

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Worshiping the Son of God, Part 1**

Scripture: Matthew 14:22-27

Code: 2309

Look with me at your Bible. We have the great joy again today of examining another section in Matthew 14. I hope you're noticing that we're moving a little faster; we are trying to get done before the Second Coming. We are having a great time in Matthew's gospel, and we come at this juncture in our study to verses 22-33.

This is one of the familiar, beloved, very important events in the life of our Lord, in the lives of His disciples, and in your life and mine as well. To understand this marvelous event, I want to begin by drawing your attention to Matthew 14:33, which is the key verse in our text. "Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.'"

Something happened here to convince them of that. What happened was so convincing that the next day, when the multitude which showed up for another free meal after the feeding the prior day had left, the disciples stayed and Peter, speaking for them, said this: "We believe and are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." You can't make any greater discovery than that; that is the greatest discovery you can make, that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God.

Verse 33 is the first time they have ever said that. The Father said it at the baptism; the demons said it on the eastern shore of the sea, but the disciples have never said it before. They have seen miracle upon miracle upon miracle, healings, raising the dead, casting out demons, they have heard preaching and teaching without equal, and they have been hearing it for two years. Now, they come to this monumental affirmation, which means that something very spectacular must have happened to inspire such confidence and surety as is indicated by their testimony in verse 33 and the next day in John 6:69-70.

Look at verse 33. Before we see what happened that caused them to be sure, let's just examine the thought that they worshiped Him. That is a very essential reality in the New Testament. It tells us something very basic about Jesus Christ; it tells us that He is equal with God. In the Old Testament, God alone was to be worshiped. When God established the law by which man was to live, it began with, "You shall have no other gods." Only the true God, Jehovah God, is to be worshiped. That rang loud and clear through the monotheism of the Jewish religion, that one God and one God alone was to be worshiped.

However, in the New Testament, again and again and again we note that Jesus Christ also is to be worshiped. The simple conclusion is then that Jesus Christ is equal with God, and that is affirmed in the statement that He is the Son of God, He is of the same essence as God. If you look at the New Testament, you'll see the mark of the worship of Christ planted everywhere.

Looking in the gospels, for example, we find the wise men worshiping in Matthew 2, the leper worshiping Him in Matthew 8, the Gentiles worshiping Him in John 12, a Canaanite woman worshiping Him in Matthew 15, a maniac out of the tombs worshiping Him in Mark 5, a blind man worshiping Him in John 9, the disciples worshiping Him at His resurrection and again in the mountain in Matthew 28, then worshiping at His ascension in Luke 24.

If we look in the epistles, we find in Hebrews 1 that all the angels of God worship Him. In Philippians, we find that God demands that every creature on the earth, over the earth, and under the earth bow the knee to worship Jesus Christ. If we go all the way to the consummation and the revelation, we find Him being worshiped by all those in glory, in chapters 4, 5, 11, and 19.

So this theme sweeps its way through the gospels, the epistles, and to the revelation of the New Testament - that Jesus Christ is to be worshiped. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says in I Corinthians 16:22, "If that is not done, let that man be anathema," or accursed. So Jesus Christ is to be worshiped, and that is something reserved for God.

When John, in the wonder of his visions in Revelation, fell down to worship an angel, the angel said, "Get up, for I am only a creature as you are. Worship God." He reaffirmed that single-worship perspective, and yet when Jesus was worshiped, never ever did He say, "Get up, for I am a creature as you are." He accepted it. They worshiped Him, in verse 33, because it was clear to them that they had a right to do that because He was the Son of God. They were sure of it, after the event that occurred in this text.

Just a few other words of introduction. This particular account is therefore one of the great moments in all of redemptive history because it is a major step in the affirmation of the disciples. They are the key to the Kingdom, in a sense. They held the keys, and they were the key. They are to be the rulers in the Kingdom. They were the front line to proclaim the Kingdom. It was very important that they had an ever-increasing understanding of the King's identity.

