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

Jesus Walks on Water
Scripture: Mark 6:45-56
Code: 41-31

For this morning, we come to the final section in the sixth chapter of Mark's gospel, the last section beginning in verse 45 and running to the end of the chapter. As you know, we're endeavoring to move through Mark at a little more rapid rate than we have some of the other gospels through the years. That is consistent, I think, with Mark's intent. His favorite word is the word "immediately," so in due respect to the Holy Spirit who inspired Mark to use "immediately" repeatedly, we are trying to be rather immediate in the way we move through Mark. We want to do that but not by sacrificing any of the truth, not by sacrificing the message or anything the Holy Spirit has intended for us. It's a delight and a joy for us to go through this wonderful history of the Son of God. Mark launches his gospel by saying, "This is the beginning of the gospel of God's Son," and that's what it's about. Everything in it is designed to give us all the evidence we could possibly need to prove that Jesus is God in human flesh, God the Son, so that every paragraph directs its attention at the person of Jesus Christ. That is consistent with all of the gospels and that certainly is Mark's great intention that we would see Christ in all His majesty and glory.

Now in our last message a week ago, we looked at verses 33 to 44, the feeding of the five thousand as it is known. That really is a misnomer, it is really a feeding of the 25 thousand, Matthews adds plus women, plus children, not just men. We can easily estimate 25 thousand people were fed by Jesus when there was no food, so He created enough food, not just to feed them minimally, but to make them all literally gorged, is the Greek word that is used, and there were twelve baskets left over to feed the Twelve Apostles.

That's the power of it and that's the precision of it. The miracle of the feeding of this massive crowd, creating food, is really the highpoint of the Galilean ministry. It is the most...it is the most massive miracle. It involves more people than any other miracle that our Lord did. There were times when thousands and tens of thousands of people witnessed miracles that were performed in regard to individuals, but there is no miracle that comes to this degree of participation.

It is the peak of power. It is the climactic power of Jesus demonstrated to an extent never before seen. It is also the peak of His popularity. He's two years into His ministry, over a year of ministry in Galilee, He has basically gone through Galilee twice, He's now gone through, or starting to go through Galilee a third time. He has multiplied Himself by empowering the Twelve Apostles to preach His message and to do His miracles so there is an explosion on this third tour through Galilee, the power of Jesus is seen and experienced over and over again in the 200-plus towns and villages that

are stretched across that densely populated small region that we know as Galilee.

The enthusiasm for Jesus reaches its fever pitch after the miracle of the feeding of this massive crowd. And again, preliminary to that, there were weeks and months of the multiplied ministry of miracles and preaching with delegated power that were accomplished by the Apostles. So up to that point, Jesus had done it all Himself. He had to be there for every miracle and every sermon, and then it exploded twelve times in recent weeks and months. And so the miracle power of our Lord has covered Galilee and this miracle is the one that peaks up the power to its height. The people become enthusiastic. How enthusiastic are they? John records this miracle, as do Matthew, Mark and Luke, and by the way, there are only two miracles recorded by all four writers, one is the resurrection and the other is this one, this pinnacle miracle in Galilee.

But John says, after He had done the miracle, the people wanted to take Him and make Him a king, John 6 verses 14 and 15. They were ready to start a revolt, revolution, a rebellion. Jesus would be their leader. They were sure of His amazing, miraculous power. They knew now that He would not only heal their bodies, deliver them from disease, raise their dead, but He would be the source of permanent food supply. And so, they were ready to make Him a king. They were certainly ready to have Him overthrow Herod and all the other petty Herodians who had pieces of Israel over which they ruled under the allowances of Rome. They were ready to take on Rome itself with Jesus as their leader. This was the crowd's response to the massive nature of this miracle and what it demonstrated about His power to provide for them.

Jesus, however, had no plan to be the leader of a revolution, no plan to be the leader of a rebellion, no plan to be the leader or author of a coup. He had not come to kill, He had come to die. The next time He comes, He comes to kill. The next time He comes, He comes as the Judge. The next time He comes in the glory of the Second Coming, He will slaughter the godless of the world and He will establish His Kingdom of righteousness. He comes the second time to kill, He comes the first time to die. He had no political agenda. He had no economic agenda. He had no social agenda. He had no moral agenda. He only had a spiritual agenda. He was coming in order to offer salvation. He would be a king but He would be a spiritual king over the hearts of those who put their faith in Him. One day He will be the King of the world, He will reign for a thousand years on Earth, as Revelation 20 tells us. At that time He will fulfill all earthly Kingdom promises given to Israel, given to David and Abraham in all the covenants and reiterated in the New Testament. He will reign over the whole Earth. But this time His Kingdom is not a temporal Kingdom, it is a spiritual Kingdom.

