course they were)...
 - ❖ John 6:19--*they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.*
 - So what then is meant by this comment? I believe that John is saying something like, "darkness was all around and the true light which gives light to men and cannot be overcome by darkness (think John 1) wasn't there." Thus, John is commenting on the dire nature of their circumstances. They were in real trouble and the only person capable of delivering them was no where to be found.
 3. **They were in big trouble.** Despite the fact that they had been rowing for between 10-12 hours, they had only made it 3-4 miles. This is how violent the storm they faced was. It was such that skilled, experienced watermen were utterly unable to make any real progress. The real frightening reality is that this keeps up, their strength will run out, the storm will have it's way with them, and they will likely perish on the sea.
- ❖ John 6:19b-20--*...they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, It is I; do not be afraid.*
 - Two things to notice here...
 1. **Why were the disciples afraid of Jesus?** Some have argued that it wasn't Jesus they were frightened of, it was the storm. Matthew's account shows us without a doubt that they were afraid of Jesus...
 - ❖ Matthew 14:26--*But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, It is a ghost! and they cried out in fear.*



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- If we think about this, it is easy to understand their terror. It's pitch black outside, there is a terrible storm raging, they're in the middle of the sea, and out of no where there a person approaching the boat. The fact that it is dark begs the question, how did they see him coming? The possible answer make their fear all the more understandable. Was Jesus radiating with glory similar to the transfiguration? How terrifying would it be to see a glowing human walking on the sea!? Another possibility is that he wasn't glowing at all, but when he got near the boat a flash of lightning revealed his presence drawing near. If that isn't straight out of a horror movie I don't know what is!
- 2. **Jesus is the great I AM!** There are a couple of ways to look at Jesus's (It is I) statement. On one hand, Jesus might simply be letting the disciples know that he isn't a ghost. On the other hand, he might be communicating that truth and much much more. In Exodus 3, Moses was asking God...
 - ❖ Exodus 3:14--*If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, What is his name? what shall I say to them?*
...to which God replied
 - ❖ Exodus 3:15--...*"I am who I am."*
 - The Greek translation of the Old Testament, which Jesus quoted often, translates God's reply "*ego eimi.*" That exact phrase is what we see here in John 6:20. Thus, it is possible that what Jesus is saying to his disciples is, "Fear not, the great I AM has arrived!" This same phrase is used the same way later in John's gospel as well...
 - ❖ John 8:58--*Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.*
 - We know for certain that he was taking the divine title of "I AM" upon himself by the way the Jews responded to him...
 - ❖ John 8:59--*they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.*
 - ❖ John 6:21--*Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.*
 - John's gospel leaves out what happened between the time that Jesus identifies himself and the time that he climbs into the boat. What happened during that time is very well know and recorded in Matthew's gospel...
 - ❖ Matthew 14:27-32--*But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid. 28 And Peter answered him, Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water. 29 He said, Come. So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, Lord, save me. 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.*
 - The reason that John left this portion of the story out is likely that it is about Peter and John wasn't interested in telling you about Peter, he wanted you to know Jesus and live...
 - ❖ John 20:31--*but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

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- The other thing that John's gospel doesn't mention is that when Jesus climbed in the boat, the wind ceased...
 - ❖ Matthew 14:32--*And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.*
 - ❖ Mark 6:51--*And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded,*
- That said, John's gospel tells us something that neither Matthew or Mark tell us. John lets us know that the the very moment that Jesus climbed into the boat, they were at their destination. "If the language is taken strictly, this suggests another miracle.¹" A miracle that seems to have been written of long before it took place in the book of Psalms...
 - ❖ Psalm 107:23-30--*Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; 24 they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. 25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; 27 they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 29 He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.*
 - It is quite possible that John is letting us know that in bringing the disciples to their "desired haven" he did so miraculously. How exactly does he accomplish this? It does not say. Was this the first ever instance of teleportation? Maybe. Did Jesus freeze time and rush the disciples across the waves and then restart time? Who knows. What we do know is that it in this, Jesus reveals that he is the omnipotent Son of God who can silence the waves and deliver his people with his mere presence.

III.A portrait of salvation

- 🕒 **Total Depravity.** The disciples were enslaved. No matter how hard they rowed, they simply were not able to make any progress. They rowed for nearly 12 hours and weren't even close to reaching their destination. The storm that they faced was simply too powerful for them.
 - This is a picture of the spiritual state of every human being on the planet. No matter how much we strive. No matter how hard we work. We are utterly unable to reach our desired final destination...eternal life. The sin that enslaves us is simply too powerful for us.
- 🕒 **Jesus transforms.** When they saw Jesus, they didn't want anything to do with him. In fact, the fact that they thought he was a ghost (Matthew 14:26) likely meant that they began to row as hard as they possibly could to get away. Yet, when Jesus reveals who he really is to them, everything changes. They aren't terrified anymore, they are astounded (Mark 6:51) and the one whom they once sought to flee from was now the one they were eager to have in the boat with them (John 6:21).
 - This is a picture of what happens to us when Jesus reveals to our hearts who he really is. When we Jesus gives life to our souls (regeneration) and causes us to see him for who he really is, we stop running from him and are are eager to know him more and more.


¹ D.A. Carson, *John: Pillar New Testament Commentary Series*



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 **FREEDOM!** Mark's gospel reveals to us that when Jesus climbed in the boat, the wind ceased (Mark 6:51). John's gospel let's us know that Jesus the instant that Jesus entered the boat, they had arrived at their destination.

- This is a picture of what happens when Jesus enters our lives in two ways...

1. The violent waves of sin that once enslaved us no longer have power over us.

❖ 2 Corinthians 5:17--*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

- Gone is the slave to sin. No longer are we (who are in Christ) unable to resist sin and all it enslaving wiles. In Christ, we are NEW. In Christ we not only can avoid becoming enslaved to sin, we are commanded that we must!

❖ Romans 6:1-2--*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

2. We immediately escape the waves.

❖ Romans 8:1-2--*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death*

- Here the apostle Paul is teaching us that we don't have to wait to discover whether or not we have been delivered from condemnation. We can know that the moment that Jesus climbs into the boat of our lives we have deliverance. He have been set FREE!