I don't think, in this section, that their understanding is fully complete. I think there are still many questions that they will have resolved as time goes on, many fears, anxieties, and doubts that will recur in the future. But there is, nonetheless, a major step of affirmation that Jesus is, in fact, the long-awaited King, the Christ, the Messiah, the Coming One, the Prophet, the Son of God. So this, then, becomes a very, very important section of Scripture.

As a corollary to that, related to us, may I say that it is also an important Scripture because it tells all of us about the protective love of Christ. It is a tremendous insight into God's care for you and for me as His children. Basically, as Christians, we need to know that. We get ourselves into difficulties in life, and into places in life where we exhibit little faith. We fear that God has abandoned us, and wonder whether we can ever get out of it, and this is a great text to encourage our hearts that if we are moving in the road of obedience, walking in the way of obedience, we are in the way where God protects and cares for His own.

John the Baptist had asked a very important question. He asked this question of Jesus: "Are you the Coming One, or should we look for another?" That was the question on the lips of everyone; that was the question on the lips of the disciples, on the lips of the crowds. Some thought He was Elijah, some thought He was Jeremiah, some thought He was one of the prophets. Everyone was in the process of evaluating who this Jesus was. "Are you the Coming One, or are we still looking for that One?" John articulated that for everyone.

For two years, Jesus had been demonstrating that He was that Coming One, that Prophet, that Messiah, that Christ, that Son of God, that King with a Kingdom. For two years, He had been demonstrating that with great power, mighty works, and mighty words. In the last even that we just looked at, which ended in verse 21, He had brought great anticipation to culmination, because He fed about 25,000-30,000 people, and that is probably conservative. He had created food for them all. It was a monumental, vast, far-reaching, sweeping miracle to create food. There were thousands of eye-witnesses to it, and as a result of that particular miracle, He reached a crescendo of popularity.

This was the climax of the popularity of Jesus. For two years, His ministry had been on the rise and He had been proclaiming, healing, casting out demons. Then, in the later part, He was joined by the disciples who also began to proclaim, and cast out demons, and to heal. The rising excitement, the fever pitch, the waves became billows. Irresistible impulses began to seize the multitude as they saw the power and wisdom of this individual. Then, when He was able to feed them with food He created from His own bare hands, seemingly unaided in any way, and they were eye-witnesses to it, and could taste it, they were convinced.

You have at this juncture the pinnacle of Jesus' popularity and John 6:14-15 says that they got together and were going to make Him the King. The disciples must have thought, "That's it. We've done our job. We've accomplished it. They see that He is the King, and they're going to make Him the King." Immediately at that juncture, when their hopes had reached the highest point, and it all looked like it was going to fall in their laps, I mean, they knew when the Messiah came, He would feed the multitude, and He had done it. It was, in their minds, very likely the door kicking open to the Kingdom. The people were saying, "We want Him to be the King!"

At that moment, He sent the disciples away, He sent the crowd away, and went into a mountain by Himself. In their little rowboat, as they were pushing their way out to sea, they must have been unbelievably disillusioned and disappointed trying to figure out how He could spend two years getting to this point, but when it was within His grasp, to send it away.

You see, Jesus didn't want their shallow commitment or minimal devotion. The crowd had political ends, and self-indulgent ends; all they could think about was free food without labor. The next morning, they showed up again for breakfast. Jesus said to them, "You seek Me not because you care about Me or what I say, but because you want another free meal."

Life for most people, in those days, consisted of trying to get enough to get the next meal. If they could have free food, that's the kind of king they wanted. With the power that He had, He could overthrow the Herodians and Romans, give them freedom from bondage, heal all their diseases, cast out all their demons, and create food for them; they were thinking, "This is the Kingdom!" But Jesus did not respond.

