

Sunday 12-June-22

Jesus walks on water

Psalm 107:28-32

- ²⁸ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
and he brought them out of their distress.
- ²⁹ He stilled the storm to a whisper;
the waves of the sea were hushed.
- ³⁰ They were glad when it grew calm,
and he guided them to their desired haven.
- ³¹ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind.
- ³² Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people
and praise him in the council of the elders.

Matthew 14:22-36

Jesus Walks on the Water

²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸ "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹ "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. **“You of little faith,”** he said, **“why did you doubt?”**

³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, **“Truly you are the Son of God.”**

³⁴ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵ And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him ³⁶ and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

Sermon: Jesus Walks on the Water

Before we begin - let me **ask God to give us His understanding and speak to us through this passage**

Let's pray...

Intro

Two elderly ministers and a **young minister** go out on the lake **fishing** one day.

They get right out in the **middle of the lake** and cast out their fishing lines.

After a while, **one of the elderly ministers runs out of bait** – so he hops out of the boat, **walks on the water back to the shore** and **gets some more bait** from his car and returns to the boat.

A while later, the **other elderly minister also runs out of bait** – so he hops out of the boat, **walks on the water back to the shore** and he **gets some more bait** from his car and returns to the boat.

The **young minister**, not wanting to be outdone, eventually decides that he **needs more bait**, so he hops out of the boat, and **immediately begins to sink in the deep water**.

The **two elderly ministers say** to each other: *“we should have shown him where the stepping stones were!”*

(pause)

In our passage from Matthew 14:22-36 – **Jesus walks on water** – and let's be clear there are **no stepping stones** – and let's be clear that this incident on the lake with Jesus and His disciples – is again – **an astonishing miracle** – just like last week's feeding of the five thousand with only 5 loaves and 2 fish.

The lake is **Lake Galilee** (aka the Sea of Galilee) – it is **13 miles** (21 km) from **north to south** and 7 miles (11 km) **from east to west.**

According to John's version of this story – the **disciples** were **3-4 miles from shore** – so they are **right in the middle of the lake.** At its **deepest point the lake is 161 ft (43m) deep.** So, there's **no way Jesus is paddling on the lake** and besides Peter is not going to **sink and ask Jesus to save him** from drowning in ankle deep water!

So, it's a **definite miracle.** But what lessons can we learn from **Jesus' walking on the water?**

This experience of the disciples in the storm **can be an encouragement to us** when we go through the storms of life.

When we find ourselves in the storm, we can rest on several assurances

Lessons from Jesus Walking on the Water

1. Jesus has brought us to where we are now (v22, v24)

#1 Assurance- Jesus brought us to where we are now

[Slide 1a-brought us]

The storm came because the **disciples were in the will of God** – the disciples were not like Jonah – when he faced a storm – **it was because he was out of the will of God** – and **running away from God.** But here the disciples are in the will of God.

Look at v22 – **Jesus made (or compelled) the disciples to get into the boat** and go ahead of Him to the other side of the lake

Did Jesus know the storm was coming?

Absolutely. He knows everything!

Did He deliberately direct them into the storm?

Absolutely – because they still had lessons to learn. Mark’s version of the story says – that when Jesus climbed in the boat and the wind died down, they were **completely amazed** for they hadn’t understood about the loaves (Mark 6:51-52). In other words, they **hadn’t fully understood what Jesus was/is capable of.** A **shortage of food**, or a **storm rocking the boat**, or **walking on water** are no problem for Jesus! The disciples hadn’t quite got that. Perhaps we don’t fully get what Jesus is capable of?

(pause)

The **disciples** were **safer in the storm** in God’s will than on the land with the crowds who were out of God’s will – because according to John’s version of the story – the **crowd** after the miraculous feeding were **ready to make Jesus king by force** – which wasn’t God’s will! (John 6:15) – and so Jesus sent the disciples away – so that the disciples didn’t go along with the crowd’s idea. **Jesus** is running **on God’s divine timetable** not a human timetable!

As we read our Bibles – we discover there are **two kinds of storms in life** – **storms of correction** – when God disciplines us (like He did with Jonah) – and there are **storms of perfection** – when God helps us grow. Jonah was in a storm because he disobeyed God – and **had to be corrected.** The disciples were in a storm because they obeyed Jesus and **because they had to be perfected.**

Jesus had tested them in a storm before, when He was in the boat with them (Matthew 8:23-27) – this time Jesus tests them by being out of the boat!

