

*The Miracles of Jesus*  
Miracle # 18

**"Jesus Walks On the Water"**

(Matthew 14:22-33, **Mark 6:45-52**, John 6:15-21)

A friend of mine puts it this way, **"In your life you are either in the middle of a storm right now, just come out of a storm or just headed into a storm."** This evening we are going to examine a miracle that Jesus performed in the midst of a storm.

This miracle displayed Christ's control of the forces of **nature**.

Jesus had just finished feeding the crowd of 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish. You will remember that after the miracle feeding of the 5,000 the multitude was clamoring to crown Jesus as **king**. Jesus rather abruptly told the disciples to get into a boat and go ahead of Him to other side of the lake while He sent the multitude away and went off alone to pray. Although none of the gospels tell us why Jesus did this, it is not hard to see that the disciples would have been vulnerable to the suggestion that Jesus be made an earthly king.

The disciples did as directed and began the voyage to the other side. What had been a bright day ended in a troubled night. According to John's Gospel, this is what happened; **"And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, (17) And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. (18) And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew."** (John 6:16-18)

***The Background of the Miracle*** (Mk 6:45-47) **"Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat, and to go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away."**

Jesus literally commanded them to begin the voyage. The Greek verb in this passage is often translated "**compelled**."

**A Storm Arose.** (Mark 6:46-47)

**"And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. (47) Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land."**

The disciples are separated from the Lord by some distance; Mark says that they are, **"in the middle of the sea."** John is even more specific he says they are 3 to 3 ½ miles from shore (6:19).

Isn't it true that the storms of life always seem to be made up of two elements; the **trouble** that comes to us and seems to overwhelm us, and the seeming **absence** of the Lord.

The disciples had been "straining at rowing" and battling "contrary winds" all night for it was now the "fourth watch of the night" which means it is between **3 and 6** a.m. They had been rowing for 8 to 9 hours and they still are only about halfway across the lake.

It is necessary that we remember that the disciples are where they are in direct **obedience** to the command of Jesus. Some think that storms in life come only when one is out of God's will. But storms can and do come in the center of God's **will**. Storms can and do come to God's **children**. Even in the storms, Jesus is always available to help.

### ***The Elements of the Miracle*** (Mark 6:48-50)

"Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed them by."

Here were the disciples struggling in obedience and making no progress. To obey Jesus is not always easy! Yet it is reassuring to know that, (48a) "he saw them." The storms in our lives do not escape the Savior's notice. Even when the storms of life hide the face of God from us, yet He is watching still. The word translated "straining" (**basanizo**) is usually translated **torment**. It refers to physical, mental, emotional and or spiritual distress. He not only saw their physical problems with the wind, he saw their inner problem with **fear**. The text says, "He came to them." Jesus came in the darkest part of the night when they had exhausted their energies and were in deep despair.

### Jesus Came Walking On the Sea. ( vv. 49-50)

"And they saw him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out: (50) for they all saw Him, and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them, and said to them, Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

The combination of the blackness of the night, the distressing storm, the frayed nerves of the disciples, and Jesus' unexpect-ed arrival (they certainly were not expecting him to join them in the middle of the lake), resulted in their believing what they were seeing was a ghost and they were terrified. There is no indication in this story that their fear is due to the wind and waves, it was sight of Jesus approaching that terrified them. Perhaps, they thought it was a harbinger of death, a sign that they were about to

die. But the water that threatened to be over their heads was under the feet of Jesus.

It is I!

**"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."**

The Greek phrase translated **"It is I!"** is literally (***ego eimi***) and reflects the Old Testament name of God (Yahweh or Jehovah) meaning "I AM!" He is saying, **"It is I – the great I AM – be not afraid!"**

What Jesus is saying is, "That which scares the living daylights out of you, that strange form appearing in the midst of the sea, doing what is absolutely impossible for men to do, that is I! The very things that oppose you, the storm tossed sea, the tormenting winds, I already have them under my feet. I am in control of these events, therefore, there is no need to fear."