In fact, the next morning, He says to them, "You didn't come after Me because you really cared, but because you wanted a free meal. Let Me tell you, the only meal you're going to get out of Me is that you're going to have to eat My flesh and drink My blood. You're going to get Me on My terms; you'll have to take all of Me as your Lord and Master and Savior, and you'll come on My terms." And they left. They didn't want that; they were shallow, thorny soil, only in it for what they could get out of it. When they saw there was no more to get, they were gone. When He gave them a lecture on theology, they split. But the disciples didn't leave.

At that point, in John 6, Jesus said to them, "Will you also go away?" Peter said, "To whom shall we go? Only You have the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The multitude left, but they stayed. They said, "We're sure."

How did they get so sure? Because of what happened in this passage. He refused the Kingdom the people offered Him. His Kingdom was not of this world, according to John 18:36. His Kingdom was not the kind of kingdom men wanted. The fact of the matter is, His Kingdom was in a little, frail boat in the middle of a storm on the sea. That's where the seeds of His Kingdom were, and it wasn't the kind of kingdom that men thought. When He sent the crowd away, and dealt with that little group of disciples in a boat, He was building His Kingdom in His way, for they would become the rulers of the Kingdom. So we see Him revealing Himself to them. The whole import of this passage, then, is to bring the disciples to the place where they really understand.

They went away from that shore disillusioned, and no doubt were asking the question, "Is He really a king? Is this really the King?" They needed a regal, royal display. "Is He the Messiah, the Lord, the

One we thought?" They needed evidence, and boy, do they get it.

Look at verse 22. "Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.'"

Oh, what a great story, a great account, a great record, and a great verification of Christ. I want you to notice five aspects of the divine nature manifest in this event. We'll just look at the first three today, because they are worth developing. Next time, we'll finish. They worshiped Him, first of all, because they knew He was the Son of God on the basis of divine authority. It is just kind of implied there, but in verse 22, it tells us, "Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away."

This indicative of the fact that Jesus controlled everything. He controlled those who were His own, and those who were not. He controlled the disciples who did not want to leave Him, who did not want to leave the moment, and the excitement, and the great thrust of that effort to make Him king. They were captivated by the whole thing, but He controlled them. The mob was going to kidnap Him and force Him to be a king, but He controlled them too, as well as the wind and the waves and the sea and their thinking and their faith and everything else that He controlled. Jesus had authority over everyone and everything, and it comes through to us clearly in this story, as well as in others.

For example, if you look at the gospel record and see again and again the authority of Jesus Christ manifest, you can conclude only that Jesus Christ had authority like no other. In John 5, He said that He had authority to judge all men, and that authority was given to Him by the Father. So He had authority over time and eternity, over life and death, over destiny.

In Mark 1:27, the people asked, "With what authority does He command even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him?" Not only did He have authority over life and death, time and eternity, Heaven, Hell, and destiny, but He has authority over the supernatural world, and over fallen angels. He, at His crucifixion, said that if He had so chosen, He could have called a legion of holy angels to His aid. He

not only has authority over the fallen angels, but over the holy angels.

In Matthew 7:29, the people who listened to the Sermon on the Mount said He taught as one having authority; He had authority over the minds of men. When the Jews in Mark 11 came to Him and challenged Him, asking, "By what authority do you do these things?" He said, "If you answer My question, I'll answer your question. Was John the Baptist of God or not?" It says that they thought among themselves and said, "If we say he was of God, then He will ask why we didn't believe him. If we say he was not of God, the people will trample us because they all believe he was a prophet." So they said to Jesus, "We cannot tell." And Jesus said to them, "Neither am I going to tell you by what authority I do these things." Literally translated, that means, "None of your business. You're not interested in My Kingdom; its privy secrets are not yours."

He had authority, and they all knew it. He transmitted that authority, according to Luke 9:1, to His disciples, and they went out in His authority. We see it with Peter and John in the temple, when they healed the man who was begging there. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." There, he exercised that authority granted to him by Christ.

