

Finding Yourself in Jesus Walking on Water

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John 6:16-21

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So I couldn't hold back the emotions, and neither could my wife, we couldn't believe what we were looking at. "It happened right over there," I said, "Can you believe it?" It wasn't just us, everyone around us was having the same experience. I can't believe that I'm here right now. I can't believe this is where it all happened. You try to picture in your mind as you look out from a boat in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, somewhere right over there, Jesus calmed the storm, somewhere off in the distance on this water, he actually walked. I can't believe I'm here right now. Jesus walking on water is one of the most famous events in the Bible. Even now when TV or our movies want to show that someone is supernatural, one of the things they have them do is walk on water. In a way that's what this text is about. Jesus has power over creation because he is the ruler over all nature. He is truly God in every way that God is God.

But if you were to ask people, what's Christianity all about, true or false? Christianity is all about behavior. It's primarily about, it's about how you live your life. I think most people would say true, but I want you to understand that before being something you do, Christianity is something you are. Christianity and because it's what you are, Christianity is also about how you see everything else. One author put it this way, he said, "You don't look at the truths of Christianity like you study them or know them." He says, "You don't look at the truths of Christianity, you look at everything through the truths of Christianity." And it may be that there is nowhere that we need this more than when we suffer. I always hesitate to talk about suffering. If I just chose what we're going to teach on every week, I would skip the suffering passages because it's easy for people to hear what I'm saying go, you have no idea what you're talking about Preacher, but that's why every week I don't teach you from my experience because my experience means absolutely nothing.

That's why I try to teach you God's word, because God's word has a lot to say about suffering. Suffering causes a spiritual Alzheimer's. See, truths we know and truths we know well, truths that we love and love telling other people. Those truths can suddenly be forgotten. When we suffer the pain, the disappointment, the worry can become so powerful in our minds that they crowd out the truth that we know. Then when that happens, the trial makes us bitter or anxious or despairing or angry or something else. Why? Because the truth about God's character, his presence, his love for his kids, his protection, all of that is just vaporized by a good trial, which means that the key to suffering as a Christian is suffering in such a way that you see your suffering through the truth that you already know about Christ, that you don't forget the truth in your trial, but the truth becomes the lens, the glasses that you see every aspect of your trial through.

It's a text like ours today that will give us some of the truth that'll help us when times of trial and suffering hit our lives, and I say when not if, because it really is when we will suffer. You see, while we hate the prosperity movement and rightfully so, and while we resist our godless culture, I think both of it had a very successful impact on the larger body of Christ, and at least one sense, both our culture and the prosperity movement have convinced us that God's love for us is linked to a lack of trial in our lives. If God really loved me, the less I would go through trials. We may not say that, but when trials hit our response shows we believe that in many ways. Well, let's test that with the Bible. Okay. Did God love Jesus? All the three-year old's said yes. Has God ever loved anyone more than Jesus? No. Well, did Jesus float through life on a bed of ease and prosperity? No.

Now, think about that. The most loved person went through horrific pain and trial. And my only point in saying all of that is to say this, a trial free life is not the Christian life. God's love for you does not depend on the trials that you go through. Not at all. Jesus said, John 16:33, "In this life you will, you will have trials." A trial free life that's reserved for you in the next life, but that's not this life. In fact, our text, in our text today, Jesus loved his disciples, but his love for them did not keep them from facing a difficult maybe even life-threatening trial, and since this text shows disciples in a trial, it shows how Jesus rescued his disciples from that trial. Then my hope in this message is that you will find yourself in the boat when Jesus walked on water, that you will see yourself in this moment.

This is a very popular event in the Bible, but it is here partially, at least, to help us learn some truth that you and I are going to need, that you and I are really going to need the next time trials show up in our lives. Now to set the stage, remember thousands are following Jesus at this point, just an hour or so before these moments he fed 5,000 men, 10 to 20,000 people, with just five loaves and two little fish. Now, nerdy scientists read that, and nerdy scientists go, I wonder how much energy it would take to create all that food out of nothing. Well, some nerdy scientists figured that out. He said to make all of that food for enough people so that they would be filled, it would take 100% of all of the energy produced in the United States for four straight years. And Jesus does it in an instant, and they don't even notice he did it until it already happened. That is divine supernatural power, which means that since Jesus did that kind of thing, he is God, and if he is God, then you must believe in him. You should believe in him. You should give your life to him. You should stop resisting him and come to him and be saved from your sin.