The people, however, wanted only physical things. They wanted only those things which were momentary and temporal. They were eager to receive His power over demons, disease, and death. His power to create food was even more attractive to them. But He saw the crowd for what the crowd was. He saw in the relentless and eager crowds no true worship, no heart repentance, no willingness to abandon an apostate religion, their sense of self-righteousness. They wanted their religion. They

loved their self-righteousness. They just wanted the things that Jesus could provide them. They were a...they were a ready group for the prosperity gospel, wanted nothing more even as people are today. They were the thrill seekers. They wanted to use Him in a bloody revolution, if they could. But He would have none of it.

On the very next day, just hours after this event which happened late in the evening on a spring night, the very next day in the morning, maybe twelve hours later, they meet with Jesus again, this same crowd that has been fed on this evening and they want breakfast. They think the welfare state has been inaugurated. They now have a sense of entitlement and He's going to provide endless food for them.

Instead, He refuses to give them breakfast and gives them a sermon, and in the sermon, we know it as The Sermon on the Bread of Life, He says, "I didn't come to feed your bodies, I came to be the bread for your souls. And if you eat of this bread, you will never hunger." I came to satisfy the hunger of your hearts, the hunger of your souls. I didn't...I didn't come to just simply fix your temporal condition, I came to give you eternal life. He preached that great sermon, it's recorded in John 6 right after John's account of the feeding of the multitude, verses 22 to 59. It's a long sermon. And He says to them, in effect, "I'm not going to lead your rebellion, I'm not going to be in charge of your coup. I'm not here to feed your bodies. I'm here to demonstrate My deity by showing you the power to do these things. But I'm here to feed your souls."

Well, they weren't interested in that. They were not interested in that at all. And so after He finishes His sermon, there's a response recorded in John chapter 6, a most interesting response. We find it in verse 66. "As a result of this, many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore."

Now the crowd was made up of people who were just there in the crowd. We know they left because they never had a commitment to Christ to begin with. But there were also many in the crowd who could be classified as *mathetes*, that's the word for disciple, learners, students. They were past the point of just the miracles. Supposedly they were there to learn, to follow like somebody would a rabbi who had become his mentor or his teacher. But even they had such crass motivation and intention for their learning. They too tied it to earthly things and so even those who were the *mathetes*, the students, the learners, the disciples abandon Him at that point. "If You're not going to give us the temporal Kingdom we want, if You're not going to give us the food we need on a daily basis, if You're not going to lead our rebellion, we're not really interested." And many, it says, "Many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore."

So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Hum...are they the only ones left?" He said to the Twelve, as if they were the ones remaining, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"

Now you have to understand something, folks. They had all the same expectations that the crowd had. They had all the same expectations the crowd had. Did they want an earthly Kingdom? Absolutely. They wanted to sit on the right hand and the left hand of Jesus in that Kingdom. Did they expect that Jesus would overthrow the petty rulers and even Rome in its occupation of Israel? Probably. Were they interested in the here and now? Absolutely. Did they not say, “Even after the Resurrection, will You at this time bring the Kingdom to us?” And Jesus had to say, “It’s not for you to know when that’s going to happen, but it’s not now.” They had the same interests. They had basically become subject to the same messianic construct that existed in the thinking of all the people in Israel, that the Messiah would come, be a military leader, overthrow their enemies and set up a welfare state, fulfill all the promises to Abraham and David in those covenants and they would flourish as a nation under the full blessing of God.

So, Jesus says to them, “You’ve had some of the same hopes. Do you want to go away?” Simon Peter, and this is the first time in the gospel accounts that Simon rises out of the group to speak and virtually becomes the spokesman from here on for all of them. “On behalf of them all, Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go?’” So we know he speaks for all of them. “‘To whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.’”

God had done a work in their heart and while the others were disappointed in the words of eternal life that Jesus spoke, they believed those words. They embraced those words. This is where they begin to understand that this is about eternal life, not earthly life.

