

“Jesus Walks on Water” (John 6:15-25)

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Opening Prayer

Good Evening, we are back here again in worship. Even from afar it is a joy to be in prayer with you. Before diving into the message, do know that your church is in prayer for you and that we care for you. If there is anything that you need (especially those of you who are in an especially affected age group) please do not hesitate to call and let us know. If you need help grocery shopping, are running low on a needed supply that you cannot find, etc. please let us know. We will make it through all of this together, God is still in control!

In our readings for today we continued our Lenten theme. We have been working our way through the Gospel of John, alternating between the miracles of Jesus on Wednesday nights and the teachings of Jesus on Sunday mornings. Tonight we continue this trend by talking about one of the most famous miracles that Jesus performed, His walking on water. The reason this miracle is so important is twofold for us today. (Or at least we are going to look at two points this evening.) The first point is that it further proves that Jesus is fully God and fully man. The second, the one that maybe you need to hear this evening, is that Jesus shows us that we need not be afraid because He is in control.

The lead up to this miracle is something that we have looked at before. It directly follows Jesus’s feeding of the five thousand. After performing that miracle the people who were there were ready to declare Jesus as king immediately. However this was not in Jesus’s plans. John 6:15 reads “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.” We know now what Jesus’s overall plan was, to save all of us who call on Him by His sacrifice, but it wasn’t yet the time for that. So He goes off onto the mountain to pray, and when He does that He sends His disciples on ahead of Him to the other side of the lake. The body of water here is the Sea of Galilee, and it is a decently sized body of water. The disciples, when they make it out to the center, then encounter a severe storm.

John 6:18-19 reads “The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened.” Understandably, the disciples were terrified when they saw Jesus walking on the water. In our reading from Matthew they supposed that Jesus must have been a ghost. (I guess on a dark and stormy night when in the middle of a giant lake if I saw someone walking on the water from a distance I would think the exact same thing.) Jesus’s response to their terror is immediate, and hopefully it speaks to you today. Jesus says in Matthew 14:27 “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”

In the Gospel of John this is where the story ends, Jesus gets in the boat and then the storm calms and they get to the other side real quick. In Matthew though there is a further piece dealing with Peter. In verses 28-29 we read “Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ And He said ‘Come!’ And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.” By faith, in the middle of a storm, Peter was called by Jesus and walked on water towards Him. Now of course that didn’t last, because Peter then noticed what was happening and began to sink, but maybe the most telling part of this entire story is that in verse 31, after Peter cries out to the Lord to save Him, Jesus does this: “Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, ‘You of little faith, why did you doubt?’ When they got into the boat, the wind stopped.” Jesus saved Peter, He stretched out His hand and grabbed Peter and saved Him. In our present time we would do well to remember this part of Christ’s history. It shows that Jesus is fully God and fully man, but it also shows that we do not need to be afraid for He is in control.

On the theological side of things, this miracle proves that Jesus is fully God and fully man. Quite simply He has a normal human body. He walks with it, He is able to grab Peter’s hand (He isn’t a ghost), and He speaks normally. However Jesus possesses at the same time great power, not only to walk on water but also to calm the sea when He gets into the boat. The disciples recognize this, and they worship Jesus and call Him God’s Son immediately. On the practical side for us, it shows that our Lord is in control, that He is not bound to the same things that we face. If we are honest many of us are living in a storm right now. Our lives are on pause in so many ways. There is no regular church, no school, many are laid off, our favorite restaurants are closed, many are scared of catching the coronavirus or of spreading it, and if you listen to the outside world everyone is in a panic. We are in a similar place to those disciples in the boat who were scared in the middle of the night in the middle of that storm. Their saving grace was Jesus. Guess what Beloved? Our saving grace is the same guy. We can have peace in recognizing that this isn’t the Lord’s first rodeo. This isn’t even close to the most horrible thing that has happened in human history. It is scary, it is different, and it certainly is frustrating, but our Lord is still in control. While the Lord doesn’t promise to end all of this immediately, He does promise to walk with us in the midst of it. So if you are finding yourself afraid, or lonely, or frustrated, or confused, I encourage you to take a step back this evening. Turn everything off and pray to your Creator. Share with Him where you are at, share with Him your fears, share with Him your pains, and acknowledge that He is still in charge. He is still good, just, and Holy. Beloved, we do not need to be afraid, God is yet with us. Let us pray.

Closing Prayer