Well, he proves the same thing that he's God by walking on water that evening, and I say evening because we have transitioned from the sun setting, now it's evening about six o'clock. How do I know that? Look at verse 16, "When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them." Now this event is also in Matthew 14 and in Mark chapter 6. So, what we're going to do is we're going to bring all the information from all three texts together to get a full understanding of what happened in this moment. And what we know from Matthew and Mark is that these guys didn't just meander their way down to the boat. Hey guys, we should go to the

boat now. No, what Matthew and Mark tell us is that Jesus sent them to the boat, get on that boat and get out of here.

They're on the eastern shore. They need to go to the northwestern part of the Sea of Galilee, past the city of Bethsaida on the way to Capernaum. Now after making his disciples get into the boat, Jesus does two things. He tells that crowd of 10 to 20,000 people time for you to get out of here, go home, whatever, and then what he does is he goes on top of a mountain and prays. I want you to picture this in your mind. Okay. The disciples are in the boat. Jesus is on the shore. John is emphasizing in these two opening verses that the disciples are alone. Disciples in the boat rowing north by northwest, Jesus away from them praying, and from this scene, I want you to point **#1) *Realize Jesus May Seem Absent at Times. Realize Jesus may seem absent at times.*** There will be times in your life when you are going through a trial, and it will seem like God has forgotten about you.

This is not an abnormal experience for God's people. Listen to Psalm 10:1, "Why, oh Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" Psalm 22:1., "My God, my God, why are you forsaking me?" A thousand years before Jesus uttered those words on the cross, God's people were singing that song on a regular basis. Psalm 22:2, "Oh my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer and by night, but I find no rest." Psalm 13:1, "How long, oh Lord, will you forget me forever?" How long will you hide your face from me? Others you're supposed to be a 24/7, 365, ease and comfort and all of that, and it's not Psalm 35:17, "How long, oh, Lord, will you look on? How long will you watch?" Then they respond, rescue me, stop looking and do something about this.

Psalm 44:24, "Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? Question, does any of that sound familiar? God, where are you? Why aren't you here? What does it seem like you're hiding? Why aren't you helping? Have you abandoned me? Are you done with me? Are you ignoring me? I pray, I cry, I beg you to act, but I don't get an answer. I'm exhausted. I'm spent. How long is this going to go on? Will you ignore me forever? Are you just done with me? I know you can see what's going on. Why are you letting it happen? Why aren't you rescuing me? Why do you ignore when all of this is going on? These are all very real cries from very real people in the scriptures, people who know God, people that God knows and loves, and yet it seems like for these people, God is not there and doesn't care. The same can be true for us.

We can think the same exact things. But notice I said seems like. Why? Because trials blind us from the truth. The truth being that God is not hiding, he's not ignoring you. He's not abandoned you, your trials, saying nothing about his love for you or his presence with you, and how do we know this from our text? Well, what's going on in our text that tells us this truth? Because while the disciples were without Jesus, while they were far away from him about to go into a massive storm, what was Jesus doing? He was praying. Question, is Jesus with us right now? In one sense he is, but in another sense, Jesus in the future is going to what? He's going to return, and he needs to return because he is not physically here now. So question, what is Jesus doing now

when he is not physically here? Well, Romans 8:34, and Hebrew 7:25 says that Jesus is interceding. He is praying for his people.

So more than a historical event, which this text actually was, that's what this is. This is a historical event, but also this event in John 6, is also a picture is of what is happening with all Christians down through the ages. We face various trials in this life, and between Jesus' first coming and his second coming, while he is away from us, he is in heaven praying for us. So don't think it's some strange thing that there are times when it may seem like Jesus is absent from your life, but just know that that's not the truth. The truth is just the opposite. The truth is that in your darkest hour when the trial is at its worst, he is not absent. He is there, he sees, he knows and he's praying. He's praying prayers of infinite wisdom, infinite knowledge, infinite love for you.

