

John, Part 20: Revealing his Glory on the Waves

John 6:16 ESV When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, **17** got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. 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, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. **20** But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” **21** Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

- I. Continuing through the sixth chapter of John, we come to the familiar story of Christ walking on the water, the fifth of seven signs that John hones in on.
 - A. This story is very familiar to us. Believers and nonbelievers are familiar with it.
 1. Often times people will look to this as the signature miracle of Jesus’ ministry. Non-believers might mock it in film and TV, and believers might not really understand it and take it for granted.
 2. But this morning, let’s go deeper than we’ve gone before in looking at this story and ask, “What does it mean? What does it say to us?”
 - B. Rare for the book of John, and like the previous story of Jesus feeding of the multitude, this account is found in the other gospels, with the exception of Luke.
 1. Although the stories are very similar in each gospel, John actually gives the **most concise** account, with **fewer** details than Matthew or Mark.
 2. Because of this, I am going to overlap the three accounts and tie them together for you, so that we get the most details possible. I’ll be going back and forth through the three accounts, but if you’d like to read the other accounts on your own, they are found in Matthew 14 and Mark 6.
 - C. Also, you should note that the chronology of this miracle is very important with to what happened before and what will come after! So let’s quickly review the sequence of events so that you don’t miss any of the context.
 1. Jesus had, earlier that day, fed somewhere between 5,000-20,000 people with just 5 barley loaves, and 2 small fish.
 2. Next, the crowd, in its enthusiasm following the miracle, had begun to speculate that Jesus was the Prophet Moses had said was coming to Israel.
 3. Because of this, the crowd planned to take Christ by force and make him the King of Israel. But he slipped away from them and went to the top of the mountain to enjoy the fellowship of the Father in a night of prayer.
- II. In John’s account, the story begins: “When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum.” Simple enough. But Matthew and Mark begin the story like this: **“Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side”**.
 - A. Now if you're just reading casually, you might miss that. But look again - Jesus **made** the disciples get into the boat!
 1. The Greek word that Matthew and Mark use for “made” means to constrain or compel. It speaks of a commandment. The implication is that of a commanding officer giving an order to do something vital to the mission.

2. Therefore, they didn't **decide** to get into the boat and go to the other side of the lake after a committee meeting where everyone voted; Jesus **made** them get into the boat. Why is this important?
- B. Pause and ask yourself: Did Jesus know what was going to happen to them on the lake that night? Of course he did. And yet he made them go anyway.
 1. Have you ever noticed that oftentimes while we are making our way across the lake of life that serious storms can pop up frequently?
 2. And how do we normally react to those storms?
 - a) Some of us blame everything unpleasant in our lives on the enemy! "Why you mean 'ol devil! You better quick rocking my boat in Jesus name!"
 - b) Others of us are convinced, that because of our failings we have brought the wind and the waves that batter our boat upon ourselves. "Well I've done it again! All this sin in my life is causing me to get stuck here!"
 - c) But some people just grit their teeth and get to rowing! "If we work hard enough, we'll make it to the other side!"
- C. But what if in certain circumstances, it's not the devil, or our own failures, or even some need to work harder at fixing our problems? What if we are where we are, because Jesus **made us** get into the boat in the first place? I admit that this is a hard concept for us to consider!
 1. Our problem begins with the fact that in the Western world, we are enslaved to anything that gives us a sense of convenience and control. Fast food, easy financing, and instant downloads.
 2. But that addiction often flies in the face of the Biblical concept that God is always in control, not us. We call that concept, God's "sovereignty".
 - a) A lot of times our diminished **realization** of God's sovereignty results in a diminished **zeal** to see his glory. Because we think that God's purpose is to rescue us from any possibility of difficulty, when we face trials, we assume falsely that God has lost control.
 - b) **1 Peter 4:12 ESV** Beloved, do not be surprised at the **fiery trial** when it comes upon you **to test you**, as though something strange were happening to you. **13** But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, **that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.**
 - c) Though we may not fully understand now, the suffering that is allowed by Christ in our life today is preparing us to be in the right place to see the glory of God! So take heart! Whatever you're going through will have a big payoff if you remain faithful under trial.
 - d) **Romans 8:18 ESV** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are **not worth comparing** with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
 3. We need an elevated view of God's sovereignty, and a greater desire for his glory; knowing that if we trust his sovereignty, we just might see his glory!
- D. Note the nature of this storm by comparison. Do you remember the other "storm story" in the gospels? Once again the disciples were going across the lake and a whopper of a storm kicked up. But as the disciples were panicking, Jesus was sleeping! They rouse him from his slumber, with terror in their voices, and Jesus simply tells the storm to "shut up" and it obeys.