Many Christians **make the mistake that obeying God's - will produce "smooth sailing" through life.** But **Jesus doesn't promise that;** He says in John 16:33 *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world!"*

When we find ourselves in the storm because we have obeyed the Lord, we must remember that He brought us to where we are now – and He can care for us in the storm – as we'll see!

2. Jesus is praying for us (v23)

#2 Assurance – We can be sure – "Jesus is praying for us"

[Slide 1b-praying]

This entire **scene on the lake** is a picture of the church and the Lord today.

God's people (that's us) are on the lake/sea, in the midst of the storm.

And **Jesus is heaven praying and making intercession for us** (Romans 8:34).

Look at **v23 – Jesus goes up the mountainside alone to pray – and according to Mark's version of the story (6:48) – Jesus sees the disciples straining at the oars because the wind was against them. He sees their plight – just like He sees ours! He feels the burdens that we feel and He knows what we are going through – He empathizes with us** (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Amongst other things, Jesus was for sure, up the mountain, praying for His disciples, that their faith would hold up.

If we knew that Jesus was in the next room, praying for us, would it give us new courage to endure the storm and do His will? Of course, it would! Jesus is not in the next room, but He's in Heaven interceding for us. He sees our need; He knows our fears and He is in control of the situation.

Another spin of application of Jesus praying alone on the mountainside is this: If Jesus, the Son of God, sees the need to stay connected to His heavenly Father in prayer. **How much more, do we need to stay connected to our Heavenly Father, in prayer?** How are our quiet times with God in prayer and reading His Word going? From my own personal experience, I can say, that there is a **direct correlation between my quiet times with God and my spiritual and mental well-being.** Simply, when I don't have quiet times with God – I'm not spiritually and mentally well and I can see the difference!

3. Jesus will come to us (vv25-26)

#3 Assurance – “Jesus will come to us”

[Slide 1c-come]

Sometimes, we can feel like Jesus has deserted us, especially when we are going through the hard times of life.

In the Psalms, King David frequently complained that God seemed far off and unconcerned (Psalm 22:1; 11; 35:22; 38:21; 71:12) – but King David also knew that God would ultimately rescue Him.

Even the great Apostle Paul got into a situation so difficult that he said he felt “*under great pressure, far beyond his ability to endure, so that He despaired of life itself*” (2 Cor 8:1)

Jesus always comes to us in the storms of life. Isn't that what God did in our Old Testament reading from Psalm 107? He *heard the people's cry, and brought them out of their distress (v28) and stilled the storm to a whisper (v28)*

Isn't that what God promises through the prophet Isaiah – “*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you*” (Isaiah 43:2)

Jesus may not come at the time we think He should come, because He knows when we need Him the most.

Jesus waited until the boat that carried the disciples was as far from land as possible, so that all human hope was gone. He was testing the disciples' faith and this meant removing every human prop.

Why did Jesus walk on water?

To show the disciples that the very thing they feared (the sea/water) was merely a footpath for Him to come to them.

Often, we fear the difficult experiences of life (such as illness, surgery and losing a loved one) only to discover that these experiences actually bring Jesus closer to us!

(pause)

Why didn't the disciples recognize Jesus? Why did they think He was a ghost?

Because they weren't looking for Him? They should have learnt from last week's miracle of the loaves! The lesson they were meant to learn from the loaves, was to look to Jesus – He can do anything – nothing is impossible for Jesus!

Here they are in a storm; what should they do? Look for Jesus to help? But it didn't even cross their mind!

Had they been in the boat waiting by faith; they would have known Jesus immediately.

They'd be saying "here He comes; I knew He'd turn up!" Instead, they jumped to the false conclusion that His appearance was that of a ghost. Fear and faith cannot live in the same heart. Fear always blinds our eyes to the presence of the Lord!

As the Apostle Paul reminds us in 2 Tim 1:7 (NKJV)- *God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

With Jesus, we do not need to be afraid!

(pause)

4. Jesus will help us grow (vv27-31)

#4 Assurance – Jesus will help us grow

[Slide 1d-grow]

This was the whole purpose of the storm, to help the disciples **grow** in their faith. After all Jesus would one day leave them, and they would face many storms in their ministries. They had to learn to trust Jesus even though He was not present with them (out of the boat so to speak) and to learn trust Him even though it looked like He didn't care.

From v28 – the attention in the story shifts to Peter.

Before we give Peter a hard time though, let's honour His magnificent demonstration of faith. Remember, Peter is a seasoned fisherman, he knows that Lake Galilee is prone to sudden winds and storms. But Peter dared to be different. Anybody can sit in the boat and watch. But it takes great faith to leave the boat and walk on water. And his faith enabled him to actually walk on water.