Well, we all know what happens next, right? Disciples are in the middle of the lake called the Sea of Galilee when, verse 18, "the sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing." Matthew says at this moment, they were very far from the land. In verse 19, we read earlier says that they were about three or four miles from the land. The Sea of Galilee, the lake there is seven miles wide, and so they're right in the middle. They're not along the shore. They're in the middle, storm is raging and like we just saw, they are without Jesus. Matthew describes the waves as beating the boat and that word is used elsewhere to mean torment and even torture. So as the waves are torturing the boat, gale force winds are blowing across against their northern direction as they needed to go. So Mark says that Jesus quote, listen to this, "he saw that they were making headway painfully." He sees them from this mountain looking down into the Sea of Galilee and he sees them struggling.

One more piece of information Matthew and Mark, both tell us that it's about the fourth watch of the night, which is between 3:00 and 6:00 AM which means the disciples may have been rowing for some nine hours at this point, and they're only in the middle. An experienced fishermen, that should have taken them less than two hours to get from one side to the other, and they're only in the middle after maybe nine hours. Think about this day for them, they go from this incredibly high of this massive public miracle feeding thousands with just, with a boy's lunch to the low of rowing in this storm. This trial is going to teach them to trust Jesus no matter what, but listen, despite everything they had seen up until this moment, everything they'd seen that day, how many times did Jesus heal tens of hundreds of people? How many people did he heal? How many miracles did they see?

These guys still needed this lesson because Mark 6:52 tells us something that the others don't tell us about what was going on in the hearts of the disciples in this moment, it says there, quote, that "as they're on the ship there, they "did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened." Even though they carried those baskets of bread in their hands and that bread was supposed to scream at them, you can trust Jesus. He will take care of you, provide for you. He is God. He can do that. Their hearts were hard. This isn't even the first time they've been in this

predicament. This is the second storm that they've been caught in, and they still don't know what they needed to know about Jesus, that he is God and that he is God for his people to trust in.

They may have even had those 12 baskets in the boat with them in this moment staring at them screaming, Jesus is God, but they still don't get it. So, Jesus teaches them this lesson. Verse 19, "When they'd rode about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat and they were frightened." Matthew and Mark say that they screamed. They also say that they were terrified, a word that means shaking and panic and confusion. That's what all these guys are doing, and Matthew and Mark tell us why, because they see Jesus walking on the sea and they think it's a ghost. They think the angel of death is showing up to kill them and they're freaking out. But verse 20, "He said to them, it is I, do not be afraid." Matthew and Mark add that he said, "take heart. Be strong. There is no need for you to be afraid." Why? Because I'm here.

Well, unlike the disciples who had the physical Jesus with them, we don't have that. We have his spiritual presence, and we have the truth about Jesus. So point #2) ***Bring Jesus Into Your Trials.*** ***Bring Jesus into your trials***, in between you and your trial insert Jesus. Place him right between you and the trial just like he comes between them and the storm. Bring him, bring the truth you know about him into your suffering. Bring the truth you know about him. When trials come into your life, bring the truth right in there. Do we take... Well, what is the truth about Jesus in this event? Well, Mark 14, Mark 6, John 6, putting it all together, what is the truth that this text wants us to bring into our trials?

Point number one, he knows what's best for you. In the midst of your trial, Jesus knows what's best for you, just like he knew what was best for his disciples was getting them on the boat and away from that crowd, Jesus knows what's best for you. Second, he sees you just like he saw his disciples. He is not distracted. He is attentive. He is focused. He is observant. He sees you in your hurt. He sees you in your confusion. He sees you when things are incredibly difficult. He sees you. Third, just like we saw, Jesus is praying for you. He's praying for you. In fact, Jesus may have been praying for as much as nine hours at this point of the night. See, unlike all of our prayers, his prayers for you are perfect, based on his perfect knowledge of you, his perfect knowledge of the situation and his perfect love for you. That's what his prayers, that's how he's praying for you.