And they go beyond that. “‘We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.’” Wow! This is the first great open confession of the Twelve. They said, “We’re not going anywhere. We believe...we believe in You....we believe You are the Holy One of God....we believe that You have come to provide eternal life.”

Now this is a monumental moment...monumental moment. The question comes up at this point, What...what convinced them? Why don’t they just disappear with the crowd? Why are they still there? After all, they too are disciples, students, learners. They have been called messengers or apostles or sent ones and they’re in training for that. They just had their first short-term effort at it. But then again, they have the same kinds of attitudes that the others have, why...why didn’t they leave?

You say, “Well, maybe it was the miracle of the feeding of the thousands that did it.” Go back to Mark 6...go back to Mark 6, let me show you something. Verse 52, “For they...meaning the Twelve...had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves and their heart was hardened.” They didn’t gain anything out of that. They didn’t connect the dots at all.

You find that hard to believe, that you could watch somebody create food out of nothing? Bread from grain that never grew, and fish that were dead and had never lived and never swam? And enough to feed thousands and thousands of people?

But that wasn't it. That wasn't enough. They didn't learn anything from it. They didn't gain any insight from it. They're blockheads, brain dead. So it's not that. The crowd saw that. What...what in the world made the difference?

Well what made the difference is the text that we have before us this morning. Let's look at Mark 6 starting at verse 45. Here's what made the difference. "And they were the only ones who experienced it." Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida...it means fish house...the name of that little town nearby where the feeding took place. Go to the other side to Bethsaida while He Himself was sending the crowd away. And bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray. And when it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea and He was alone on the land. Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them at about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them walking on the sea and He intended to pass by them. And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost and screamed for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, 'Take courage, it is I. Do not be afraid.' Then He got into the boat with them and the wind stopped and they were utterly astonished for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves and their heart was hardened. When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. When they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick to the place they heard He was."

"And then a summary of His Galilean ministry wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the marketplaces and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak and as many as touched it were being cured."

You have to understand that the Kingdom at this point, as we look at it here, the Kingdom at this point is all in one little boat. This is not very impressive. This Kingdom is not at all impressive. It is a poor Kingdom by any human estimate. A wooden boat in the middle of a storm and the vice regents and future rulers and proclaimers of this King and His Kingdom can't control the boat. This is a very dangerous moment for the Kingdom. Nazareth has rejected Him. Galilee has rejected Him. Herod wants to kill Him. The Pharisees and scribes want to kill Him. The leaders in Jerusalem want to kill Him. And now, even those who are His Apostles, first generation of gospel preachers, the ones who will rule over the twelve tribes of Israel. These men are in a dire situation. Their rescue is essential and so is their complete devotion to Him. Future hope for gospel preaching depends on their survival and it depends on their faith. And apparently what they experienced that night did it. The feeding didn't do it, this did. That night they went from fear to faith. That night they went from confusion to

confession. That night they went from wondering to worshiping.

Well let's not get ahead of ourselves. Let's go to the story. There are three scenes here. First, our Lord's intercession with the Father; second, our Lord's protection for the Twelve; thirdly, our Lord's compassion for the crowds. In each case, the Lord is at center stage, as He should be.

Let's begin with the first scene which is the scene in which we see the Lord's intercession with the Father. Verse 45, "Immediately...there's that word again...Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida." Immediately, that is after the miracle of creation, creation of food, immediately Jesus made His disciples leave.

Why? They're easily caught up in the euphoria of this potential rebellion. They're weak and they are susceptible to the crowd's passion and zeal. They've been waiting a couple of years for this to happen, certainly Judas wanted this more than anything else. In fact, he wanted this only and nothing else. They have such susceptibility to this passion and zeal of the crowd that Jesus knows they need to get out of there. So He made them go. Matthew 14:22, same thing, it uses the word *anankazo* which means to force, to insist, to demand. They didn't have a choice and that verb being used indicates that this wasn't their will, this was His will. They would have been glad to stay and let this euphoria and this coup begin to gather momentum. But they didn't have a choice. Jesus made them get into the boat...it's always THE boat, isn't it? The definite article is always there. They've got a certain boat that they have kind of made their own. And He says, "You need," they were now on the north end, east side of Galilee where the miracle happened, near the town of Bethsaida. And Jesus says, "Get into the boat and go ahead to the other side toward Bethsaida." John says that He said, "Go to Capernaum." Well that is not a contradiction because wherever they were on the east side, Capernaum was on the west side and Bethsaida was somewhere along the path.