The sum of it all comes in Matthew 28:18, where Jesus says, "All authority is given to Me in Heaven and in Earth." He had authority. What is authority? If I were defining authority, I think I would define it as ruling, sovereign control. He was in control of everything. He called all the shots, made all the decisions about everything. He commanded angels, holy and fallen; He commanded men, redeemed and unredeemed. He commanded them in time and eternity, in Hell and Heaven. He determines their destiny. He controls nature. He creates whenever He will create; He stops the storm whenever He will stop the storm, and causes the wind and causes it to cease. He can walk on water; He has authority. That becomes clear to us in this passage.

Go back to verse 22. It says that immediately after they had wanted to make Him king after He had fed them, "Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side." He sends the disciples away first; they were no doubt delighted with the desire of the crowd, and surely wanted the kingdom to come. They had been waiting a long time for this, and were ready to get their rank, to get their robes and sit as the hot shots in the kingdom.

They had all of this anticipation. They had suffered for two years in their wanderings and travelings, with the antagonism and hostility of the political and religious leaders, and now, when they saw the crowd reach this fever pitch, they could see it coming. They could see the kingdom beginning to open, and they were really excited. The Lord knew this was difficult for them, so He just sent them away and removed the temptation. Fully aware of their weakness, and their susceptibility to the political plans of the crowd, to the confusion that they must already have had, and certainly Judas, if no other, would have fostered this within their midst, He said, "Go to the other side."

They were on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee and needed to go across the northern end to Capernaum. Mark tells us that they were headed to Bethsaida, John says that they were headed to Capernaum; they were both side by side, Bethsaida being a suburb of Capernaum. So it just means they were going in that general direction in a short trip across one little corner of the Sea of Galilee, something they were familiar with and had done many, many times. But they didn't want to go, and that's why the Bible says He made them.

I'm sure they put up a fight, certainly because they didn't want to leave the action of the moment, secondly because they didn't want to leave the Lord, and thirdly, they probably saw the storm starting. They didn't want to go, but He sent them anyway, and that's how it is when you're in authority. I love the fact that they went anyway. What's amazing is it says later on, when they hit the storm, the wind was contrary to them. I guess any normal person would say, "Let's not fight it. Let's turn around, and it will blow us back to the other shore." But not them; when the Lord said, "Point your bow to Capernaum," they did it. They fought it all the way even though they weren't making any headway; they continued in the path of obedience to the authority of Christ, His sovereign authority.

Even the wild-eyed mob couldn't resist His authority; it says in verse 22 that after He had sent the disciples away, He would send the multitude away. Verse 23 says that after He had sent the multitude away, He went to pray privately. He sent the whole crowd away! They were going to kidnap Him; they were at a fever-pitch, and He had total control over them, and total authority. He sent them all away.

You say, "Where did they go?" They went all over the place and went to sleep, thousands of them, sleeping all over the hillsides and wherever they could sleep in the area of Bethsaida Julia, and that hillside where He had fed them dinner. He just sent them away, and they went to sleep. How do we know they went to sleep? Because they woke up the next morning, and when they woke up, they were all in the same vicinity according to John 6, and they said, "It's breakfast time. Where's Jesus?" but He wasn't there. They knew a good thing when they saw it.

That's when He gave them a lecture about how the only other meal they were going to get was His flesh and blood. They said, "Forget it," and from then on, the popularity of Jesus started going down. He taught a little in the synagogue, and did some healing, but eventually, He began to move away, and His popularity waned, and He spent more and more time with the disciples and less and less time with the crowds. This is that peak from which things begin to descend to His crucifixion.

He sent them away; He shot their dreams to pieces because He would not be made a political leader on their terms. Verse 23 says, "He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there." The hope of any rest and quiet was gone, the hope of any debriefing with the disciples was gone; the miracle of that day had only added to the excitement, augmented the

pressure and the danger from those who would want to destroy Him, only added pressure to the popularity that would have wanted to make Him an illegitimate King.

