

SIGNS / Sermon 5 / Let Him In The Boat

July 26, 2015

John 6:16-24

Good Morning. {This is an }Email I received this week.

Hey, Jon. Trust all is well with you.

As you know, we are now well into our series called "Signs"...and I've got to tell you that I am absolutely convinced Steve Mackey and I witnessed one just yesterday. As is our custom, we met at church around 0830 or so to walk. If the weather is wet, hot, cold or whatever we walk inside. However, yesterday was gorgeous, so we walked around the state parking lots there behind the church just like we usually do when the weather cooperates. As we were walking we noticed an amazing cloud formation directly over the church building that can only be described as a "sign". (see attached photo)



After much careful introspection we are convinced it was a sign directly from the very parapets of heaven telling us that there should be no more talk of Tennessee or Duke (as was mentioned just this last Sunday in relation to Wolfe) or that other light blue team, within the walls of CCCC. Clearly the Lord is a UK fan. Just thought I should share this with you before we next see fire from heaven raining down on CCCC.

*Your concerned brother,
Marty*

How many of you have a bucket list? If you're not familiar with the word bucket list it is a term that someone came up with a few years ago to define a list of things that one wants to do before dying.

Any of you have these on your bucket list?

- Bungee jumping off a bridge would be awesome
- Sky diving would be a cool thing to do
- Winged Suit flying would be an amazing sensation
- Tightrope walking but only if I had a net underneath me. That Wallenda guy is crazy
- Walking on water would be something pretty cool as well.

I remember as a kid trying to run on water at our local pool. Did you ever do that? My friends and I thought we could accomplish this great feat. We would get as far away from the edge of the pool as we could. We would crouch down in a runner's stance. We would wait for the lifeguard to turn his head. Then bam we would burst out of that stance and take off running towards the water and as you might guess we never made it very far, but it was definitely fun trying.

Mark Batterson writes in his book *The Grave Robber* that it can be done---- if one could sprint at 67 mph. In case you are wondering how fast that might be, the fastest recorded foot speed by a human is Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt who topped out at just under 28 mph. I'm figuring if Usain Bolt can't do it then there's little chance of me doing it.

We're in week 5 of our series called Signs. If this is your first morning with us we have been wandering thru the book of John and looking at what John refers to as signs. Most of the other writers referred to them as miracles and most of the time when we talk about them we refer to them as miracles as well. But I think John is trying to get us to grasp or understand that there is something even bigger and maybe even better going on in each of these stories where we see these signs. It's not just a Wow moment but it's also an Aha moment with each story we're looking at.

Today our story takes us back to John 6 where we were last week. If you remember, Jesus had fed a crowd of some 15 - 20,000 people with 5 barley loaves and 2 fish. Now you won't see that number of people mentioned in John but the belief was that each man, John tells us there were 5,000 of them, probably brought along family with him, to see this one who had healed sick people.

Now they didn't know they were going to be provided a meal but since they got a free one they became even more amazed at this man Jesus and who he was and what he could do.

Look with me at John 6:14:

After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say: Surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world. They had been waiting on him for a long time. They had heard about him, read about him, studied about him, been taught about him.

But then John says,

Jesus, knowing that they intended to make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

So Jesus begins to sense that something isn't right here. They are thinking- here's the guy that is going to help us rise to power and overthrow the Romans. He can do everything we need our King to do. But there thinking was wrong. This was not what Jesus had come to do and these people didn't understand that yet so John tells us he withdrew to the mountain to be by himself.

Now Mark gives us a different view of the end of this story that I want us to peek at for just a moment.

Mark 6:45

The feeding has occurred. The baskets of leftovers have been gathered and then we read,

Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida. 2 things here.

One---Getting the disciples to go ahead and leave was a sign to the rest of the crowd that this party is over. Time to go. Been nice seeing you but it's time to head on back home.