Now remember, it is night. It is dark. They would be rowing and so they would simply row along the shoreline. The best way to understand it is in the direction of nearby Bethsaida and then on the way all the way over to Capernaum. It was only a four-mile journey, as we know, to get from where they were at the feeding, over to Capernaum by water.

Now some have suggested that there was another Bethsaida and what He is saying is you need to go to the Bethsaida that's on the other side of the lake. We don't have any evidence that there's another Bethsaida at all. It does mean "fish house" and there might have been a lot of fish houses around the lake cause fishing was the primary industry. But no one has ever been able to find another Bethsaida, so it's better to stick with the one we know is there, the one where the Apostles were born, the one that was cursed because of its exposure to the miracles, especially the one of the feeding of the thousands. So we're talking about the Bethsaida that is north and east. So they're sent on their way in the direction of Bethsaida and then past Bethsaida to Capernaum.

Now, “After sending them away, He Himself was sending the crowd away.” That would not be an easy task. You’ve got 20-25 thousand people with high levels of expectation. Remember now, they’re ready to make Him a King. This has torn through the crowd, this notion that this is the one who can be our King, look what He can do for us. And yet He Himself sent them away. This is much like cleansing the temple at the beginning of His ministry, or cleansing the temple at the end of His ministry. He exercises a kind of authority that just dissipates a crowd. They just leave. They just dissolve into the dusk of that spring night.

They didn’t go very far. It was night and they need to sleep. So they slept wherever. Again it’s spring around the Galilee, lovely place to sleep at night. Maybe they found places here and there where they could go, some perhaps to their homes, but they slept. And in the morning, according to John 6, they wake up and in verse 22 we find they come right back to the place where the feeding took place. “The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw there was no other small boat there except one and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat but that His disciples had gone away alone.” They didn’t know that. The disciples are gone. “There came other boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus.”

They stayed in the same place expecting to have breakfast and to follow their coup plans. Jesus dissolves the crowd into the dark. They show up in the morning. They realize He’s not there. The disciples aren’t there. They assume they’ve gone back to Capernaum which is headquarters of His ministry and some of them, no doubt, went the way they came, running and walking on the eight....that’s eight miles around the long way. Others got into little boats because boats had come from all over the place, even from across the lake at Tiberias, the headquarters of Herod Antipas.

Now, they wanted their revolution. They wanted Jesus to give them what He had the power to give them. But in the meantime, it tells us, this is very important at the end of verse 45, “That after He sent the crowd away, bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain...verse 46...to pray.” He went away in isolation into the familiar presence of His Father, away from every human.

Why did He go there? To pray. To pray for what? No, to pray for whom? He is the great High Priest who intercedes for His people, right? Hebrews 2:17 and 18. Remember He said to Peter in Luke 22, “But I have prayed for you.” And you know the prayer, the only great High Priestly prayer we actually have verbatim of our Lord is in John 17, and the whole prayer is praying for His own. Surely He went to intercede for their faith and their strength. Surely He went to ask that the Father would grant them strong faith, enduring faith, true faith and would grant them the revelation of Himself so that they would know who He is.

He prayed for them. He sought for them the revelation of His own nature and person and the gift of saving faith. And the Father answered His prayer and we move from the intercession with the Father to the protection for the Twelve in verse 47. “When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea and He was alone on the land.” Now that can’t be good...that cannot be good. When it’s evening, this is second evening, 6 to 9. They broke up their days in three-hour periods. Six to nine, and early evening three to six, second evening they call it six to nine...this is darkness as they begin to row along the shore toward Bethsaida which is very nearby and then on to Capernaum.

However, instead of being on their nice little shoreline cruise, the boat is in the middle of the lake...the middle of the sea. They’re way off course and this is very familiar area to them and they are expert sailors, they are fishermen by trade, four of them we know about, as many as seven of them may well have been fishermen. And they’re way off course. Matthew 14:24 in his parallel account says, “They’re a long distance from land.” John says, “They’re three or four miles out into the middle of the lake.” And the reason John says in 6:18 and 19 is because of a fierce opposing wind. And on the other hand, Jesus is up in the mountain and He’s praying for them, He’s praying for the Father to draw them. He’s praying for the Father to give them enduring, saving, trusting faith. They’re in deep trouble.

