

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Jesus Walks on the Water

John 5:15-21

Prayer: Father God, we just thank you, we praise you for the cross. We thank you for the ultimate gift of your Son, the ultimate sacrifice that he made on our behalf, and Lord, as we are about to undertake this morning a meditation of you and your cross, I pray for your Holy Spirit's presence, I pray that you would guide us into that, that you would give us strength, wisdom, grace, and power to understand what you've given to us in your word so that we may grow in our understanding of the great love that you have for us as demonstrated by the cross. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, it's once again the first Sunday of the month, and again, this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died met with his disciples, and there for the last time he celebrated a Passover supper with them. We read from that Matthew 26:26 the following. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."*

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink it of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and blood and then he asked the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. Then he asked them to repeat that sacrifice on a regular basis, and this is what we call the Lord's table. We celebrate it once a month, and we do it by meditating on what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, and then we examine ourselves, we ask God's Holy Spirit to point out areas where he is convicting us of our sins, and then we confess our sins and participate in the elements. John 6:53 says: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Now, we've been following the life of Jesus, and our story picks up in John chapter 6. If you've been following along, you remember, this is the place where Jesus is entering that phase in his ministry where performance is everything. He is being praised, he's being loved and worshipped for the very same reason that sports figures are, that's because he has become to the people

around him incredibly useful.

And our text opens up with Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee in John 6. It says this: *After this, Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias), and a huge crowd was following him because they saw the signs that he was performing by healing the sick.* Now, Jesus went by boat, but the crowds who met him, they had literally run around the outside perimeter of the Sea of Galilee because Jesus at this point had become far more than just a preacher. He had become a celebrity figure. A rock star, basically. Someone who could heal the sick and feed the hungry. In short, Jesus had become incredibly useful. And so at this point we're at now, he takes five loaves and two fishes and he feeds up to 20,000 people. Verse 14 says this: *When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This really is the Prophet who was come into the world!" Therefore, when Jesus knew that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*

You see, Jesus knew precisely why they wanted to make him king, because under his leadership, people could perceive themselves now as having a leader who would make sure that they were always warm, always fed, always dry, and always healthy, and Jesus just would not have that. Again, John 6:15 says: *Perceiving then that they*

were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. See, Jesus had just done a spectacular miracle, but he also was doing something else. He was instructing his disciples in one of the most important lessons they would ever learn. And it's a lesson that he's instructing all of us in as well. See, prior to distributing the loaves and the fishes, Jesus gave Philip a spot quiz on faith. This is in John 6:5. It says: *Lifting up his eyes then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.*

Now, this was just one in a series of tests that Jesus had in mind for the disciples. The next one was to come that very same evening. John says in John 6:16: *When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark and Jesus had not yet come to them.* Now again, if you only read this, you wouldn't really get exactly what we're getting at here because this story only gets fleshed out when you look at the other gospel accounts, the accounts in particular of Mark and Matthew. If you just read John's account, you would get the impression that the disciples just kind of went off by themselves. But Matthew tells us flat out that this indeed was a test. Matthew 14:22 says: *"Immediately"* -- speaking of

Jesus -- *"Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds."*

So Jesus sends the disciples on ahead without him. And they start out rowing across the Sea of Galilee in the early evening and by nightfall they are in serious trouble. Verse 18 says: *The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.*

Now, you might recall that this is not the first time that the disciples have been in trouble on the Sea of Galilee. In Matthew 8 we have a previous account of a previous story that took place, and Jesus is asleep in the boat and a furious squall is enveloping the disciples, that's in Matthew 8:23. Let me just read that to you. Discussing Jesus, it says: *When he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.*

Now, once again, you need to read all of the gospels on these different accounts in order to get the full picture of what's taking place here. If you read Mark's gospel, you see that it puts the disciples' concern in much starker terms. The same event in

Mark's gospel reads like this. Speaking of Jesus, it says: *But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*

Well, as we all know, this past week, we had a little taste of what the raw power a storm can produce is like. Now, just imagine for a minute, just imagine standing in a boat, facing into a 60-mile-an-hour gale and just ordering nature to cease and desist, and instantly it does so. I mean, no wonder the disciples in that boat were filled with fear. Well, the incident that we're speaking about on this time, this night, they're on the very same body of water, but the circumstances are a little different. They've just come from yet another spectacular miracle. Jesus had fed almost 20,000 people with five loaves, and two fishes. The crowds want to forcibly proclaim him as the new Messiah. He wants no part of that whatsoever, and so he goes up on the mountaintop and he dismisses his disciples, knowing that he has another test yet for them.