Fourth, Jesus is proactive. He didn't passively wait for them, but he went after them, and the darkest part of the night in the most difficult part of their trial, he comes to them walking on the water notice, not hiking on the water, not running on the water. He's just walking because none of that storm was bothering him. He's good and he gets to them, gets to them at the exact moment, infinite wisdom had determined for him to go there. They were exhausted, soaking wet, backs aching, arms aching, hands aching, hearts discouraged, and that's when he arrives to save them. Fifth, he is encouraging. He isn't harsh with them. He says, "Be strong, be brave, and stop being afraid," and both of those directives are given to these suffering men based on the fact I am

with you, I'm with you. In other words, he encouraged their behavior with the fact that he was there.

Now question. Christian is Jesus with you? He's in you, and you're in him. You are intimately and eternally connected to him. He cannot leave you. He will not forsake you. He is with you always to the end of the world, and because that is the truth that he is with you in your trial, you can be strong, you can trust him. You cannot be afraid because he is with you. In other words, his presence in your life can be an encouragement. The truth that you know about him, that truth can be an encouragement to you in the middle of your suffering. Sixth and finally, don't miss this, Jesus saves. He saves. He actually helps. He actually rescues not just from the punishment we deserve for our sins. He does that on the cross in his resurrection. He also rescues us from what is causing our suffering. How does he do that?

Well, sometimes for his people, he does that through death. He rescues us from our trials by taking us home to be with him. But other times he rescues by healing. Sometimes he rescues by the removal of the trial. Sometimes he rescues by our repentance because it's our sin that is causing the trial. Sometimes he rescues by some kind of temporal punishment for those who are causing the trial. Other times it's getting us the help that we need. Other times it's getting us away from whatever it is that's harming us. But listen, if every good thing comes from the Lord, and it does, James one, 17, then when the good of your trial being over, when the good of your suffering coming to an end, when the good of your pain subsiding, when that happens, do not miss that. That is God doing that for you.

So in your trial, whether you're going through one now or will be in the future, can you bring this Jesus into your trial with you? A Jesus who knows what's best for you, who sees you, who is praying for you, who is proactively working for your good, who encourages you with the truth about him, that he is actually there with you, Christian, and he will actually save you from this trial. This Jesus, you do that, this Jesus in your trial is a rock you can anchor your mind to when things just seem out of control, when your thoughts are like a blender, this Jesus is a fortress that can protect your heart as the fear and the doubt, and the pain and the anger is attacking from every direction. She's like, well, how do I do that? How do I bring him in? Jesus, come over. How do I do that, Preacher? It's great. Sounds good. How do I do that? Give me the how. Okay. Here's how. You have to trust him.

You've got to bring him into your trial and allow this Jesus to be bigger to you than the trial you're going through. You bring him into the doctor's appointment, into the counseling session, into the lawyer's office, into the family meeting. You bring him into the doubts the pain is causing, into the fear the enemy is fomenting, into the confusion the trial is causing. You got to bring him into your home, into your school, into your job. You've got to bring this Jesus into your trial by trusting in those moments that he knows what's best for you, by trusting in those moments that he sees you, by trusting in those moments that he's praying perfect prayers for you, working out your good regardless of what you see, regardless of what you feel. It's trusting him

to give you the perspective that is an attack on the fear and the feelings that you have in those moments.

When you do this, when you trust him, when you bring him, insert him into your trials, the truth about him and the fact that he is actually there with you can lift you out of the pit of despair that the trial is trying to cause in your life. Now, remember the guy that wrote this book that we're looking at, where is he in this moment? He's in the boat. He's there. So let's see how he ends his memory of this event. Verse 21, "Then they were all glad to take him into the boat." Wouldn't you be? Yeah, you get in here Jesus. "They were glad to take him into the boat and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going." Interestingly, John doesn't mention what Matthew did. Now, what did Peter do in this moment? He got out of the boat and started walking on the sea until he got afraid, and then he started sinking. You think Peter was like John, bro, thanks for not putting that in there. Thanks. Maybe?

