

“Jesus Walks on the Water”
Mark 6:45-56
(Preached at Trinity, February 16, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Verse 45** tells us that as soon as the crowd had finished eating Jesus sent His disciples to Bethsaida on the other side of the Sea of Galilee and then He sent the multitude away. The reason Jesus sent the multitude away is two-fold.
 - A. After feeding the 5000 the people were certainly filled with all enthusiasm. The issue was never a lack of enthusiasm. They were not attracted to the fullness of His glory and the excellence of the Divine person. They were attracted to Him for what He could do. He fed them and healed them. More important, at this point these people were convinced He was the Messiah, but they believed the Messiah would be an earthly king. They were ready to take Him by force to make Him king.

John 6:14-15 – “Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”¹⁵ So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.”

 1. But our Lord’s Kingdom is not of this world. It isn’t an earthly throne. He knew their heart and their intention so He dismissed His disciples and then He sent away the crowd.
 2. Before Jesus sent the crowd away He sent His disciples away. The text says Jesus, “made his disciples get in the boat.”
 - a. The word for “made” is a strong word in the Greek. It means to “force” or “compel.”
 - b. Perhaps they were reluctant to go.
 3. A possible reason Jesus compelled His disciples to go away first was to mercifully protect them from temptation. Knowing the weakness of His disciples He knew the temptation would have been for them to also become involved in this unholy political planning for they did not fully understand the spiritual nature of His kingdom

Matthew 20:20-21 – “Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.²¹ And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left.”

Acts 1:6 – “So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”
 - B. The second reason He sent them away was to be alone to pray – **Verse 46**. He desired a time of solitary communion with the Father.

1. In the life of Christ we can see the importance of prayer. He prayed in the morning, in the evening – sometimes all night.
 2. He prayed for Himself, He prayed for others
 3. If the holy, Divine Christ saw the importance of prayer, how much more are we in need of spending much time before God in prayer.
2. **Verses 47-48** - Meanwhile, as the night wore on the disciples were still rowing trying to get to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. John's Gospel records that they had gone 3-4 miles, about midway – the winds had picked up and the water had become rough. The winds were head winds and so progress was now very difficult.
- Mark 6:48** – “Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them” The situation seemed grim. They were skilled seamen but after rowing hard for hours their strength was beginning to fail.
- In this miracle, we find a great principle for the Christian life. The Christian must maintain a trust and confidence in Christ in spite of outward circumstance.
- I. Storms should be seen as a normal part of a disciple's journey
- A. Sometimes our difficulties and struggles are of our own making
 1. We are often headstrong and stubborn. We want to do things our way. Often such a mind leads to sin which leads to hardship. But it is of our own doing.
 2. I had an alcoholic who was suffering greatly with homelessness and physical need tell me, “I can't understand why God is doing this to me.” I told him he had done it to himself.
 - B. Life's difficulties do not always mean that we are living contrary to the will of God
 1. The disciples were exactly where Christ had sent them – the storm came while the disciples were doing their duty. They found themselves in this difficulty *because* of their obedience.
 2. Christ had sent them into the storm – Remember, He compelled or forced them to leave.
 3. It is of great tribute to the disciples that in spite of the storm and the contrary wind they did not turn back.
 - a. It was a headwind slowing their progress. All they had to do was stop rowing and the wind would have returned them to where they began—but they pressed on.
 - b. Jesus came to them in the fourth watch—3 o'clock in the morning. They had been rowing hard against the wind for 7-8 hours and were not making any headway.
 - c. Their Master had commanded them to go to the other side and they would not turn away from their duty.
 - d. How often are we tempted to quit when things become difficult. Often pastors leave churches because of difficulties instead of pressing on.
 - C. In the midst of this storm Jesus was on the mountain praying for them.
 1. While from their perspective things looked hopeless, in reality they had nothing to fear.
 2. We often view our life's situation from our limited perspective and fear the outcome. From God's perspective nothing is left to chance. O that we might see our life from God's perspective.

