

**MATT. 14:24-36**

22

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

23

After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,

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but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

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During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

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When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

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But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

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"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

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"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

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But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

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Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

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And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

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Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

**MARK 6:42-56**

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Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

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After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

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When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.

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He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them,

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but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out,

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because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

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Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed,

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for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

**JOHN 6:16-21**

16

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake,

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where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them.

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A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough.

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When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified.

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But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid."

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Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

# Walking on The Water

John 6:16-21

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## I. Introduction:

Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, “Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.”

Benjamin Disraeli described worry “*as a god, invisible, but omnipotent. It steals the bloom from the cheek, lightness from the pulse: it takes away the appetite, and turns the hair to gray.*”

Worrying is the activity of occupying your mind with thoughts and circumstances that are out of your control. Because of it, some people never embrace any of the joy of this life. Worry. Causes you to think continually about how life is adversely affecting us.

When asked to consider this very issue, The Irish writer Arthur Rache wrote that “worry is a thin stream of fear trickling through the mind. If encouraged, it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.

This morning’s Scripture records an event that took place immediately after the feeding of the five thousand. In fact it is a continuation of that incident. Jesus was in the process of revealing Himself to be the very God of Creation. This storm is part of that revelation. Mark, speaking of this event says of the disciples:

**Mark 6:52** <sup>52</sup> ....they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Let’s read then the account from the Gospel of John:

**John 6:16-21** <sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, <sup>17</sup> got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. <sup>18</sup> The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." <sup>21</sup> Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

Here then is the CHRONOLOGY OF THE EVENTS leading up to this event:

- When Jesus heard of the death of his cousin and friend John the Baptist He departed for a deserted place. One would assume that He wished to be alone to mourn this human loss. The multitude, however, heard of His whereabouts and pursued Him on foot. Jesus asks them to feed this multitude.....5000 people have

just showed up for dinner and it is 4 days before payday. They have almost nothing on hand. Now this situation would be bad enough for a skilled homemaker, but can you imagine it in the hands of 12 single men? The disciples have a legitimate worry about finances and a situation that is out of their control. God may ask you to do something someday and you will not have the resources or the abilities to accomplish it. What will be your response?

- BUT....The Scripture reveals a truth you need to embrace. God never asks you to do something without making the provision for you to accomplish it. Jesus feeds these folk in a most unlikely way. And...He uses the resources they already possess. Why not just rare back and feed them all something really great? Instead He has them bring to Him what they have available and He blesses that! There is no recorded response from the multitude or the disciples in this passage. What is recorded is the account we just read:

**John 6:16-17** <sup>16</sup> Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, <sup>17</sup> and after getting into a boat, they *started to* cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

- Both Matthew and Mark record that that the Disciples are **forced** by Jesus to leave by boat. It is clear from the text that Jesus was orchestrating this event. [Matt. 14:22]
- Matthew and Mark tell us why Jesus had not yet come to them. He dismissed the crowd and retired to pray alone. He pushed them out into the deep water by themselves so that both they and we could witness His spectacular intervention in their lives.
- This is personal now. The crowds are gone and the only people in the story are Jesus and His disciples. **Are you a disciple of Jesus?** If you say yes, then come with me into the small corner near the back of this boat. This story is for you and me. It is the story of how God cares for us in our hour of greatest need. It is not an object lesson. It actually happened. The God who created the universe is now with His creation revealing Himself to them and to us if we will allow.

**John 6:18** <sup>18</sup> The sea *began to* be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing.

- By the time it was dark the boat was a considerable distance from land in the middle of the Lake. [about 3.5 miles from shore according to John's Gospel]. The situation is rapidly getting out of the control of even experienced seaman.

**John 6:19** <sup>19</sup> 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.

- Mark tells us that Jesus was watching all this from the shore. [a demonstration of His Divine nature] They were in trouble because the wind was resisting them and they could not row to shore. [Mk 6:48] They were very alone and very helpless.

**Worry, anxiety, fear, terror, despair: This, my friends is the human condition. We look for ways NOT to think about such things but life insists we do.... and when it does it terrifies us with it intentions. The situation has now escalated from worry about finances to worry about survival. One thing is certain in this story, You cannot merely walk away from the adversity in this life that produces worry. Such things dog us like this ocean storm that rages all around us producing a sense of despair. Let's go on....**

