

WE ARE GROWING IN FAITH

JESUS WALKS ON WATER

Quote text Mark 6:45-56

[Parallel accounts: Mt 14:22-33 and Jn 6:15-21]

I. EXPLANATION

A. WHY JESUS REMAINED BEHIND

He knew they were coming to make Him king—**Jn 6:15**

B. POSSIBLY WHY JESUS SENT THE DISCIPLES AHEAD

1. He did not want them to become a part of king-making

- He “dismissed” the crowd—see **verse 45**
- Just like—after feeding the 4000—he “sent them away”—see **Mk 8:9**

a. Instead, he had *warned* them not to tell about His miraculous works

Mk 5—healing of Jairus’s daughter

b. He would warn them again—later

Mk 7—healing of deaf-mute in the Decapolis

2. Possibly to **test** their faith

a. After seeing the miracle of feeding the 5000, maybe they would have more faith

b. He wanted them to rely on God more

c. Surely, He knew the storm was brewing!

3. This provided a 2nd opportunity to address His earlier questions

- Why are you so afraid?
- Do you still have no faith?

4. It also provided another opportunity to answer *their* question—“Who is this?” [see **Mk 54:41**]

C. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LAKE

They had rowed about 3-4 miles (25-30 stadia)—**Jn 6:19**

D. THE FOURTH WATCH

- There were 4 three-hour watches—from 6pm to 6am
- So this was sometime between 3 and 6 am

E. STRAINING AT THE OARS—THE WIND WAS AGAINST THEM

Boat was battered by waves—and wind was ‘contrary’—**Mt 14:24**

F. THE FUTILITY OF THE DISCIPLES

- They had been rowing all night!—but had made little progress
- It was springtime—Passover was near—**Jn 6**
- They started just after dark—so maybe 8 or 9—end of first watch
- They had rowed through 2nd and 3rd watch—6-9 hours
- So 3-4 miles was not very far

G. WHY WAS JESUS ABOUT TO PASS THEM BY?

1. First—to **check** on them—He cared—He was concerned
2. Wanted to **encourage** them with His presence
3. To “pass by”—as God “passed by” Moses and Elijah—and reveal His **glory** to them
4. And their lack of faith provided another teachable moment—**how to grow in faith**

H. WALKING ON THE LAKE

1. Another example of Jesus’ control of nature
2. But it could be perceived two ways
 - Possibly divine power?
 - Or maybe occult power?
3. Disciples’ initial response—was to the occult—a *phantasm!*

Additional event—Peter on the water—read Mt 14:28-33

II. JESUS DID NOT KEEP THEM FROM FACING ADVERSITY

A. TWO WAYS OF DESCRIBING ADVERSITY—**βασανίζω**

1. Mark uses it to say they were ‘**straining**’ at the oars

Meaning: harassed—distressed

2. Matthew uses it to say the waves were ‘**battering**’ the boat
 - Meaning: tested—tormented—tortured
 - Could even connote demonic resistance

B. THE MOST TEACHABLE MOMENTS

- Are times of greatest **resistance**
- Are the most **perilous** times

Example: telephone poles—from trees high on windy hills—not in the valley

C. WHY DID JESUS WAIT SO LATE TO SHOW UP?

1. First—He probably spent most of the night **praying**

2. Second—He allowed time for pressure to build
 - The fourth watch is the **darkest!**
 - He gave time for the storm to brew—heightened danger
 - *This* time He was not with them in the storm

3. This gave the disciples time:

- a. To realize their **inadequacy**—they could not do it alone
- b. To **exercise** their **faith**—depend on God
- c. To heighten their **awareness** of His **absence**

4. Application

- a. In danger—we are tempted to say
 - God is not there—or doesn't care
 - Or to get upset/mad—because God does not seem to help us
 - Maybe even think God is against us
- b. But He is *always* there
 - Sometimes on the distant shore
 - But He is always watching and caring
- c. God wants us to succeed at what He tells us to do

And is ready to help us—not hinder us

III. LOOK AT HOW JESUS ENCOURAGED AND TAUGHT THEM

A. HE WAS ALWAYS FAITHFUL—IN HIS OWN TIME

1. Notice His **silence**—no response to their fear after stilling the storm
2. But He had not forgotten—He was waiting for a ‘teachable moment’
3. Now, he responds to their fear—in a different way than during the first storm

B. “TAKE COURAGE”

1. Meaning

- Be of good cheer (KJV)
- Take heart—be strong—hearted!
- Be confident
- Imperative!