Again John 6:19, it says: *When they this rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat,*

and they were frightened. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

And once again, John only gives us a bare-bones account of what took place. You need to read the rest of the gospels to flesh it out, because he leaves out much of the details that the other gospels fill in, including Peter's attempt to get out of the boat and walk on water to meet Jesus. The one thing that you learn from Mark's account is that Jesus all the while this is taking place with the disciples out on the lake, all the while this is taking place, Jesus is intently watching them.

Mark's gospel says this in Mark 6, it says: *After he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.* I don't know whether it was because Jesus was up on top of the mountain and he had a vantage top and he could look down on the Sea of Galilee and see what was going on or he had some supernatural power. The point is the disciples were never out of Jesus' sight.

Verse 48 continues, it says this: *And about the fourth watch of*

the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." And he got into the boat with them, and the winds ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

You know, I confess, the first time I read this account, the first time I saw it, it just -- it struck me like Jesus was doing a magic trick. I had a very low opinion of what was going on. I got the idea that he was intentionally trying to impress his disciples with his supernatural power. I realized that's exactly what he was doing but for a far, far different motivation. And to get at Jesus' motivation, you really have to go back to his words to Philip at the very beginning of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, back to John 6:5 where it says again: *Lifting his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.*

This whole evening, all that was taking place, this was a test. And a test or a trial as opposed to a temptation is always a

solicitation to growth and blessing by means of the testing. And the source of it is always God. You see, Jesus was putting the disciples through yet another test that was designed to increase their faith in him. He had sent them on a mission, and it was a mission that had them in the same stormy sea that once before had filled them with terror. John 6:18 says: *The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.* And even though they didn't know it, they were unaware of this, Jesus had never taken his eyes off them. Again, Mark 6: And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was *against them.* And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass them by.

Now here's again a very important piece of information. The fourth watch, you know, the fourth watch is between 3:00 o'clock and 6:00 o'clock in the morning. If you remember the very beginning of this test took place in John's gospel which says they started out in the evening. John 6:16 says: *When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.* See, it wasn't just dark when Jesus came to them. It was storming, the wind was howling, and they were once again in fear for their lives. They were three miles into a five-mile journey, and according to this, it had taken them eight or nine hours to get

there just rowing and rowing against the wind. Mark 14 says: *But the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" and they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."*

You see, Jesus had sent them, he had seen them all the while, and he had secured them, and he wanted them to know that. First he had sent them on a mission that was designed solely to grow their faith in him. And he had seen them all along even though they never realized it. And when circumstances began to overwhelm them, he supplied them with the only thing that they really needed, and that was himself. Verse 27: *But immediately Jesus spoke to them saying, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."* Mark 6 goes on to say: *And he got into the boat with them, and the winds ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.*

As the elders step forward to begin distributing the bread, I would like us to take some time to just consider, consider the tests that Jesus was putting the disciples through and consider the fact that

Jesus is putting us through tests even today. He has sent every one of us, he has never taken us out of his sight and he says to each one of us, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

As the elders distribute the bread, consider also the warning that I repeat each month at this time. It's from 1 Corinthians 11:28. It says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* You know, I say this every month. I say, you know, communion is extremely serious business, and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to court disaster. I tell people if you're not absolutely confident that you are a child of the king, just pass the elements on and that nobody's going to look at you strangely, nobody's going to think you're odd. I often say that they'll think you're wise for you doing that. But you know, on the other hand, we can make a mistake on the other side of thinking that unless we are spotlessly perfect, we are unworthy to receive communion. Well that, too, that, too, is a large mistake. See, being a child of the king does not mean that we don't sin, and that we never fail. It means that when we do fail, we are aware

that we have sinned because God's spirit is inside of us, it is God's spirit inside us convicting us of sin, and we grieve as children knowing that we have a Father who longs to forgive us and to cleanse us.

God says in 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the king does not mean that we are without sin. It means that when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, that is someone who speaks out on our behalf.

1 John 2:1 says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the righteous one.* You see, because we have Jesus' righteousness, we are free to eat from his table. And so if you love the Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus has already purchased for you. You know, the disciples, they constantly messed up. They constantly blew it, but that never, never stopped Jesus' love for them. Even in this test of faith that we're looking at, they basically came up empty. You know, Mark says in spite of the previous "sea rescue" that they received from Jesus, in spite of this astounding miracle that had just took place and just helped out in the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, in spite of that, the disciples still had an incredibly

hard time placing their trust in Jesus.

