

The Miracle of the Lord Walking on the Water

Mark 6:45-56

Mark 6:45-56 – *“Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. ⁴⁶ And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷ Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. ⁴⁸ Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. ⁴⁹ And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; ⁵⁰ for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” ⁵¹ Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. ⁵² For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.*

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. ⁵⁴ And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ⁵⁵ ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. ⁵⁶ Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.”

Background Notes

In verse 45, we read that the Lord **made** His disciples get into the boat. The word used for *made* is a very strong word. The idea is that He urged them strongly – you could almost translate that as “He *compelled* them.” Why? I believe the answer is in the parallel account in John 6:15 - *“Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.”* Making Jesus King at this time was not God’s plan. The Cross must come before the Crown.

The town of Bethsaida is at the north end of the Sea of Galilee. If the feeding of the 5000 took place at the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee as we believe, it wasn’t far to go by boat from there to Bethsaida – the disciples would row more or less along the shore. While they were on the way, however, a strong wind came sweeping down from what is now the Golan Heights, and it blew them off course. High winds can come up quite suddenly on the Sea of Galilee - I’ve seen it perfectly calm, and then white-capping within an hour as winds suddenly come up. (In fact, the Sea of Galilee today is a *mecca* for windsurfers because they get great wind there!)

“*The fourth watch*” (v48) is in the “wee hours” of the morning, so the disciples had been rowing for quite a long time. They weren’t likely in danger, as they were back in chapter 4. (Remember when the big storm arose, the boat was being swamped with water, and the Lord was asleep? And they woke Him, saying, “*Lord, we’re about to perish!*”) Well, they probably weren’t in as much danger on this occasion, but the wind was against them, and it was taking all their strength to row. They could have let the wind carry them down the lake to Tiberias, but that would be long way from where the Lord told them to go. So they were trying to follow the Lord’s direction, but it was taking a long and hard time.

And then the Lord came to them - walking on the water! What a miracle! Skeptics of the Bible try to claim that the Lord was actually walking on a sandbar - but this was no trick. There was no sandbar - this was truly a miracle! In Matthew’s account we learn that Peter also walked on the water. John and Mark did not select to record that part of the event, but this is the same event. So this is another miracle of our Lord that shows His power over nature - because **He’s God**.

Genesssaret, where they landed, is south of Capernaum, and there the crowds came running to meet them. Verse 56 mentions the border of His garment. Jewish men were to have tassels on the edge of their garment to remind them of God’s Law (Numbers 15:38). The Lord kept the details of the Law. Not everyone kept the details of God’s Law, but our Lord did. There wasn’t anything magical about the hem or the tassels. The healings took place by the Lord’s power, in response to the genuine faith of those who reached out in faith to Him.

Doctrinal Point

The Lord is praying for us in heaven while we are toiling here on earth.

We have a spiritual picture of that truth in the setting of this miracle. Just as the parables of our Lord Jesus have a spiritual meaning, the miracles have meaning associated with them as well. Follow the spiritual picture with me.

The Lord sent His disciples out on the sea, even though He knew the sea was going to be rough. In the same way, the Lord sends us out on the sea of life - and we don’t always experience “smooth sailing.” Life can be very rough. The winds can be “contrary,” and it’s hard to stay on course. And the Lord knows it.

While the disciples set out on the Sea of Galilee, the Lord went to a mountain to pray. I believe that’s a picture of our Lord’s present position. Hebrews 7:25 speaks of the High Priestly work of our Lord Jesus: “*Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them.*” Our Lord is now praying for us - interceding for us in Heaven as our great High Priest. I think this truth is pictured in the miracle.

The Lord saw them in the difficult conditions, toiling at the oars. They were trying to follow the Lord’s direction, but the winds were against them. But rather than drift, they continue to plug away, trying to do what the Lord has asked them to do. In the same way, the Lord sees us on this troubled sea of life. He sees us laboring. He sees us toiling. He knows

the winds are against us, and His eye is on us. We may not realize that the Lord is watching us all the time, but as Hebrews 7:25 says, He always makes intercession for us.

And then the Lord came to them! He got into the boat with them, and brought peace. What a great picture of the peace our Lord can bring to us in times of trial and suffering. He “gets into the boat with us” - He understands our difficulties, and His presence is with us to give us comfort and support in all the difficulties of life.

In addition, what a picture of our Lord’s future return for His people! He’s coming for us - and there will be a great time of peace when He returns. So in this miracle we have a great picture of our Lord’s present ministry in our present situation, and the wonderful peace and joy that is to come. The Lord is praying for us in heaven while we are toiling here on earth.

Practical Application

The Lord can walk on your troubled waters

The setting of this miracle is a picture of the Lord’s present ministry in Heaven, and our present situation here on earth, and our Lord’s return bringing peace. It can also be applied to our immediate situation. Is your life a “troubled sea” right now? Are you straining at the oars, just trying to keep your life afloat? Maybe you have financial problems or you’re out of a job, and life is rough. Maybe you’re facing difficult problems in your family life, and you’re hurting. Maybe your health has failed, and you’re fearful.

The Lord knows! He cares! He’s in control! He can come to you, walking on your troubled waters. He can bring relief and peace. He has allowed the troubled waters so we can experience His power first-hand. Sometimes He waits till the darkest hour of the night before He brings calm to our troubled waters. Sometimes, before we realize He’s present in the midst of our troubles, we’re afraid. We forget that the Lord is there, waiting for us to call out to Him. But the Lord said, “*Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid!*” And He would say that to us in our troubled situation.

“*Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.*” He is present! That phrase - “*It is I*” - is very interesting. It’s not at all the same as if we were to say “It’s me” or “It is I” when someone asks “Who’s there?” “*It is I*” used here is the divine title - **it’s “I AM.”** It’s the divine name by which God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, and it’s the title for God that’s used so often in the Gospel of John. And the Lord used it here! “*Be of good cheer! It is I [AM].*” He was proclaiming His deity. He was saying, I am God - so don’t be afraid! When we realize that our Lord Jesus is God, and that He’s with us all the time, and that He’s in complete control, we don’t have to be afraid. We can be “of good cheer”!