I believe, beloved, that that was a temptation of Christ very much like the third aspect of Satan's temptation in Matthew 4, when Satan showed Him the kingdoms of the world and said, "I'll give you the kingdoms of the world if You will bow down to me." I think this is a very similar situation, and that this comes as a temptation.

What does Christ want but to be king? Here He can bypass the Cross; the people are willing to push Him into Jerusalem, sweeping down in the Passover season, and what a time! They're all going to be there at the Passover to raise up the Messiah. With His power, He knocks off the Herods, the Romans, brings them freedom, provides the kingdom elements. I believe this came to Him as a temptation along the line of that temptation which came when Satan had Him out in the devastation. But He gained the victory, and I think He tasted the sweetness of the fruit of that victory in the fellowship and communion with the Father that He enjoyed in that mountain in prayer.

It was a familiar place to be - in the presence of the Father. He went there very often at night to find rest for His soul, and to find that great fellowship for which He longed as He expressed the longing in John 17, saying, "How much do I want to be restored to that which We knew before the incarnation," that sweet communion with the Father.

Notice it says in verse 23 that it was evening. This would be, by Jewish definition, the second evening. The first evening was from 3-6, and the second evening was from 6-9. From 3-6, the first evening, He had fed them. From 6-9, we're in the second evening, and it's coming toward darkness. As it grows dark, He is alone in the mountain, and He is praying. Always remember that if He needed to pray, how much more do I need to pray!

You ask yourself, "For whom does He pray?" All you need for an answer is John 17, which says that after He prayed on His own behalf and exalted the Father in His prayer, He then spent most of the time praying for His own, and I see Him there interceding for His own, praying for His disciples, that they will overcome with victory the same temptation He had just overcome, not to follow the mood of the mob, or the shallow popularity. I believe He prayed for them.

In Luke 22:31, He said to Peter, "Satan has desired to have you, Peter, but I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail." Isn't that a comforting thing? That is the High Priestly work of Christ. Right now, this moment, at the throne of the Father, He prays for you and for me and He prays with the authority of God. What a great confidence!

So we see the authority of Christ here; we see His authority as He commands the multitude, as He commands the disciples, as He calls upon the Father's protecting care for His own. No wonder they



worshiped when they understood His authority; so should we.

Secondly, we see here revealed His divine knowledge. I love this. Verse 24. Meanwhile, we leave the mountain and go back to the sea, the Lake of Gennesaret, the Sea of Galilee. The boat is in the middle of the sea. John's gospel says 25-30 stadia, or furlongs, out into the sea, which is about an eighth of a mile, and puts them somewhere between 3-4 miles into the sea. The trip from where they were on the shore at Bethsaida Julia across to Capernaum and Bethsaida West couldn't have been more than four and a half miles; we don't know exactly, because we don't know the exact spot they were in, but it was at most four and a half miles.

Instead of going along that little cut on the north shore, they find themselves three or four miles out into the middle, and it's only seven or eight miles across, so they're pretty well in the middle. They are being tossed with the waves, and the wind is contrary.

You have to love these guys, because they're doing their best to be obedient, aren't they? They are pushing that bow in the right direction, confused, disillusioned, disappointed, upset, questioning, but they keep the bow pointed to the west. They left after the meal was served in the first evening, and are trying to navigate four miles. Instead, they are in the middle of the lake, afraid they're going to drown.

Mark adds that they were distressed in their rowing. Notice the word 'tossed' in verse 24; it is the word translated in Matthew 8 as 'tormented.' It means 'to test by torture.' They were being tortured for their lives. John tells us that not only was the wind contrary, but John 6:18 says it was a fierce wind. So they are being tormented; it is a bad night. They are trying to be obedient, but they're not having much success. It is dark and gloomy, the storm is violent, the water is angry, and worst of all, no Jesus.