When Jesus got into the boat, it says the disciples were quote "utterly astounded." The King James says it best in Mark 6, it says this: *And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased; and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. They were stunned. They were beside themselves with amazement, but here's the reason why. Verse 52: For they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.*

As you take the bread, as you consider, consider the tests that Jesus is putting you through right now. Consider what your response to those tests is. *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Take and eat.*

As the elders come forward to distribute the cup, I'd like to continue this meditation about the testing procedure that God has for us. You know, one of the most enduring images we have of child-like faith is a picture of a dad standing in the water beckoning for his child to jump. You know the child knows that his daddy loves him, but what he doesn't know is what the water itself

is all about. What he does know is that jumping itself is a very frightening thing. So when daddy says, "Jump," the child faces this great dilemma. And you know, it's only when the child, what the child knows about his daddy is greater than the fear of the unknown, it is only when that happens that the child is willing to jump.

Now, Jesus time and time again, just poured himself into the disciples, proving to them over and over and over again that he was as trustworthy as the -- as any father ever could be, and yet time and time again, the disciples simply refused to jump. And they resolutely failed to trust him. There was no miracle great enough, there was no saving rescue that was thorough enough, no astounding supernatural feat lasting enough to make a permanent difference in the disciples' faith.

You remember who this test was originally given to? This test at the very beginning of the loaves and the fishes, Jesus approached Philip. Well, as we read through the scriptures, later on we see another instance that took place with Philip, in John 14, eight chapters later, and it's the same Philip who later on demonstrates that he still doesn't get it. Let me read to you this section from John 14, starting at verse 6. Jesus is speaking, he says, *Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to*

the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have you seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I've been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

You see, for three full years, Philip watched God the Father expressed in the flesh in Jesus Christ. He watched the healings of the sick, he even assisted in the distribution of the food. He saw the dead raised to life. It wasn't enough. And Jesus' frustration -- I don't know if I could use that word -- but Jesus' frustration at Philip's hard heart just seems to -- to pour out in this text. I picture Jesus just kind of holding his head and just kind of squinting, he's astounded at this ignorance and lack of faith and he's saying, "*Don't you know me, Philip, even after I've been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say 'Show us the Father'?*"

You see, there was only one miracle that Jesus did that changed the very hearts of his disciples. It wasn't a son waiting to decide

whether the father would really catch him, it was the son knowing that his father could never catch him because he had become sin itself. It was the son knowing that his jump wasn't into just the deepest of waters, it was an endless dive into a black abyss inhabited by demons and monsters. It was a place that only he could go to and he would go there completely alone, stripped of everything including his relationship with his own father. And he went there not bearing his own sins, he went there bearing ours. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

You know, there's another aspect of the cross that I've always wondered about. I've always been troubled by the fact that Jesus hung on the cross for only six hours. You know, it's not that I in any way wanted Jesus' suffering to be prolonged, but just that it seemed to me that six hours seemed to be a quantifiably small period of time to pay the eternal price for the sins of his sheep, and that's even bolstered by the fact that if you read in the scriptures, it says that Pilate himself seemed to think that six hours was an unusually swift death on the cross. In Mark 15 it says this, it says: *Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he*

*asked if Jesus had already died and when he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So we know that Jesus' death was unusually swift for a crucifixion. But I have since come to believe that God is also the master not just of space but of time as well. And that for justice sake, he compressed an eternity in hell for every one of his sheep somehow into the righteous fury that he poured out on the head of his Son all squeezed into six earth hours. Jesus will forever bear the scars of the nails and the sword in the flesh that he became for us. And for all eternity he now exists in a body like one that we will someday have. But for those six hours on Calvary, that body, that mind, and that spirit went through an unspeakable eternal torture that we human beings just can't begin to grasp. We don't understand somehow, some way, God was able to squeeze that torment into six earth hours. That is the king, the creator of the universe, the sustainer of the universe is reduced to this in Psalm 22:6, this is the king saying: *But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people.* Psalm 22 verse 14, he says: *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They**

divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. God's justice demanded it, and Jesus as the justifier and the just one insisted on it. Hebrews 10:12 says: But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

And you know, three days after that sacrifice was offered, the greatest miracle of all time took place. Jesus had conquered death itself, and that is the miracle that forever changed the disciples, and that is the miracle that God wants to use to change your life and my life as well. You see, we are no different than the disciples, and life itself is a series of tests that are designed to grow our faith just like that rowing exercise the disciples were being put through. They were sent, they were seen, and they were secured by Jesus. They were sent by Jesus; we are sent by Jesus. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says: *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

You see, when life is a real struggle, it's very easy to get our focus off the purpose we have in being here. We are here to glorify God, and the most God glorifying thing we can ever do is

simply to trust him, to trust him when circumstances are dictating otherwise, when you've been rowing against a howling wind and you're getting nowhere.