3. Jesus did more than pray for them – He came to them walking on the sea.
- D. Notice, though, that Jesus intended to walk past them
1. It wasn't until they cried out that He came to them
 2. There is a prerequisite for receiving help from God. We must seek Him. We must ask. This is consistent throughout the NT. We must seek, knock, ask.
- E. God trains us by degree – in the previous storm Christ was with them in the boat
Mark 4:37-38 – “And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. ³⁸ And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?”
- II. Jesus came walking on the rising and falling waves. The laws of nature are suspended at the command of our Lord – they are used to fulfill His purpose.
- A. **Verses 49-50** - The sight of a man walking on the water caused them great perplexity.
1. It appeared to be a man, but men do not walk on water. There would have been little light to illuminate the scene.
 2. Their first conclusion was that this must be an apparition.
 - a. The Greek word - φάντασμα – the word designates a phantom or an unreal appearance.
 - b. The English word phantasm comes from this word – it means something that has no physical reality – a figment of the mind. In others words they couldn't believe their eyes.
 - c. The first advent of Christ was a period of great spiritual activity. An angel appeared to Zacharias and Mary and Joseph. An angel opened the prison door to free Paul, and then Peter. An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip and Cornelius. Demonic activity was common.
 2. They cried out for fear.
 How often do we doubt the presence of Christ. Perhaps He is just our imagination. Perhaps He is not really there. We cry out in fear.
- B. There are many today who doubt and try to explain away the miracles of our Lord.
1. It's almost comical to witness the extremes people go to in order to try to explain away the miracles.
 2. William Barclay on the feeding of the 5000:
 - a. It was a sacrament in which each person received a tiny morsel and were filled spiritually. (Notice the text says they collected 12 baskets *filled* with the remaining bread)
 - b. What really happened is that everyone had brought food with them but kept it hid in their bags because of their selfishness. They did not want to share what they had. But when Jesus took the lead and began to share everyone else began to share and there was plenty for all. The miracle was the birth of love in grudging hearts.

3. William Barclay on Jesus walking on the sea – Jesus walked around the lake and being a full moon He saw His disciples just off shore struggling to bring in the boat. He came down to the shore to offer His help. He appeared so suddenly that He startled them. The important thing is that in their hour of need Jesus came to them.
- C. **Verse 50** – the words of our Lord, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid."
1. Jesus comforted them in their fear
 2. If we are not filled with joy even in the midst of the worst storms it is our fault – not God's. God says, "Take courage."
John 16:33 – "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."
 3. ἐγώ εἰμι – equal to the Hebrew - הָיָה hayah in Exodus 3:14.
According to Leon Morris the emphatic form ἐγώ εἰμι was "one that would not normally be employed in ordinary speech. Thus to use it was recognizably to adopt the divine style."
John 8:58 – "Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." ⁵⁹ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple."
 4. Jesus reveals Himself to His people – "I AM."
They didn't recognize Him until He revealed Himself.
 - a. This was true of Mary at the resurrection
John 20:15-16 – "Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher)."
 - b. This is true of the disciples on the road to Emmaus
Luke 24:31-32 – "And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³² And they said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"
 - c. When Jesus came to the disciples while they were fishing
John 21:4 – "But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus."
 - d. This is true of all who come to Christ
Luke 10:22 - "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."
 4. φοβέω – Fear not! do not be afraid – God has told this to His people over and over. Only the Christian can say with confidence, "NO FEAR"
Deuteronomy 31:6 - "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."

Deuteronomy 31:8 - "The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

Isaiah 41:13 - "For I am the LORD your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you.'"

5. None need fear anything with Christ by their side.
It is amazing they feared in light of what they had just witnessed with the feeding of the 5000.

Mark 6:52 – “for they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves*, but their heart was hardened.”

6. Knowing what we know isn't it amazing how often we fear?

D. Mark's Gospel doesn't record what happens next

1. Peter suddenly changes his opinion. Moments before he had seen a ghost. Now he exclaims,

Matthew 14:28-32 - "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." ²⁹ And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² When they got into the boat, the wind stopped."

2. Some say Peter was acting upon impulse without thinking about what he was doing. Rather, Peter's words reveal a high trust in Jesus. Peter had seen the mighty deeds of Christ. Now Peter is trusting in his Lord.
3. Peter didn't say, "Lord if you are able." Peter knows that if he is to walk on the water it will be by the power of Christ. There is not self-confidence or boasting.
4. Peter's action is based upon his faith and devotion. Jesus knew his heart. This request was not arrogance, pride, boastfulness trying to show off in front of the other disciples. Peter simply wanted to go to Christ. When the Pharisees asked a sign they got a reproof. One of His own asked Him and He answers, "Come."
5. **Verses 30-31** – Here we come to the oft preached verses. Upon seeing the wind and the waves and reminding himself that men can't walk on water Peter cries out, "Lord, Save me!"

Conclusion:

1. This passage serves to encourage us. The Christian life is filled with many difficulties, yet Jesus is with us. He will never leave us.
2. Our duty is to press on no matter what the cost; no matter what the difficulty. Our duty is to look to Jesus through every storm. Notice when they cried to Him He joined them in the boat.

Mark 6:51 – “Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished,”