Two--- I think Jesus was trying to protect the disciples from being influenced by the crowd with all this talk about Him being their King. 15-20,000 people could easily pressure 12 guys so Jesus says you guys need to get in the boat and head on out.

So the disciples are gone and Mark writes while he dismissed the crowd. Jesus starts to thank the people for coming. It's been great spending time with you. Hope to see you again soon. Here's a basket with some leftover fish and barley--feel free to take it home. I don't know that he did that but he's got 12 baskets full of bread and fish. What else you gonna do with it? I'm sure there were some who just kept hanging around. Hoping for dessert and coffee. Maybe they were hoping he would do that water to wine thing again. There may have been some who stayed the night hoping they were going to see something else remarkable take place. He tried sending them away but apparently he couldn't get rid of them all and Mark writes:

After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

You ever have one of those days where you just want to be alone?

This had been a really hard day for Jesus. As this day started Jesus has just found out that his cousin, his dear friend--John the Baptist, has been executed. Even with this news people continue to flock to Jesus. Mark tells us that Jesus and the disciples crossed the lake so they could find a quiet place to rest and deal with the news they had just received, but the crowd could see where they were going so they all ran on foot and met them where the boat landed. Instead of some down time Jesus spent all day teaching, sharing, loving and healing. But now that he has finally sent the crowd away he's found the time to process the loss of this dearly loved family member.

Add to this loss the pressure from the crowd trying to make him King. Although he knew it wasn't right you've got to wonder if Jesus was flattered by the accolades he was receiving. Enticing, maybe even tempting---for sometimes temptations come dressed like great opportunities---and maybe Jesus knew he needed to get away so He could reconnect with His Father. Get his spirit back in line with his dad's.

We read of Jesus doing this a number of times in the gospels. Spending time with his father helped him realign his will with his Fathers. Spending time with his father helped restore him and reinvigorate him for the tasks that still were in front of him. Can you imagine the pressure that he was under? The weight that he carried every day. He poured himself out daily. Often being ridiculed and criticized for it and he needed those times of

replenishing. Jesus knew what to do and where to go when he was drained.

This isn't the big idea for us today but we can learn from his example in this story. I've often asked, if it were important enough for Jesus to do it, how much more important is it for us to do it? When the day has been hard. When we've received bad news. When temptations are knocking on our door. When we find our tanks are near empty. We need to get away. We need to find a quiet place. A place where we can be alone with God and just the two of us can visit.

So that sets us up to where we come today. Back to John 6:16

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum.

Many of you may be familiar with this story from John. Matthew includes it in his story and we've seen that Mark does as well. The part of the story that most of us remember is when the disciples see Jesus walking on the water. Peter calls out to him, ***Lord if it is you, then let me come to you.*** And Jesus says, ***Ok. Come on out here Peter.*** And Peter walked on water too. I don't think he was going 67 mph per hour. But Peter did walk on water and it probably happened this night. And there's a great message in that story about being willing to get out of our boat and do something risky for God. It's a great message about taking a step of faith, not only when we find ourselves in the midst of chaos, turmoil and fear but also when things are going well, when things couldn't get any better he may call us to take a step. Jesus challenges each of us to do that. My guess is He has challenged you. What did you do with it?

But this is not our focus today. John's version of this story is a bit different from Matthew and Mark. So let's see how it plays out.

John 6:17

By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. Have you been there before? You ever been by yourself in the dark? Most of us don't like

the dark. As kids sometimes we liked playing in the dark. Hide and seek. Sardines. Flashlight Tag. Sharks & Minnows. Playing games can be fun but unfortunately there's a worse kind of dark that some struggle with.

Darkness of grief: Darkness of depression. Darkness of being alone. Darkness of feeling alone even when you're surrounded by others. Darkness of despair. Darkness of uncertainty. When there---all we want is a flicker of light that lets us know the way we need to go.