What caused Peter to sink?

His faith began to waver because He took His eyes off the Lord and began to look at the circumstances around Him.

Perhaps we are guilty of that too? We focus too much on our circumstances and **don't keep our eyes on Jesus.** We make circumstances **BIG** and **Jesus small**, instead of the other way around!

Jesus asks Peter (v31) – why did you **doubt**?

The Greek word used for doubt here - literally means “to see two ways and to be uncertain which to take”.

Peter started out with great faith but ended up with little faith - because - He saw **two ways** [Jesus' way and human's way] – instead of seeing just **one way** – **Jesus' way!**

(pause)

We must also give Peter credit for knowing he was sinking and crying out to the Lord for help. He cried out when he was **beginning to sink** – and not when he was drowning. A lesson for us – to **cry out to the Lord when we're sinking** and not wait until we're drowning in our troubles. Our pride can get in the way, sometimes, can't it?

This experience was difficult for Peter – as was His denial of Jesus three times later on when Jesus was arrested. But these episodes in Peter's life helped him to grow in his knowledge of himself and of the Lord. Later on, Peter would write "*the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer*" (1 Peter 3:12). I wonder if Peter was reminded of that day he was sinking as he wrote that!

For us – the storms of life are not easy but they are necessary. They teach us to trust in Jesus alone and to obey His word no matter what our circumstances may be.

The lesson we must learn from this is to not doubt because doubt leads to a lack of faith and leads to fear – Instead we are to have utter dependence upon Jesus – in all circumstances of our lives.

5. Jesus will see us through the storms of life (vv31-36)

#5 Assurance – Jesus will see us through

[Slide 1d-see us through]

When Jesus said to Peter: "Come" – and I love how Jesus uses an economy of words as always here.

If Jesus says "Come" then that word will always accomplish it's intended purpose.

Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Whatever Jesus starts, He completes.

Jesus reached out His hand and caught Peter (v31) – and they walked together and climbed in the boat together. Jesus' hand is always outstretched for us – we just need to take hold of it. Will we obey Him and come?

(pause)

Peter's experience turned out to be a blessing to the other disciples as well as himself. When they saw the power of Jesus in calming the storm, they could only fall down and worship Jesus.

When Jesus calmed the storm back in chapter 8 (vv23-27) the disciples said “*What kind of man is this? Even the wind and waves obey Him*” – but this time - they make a clear statement “*Truly you are the Son of God*”.

The disciples are learning who Jesus really is?

What about us? Can we join the disciples in worshipping and thanking Jesus, the Son of God – and King of Kings!

Once Jesus climbed into the boat – according to John's version of the story -the boat immediately reached the shore and safety. Yet another miracle – showing that when Jesus acts it is immediate and decisive!

Jesus saw them through to safety – back on land again.

Jesus does the same for each of us –

Jesus endured His own storm – as He was crucified for the sin of the world – but He saw it through to the end – so that we would never face the punishment and condemnation for our sins!

By believing in His death on the cross - we are safe from the punishment of our sins – and we are forgiven.

And by believing in His resurrection from the dead – we are safe from the fear of dying – because we have the certain promise of eternal life – living safely in Heavenly shores with Jesus forever.

(pause)

Once back on dry land – at **Gennesaret** – the northwest shore of Lake Galilee

Such is Jesus' compassion for helping people through the storms of life; we see Him heal many who were going through a different storm in their lives – the storm of sickness.

We can't help but be impressed by the faith of these people – who believe that they only need to touch the hem of Jesus' cloak to be healed.

Isn't the lesson we're meant to learn from the disciples and these sick people in Gennesaret –that we can surely have faith that Jesus will see us through the storms of our lives?

Conclusion

To finish up then – one last thought.

If we think about it - anything that threatens to be over our head - is under Jesus' feet.

In Peter's case - the water which threatened to be over Peter's head - was actually under Jesus' feet.

[Slide 2]

The Apostle Paul's makes the same point in 1 Corinthians 15:27 which I'll finish with-

“For He (God the Father) has put everything under His (Jesus') feet.”

Let's pray...

Father God, thank you for your love for us in sending Jesus.

Thank you that Jesus has brought us to where we are now.

Thank you that Jesus continues to pray and intercede for us now.

Thank you that Jesus comes to us in the storms of lives – and that through our circumstances, and through your Word and through your Holy Spirit – we grow to be more like Jesus.

And thank you, Father, that ultimately Jesus sees us through the storms of life and leads us to Heavenly shores.

In His name, we pray, Amen.

Benediction

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

(Hebrews 12:1-3)