They’ve been in a storm before, but the last time Jesus was in the boat and the note here is that they were in the middle of the sea, verse 47, and He was alone on the land. And that’s not good for from their perspective. They knew if present He had the power over the water and the wind because He had already demonstrated that power as we saw earlier in Mark’s gospel. They have a very serious problem. Those storms were deadly dangerous.

Verse 48, “Seeing them...” Can I just stop there and say, “Seeing them?”...

Now remember, He’s up in a mountain and they’re in the middle of the lake, four miles off shore. How far away from the shore He is, we don’t know, but He was up a hill, up a mountain. How can He see them? He can see them the way God always sees, with His omniscience...with His omniscience.

Walking on the water is not the only miracle in this account. He always sees His own. They are deep into the dark night...deep into the dark night, well after the storm began, they’re three or four miles in the middle of the lake. And Mark says, “It is about the fourth watch of the night.” Watch number one was six to nine, watch number two was nine to twelve, watch number three was twelve to three and watch number four was three to six. It’s three to six in the morning. If it’s five in the morning and they left at eight in the evening, they’ve been out there nine hours. They’re in some serious trouble. It’s deep darkness all night long in the fourth watch of the night.

They're trying to survive. Verse 48 says, "They're straining at the oars. They cannot control this boat. Struggling to go the familiar four miles along the shore, eight hours-nine hours later the boat's at the mercy of the vicious wind tossed in the middle of the lake. Their lives are on the line and Jesus isn't there to still the storm, as He was in chapter 4 verse 35.

"Then out of the howling wind and the splashing waves...it says...He came to them." How did He get there? "Walking on the sea." That's how He came. No doubt smoothing its turbulence with every step. I just like to believe He was untossed and undrenched. Though there was no way to see them in the dark night far from shore, He knew exactly where they were. He knew precisely where they were because He always knows where His own are so that He can come to them in the hour of their desperation. And I love this at the end of verse 48, and you can misunderstand it if you're not careful, "He intended to pass by them." That does not mean that He intended to just go right on by them. That's not a good translation. "He intended to pass by them," sounds like...what? Literally, He desired to come alongside them. There was not a coincidence, like He was on the way to somewhere else. He had no intention of leaving the Kingdom in that little boat to drown. He had come for this purpose. He knew exactly where they were. He knew exactly when He needed to arrive. And He walked across the lake at a supernatural speed to arrive precisely at the right moment alongside the little boat.

Well, this is very unusual, shall we say? "So when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost and screamed." These are grown men who probably have been doing a lot of yelling up to now anyway. But this is the shrieking scream of someone who is just in panic. They thought He was a ghost. The Greek word is *phantasma*, phantom, fantasy, popular belief at the time that spirits of the night brought disaster. That was hanging around in the superstitions of that time and that place. Maybe all of a sudden it was true in their experience. A phantom had appeared, *anakrazo*, it means to scream and it's a very intense word. They just shrieked in outright terror. Verse 50 says, "For they all saw Him and were terrified," *pturaso*, that word means to throw into panic. They were literally thrown into panic. There was no...there was no way to process what they saw, a person walking on water.

Well, the Lord didn't let their shaking terror last very long. I love this, "He spoke with them and said to them, 'Take courage, it is I. Do not be afraid.'" Easy for You to say, right? Wow!

"But take courage," from *tharseo* means to be brave, buck up, get a grip on yourselves. That expression, "Take courage," is used eight times in the New Testament. Jesus is always the one who gives us the courage to endure the trial. Seven times He says it in the gospels, one time He says it in Acts 23 to the Apostle Paul. Jesus is the source of our bravery, isn't He, in the midst of deadly circumstances.

Then He says, "It is I...it is I, be not afraid," from *phobeo* from which we get phobia, be not afraid. That phrase, "Be not afraid," stretches from Genesis to Revelation a hundred times plus through the

Bible...be not afraid...be not afraid, be not afraid, be not afraid. In the New Testament it appears in the gospels, in the book of Acts, and in the book of Revelation. Jesus, He is the one who says “be brave, don’t fear, I’m here...I’m here.” He is the protector of His people, is He not? He is always the protector of His people. This is evidence that He is God.