One interesting thing of note in verse forty-eight where it says, **"He came to them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed them by."** Have you ever considered why he acted as if he would pass them by? Because he wanted them to **recognize** Him, **trust** Him, and **invite** Him in.

"Command me to Come to You." (Matthew 14:28-31)

It is at this point that Matthew tells us that something very interesting happened, -**"And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." (29) So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. (30) But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" (31) And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (32) And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased."**

Fully convinced of who the one walking on the water was, impetuous Peter said, **"Lord if it is You, command me to come to you on the water."** The conditional here translated "if" is literally **"since"** meaning **"Since it is You!"**

In faith Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk on the water. But once out of the boat his gaze was torn from Jesus and fixed on his turbulent surroundings. What caused Peter to shift his eyes away from Jesus? It could have been that he had a moment in which he considered that what he was doing was **impossible**. Or it could have been that when he focused on the **storm**, his faith began to falter and he began to sink.

But whatever the cause of his sinking, Jesus was ready to reach out for Peter as soon as He could get his attention again. When Peter cried out to Jesus, "Lord save me" Jesus immediately stretched forth his hand and caught him. In His lovingly reprimanded, Jesus did not say, "**Why did you try to come to me?**" instead He said, "**Why did you begin to doubt.**"

Peter is both a good example and a bad example in what transpired. He is a good example in that he **alone** had the faith to step out of the boat into the stormy sea and attempt to walk to Jesus. Even in his failure he reminds us that the trouble really begins when we take our eyes off of Jesus and begin to be ruled by our **circumstances**.

Yet the opposite is also possible. It is expressed so well in the chorus of one of the old hymns, when it says

***Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace.***

[Praise! Ours Songs and Hymns. "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus." (Grand Rapids: Singspiration Music, 1979) # 284]

Jesus reached out and caught Peter and they both entered the boat and at that moment the winds ceased.

### ***The Effect of the Miracle*** (Mark 6:51-52)

The storm ceased. (Mark 6:51a) "**and the wind ceased**"

When it says the winds "**ceased**" he used a word meaning, it grew **weary**, the waves "sank to rest as if exhausted from its own beating." [Marvin R. Vincent. Word Studies In the New Testament. Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946) p. 185]

The boat was immediately at land.

John in his account tells us, "**Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.**" (John 6:21) As soon as Jesus entered the boat, the rest of the voyage was super-naturally accelerated, they were **immediately** at land.

They were amazed (Mark 6:51b-52)

"... **And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. (52) For they had not understood loaves, because their heart was hardened.**"

We need to consider the last two verses in reverse order. Verse fifty-two says that they "**had not understood the miracle of the loaves.**" They had grown spiritually **insensitive** to the miracles of Christ. They had just observed how Christ had fed the multitude yet it had no effect on how they

faced the very next crisis. This always happens to us when we forget what He has done for us in the past.

The second half of verse fifty-one says, "And they were greatly amazed in them-selves beyond measure, and wondered."

What had happened caused the disciples to be amazed "**exceedingly beyond measure.**" The result was to move them to worship.

The disciples worshipped. (Matthew 14:33)

"Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." Amazed the disciples worshipped Jesus. For the first time in Matthew's gospel, they expressed the belief that Jesus was "the **Son** of God."

Conclusion.

He is teaching us, by means of this story, the resources that are available to us which the world knows nothing about. It is startling to realize the number of Christians who do not live by this truth, but seem to succumb to the pressures and the problems of life and react just like a non-Christian would. They grumble and complain, feeling set up and put upon. They despair and strike back, they rely upon worldly schemes to deliver them from difficulties, and oftentimes they even do that which is wrong.

Down through the centuries the teaching found in this miracle, has been a source of comfort and strength to God's people when they are troubled. We all go through storms in life and these can be sources of discouragement that test the very limit of the strength of our faith. It is good to be reminded that even at those times (perhaps especially at those times) that we are the objects of God's love and care and that in his own way and in his own time, he brings us through those trials.