1. Now that storm was threatening on a whole other level! The boat that day was filling with water and threatening to capsize. From a human perspective their lives were in jeopardy! It was the most natural thing to cry out to Jesus.
 2. But this storm is different. No lightning. No thunder. No immediate danger. Just strong resistance from a constant wind that produced increased and prolonged labor and subsequent weariness.
 - a) Matthew says the disciples had departed “when evening came”. Let’s assume that means between 6-9PM. This story reaches it’s climax, according to Matthew and Mark, in the “fourth watch” of the night. By Roman time, that meant it was between 3:00 - 6:00am.
 - b) This means that they had been rowing for between 6 and 12 hours! And in that time, John says that 12 experienced sailors, rowing non-stop, had gone only about three or four miles. How discouraging and exhausting!
- E. Does that describe any storm you are facing? You may not feel like death is imminent, but the constancy of what you’re facing has worn you out! You have rowed and rowed against a battering wind for some time, and you feel **spent**.
1. Unlike the story of Jesus waking up and calming the storm, did you notice in this story that no one cried out to Jesus? In their minds, this storm, though exhausting, was manageable. All they had to do was **work harder**. Why trouble the master?
 2. Are you ever tempted to look at the storm you’re in and say to yourself, “Everyone’s got problems; just row a little harder! I don’t need to whine or complain; just row harder! It’s not like we’re sinking, just row harder!”
- F. And the result is that you are wearing yourself out and losing ground trying to get where you are going.
- III. But when the disciples strength was almost completely spent, they noticed something on the waves, it was dark and they could just barely make it out. They strained their eyes harder until they were convinced that it was the figure of a man! But how could this be? They were three or four miles in the middle of the lake! So they made the most natural assumption imaginable - they thought they were looking at a ghost, and they were naturally terrified!
- A. They probably did not have in mind a disembodied spirit (like we do when we think of a ghost), but rather an evil spirit. We know that they were aware of the reality of such beings because of Jesus’ encounters with them in his ministry.
 - B. Remember that I said that in our storms our conclusion is often that the devil has been unleashed on us? Perhaps this is what the disciples were thinking as well - “the devil’s out to get us!”. But who made them get into the boat? Could it be that he had a greater, more loving and beneficial purpose for them than just to see them victimized by Satan? Could it be so in your situation as well?
 1. In the middle of their fear, Jesus (in all 3 accounts) cries out to them, “Take heart; **it is I**. Do not be afraid.” But many scholars strongly feel is that Christ was not merely identifying himself, as if to say, “Don’t worry! It’s just me!”
 2. The words translated “It is I”, are the greek, “ego eimi” (egho ee may), literally, “I AM”.
 - a) **Exodus 3:13 ESV** Then Moses said to God, “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?" **14** God said to Moses, "***I am who I am.***" And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: '***I am*** has sent me to you.'"

- b) Look at Jesus' words again with this in mind. Could it be that he was literally saying, "**Take heart; *I AM*. Do not be afraid**"?
- 3. Could it be that he had sent these 12 guys out in a boat to row all night, expending all of their own energy and ability, just so he could blow their minds with the revelation of his true identity, his absolute authority over all creation and every circumstance, and to display his eternal glory? Could that possibly be the purpose of the trial you find yourself in the middle of?
- C. But notice something else. Mark says that when he showed up on the lake, "**He meant to pass by them**". What does that mean? Was Jesus trying to be coy and sneak past them? Was he trying to get to the other side so that he could yell "Surprise!" when they finally showed up?
 - 1. I think Mark makes this comment to bring our minds back to another Old Testament story to help us better understand the Savior.
 - a) The setting is this: the people of Israel have left Egypt, delivered by God's hand, with signs and wonders. He has brought them to Mount Sinai, and has given them his holy law; yet in response to all of this, the people construct a golden calf, They have ceased to trust God, and are rowing their own boat.
 - b) Though God, in his holy wrath threatens to destroy the people and begin anew with Moses, Moses intercedes for them. And then Moses makes a gutsy request...
 - 2. **Exodus 33:18 ESV** Moses said, "Please show me your glory." **19** And he said, "***I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.'*** (Literally, "Yahweh" or "***I AM***" - MS) And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.
- D. Could it be that Jesus "made" the disciples get into the boat simply so that they would have the joyous opportunity of seeing his goodness and glory pass by them, and the delight hearing him identify himself for them as the great I AM?
- E. Could it be that Jesus has placed you in a boat, in the middle of your own lake, rowing hard against the wind, going nowhere, just so Jesus can reveal his glory to you and assure you of who he really is?
- IV. Matthew adds an interesting detail that is unique to his account. **Matthew 14:28 ESV** 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."
 - A. After hearing the voice, and seeing the form of Jesus Christ, Peter, perhaps with unresolved doubts, calls to Jesus with a proposition, "If it's really you, call me to yourself!" When Jesus says to come on over, he jumps out of the boat, his eyes fixed on Jesus, with no forethought, caution, or hesitation apparent in the text.