Psalm 5 verse 11, “Let all who take refuge in You be glad, let them ever sing for joy, for You shelter them.” Psalm 9, “The Lord also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.” Psalm 18, “I love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge. My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold, I call on the name of the Lord who is worthy to be praised and I am saved, I am rescued.” And then, of course, you’re very familiar with these precious words of Psalm 23 verse 4, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for You are with me.” Same thing in Psalm 62, Psalm 89, Psalm 91, Psalm 143, 145 and a whole lot of other places. He comes to us in our need, doesn’t He? He will even use the element we fear as the path for His feet.

The lesson in the training of the Twelve is that if you belong to Him, you never need to fear no matter how terrifying the circumstances. If you are in the place of obedience, and they were, weren’t they? They were where they were told to be. And if you’re in the place of obedience, you have nothing to fear. He will be a present help in time of need.
Now you’re looking at that story and you’re saying, “Something’s missing here.”

You’re right. This is Mark’s account and what’s missing is he doesn’t tell the part about Peter. You say, “Why did he leave it out?” Well, who am I to know, but I can give a good guess. Mark wrote his gospel under the influence of Peter. Mark wrote his gospel from Rome to Gentiles. And I think by the time Mark wrote His gospel, Peter was a humble man. Peter didn’t want the focus on Peter, Peter wanted the focus on Christ. And so the Holy Spirit allowed Peter to have that influence over Mark because the story is in Matthew anyway, and let’s look at Matthew because we need to understand what happened.

Matthew chapter 14 verse 28, immediately Jesus in verse 27 says...just what Mark said., “Take courage, it’s I, do not be afraid. Peter said to Him,” verse 28, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”

Now what in the world would motivate him to say that? Did he want to show off? No, this is the first time Peter’s isolated in anything from the rest. What is he doing here? Why would he say that?

I’m convinced he was absolutely panicked out of his mind. He knew Jesus could control the wind and the waves because He had just done it. And he thought, “You’re better off near Jesus in the water, than away from Jesus in the boat.” It’s not a bad idea. All he knew was there was only one who was going to get them out of this dilemma. The boat, probably swamped, well nigh sinking with screaming

and panicked adult men in it. He would feel safer in the presence of the one he knew could control the wind and the waves than he would in a boat without Him.

He's bold...sure. He's brash. But I don't think that's the issue. He's just scared to death. He wants to be where the one person is that controls the elements. So he said, "Lord, if it's You, command me to come to You on the water."

Another thing I like about that is he said, "Command me." He was already in submission to Christ, wasn't he? I do what You tell me to do. Command me to come. He doesn't say, "Let me come...command me to come." And He said, "Come!" And Peter actually got out of the boat. That is...that shows you how oblivious he was to reality. He was so caught up in the fact that Jesus was there and he was where he was and they had been at this thing for hours and hours and hours and hours, and there was no human solution. But there was a divine presence. He just in the power of fear in the moment, jumped out of the boat and started walking on the water toward Jesus.

Well he didn't get far until reality set in. "Seeing the wind, he became frightened and beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord, save me.' Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand, took hold of him and said, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt? Why did you doubt?'"

There's something wonderful about Peter, isn't there? We understand his fear, we understand his faith, we understand his doubt. We understand, "Look, Lord, not easy to have faith while I'm walking on water, I haven't done this a lot. Been around this water my whole life and every time I put my in it, it goes to the bottom. It doesn't stay on the top. A new experience." He demonstrates honest, genuine, trust in the Lord that the Lord is his only hope, his only protector, his only deliverer. But it's not pure faith, it's mingled with natural doubt, like all of our acts of faith when we get ourselves in dilemmas and issues of life and we believe and we say we believe. We're like that man who said, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief."

Why did you doubt? This is a great teaching time for the disciples. You can keep trusting Me in the direst of circumstances, the most hopeless circumstances. The message is, if you're Mine, you're safe. Peter's experience was like the Psalmist who said, "When I said my foot slips, Your mercy, O Lord, held me up." Beautiful, isn't it? When I said my foot slips, Your mercy held me up.

Peter and the others already knew that Jesus could overpower demons, disease and death. They knew Jesus could feed, creating food. They knew He had power over wind and waves. What they didn't know was how much He loved them and cared for them. How protective He was of them and how much they needed to trust in Him. They needed to learn the power of faith. Faith will sustain you through anything, when you can't see the end, and you can't see the escape, faith in the Lord will sustain you through anything. That's what they needed to learn. But in this world, as He said in John 16, you'll have tribulation. Be of good cheer, I've overcome the world.