John also doesn't mention that Jesus got in the boat and when he got in the boat, the storm disappeared. He doesn't say what Mark said is that in this moment, the disciples were astonished by the miracle. Their mind was blown, and he also doesn't say what Matthew said, that they worship Jesus in this moment saying, "Truly, you are the son of God," and that's really the goal of this event. That's why this is in the book, that you would come to the same conclusion. If he did this, since he did this, he is the son of God, and I should give my life to him. Notice how John ends. He ends with the guys overjoyed to see Jesus, thank you. You're here. Get in this boat, and he ends with them safely on the shore. Notice, exactly where they had set out that evening all along there they were, and I wonder if there's a lesson in that for us.

See, when you bring Jesus into your trial, when you trust him, even though it's hard to do so, when you trust him more than your feelings, when you trust him, when the suffering is the greatest, one of the proofs that you are trusting in him is that you will point #3) ***Wait for Jesus' Solution Instead of Forcing Yours. Wait for Jesus' solution instead of forcing yours***, instead of taking things into your own hands you'll trust that whatever solution God brings to this trial is far better than any solution you could ever come up with, and because you trust him, you will trust that he can and he will bring you exactly where he wanted you to be all along, just like these guys ended up exactly where they were supposed to be all along. That this trial cannot and will not and does not stop his will for your life. That whatever so and so meant for evil, God meant for good to bring about your good and his glory. This is what it means. This is part of what it means to wait on the Lord.

So Psalm 27:14, "Wait for the Lord, be strong and let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord." Or Psalm 130:5, "I wait for the Lord. My soul waits and, in his Word, I hope." There is a direct connection between waiting on the Lord's solution to our problems and trusting in his Word. We can be strong when our trials make us weak. We can have courage when fear is dominating because we know him and because we know him, we can trust that his solution is better than anything that we could come up with. It's Isaiah 33:2, "Oh, Lord, be gracious to us, we wait for you. Be our arm every morning." That's strength. "Be our strength every morning,

our salvation in the time of trouble." Question, who is the salvation in our times of trouble? Is it us? No. It must be him. God is our salvation, not us.

He works our rescue from our trials, not us taking our rescue from our trials apart from him by taking things into our own hands or by disobeying him or thinking we know what's best by twisting his word to fit our own agenda. Does that speak to anybody here? Am I just talking to myself when I say that, or is taking things into our own hands a real temptation for us when we suffer? Well, maybe God's word doesn't really mean..., Well, God wants me to be happy and I've suffered long enough, so maybe I will.... Well, God's not moving fast enough on this, so I think I should..., Well, I know it'll hurt people I love, but they'll get over it and God will forgive me, so I'm just going to... Yeah, but you don't get it, Pastor. You don't know what the fear is like, what the pain is like, what this person treating me as their enemy, you don't know what they're doing to me. So that's me, I'm just going to... I hope none of that sounds familiar.

I hope it sounds familiar something like I know what God's Word says, so that's what I'm going to do. God wants me to be holy more than he wants me to be happy. So I will be patient as I endure more of this trial, or God is moving as fast as he knows is best for me, so I will wait on him to help me, or since this will hurt people I love and since I don't want to take advantage of his grace, I will seek to please him and not myself, or I know I'm afraid, I know I'm in pain, I know this person who sees me as their enemy is after me, but I will trust in the Lord anyway.

Taking things into our own hands to try to end a trial rather than leaving yourself and the trial in Jesus' hands is about as idiotic as taking the ball out of the hands of a Hall of Fame pitcher, seventh inning, seventh game of the World Series, bottom of the ninth, bat is loaded, two outs, everything on the line for the world championship, taking the ball out of his hands and putting it into the hands of an eight year old that you found in the crowd. Totally stupid. It's like giving your toddler responsibility for your bathroom remodel. So the first one, all the guys laughed at, second one all the ladies laughed at, so I got everybody. Both are just idiotic. But listen, all of that is a fraction of the idiocy of thinking your plan is better than God's, and yet we are all tempted to do it all the time.

