

22. Jesus Walked on the Water

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that Jesus wants to involve them in the distribution of spiritual food to others. That will happen as they learn to share the Word of God effectively with others. In our topic today, we are going to see what happened after Jesus fed the five thousand.

Jesus had finished feeding the five thousand. Then, Mark 6:45-48 says, “Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. 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 on the sea, and would have passed them by.” Here, we see that Jesus sent the disciples away in the boat before He sent the crowd to their homes. Jesus instructed the disciples to go to the town of Bethsaida.

Once Jesus had sent the multitude away, we see that He went to the mountain to pray. One of the key things we notice throughout the ministry of Jesus is the many times He went alone to pray to the Father. We see this from the beginning to the end of His public ministry. Mark 1:35 says, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Then, Mark 14:35 says, “He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.” Jesus gave us a real example for our own lives. In addition, Jesus gave specific instructions about our need to pray alone to the Father. Matthew 6:6 says, “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Meanwhile, the disciples were in the boat crossing the Sea of Galilee. Mark 6:33 says, “But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him.” This verse shows that the place where Jesus fed the five thousand was near the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had told the disciples to meet Him in Bethsaida which was also near the north end of the Sea of Galilee, so the disciples should have only been about a mile or two from the shore. However, the wind was blowing against the disciples. In fact, by evening, we see that the boat was in the middle of the sea. Matthew 14:24 says, “But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.” This means the wind had driven the boat several miles to the south.

Jesus knew what was happening to the disciples. We read that He saw them straining at rowing, because the wind was against them. Jesus was watching over them, and protecting them, even though they did not know He could see them. We also see that Jesus was testing the disciples in order to teach them some very important lessons. Many of the lessons the Lord teaches us are in difficult situations. That was also true for the disciples that night. Finally, at the fourth watch, Jesus started walking across the water so that He would pass near the boat. The fourth watch of the night was between 3:00 and 6:00 in the morning. This meant the disciples had been out in the

middle of the lake trying to get to the shore for about nine hours.

As Jesus walked across the water, He chose a direction that would take Him close to the boat, so the disciples would be able to see Him as He walked on the water. Mark 6:49-52 says, “And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; 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.’ Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.” These verses give us the reaction of the disciples when they saw Jesus coming across the water.

Instead of recognizing that it was Jesus walking near them on the water, the disciples were immediately filled with fear. Matthew 14:26 says, “And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear.” The word translated “ghost” is only used in these two verses in the New Testament. It comes from the Greek word from which we get our English word “phantom” and speaks about seeing something that is imaginary. We see that all of the disciples saw what they thought was a ghost about the same time and they cried out in fear. Here, we see that Jesus was testing their faith. He allowed them to row the boat for many hours before this happened, so they were both fearful and exhausted by the time they saw Him.

Jesus could see that they were troubled and fearful. He immediately spoke to them and said, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” Every time the phrase “Be of good cheer!” was used in the New Testament, it was during a time when a person was fearful, either because of sickness or disease, or in a situation like the disciples experienced here. In Acts 23:11, we read, “But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, ‘Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.’” Paul had nearly been killed by the Jews the previous day, so the Lord knew that He needed encouragement. That was exactly what the disciples needed as they were in the boat that night. Jesus then walked to the boat and got into the boat with the disciples.

As soon as Jesus got into the boat, the wind stopped blowing. The disciples saw the wind stop. They were filled with amazement and wonder as they saw what happened as Jesus got into the boat with them. We read the amazement was due to the fact that their hearts were hardened. The word translated “hardened” means *to make the heart dull or to blind*. 2 Corinthians 3:14 tells us one reason their hearts were hardened. “But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ.” The disciples had not yet fully understood that Jesus is truly God. The previous afternoon, Jesus had showed that He is God. He had shown this by multiplying one small lunch so that there was enough food to feed five thousand people. The disciples did not understand that miracle was to show them that Jesus is God. 2 Corinthians 3:16-17 points out, “Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.” Christ allowed the disciples to work long and hard that night so He could bring understanding to their hearts.

We go on to read what happened the next day when they reached the land. Mark 6:53-56 says, “When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.” The disciples anchored their boat when they reached Gennesaret on the northwest shore of the sea.

The people, there, immediately recognized Jesus as He and the disciples got out of the boat. Some of the people ran through the surrounding region letting the people know that Jesus was there. As a result, the people began carrying the sick on their beds to whatever city or village they heard that Jesus was visiting. Then, the people would lay the sick in the open places with the hope that Jesus might pass by that place.

We see that the request of these people was that they might just touch the hem of the robe Jesus wore. This tells us that the people had heard about the woman who was healed from the issue of blood. Mark 5:27-29 says, “When she heard about Jesus, she came behind *Him* in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, ‘If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.’ Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of the affliction.” Jesus called attention to the faith of that woman. Mark 5:34 says, “And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.’” Jesus had healed the woman when she had touched the hem of His garment.

As a result, we see that the request of all of these who were sick and lying in the open places was to touch the hem of the robe of Jesus so they could also be healed of their sicknesses. We see that every person that did touch the hem of the robe of Jesus was made well. Just like the woman in chapter 5, these people had to exercise their faith in Jesus by reaching out and touching His robe. Jesus said, in John 6:37, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” God honored such faith throughout the Bible. Numbers 21:7-9 says, “Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.” When people turn to the Lord in repentance and faith, He will give life. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others how they can also come to Christ and receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain to others how to have eternal life.