You know, when it comes to faith, one of the most glorious statements ever uttered was uttered by Job in the midst of the most bewildering torment any of us will ever face. Job said in Job 13:15: *Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.* You know, Job is saying, "God, I don't care if you kill me. I still won't stop trusting you in you!" That was the battle cry of victory in the war of faith between the two kingdoms. Donald Gray Barnhouse once said, "those words sent heaven rejoicing and gave the devil a mouthful of gravel." That's why we're here. You see, Job's trust was tested severely. The disciples' trust was tested repetitively, and we, too, will be tested as well. And the simple mundane struggles that the we go through can make us lose sight of the fact that they, too, are designed to grow our ability to trust, because that's what faith is all about.

Secondly, the disciples, even though they never realized it, the disciples were never, never out of God's sight. Christ had his eye on them all the time. And we, too, have the exact same privilege and we, too, seldom realize it. Matthew 10:29 says: *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the*

ground outside of your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

You see, the time to trust in the sovereign hand of God upon you is when it feels like you're completely invisible to God. It's times like that when we have something that is incredibly precious to God, and that is trust. It's something that we can give back to him. That's what Job did, and he did it spectacularly.

And finally, we are forever secured by Jesus. In John 10:27, Jesus said: *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."*

Well, what does this mean to us, practically speaking? Well, it means this. It means the source of our ability to trust in Jesus lies in the cross, period. You know, the disciples saw Jesus do spectacular miracles. And it never, never cemented their faith. They saw Jesus himself command nature to cease and desist, and they were filled with terror at the raw power they saw emanating from the Son of God and they still didn't believe. They saw Jesus turn

five loaves and two fishes into a banquet for almost 20,000 people and they still didn't believe. So they were sent on a mission from Jesus rowing against the wind in the middle of the Sea of Galilee and they see Jesus walking on the water, and Peter even steps out of the boat and he begins to walk on water until his faith starts to fail and he begins to sink. And when they finally welcome Jesus into the boat, they are stunned and they are overwhelmed at his strength and his power and his majesty, and it still is not enough to cement their faith. All of the time and all of the energy and all of the preparation that Jesus poured into his disciples, it all evaporated the moment he entered into his passion. Not only that, Jesus specifically told them what was going to happen.

In Mark 10:33, he said: *"We are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. And three days later he will rise."*

You see, no amount of preparation from Jesus, no miracle could forestall the panic and cowardice that made them all scatter and abandon their Lord. Jesus even perfectly predicted that abandonment. In John 16:32, he said, *"A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You*

will leave me all alone." We know Peter even denied him outright. You see, the only miracle that changed the disciples forever is the very same miracle that can change us, and that miracle is the cross. It is the cross that changes everything forever. And that includes you and that includes me. And when you feel like the disciples felt, that you're rowing like crazy against this incredible head wind and you're getting absolutely nowhere and you begin to feel this panic starting to set in, that's the time when the cross can change everything. You see, we have the benefit, the benefit of knowing that Jesus, was testing the disciples when he sent them out in that boat on the Sea of Galilee. We have the benefit of knowing that Jesus never took his eyes off the disciples and that when they desperately needed him, he was right there. They saw him walking on water. You know, the next time you're thinking, you know, if I could just see Jesus walking on water, if I could just have that experience, it would change everything. Well, the next time you think that, consider this: It wasn't enough! They still didn't believe! And what changed them so that five years, ten years, fifteen years after all of the miracles, they still had the strength and the power to be martyred themselves, was the height and the width and the depth and the breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus at the cross.

Romans 5:6 says: *You see, at just the right time, when we were*

still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. You see, the cross, the cross is God's proof that God went to the end of his infinite resources to rescue and redeem us. And whenever we are rowing against the tide, we need to focus on the cross. We have to focus on what it is that Christ did for us on the cross. We have to understand what it is that God did for us at the cross. Because if we truly begin to grasp what Jesus went through on our behalf, everything else will begin to fall into place.

Romans 8:31 says: *What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all -- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? You have to hear what God is saying here. God is saying, if I gave you my own Son, would I not give you everything and anything that you need, that you truly need to grow into the very image of my Son? You know, God is arguing from the greater to the lesser. He's basically saying if I bought you a new car, don't you think I'd give you the keys? If I put on a gigantic feast for you, don't you think I'd give you the utensils to even eat the feast? And what he's saying is if I gave you my Son, forsaken, tortured, stripped,*

naked, and crucified for you, would I not also give you every single thing you need to be everything I intend for you?