The trial gets us to think insanely that we know better. We do things we would never advise other Christians to do because the fear is so great, or the pain is so unbearable as we act in those moments like we're smarter than God when the truth is we don't know what's best for us, but he does. We don't see things clearly. We don't see everything going on, but he sees. We don't pray enough or pray as we ought, but he does, and he's praying for you because he sees you in the trial and cares about you with infinite love, we don't always encourage ourselves with the truth, we let lies fill our heads, and we don't push them out with the truth. We don't encourage ourselves with the truth, but he does because he is the truth and only speaks the truth. So wait on him, wait on the Lord, wait on his perfect timing, his perfect will, his perfect heart and his perfect solution to your trial. Trust in him in your trials.

Trust his heart when you can't see his hand at work in your life, trust his word and not your feelings. Trust his word and not your fear. Trust his word and not some traitor's friend trying to

pull you away from the truth. Trust his word and not that inner heretic that tries to convince you that what's best for you is to do whatever you want because God's taking his time or he's ignoring you or he's punishing you, or whatever nonsense that inner heretic is trying to convince you of, that'll make you happy if you just twist the scriptures or follow on biblical advice right into disobedience, trust in the Lord in your trials instead. Wait on him. Now, one last thing. There may have been as many as four miracles in this event. Did you see them? Jesus walking on water, number one. Peter walking on water, number two. Jesus calming the storm, number three. And maybe number four, it's the boat miraculously getting to the shore. Did you see that in verse 21? "And immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going."

Remember the miracles all took place in the middle, three mile, four miles out in the middle. That's where Jesus was walking on water, and that's where he calmed the storm three miles offshore. So maybe the boat just instantly traveled a couple miles to the northwestern shore, maybe it just disappeared and then reappeared, or maybe it just got there because there was no wind anymore and they could just get there easily. Who knows? But it could be four miracles, but how would that even be possible? You see those three words in verse 20, "It is I." In Greek, it's just two words which are normally translated, I am.

Yes, Jesus is saying, it's me, it's not a ghost, it's me. But in John, the words I am carry a ton of significance, don't they? He literally said, "Take heart, I am. Don't be afraid." And he said these words while doing something only God can do, standing on top of water while solidifying the properties of liquid and superseding the law of gravity. Doing something by the way, that Job 9:8 says, only God can do, that God trampled the waves of the sea. Psalm 55:7 says, God, "stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of the waves." Psalm 107: 29 says, God, "made the storm to be still and the waves of the sea were hushed." See, regardless of what is going on outside of the boat of your life, if Jesus is in the boat of your life, you'll be okay.

I know many of you are nodding right now, but the goal of this message is that you will believe it, that you will really believe it. When everything within you wants to take things into your own hands, that you'll believe it. When you doubt that he can be trusted, when you doubt his love for you, because the trial is constantly pushing you away from him, and at times very successful at pushing you away from him, that in those moments, you will believe these truths, that in your trials, when it seems like God is absent, you bring Jesus into your trial and you wait. You wait for his solution. When you do, you will be exactly where God wanted you to be. When you do, you will look back on your trial with a little bit of gratitude that God gave you the strength that you needed to faithfully persevere. This is God's truth for our trials. May we see all of our trials through these lens. Let's pray.

Father, it's a text like this that can really expose our lack of trust. It can really expose the fact that we come to not only the trials in our lives, and maybe all of our life, and we're trusting in ourselves instead of trusting in you. We know the truth. We know the truth is true, but we live in rebellion against it. Maybe that's our whole life, or maybe that's what happens when trials hit our lives. Either way, thank you for showing us in this text that you are a kind and gracious, merciful

Savior. You rescued these men from this trial, and you rescue people all over the world from the ultimate trial, which is our sin against you. Thank you for being a God who loves sinners. Thank you for being a God who saves. I pray that you would use this text, equip us, train us, teach us with this text whether we are currently going through a trial or whether one is coming. Through these things, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.