- B. But as many of us, as soon as he takes the leap of faith, he feels the wetness of the bottomless sea beneath his feet. His eyes begin to survey his surroundings. “Those are real waves! This is a real sea! Human beings can’t walk on water!”
- C. And as the awareness of the **assumed reality** of his surroundings fills him with fear, the **actual reality** of the presence of the “Great I AM” slips from his consciousness, and he falls beneath the waves.
1. Much has been said about the failure of Peter’s faith; of how he dropped his gaze from Jesus and he began to sink.
 2. What I to point out to you is that even when Peter’s faith failed, he was saved by the goodness and nearness of the “Great I AM” anyway!
- D. **Matthew 14:31 ESV** Jesus **immediately** reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”
1. Jesus never accused him of having “no faith”; just little faith. Jesus never condemned him, just rescued him, bringing him to safety.
 2. **2 Timothy 2:13 ESV** if we are faithless, **he remains faithful**—for he cannot deny himself.
- E. Jesus encourages Peter with the words, “Why did you doubt?” (yes, encourages!) He was commending the reckless abandon of Peter’s faith, not mocking or demeaning him for his failure.
1. It was like he was saying, “Peter! You saw me walking on the water! You heard my true identity! I called you to myself; giving you authority to do what you saw me do! Next time, stay on top of the water by keeping your eyes on me!”
 2. What a message for all of us, right? How many times has a failure in our faith caused us to retreat from trusting God again? But remember, he called you out of the boat! And when he calls you out of the boat, you **can** walk on water!
 - a) So determine today to embrace reckless faith, and not fear it! Keep your eyes on Christ and not your circumstance, and he will give you what you need to make it to him.
 - b) And if you find your faith failing, and you begin to sink, simply call out to him and he’ll be there to pull you up and bring you to safety!
- V. One last thing we’ll notice about these three accounts is that they all end differently. This is not evidence of conflicting testimony, just simultaneous truths...
- A. **Matthew 14:32 ESV** And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. **33** And **those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”**
1. This is a very logical response to the revelation of Jesus’ glory and a deeper understanding of his identity. If we listened to him and recognized him more, even in our storms, we would worship him more!
 2. Their response is similar after he calmed the storm. They said, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?”
- B. **Mark 6:51 ESV** And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And **they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.**

1. To say that their hearts were hardened may, at first, seem to be a polar opposite thought to Matthew's; who says they worshipped, and confessed that he was the Son of God, but I don't think that's necessarily so. In the presence of God's glory, people often don't know how to respond.
 - a) When Peter saw Jesus standing with Moses and Elijah in all his glory at the Transfiguration, his best thought was to build them all a summer home on top of the mountain!
 - b) Remember, in our story last week, the people failed to properly interpret the meaning of the miracle of the loaves and fishes so they thought to kidnap Jesus and make him their King!
 2. They may have been genuinely worshipping Christ to the best of their ability, in the knowledge they had, but they had completely missed the fact that in 24 hours Jesus had performed two miracles that screamed, "I'm God!"
 3. Why? Their hearts were hardened. Perhaps this means that they'd been with Jesus so long that his glory and miracles had become commonplace. Could this also be possible with us?
 4. And the point of this is that we should never miss an opportunity to cry out to the Lord, "Show us your glory! Teach us who you really are! Reveal your ways to us!" The Lord is very near to that kind of praying.
- C. **John 6:21 ESV** Then **they were glad** to take him into the boat, and **immediately** the boat was at the land to which they were going.
1. John seems to indicate that they were the beneficiaries of divine "rapid transit"; saying, "**immediately** the boat was at the land to which they were going."
 2. The point is that you can row as hard as you want in your own strength against every kind of wind, but when you let Jesus into the boat, he'll get you where you're going (or should I say, "where he means for you to go").
- D. Have you noticed a theme developing in John 6?
1. In the first week, we saw that Jesus doesn't need your help to provide what you need. He can satisfy you with the equivalent of a couple of fish and a few slices of bread.
 2. Last week we learned that he doesn't need you to chain him to your agenda, he is already king and has great plans for the cosmos that he will never abandon.
 3. This week we saw that he is the storm-walking "Great I AM" that can put you in the right place to see first hand his glory, and hear his true identity.
- E. The point is that Jesus is the all-satisfying and all-sufficient one, and there is more evidence of that to come as we move through this chapter.