So what do we need more than anything? It's the very same thing that the disciples needed when they were rowing against the wind. It's not the loaves, it's not the fishes, it's not any other miracle, no matter how spectacular it was. When circumstances began to overwhelm the disciples, he supplied them with the only thing that they really needed, and that was himself. Verse 27: But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, *"Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."*

As you take of the fruit of the vine, consider these words of Jesus. This is John 6:31. It says, *"Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" And Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."* Consider the fact that all we really need is Jesus.

1 Corinthians, the 11th chapter, the 25th verse says this: *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remember remembrance of Me."* Take and drink.

This is the time for our heads, our heart, and our feet, the practical application of remembering Christ. And you all know folks, all of us have been tested this week, some more severely than others. People have lost heat and power and lights and water, and most of us understood that this is the lot of how everyone lived a hundred years ago, and we were thrust back into that, and we realize how easy it is to take for granted all of the blessings that we have. So we've had only a very tiny taste of -- of the inconvenience that has been kind of spread all around this area. Others have had terrible, terrible tastes, some of death, others of complete destruction, and so it's been a time of severe testing for many. And that also includes our brothers and sisters. And this really is a time for us to be -- be the love of Christ practically. You know, for us, as a congregation, I was gratified to see the interaction, everybody was calling everybody else and trying to get in touch with everybody else, what do you need, what can we do, how can we share this, how can we share that resource, and that was just a great thing to be able to see. There were multiple offers of space, of generators, of showers, of whatever it

is that it took to be able to get through this, but there still is a great need that's out there, and the three things that I want to identify particularly, number one, there is a great need, first and foremost, for prayer. You know, for me it's very hard when you see something as broad and as gigantic as this to kind of identify with how to pray, and you know, Lord, help everybody everywhere, things are bad. That's kind of where it goes. For me, I tend to focus in on the micro, and to me one of the thoughts in my mind is a prayer for Glenda Moore whose two children, age 4 and 2, Brendan and Connor, Brendan and Connor were swept away and killed. I can't imagine what that is like. I just have no concept of what it's like to see your children swept away. Or the Miller family who were preparing in Long Island to leave their house and all the kids and the family is in the car and the dad's outside, and a tree falls on him and he dies in front of his family. So to me, it's a lot easier for me to pray for the Miller family and the Moore family. I don't know where they are spiritually but I just pray that God would use this in some way for His glory and for their peace, that somehow or other something good can come out of this. So we need to be very specific about it is that we're praying and ask God how it is that He would have you pray.

Secondly, there's the practical needs. We made a contribution to the Salvation Army. It couldn't be easier. I just clicked

Salvation Army, donations, boom, all the boxes come up, you put in your credit card, boom, it's done. There's World Vision that you can contribute to, there's other wonderful organizations like the Red Cross, et cetera, and they're fine organizations, but I would just suggest if you're going to give money, give it to somebody who's going to be giving the gospel out as well as physical aid. I'm not knocking the other NGO's and all of the great work that they do, but if you have money to give, give it to the Salvation Army or World Vision or something else that will give the gospel along with physical help.

And lastly, there's local needs. I noted that Kathy Spears had posted that the Neversink Fire Company and the White Lake Fire Company had posted that they were gathering points for -- for imperishable goods, for canned goods, that sort of thing so they could distribute. It's really not hard to find out where that need is. It's just to look around and say what can I do, how can I give, how can I help, and specifically the main thing that we can do that a lot of other folks can't do is pray. And so let's do that right now.

Father, I just want to lift up this entire area. Lord, there's been wholesale destruction, there's been death, there's been over a hundred people that have died as a result of this storm, there's

been terrible, terrible things that have happened, there's been widespread loss and destruction of property, panic, all kinds of terrible things that have happened, and yet, Lord, we know that you are sovereign, that you are the Lord of the storm, that you had the ability and the power to stand up to Sandy and say "stand down," and it would have stopped instantly. And for your reasons, Lord, you have allowed this to take place, and we find ourselves as your ambassadors ones who have been sent into this area with a task and that is to glorify you by trusting you through these things and trusting you even in the little things that we have suffered but trusting you to give us the ability to understand how to pray, how to give, and how to help. And so I pray, Lord, that you would in this next coming week or two give us the ability to ferret out what it is individually you have for us to do, and that you would give us the ability to do it to your glory. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.