Four times in the book of Matthew alone, Jesus said to the disciples, “You are of little faith.” You’ve got some but you need more. And these kinds of experiences lifted them to a higher level of trust.

Well what was the impact of this? Matthew doesn’t tell us everything. But he tells us enough. Verse 32, “When they got in to the boat, the wind stopped...listen to this, here’s the key, verse 33...and those who were in the boat worshiped Him.” Wow! Now this is the moment of their first open confession. They were saying, “You are maybe...You are...what?...certainly God’s Son...Son of God.”

So when you ask the next day when the crowd all left and the Twelve stayed, what made the difference? This made the difference. This personal, private incident of divine protection, loving care over the little Kingdom in the little boat in the middle of the lake. That’s why the next day Peter says, “Where are we going to go? You and You alone have the words of eternal life and we believe that You are the Son of God.” I think it was that night that the Father drew them because in the sermon the next day, Jesus preaching on the bread of life, what does He say? “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me. But no man comes to Me...John 6:44...unless the Father draws him. And whoever the Father sends to Me, I will receive and not turn away and all that the Father gives to Me will come to Me and I will receive them and I will raise them at the last day and I will lose none of them.” I think He was talking about those men. That was the night when the Father drew them. That was the night when He received them. That was the night when they went from wondering to worshiping, confusion to confession, fear to faith. And that’s why they didn’t leave. They understood eternal life.

Well, go back to Mark. Let’s wrap this up in five minutes. Verse 51, “And He got into the boat with them and the wind stopped. They were utterly astonished.” There’s miracles of water, wind, walking, locating, Peter walking...just...the whole thing is just absolutely astonishing. *Exestemi* means to be beside yourself, they were literally beside themselves, there was just no...they were out of their minds, blew their minds. He turned off the storm again.

I think of Job 26:14, “The thunder of His power, who can comprehend?” Their hearts have been divinely awakened cause prior to this they didn’t gain any insight, verse 52, from the incident of the loaves, because their hearts were hardened. So what did the Son pray to the Father? I think the Father heard the Son pray, “Father, can You open their hard hearts?” And they went from not getting it at all at the feeding to the middle of the night completely understanding it and making the confession.

Now Mark doesn’t record that confession cause the first confession of Jesus as the Son of God he leaves for a Gentile in chapter 15, a Gentile centurion because he’s written his gospel to a Gentile audience and he wants them to know that they’re in on this.

Well, there's a final scene here...there's a final scene and it's our Lord and the crowds, compassion for the people. We've seen intercession with the Father, protection for the Twelve, and finally, compassion for the people with a few things left out.

Can you just comprehend that they said, "You're God's Son," and maybe flooding into their minds were some of the Old Testament passages that they were familiar with? Like Psalm 77:19, "Your way is in the sea. Your path is in the great waters and your footsteps are not understood." Or maybe they thought about Habakkuk 3:15, "You walk through the sea and through the great heap of waters." Or maybe they thought about Job 9:8, "He treads on the waves of the sea." This is God's Son.

And the final scene, then, verses 53 to 56, compassion for the people. This is familiar. We know this is what happened every day in our Lord's life. "When they had crossed over, they came to the land."

By the way, how did they cross over? You say, "Well they rowed the rest of the way." Really, they were in the middle of the lake, you think they rowed the rest of the way? That's possible. However, there's a more likely way they got there. John 6:21, "They were willing to receive Him into the boat and immediately the boat was at the land." Okay, that's a completely different issue. That was what's known as a quantum leap in science, that's when the reality moves from here to there without ever traversing the space in between...that's a quantum leap. That's what sent Einstein to the grave confused cause he knew it existed, but he couldn't explain it scientifically. They were in the middle of the lake and immediately they weren't in the middle of the lake, they were at the shore. Another little incidental miracle.

Only they weren't at Capernaum where they were ultimately headed. They were at Gennesaret because Gennesaret is a plane three miles by one mile, right against the shore of the lake of Galilee, right up by Capernaum. And so, that's where the Lord wanted them to be and that's where they were and they moored to the shore and they got out of the boat, there were people there because it was a densely populated area, beautiful area. Gennesaret is often identified with the lake. Sometimes the Sea of Galilee is called the Lake of Gennesaret, such as in Luke 5:1. That's where the Lord wanted them to be, that's where they were supposed to be. It was right adjacent to Capernaum anyway, so they arrived there and all the people from everywhere, once they knew they were there, the word spreads and people recognized Him, verse 55 says, "They ran about the whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick to the place they heard He was."