The last time they got in a storm like this, Jesus was in the back of the boat and all they had to do was wake Him up and have Him stop the storm, which He did. But He isn't here. To make it even worse, He can't get there because they took the only boat. John tells us in John 6 that the next morning when the multitude got up, they saw there was no other boat.

So they had taken the only boat, and they had no Jesus and know that Jesus isn't going to come, because there isn't any way to get there. But all the while, they're in the middle of the sea, going through all this trauma, and He's up on the hill praying for them. It is a marvelous picture of the High Priestly intercessory work of Christ, isn't it? While His own are down being buffeted, battered, tormented, tortured, tossed by the storm, He is quietly and calmly in the Father's presence on their behalf. They don't know it, but they're secure. For five or six hours, they've been at it, trying to go four miles, with no success. But isn't it comforting to know that He knows? He knows.

Verse 25. "In the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea." I like that; no hoopla. It just says He went walking on the sea, just like you would take a walk on the sea. It is so matter of fact that it is almost overpowering. But for Him, it wasn't any big deal; He who made the sea could walk on the sea if He chose. So He came walking on the sea.

He knew where to walk, by the way; He knew right where they were, exactly where they were. It didn't matter that He couldn't see them. That is His divine knowledge - He knows everything. Darkness is no barrier. Remember what I read you in the beginning of the service? Psalm 139 says that the night and the day are the same to Him. When you say, "The darkness hides me," the darkness will be as the light. Darkness is no barrier, distance is no barrier to the knowledge of the Son of God. He knows where we are, our distress, our circumstance, and He knows how to get to us.

This happened during the fourth watch of the night. At night, when you were a sailor, someone kept watch always. They divided the watch into four parts, four shifts, with one man for each watch. The first watch was 6-9 in the evening; the second watch was 9-12; the third watch was 12-3; and the fourth watch was 3-6, the morning watch. They had been at this all night, and they are in great anxiety and fear.

He waits a long time until He comes; that is all part of the lesson. Do you realize that if you never have a storm, you'd never know that He can handle a storm? You never really understand the power of God in your behalf until you are strung out to the extremity. That is part of it. Why do you think our Lord didn't go to Martha and Mary until Lazarus was so dead that he stunk? Because it was in the impossibility of that extremity that they would see His power. He could have just turned around on the top of the mountain and hushed the storm, or made sure it never started. But He ran them out to their extremities so that they would learn that in that extremity, He was there, and He knew and understood.

He does know. He knows everything; He knows your sitting down and your rising up, as I read this morning. He knows everything there is to know about you - where you are, what your needs are. He has known you from your womb. If you ascend to Heaven, He is there; if you make your bed in Sheol, He is there. If you take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, there will His hand lead you and His right hand will hold you up. It doesn't matter where you are, He knows, because He knows everything.

In Exodus 3:7, there is a wonderful verse. It says, "The LORD said: 'I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.'" He said, "I know where they are, what they're enduring, how difficult it is, and I will come and deliver them."

Listen to Genesis 22. Abraham has Isaac on the altar, in whom all of his hope resides, and Abraham lifts his knife in the air to plunge it into the heart of Isaac to kill him. At the moment he starts to plunge that knife, the angel of the Lord says, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'" The angel says, "Abraham, the test is over; you passed. Hold it!"

Have you ever thought, "What would happen if God was just a few minutes late?" No, He knows the extremity, where you are, what the storm is like, what your boat is. When it is time, and you're at the end of the extremity, He'll be there. And the next time, you'll know that, right? That's how He teaches, and that's what He was teaching them.

He not only came in the storm, but He came on the storm. He uses the very trial as His footpath. The howling wind, the crashing waves, they don't affect Him. In fact, as He is walking on the water, I can see the water flattening out and becoming placid; I don't even think He got wet. It says He came toward them. Why? Because they had needs, and were at the end of their rope. They were in the extremity. He couldn't see them from the mountain, or in the dark, stormy night, but He knew exactly where they were.