Have you experienced a time in your life when you had no sense of God's presence with you? A time when you called out or cried out only to get nothing back? I hope you've had those times when you knew he was there. You felt his touch, you felt his presence, you knew he was providing for you. But this isn't one of those. This is one of those times when you felt like God had sent you, for a reason, with a purpose, but now it feels like you are all alone. And just when the darkness seems to be too much, John writes:

A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. Have you been there? It's not enough that the darkness has overtaken but now let's add more to it.

- There's no money in the account and you get hit by a driver with no insurance
- Your teenager is rebelling and you find evidence of drugs in their room
- The nagging health problem leads to more tests and you hear the "C" word
- Your marriage is struggling and then you learn of your mate's affair
- You've learned to never say "It couldn't get any worse" because it can and it has and you've got the T-shirt that says it-Been there, done that, and it didn't work out like it was supposed to.

What do you do when its dark, and you're alone, and the wind starts to howl and the waves start coming over the side of the boat?

I know what you do---because I do it to. You pull yourself up by your boot straps and you get in there and you try harder. You dig deeper. You give more effort. You grab that oar and you pull and you pull faster and you pull

harder and you pull longer. Why? Because we're not a quitter. My daddy taught me to never quit so I dig down deeper. Or we get creative. We start thinking how we can turn this situation into a win. How can I come out of this even better than when I went in? We're going to figure this thing out ourselves, on our own. We don't need anyone else to help and we don't need to rely on anyone else.

You ever wonder why we just don't turn the boat around and go with the wind? Maybe it's because we are stubborn. My zodiac sign is Taurus. I can be pretty bull headed. Maybe it's because we've been here before---this isn't the first storm we've tried to row in. But mostly it's because Jesus said to take the boat to the other side. I hope you understand that just because Jesus told you to do it doesn't mean there won't be periods of darkness, or strong winds or crashing waves. Sometimes doing what Jesus tells us to do will put us right in the middle of the storm.

Do you think Jesus knew the storm was coming? Did he have a Bill Meck or Chris Bailey at WJEW news who was predicting this bad storm was about to hit the Sea? Did he tell them to go ahead so they would be caught in the middle of the storm?

Unfortunately we tend to believe---matter of fact some even preach that if we let Jesus lead our life that life will get better. If you'll turn it over to Him everything will work out just fine. Doesn't always happen does it? These guys did what Jesus told them to do and look what happened. They followed his instructions and still came the darkness, and the wind and the waves.

It will happen to us as well. If you tell the truth some aren't going to like it. If you refuse to compromise some aren't going to like it. If you call sin sin some aren't going to like it. If you take a stand for what you believe some aren't going to like it. I'm not gonna promise you that things will be better or get better if you do what Jesus says. But I can promise you that He will be there for you. And what's more important? Having Him by your side or those who only stay around as long as you agree with them? I know our focus is the story from John but I want to jump back to Mark because he adds an interesting piece to the story.

Mark 6:47-48: ***When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them.***

The lake was about 7 miles wide. They are now at the middle of the lake which means they are how far away from shore? Approximately 3 1/2 miles. Are you catching this? It's dark. There's a storm on the lake. The wind is blowing. The waves are rising and falling and Jesus can see that they are struggling to row the boat. He sees. He knows. And He'll come.

Back to John 6:19

When they had rowed three or three and half miles they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water, and they were terrified.

The darkness didn't bother them. The wind tossing the boat around on the water didn't concern them. The waves crashing against them, maybe even splashing up into the boat, didn't seem to worry them either. It wasn't until they saw Jesus that they were terrified.

Remember---John is writing this story long after the event occurred. I'm guessing they didn't recognize the figure being Jesus and that is why they were terrified. Matthew and Mark tell us they thought it was a ghost. Wouldn't you? No one had ever done this before. No one had ever seen someone walk on water. They had probably seen magicians and sorcerers perform healings and change water into other liquids but walking on water?