Well, He took the little bit of time it would take, once they moored the boat, to walk to Capernaum, and John tells us He was in the synagogue at Capernaum when He preached the Sermon on the Bread of Life...the sermon they didn't want to hear and didn't want to believe.

By the way, in that sermon He said something very important. Not only did He say that the Father had given Him some and He received and would keep and raise, but He said this, verse 51 of that sermon

in John 6, “I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.” And He promised His death...His death.

It was a great sermon. It even incorporated His death. And, of course, it unmasked all the superficial people and it allowed for the open confession to be repeated again that day, that morning.. “To whom shall we go, You and You alone have the words of eternal life. And we believe and know that You are the Son of God.”

And then a summary of His whole ministry in Galilee. Verse 56...verse 55 says they were bringing people on their pallets, straw beds, who were sick and brought them into the place where He was which would be a synagogue area in Capernaum. But wherever He entered, and here’s the summary, villages, cities, countryside, all possible locations, they were laying the sick in the marketplaces, the *agoras*, city centers, city squares, town squares and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak. Humm, where did that trend start? Oh that started back in chapter 5, didn’t it? Verses 27 and following, when He healed a woman with an issue of blood and she knew if she could just touch His cloak she’d be healed and I guess the word spread...all you have to do is touch His cloak...a woman the other day touched His cloak, that’s the hem of His garment, the tassels that hang on the bottom of His garment, she was healed, and so that became the thing to do. And everywhere He went, people were grabbing on to the fringe of His cloak and as many as touched Him were cured. This is common grace, isn’t it? This is the greatest exhibition of visible manifest common grace you will ever see. No discrimination, no questionnaire about who gets healed, you don’t have to go into a pre-room to be screened. Anybody and everybody whether you believe or don’t believe, whether you love or hate, this is for everybody. This is common grace. This is the compassion of our God.

What do you want from Jesus? Are you like those people, or the people today who fill up the prosperity preacher’s auditoriums? You just want the healing? You just want the well-being? You just want the wealth, the prosperity? You want to be able to name it and claim it, you want to be able to chart your own course, be the designer of your own destiny in this life? Is that what you want?

That’s not what Jesus offers. He did enough of that to demonstrate His power and to demonstrate divine compassion. But it was ever so temporary. All those people died. They all get sick again with something else and died. Some were killed other ways. Once they had died and raised, they died again. Or do you want from Jesus what He really comes to bring, and that is eternal life? Do you want Him as the bread of life which upon eating you never hunger, the water of life which upon drinking you never ever thirst.

Father, we thank You for Your Word to us. The richness of this encounter, we stand there humbled because we like the Apostles, eleven of them, with the exception of Judas who is noted as a defector at the end of John 6, we stand with the eleven and we make the same confession and we make it

because of the same reason. We make the confession because You, O God, drew us and Christ received us and keeps us and will one day raise us. We offer our praise and our heart gratitude. That's why we're here. That's why we worship. That's why we obey. That's why we rejoice. That's why we live in peace. That's why we celebrate the fellowship of those of like precious faith. That's why we love the Word of God. All these things are part of the gift of grace that is come to undeserving sinners because of the sovereign love from You, O God. What can we say in gratitude for the fact that You drew us, You gave us to Your Son, He received us, He embraces us, He keeps us, protects us, meets our needs and one day will raise us to eternal glory. This is all we could ask from Christ. Whatever the suffering in this life, whatever we have or don't have, whether we abound or are abased, whether we have much or have little, it matters not. What matters is that we have that which is eternal that can never ever rust, corrupt or be taken away. We have an inheritance undefiled, untarnished, already laid away for us in heaven. That is the hope of our calling, the glory of the inheritance You have for us.

We grieve, Lord, that the people of Israel rejected what they were offered. We rejoice that in Your kindness You extended that offer to us. May we be faithful, may we be loyal lovers in every sense, loving You, O Father, and You, O Son, and You, O Holy Spirit. May we love the truth written and incarnate by which this gift has come to us. We thank You that we are fed, we are full from the bread of life. Use us, Lord, to proclaim this glorious message far and wide. Thank You for the privilege in Your Son's name. Amen.

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