2. Twice before He has said this already

- Healing the paralytic at Capernaum (in **Mt**)
- Healing the woman with blood (**Mt** and **Lk**)

3. Later, this was reiterated

- Jericho crowd says this to blind Bartemaues—**Mk 10**
- When Jesus says He has overcome the world—**Jn 16:33**

C. IT IS I

1. **εγω ειμι**—in all three Gospels—the “I AM” from **Ex 3:14**

2. One of 2 “I AM” statements in Matthew

The other is **Mt 28:20**—Great Commission

3. One of 2 “I AM” statements in **Mk**

- The other is **Mk 14:62**—response to High Priest’s question
- “Are you the Christ—the Son of the Blessed One?”

4. Clear statement of **divinity**

Intended to bring comfort and calm—God Himself is present

D. DO NOT FEAR

1. Have no *phobias*

2. No fear!

3. When God is with us

- Who/what can stand against us?
- We should fear *nothing*!

IV. HOW GOD STRENGTHENS OUR FAITH

A. SEE WHAT HAD HAPPENED SINCE STILLING THE STORM

- Jesus had exorcised Legion
- The disciples had exorcised many demons and anointed/healed many people
- Jesus had fed the 5000

B. BUT *STILL* THEY SHOWED WEAK FAITH—THREE TIMES

1. Here—they were **terrified** when they saw Him

2. Here—Peter’s ‘little faith’

- He doubted—**δισταζω** = tried to look in two directions
- Wavered—divided sight on two things—Christ and the storm

3. They were completely **amazed**

a. Because they had not understood about the loaves

- Still did not understand His ability/power to provide
- Or His interest—and concern—to care for them

- b. And their hearts were hardened
 1. Like “poros”—a kind of stone
 2. To become callous—or dull—insensitive and unresponsive
 - a. Does this refer to doubt?
 - b. Or had they have begun to take Jesus and his power for granted?
 3. After feeding the 4000—Jesus asked them about this—**Mk 8**
 - Do you still not see or understand?
 - Are your hearts hardened?
 - Do you have eyes, but fail to see—and ears, but fail to hear?

C. OUR BEST FAITH IS OFTEN MIXED WITH DOUBT AND DULLNESS

1. The disciples had begun to worship Him as the Son of God
2. But they still did not understand it fully what this meant

D. OUR FAITH BY ITSELF IS NOT ENOUGH

1. Peter’s faith
 - Should be admired—it was growing stronger than the others!
 - But it had a fatal flaw—he relied on his *own* strength/faith
2. Take another look at Peter’s situation
 - a. First—notice how far Peter made it—within an arms length!
 - b. Jesus took Him by the hand

Jesus physically touched him—as with the leper
 - c. Literally—Jesus ‘caught’ him with His hands

Trusting Jesus is—letting go and letting Him catch us!
3. God *knows* our faith is insufficient
 - a. It may grow stronger—but—by itself, it is always lacking
 - b. It takes God’s encouragement to bolster it!
 - c. It takes God to provide it—we must have the faith *of* Christ

Rom 3:21-22—*But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ for all those who believe*

Gal 2:16—*nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through the faith of Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the Law*

Ph 3:9—*[being] found in Him not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith*

4. So—God is always faithful—even when we are not

II Tim 2:13—*If we do not believe, he still remains faithful: he cannot deny himself.*

V. WHAT WE LEARN FROM THIS INCIDENT?

1. We cannot do it alone—we must rely on God

2. Sometimes God lets us go into harm's way

- Straining at the oars—frustrated by getting nowhere
- Battered—tortured or harassed—buffeted by life's storms

3. Adversity can do two positive things

- Strengthen our faith
- Help us learn more about God's nature and character

4. God never gives up on us

- He always sees and cares
- Even when we don't think so
- He may observe from the far shore
- But He is always there to help us
- Even when our faith is weak

5. Never take your eyes off Jesus

- Do not set your eyes on two things
- Remember nobody can serve two masters

6. Jesus doesn't just exhort us

- He gives us a hand
- He catches us when we let go in faith
- He even catches us when we let go of our faith

7. Strong faith is not our own—it relies on two things

- God in Christ as the source
- And God's constant reassurance to increase it