You can't hide from Him. Proverbs 15:3 has a wonderful, encouraging word about that. It says, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place." In Hebrews 4:13 says, "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest," isn't that good? We have a High Priest who knows every single thing about us; what a comforting thought.

He says to the disciples, "You don't need to fear anything. I even know the number of hairs on your head." That means He has to keep counting every day, because that changes. He said, "I know when a sparrow falls," and the Greek word means 'to hop.' He doesn't just know when they die, but every time one hops. Jesus knew because He was God. In Matthew 6:32, He said, "Your Father knows you have need of all these things." God knows. You're never out of His knowledge, never away from His omniscience.

It says in Matthew 6:6, "The Father who sees in secret." Remember Jesus' introduction to Nathaniel? "Nathaniel, I saw you before I saw you, when you were sitting under that tree." In John 2, no one needs to tell Him what is in the heart of man; He knows what is in the heart of man. Revelation tells us that He has eyes that are piercing, and that see everything. The disciples learned that He knew right where they were. He didn't go roaming around the sea saying, "Guys, where are you?" He went right to them.

That brings us to a third revelation of His divine nature, which I'll call divine protection; you could call it divine care. We have seen His omniscience, His authority, and now His care and protection. "When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!'" The Greek word means a phantom, apparition, phantasm. "And they cried out in fear."

By the way, Mark adds that they all saw Him; this isn't one guy who thought he saw a UFO go by. They all saw Him. There wasn't any deception here; they all saw Him and stared at Him, and it was all very clear. I have to make that point because there are those liberals who want to tell us that they just *thought* they saw Him. They saw Him. They didn't know what it was, but they knew they saw Him, whoever He was.

In John 6:19, John says He came near their boat, and of course, at that point, they are terror-stricken. I mean, it was bad enough to be in the situation they were in in the middle of the storm. It was still, perhaps, the dark before the dawn. They were panicked, weary, terribly disillusioned and disappointed. There was a sense of hopelessness, not only in their present circumstance but in their extended circumstance of what their life meant. To add to all of that, here comes someone walking on the water. They just can't handle it. Some commentators say that Jesus was just walking along the shore by the water, that's all. That's the precise reason John said they were 3-4 four miles out in the middle; he was absolutely walking on the water.

In verse 26, it says they were troubled. The noun form of that verb is tarache, and I remembered an old word that I heard in a psychology class once - ataraxia. I looked it up in the dictionary, and sure enough, it was a word that I legitimately remembered. Ataraxia means to be free from anxiety, emotional disturbance, trouble, and to have tranquility. Taraxia means trouble, upheaval, to shake up, to agitate, to trouble. A figurative use is to upset, or throw into a state of panic or alarm. That is the use of it here; they were in a state of panic. They were horrified having seen this phantasm, this apparition.

Mark, who records this, adds another interesting note. He says that He would have appeared to have passed by their boat. I mean, He was just walking along on the water, like it was normal, and then just strolling past the boat, as one would walk down the sidewalk, waving at folks. It looked as if He would have passed by, and we have to ask why He would do that. It reminded me of Luke 24:28, where Jesus had walked on the road to Emmaus, and it appeared He would have continued and just gone on, but they asked Him to stay, and come with them. So then He revealed Himself to them.

The Lord will always be there, but wants to illicit from the heart of the one in need the cry. He responds to the cry. He always stops for the ones who call, and they screamed, "It is a ghost!" They were in a state of panic, crying out alright. So He stopped. Mark says He talked with them, and Matthew says what we read. Verse 27. "But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good

cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And they would have known His voice. He's saying, "Stop fearing." Isn't that good? "I'm here; take heart."

'Be of good cheer' is an English colloquialism that means to take courage, take heart, don't be afraid. You see, God is the protector of His people; oh what a great truth! The storm never gets so extreme that He doesn't know where we are, or that He can't walk on the water. He will protect His own. He never comes too late.