**John 6:20** <sup>20</sup> But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

- Again, Mark tells us that sometime between 3AM and 6AM in the morning Jesus went out to them by walking on the water. It has now been 6 to 8 hours since they were on land.
- The Disciples thought it might be a ghost. [The Jews believed that the appearance of a spirit at night was an omen of disaster] Jesus **intended** to frighten them out of their wits. He just started walking by and not calling to them at all until they began to cry out. [26]
- Jesus finally identifies Himself to the disciples in order to calm their fears. It is unlikely that men will cry out to God unless we are not in some sort of difficulty. The greatest experiences of God's power and love are granted at our darkest hour. [27]
- Peter wanted to be certain that he was not mistaken and asked Jesus for additional proof. Peter demonstrates this same characteristic later on at Jesus' empty tomb in Luke 24:11,12: Peter's behavior is an example of faith not lack of it. Peter is proposing to do what only God can do. Until we see the trials of life in this light we will always live in defeat. We may go where God bids us go. We may do what He bids us do. Jesus has already demonstrated his willingness to use what we possess to do something notable. Peter possesses the ability to get out of the boat. Everything else was going to have to be done by the Lord. [28]
- Peter was able to walk on the water with the Lord as long as he kept his attention and trust in Jesus to sustain him. As soon as he got his eyes on the wind and waves he began to sink.
- When Peter cried out to the Lord, He saved him and then the two of them entered the boat together. Jesus will care for us even when we succumb to the world's constant demands for our attention. **NOTE: Only Matthew mentions this part of the story.**

**John 6:21** <sup>21</sup> So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

**In an instant this great trial ends more quickly than it started. The disciples have faced death and experienced every human fear. They have cried out in terror and now, in a moment, it all ends. Peter and Jesus are in the boat, the sea is calm and the wind is still. Mark says that they were amazed while Matthew records that the Worshiped Him. John says that they found themselves immediately at their destination. Why were they amazed?**

- Because the wind and waves immediately stopped? Yes! Probably
- Because they had just witnessed two other notable miracles? Jesus and Peter walking on the water? No doubt
- But mostly because they had **finally** understood the miracle of the loaves and fishes. [the point of which was ...Jesus rules over the material universe as Creator] They did not understand the miracle of the loaves and fishes because “their hearts were hardened” This description of the disciples carries the idea of calloused rather than soft. It is referring to the heart or spirit. It is difficult to penetrate to where the spiritual discernment is. We too are like the disciples who so often saw and even grasped the actual event but seemed unable to make the spiritual application.

### III. CONCLUSION:

- The disciples’ hearts were not hardened by what they saw on the lake. We know this from Matthew’s account [Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."] When they witnessed the miracle of the loaves they did not understand it at all. At that time Jesus did not make his point to them about His rule over the natural laws of this world. From our point of view this seems incredible but we have to remember that the disciples did not yet have the Holy Spirit to reveal things to them spiritually. We also need to remember that there are many lessons about the Lord that have taken us more than one time to learn.
- This entire event was orchestrated by the Lord Jesus. Both Matthew and Mark make a point of stating that Jesus “**made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side**” Jesus stayed on shore watching. The disciples felt that they were alone in the middle of the lake but in fact they were not without Jesus’ watching care. This was the follow up lesson to make the point that the disciples had missed earlier that day. [Jesus rules over the creation for He is The Creator] Mark states that they did not understand the previous day’s miracles because of hard hearts. This is why they were so amazed at what they had just witnessed.

- Matthew adds the fact that they worshipped Him and acknowledged that He was truly the Son of God. Such knowledge is supernaturally revealed only by the Father

**Matthew 16:13-17** <sup>13</sup> Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup> And they said, "Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.]

- This entire incident on the lake was staged by Jesus for the purpose of penetrating the callousness of their and our own spiritual understanding.

**LESSON FOR ME:** Your circumstances this morning are under God's control and watchful care. They are intended to reveal the blessed glory of Christ to you. His Sovereign power and tender love and mercy toward you and your life. Our God rules our world, and our lives and does so with grace and mercy. His purposes are intended to bring you to love Him and worship Him. DO not resent them. They are blessed! The Psalmist describes them centuries before Christ carried out this rescue.

### **Psalm 107:23-32**

<sup>23</sup> Others went out on the sea in ships;  
they were merchants on the mighty waters.

<sup>24</sup> They saw the works of the Lord ,  
his wonderful deeds in the deep.

<sup>25</sup> For he spoke and stirred up a tempest  
that lifted high the waves.

<sup>26</sup> They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths;  
in their peril their courage melted away.

<sup>27</sup> They reeled and staggered like drunken men;  
they were at their wits' end.

<sup>28</sup> Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,  
and he brought them out of their distress.

<sup>29</sup> He stilled the storm to a whisper;  
the waves of the sea were hushed.

<sup>30</sup> They were glad when it grew calm,  
and he guided them to their desired haven.

<sup>31</sup> Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love  
and his wonderful deeds for men.

<sup>32</sup> Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people  
and praise him in the council of the elders.