And because he could sense their fear Jesus immediately called out to them, ***It is I. don't be afraid.*** We would have probably said Hey guys, It's me! In the Greek what Jesus said is translated ***I Am - Fear Not.*** Sound familiar. I Am.

In the Old Testament God spoke to Moses through a burning bush. He told him to go back to Egypt and to lead the children of Israel out of that land. Moses then asked well who should I say sent me? Do you remember how God answered? Tell them I Am sent you. I Am. It was a statement of Deity.

A statement of self existence. A statement that God used for himself and one that Jesus repeated on multiple occasions in John's book.

- I am the bread of life
- I am the light of the world I am the gate
- I am the good shepherd
- I am the resurrection and the life
- I am the way, the truth and the life I am the vine, you are the branches. I am.

Jesus announces to his disciples who he is and shows them his power by doing something that they had never seen done before. Yes they had seen him do great things prior to this event. Turn water in to wine. Heal a lame man. Speak a word and a boy was healed from miles away. Feed thousands of people with a small amount of food. But now to be doing something that no one had ever done before-walking on water---showed that he was more than a prophet---showed that he was more than an earthly king---it showed he was the king of all creation.

C.S. Lewis writes:

The fitness of the Christian miracles, and their difference from these mythological miracles, lies in the fact that they show invasion by a power which is not alien. They are what might be expected to happen when nature is invaded not simply by a god, but by the God of Nature; not as a foreigner but as a sovereign. They proclaim that He who has come is not merely a king, but the King, her King and ours.

Then John closes out this story with these words: ***Then they were willing to take him into the boat.*** Willing? Willing? Really???

Almost makes you think they paused for a moment before deciding to let him in. Maybe Peter got back in the boat and said Hey Jesus-wanna race to the shore? Me and the boys against you.

I can see Judas going --- it's a little crowded in here but there's still a long way to go so come on.

NLT says: ***Then they were eager to let him in the boat....***

I like that verse better. Eager. They wanted him in the boat. They needed him in the boat. Not because they were tired from rowing. Not because he brought along a basket of barley loaves and fish. They were eager to have him in the boat because they remembered the last time he was with them and they were caught in a storm.

Mark tells us that a furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was asleep in the boat while the disciples battled the elements and the sea. Fearing they were about to drown they call out to Jesus who gets up. Rebukes the wind and the waves and the sea became completely calm.

I'm guessing that once they realized who was walking on the water beside them that they were eager to have him in the boat once again because they remembered the power that he had over creation. With three simple words he brought calm to their night. Not just on that night but on this night as well. For as soon as Jesus got in the boat the wind calmed down.

And here's the big idea and it comes to me in the form of a question, Are you willing to let Jesus in the boat or are you eager to let him in the boat?

Are you one who likes the bumper sticker, *Jesus is my co-pilot*, or do you prefer to sing the song, *Jesus take the wheel*?

There are lots of people who believe in Jesus. There are lots of people who believe in his miracles. There are lots of people who will let him in the boat when its dark, and the wind is howling and the waves are slamming against them. But are you eager to have him with you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Why don't most people/Christians want Jesus in the boat? It's because if they let him in the boat they know he's not interested in sitting in the back and riding along. If he's in the boat he's going to want to guide it. He's not interested in being the Executive Officer. He wants to be the Commanding Officer.

But most of us only want him around in an emergency. He's like the life jacket that we know is there but we only plan on using it if we are about to drown. We like having him on call because we remember what he's done before when we've been in a dark, stormy place, but that's the only time we want him around.

So which one are you---willing or eager?

I like the way John wraps up this story ***Then they were eager to let him in the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.***

One moment they are in the middle of this lake, that stretches 7 miles from one side to the other, battling darkness, strong winds, and powerful waves. The next moment Jesus comes walking to them, they say get in the boat, and the next thing they know they have reached the shore. It's amazing what Jesus can do and will do when we let him in.