This is the lesson for the Twelve, and for us. There is no reason for fear in your life as a Christian. None at all. There is no reason to have anxiety or be upset no matter how severe the storm, or how hopeless it looks. He just comes along and so matter-of-factly says, "Cheer up! I'm here." He doesn't give them some great speech, or a great theological description, or explain to them how you can walk on water. This is not to teach the disciples how to walk on water; none of them ever did. After this incident, no one in the Bible ever walked on water.

People today who claim to be able to do miracles don't do well on this one either. This is not to teach people how to walk on water; this is to teach people who can't walk on water that God can. It is to teach that in the extremities, you don't need to fear because He is there, and He will respond to your needs.

We didn't get to Peter, and we have to know about how he did it and sank. But in closing, in Acts 27, Paul was on a ship in the sea, and the ship was being tossed by a storm, and the crew had jettisoned the cargo, throwing out everything they didn't need so they could keep the ship afloat. They threw out the tackle, and everything else. They were all fearing for their lives, sure they'd be tossed onto the rocks and destroyed, and an angel came to Paul in the middle of the night.

Paul is perfectly at peace; he just keeps reminding them they shouldn't have left the last port. Easy for him to say, right? The angel says, "Paul, I have a word from God. Everyone on the ship is OK. They'll be safe. Would you please make that announcement?" So the next morning, Paul says, "I have an announcement. We'll all be safe, for an angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, came to me in the night and said that God is going to preserve all of us. We'll lose the ship, but we'll all be saved. Therefore, be of good cheer." That is very hard to do, because Paul was a human. But it's easier to do when you see Jesus walking on the water, saying, "Don't worry about this storm. I'm here." Then Peter wanted to test and make sure, but we'll see that next time. Let's bow in prayer.

Just using this as an illustration - life is stormy; we know that. It is painful, there are hurts, wounds, some of us suffer more than others, though all of us suffer to some degree. The great confidence of this passage is that you're never away from the authority, knowledge, or protective care of the Savior. Never. The storm is never so severe, the night is never so black, the boat is never so frail that He is not there; that is our confidence.

That is what He wanted to teach them. There would be a lot of storms in their lives, a lot of frail ships in their lives and in the lives of those who would follow in their path, and they needed to know that God walks on water. He comes to us in the storm, and makes the storm His very path. We need to know that because that takes away our fear. What is to fear? He is either in the mountain interceding with the Father on our behalf, or He is on the sea, walking to us. Either way, we are secure. We are secure in His prayers, in His power, His protection. That is a great confidence.

These disciples saw divine authority, divine power expressed as He controlled people, destiny, elements; they saw divine knowledge, and they knew He knew where they were. They saw divine care and protection, and they said, "Truly, You are the Son of God," and they worshiped Him. That is the right response. He didn't want them to think of Him as a political leader but as the God of the universe who controlled everything. They saw it. I hope you do also. He is the same Christ; He still has authority, knowledge, and protecting care on behalf of His own.

If you've never invited Christ to be your Savior, you don't have that promise of His care, but you can if you'll open your heart to Him today. If you're a Christian, you have no cause for fear, but only faith. He is there, and He is able.

Father, thank You for showing us again the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Thank You that we, with these dear disciples, with all of our weakness and desire to see the show, to see the Kingdom in all of its glory, with all of our hunger to see the miraculous, the wonder, help us to learn that we really see more about You in the storm, in the extremities, in the place where we have no resource, because there, You come to lift us up. Father, we pray that we might trust You in the hardest times, and learning, trust You more next time, and give You glory and worship You as the Son of God.

Bring to the prayer room those You desire to come; gather us again tonight with great anticipation for the privilege of studying Your precious Word, fellowshiping with Your Spirit and Your people. We give You ourselves and this day to accomplish Your purpose; in Christ's name, Amen.

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