

**That you Might Believe**  
**Jesus walks on Water**  
**John 6:16-24**  
**May 30<sup>th</sup> 2021**  
**Preacher: Pastor Roy Summers**

We've arrived at the fifth miraculous sign recorded by John in his Gospel.

And once again it's both well known and remarkable—Jesus walks in stormy weather over the surface of a choppy lake and does not fall through!

What could be the meaning and purpose of such a miracle? That's our task and joy to share this morning!

And here's a clue: there is no situation so dangerous, so desperate, so extreme, that Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, cannot reach us or help us. Perhaps that's where some listener finds themselves this very morning—in a plight of extreme or desperate need—like the disciples here in the storm— with no seeming end to it. Well this miracle reveals the Almighty power of Jesus Christ to save his people.

**The Story**

Let's begin with the story itself. Jesus has just fed 5000 men - plus their wives and kids - by multiplying five humble loaves and two small fish.

At the end of that wonderful but doubtless exhausting day, Jesus sent his disciples off back to the other side of the lake while he went up a mountain to pray: they would regroup tomorrow on that more familiar shore.

Obediently the disciples get into the boat and begin to row across the lake or sea of Galilee, which is about seven miles wide and ten miles long.

It was getting dark but there are seasoned sailors among the disciples so Jesus has not given them a dangerous task, and under normal circumstances the journey would take a couple of hours or so....

...but there is something unpredictable we need to know about the Sea of Galilee. It sits about 600 feet below sea level and colder airs from the south-east can all of a sudden rush down to the sea, displace the moist air hanging over the sea creating an unexpected and perilous storm. Life-threatening storms can arise out of nowhere on the Sea of Galilee....

..and that is exactly what happened that night. "A strong wind was blowing and the water grew rough."

We see the 12 men rowing against the wind but making hardly making little progress. The disciples were in real peril!

Trouble can come suddenly upon us too. In one moment our lives may be peaceful and calm and in the next they are turned upside down. This should never surprise us (though it often does!!) because "man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward." (Job 5:7) I'll never forget visiting an elderly saint whose health had broken. Although I was nervous about how I might comfort him, I needn't have been, because he took the initiative, put me at ease, and explained that he was not at all surprised at this bout of illness because, he reminded the pastor!, that we live in a broken fallen world. Trouble is to be expected and it can come upon us at any time!

Troubles come to obedient saints. And when troubles do arise, we should not think that we have done something wrong. Yes, sometimes God does allow chastisements into our lives because he loves us. Jonah's storm was a direct consequence of his disobedience, but that's not what we have in John chapter 6. The disciples were obeying the command of their master, "Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him." (Mark 6:45)

Sudden troubles come to obedient saints, you mustn't allow Satan to accuse you when storms descend. Remember Job's comforters? They told Job that his troubles had come upon him because he had done wrong: he hadn't looked after his workers, he neglected his responsibilities to the poor, and so on. Not true! Troubles come to all of God's people - including obedient ones.

What did the disciples do? They kept on rowing, and so must we. When troubles threaten us we must not give up in despair, we must keep on rowing, keep on praying, keep on reading the Scriptures, keep on meeting for fellowshiping, we must not give up. Someone put it like this, "When you don't know what to do, keep on doing what you know you should do."

The disciples kept on rowing through the storm...

...and though Jesus knew exactly what was happening on the Lake, Jesus did not set out across the lake until the fourth watch of the night (Matthew 14:25), that is between 3:00 and 6:00am! If they started out at let's say 7:00pm, they would have been rowing hard for 8 long hours or so against a fierce wind before they were rescued! Jesus does not rescue them right away!

This was a long test, a drawn-out trial, and so it is sometimes with us. We would want our troubles to blow over in a moment, but often that is not what happens. God allows trials to continue for many good reasons – to test our faith, to develop perseverance, to teach us to seek his power and grace. The apostle Paul's trial never came to an end, so that he might learn "my grace is sufficient for you." Think of the long trial of David when Saul pursued him, it went on for years and years!

Our comfort is twofold. First, Jesus knows. Mark tells us that Jesus saw them straining at the oars. Jesus knew what was happening, he was not indifferent to their plight, and he is not aloof from ours either: Jesus knows what we are passing through!

What was Jesus doing while his disciples were rowing? He was praying! And surely his disciples figured in his prayers! Jesus was not with them bodily but he still cared for them and he was praying for them! When our suffering seems to go on and on, let us remember that Jesus not only knows and cares, but he is praying for us too: *"Jesus is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."* (Hebrews 7:25)

When Jesus knew that his disciples were at their wits end, he rescued them! And that is a second comfort to take away. Here is how Paul puts it: *"God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted (tested) beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."* (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Jesus comes off the mountainside, down to the raging sea, steps into the choppy waters and walks over the waves and through the wind to rescue his disciples! There are a cluster of wonderful miracles all happening at once here. Gravity is made to work in a different way than normal; winds are not able to blow Jesus off his feet and the choppy waves which have now become his pavement are no obstacle to his progress!

None of this should take us by surprise because through Jesus Christ "all things were made.." we read in John 1:3. The God who made the law of gravity, made the winds, and designed wind resistance, can – of course - in one moment in any place, change the normal way he runs the world, to another way of running his world! It is

a trifling matter to God. And what a comfort to know that nothing in all of creation can separate us from the loving and powerful hand of our rescuing God!

When the disciples saw this amazing spectacle, they were terrified. Not because Jesus looked any different than normal, but because they had never seen anyone walk on water!

I wonder what they had been saying to one another in the boat, "Jesus told us to go across this sea, surely he will rescue us. Perhaps he will give us the physical strength to make it across, perhaps he will calm the storm with a word, perhaps this, perhaps that..." We can be sure that the 'perhaps' none of them came up with is "Jesus will walk through the storm to rescue us!"

Sometimes God rescues his people in the most unexpected ways! We must never limit God to the run-of-the-mill, the normal! Because Martin Luther pointed out the errors of the Roman Catholic Church, he was condemned as a heretic and his life was in peril. How would God protect him? Well one day, out of the blue, Frederick of Saxony kidnapped him - and protected him in Wartburg Castle where he could continue his work! A kidnap is a surprising rescue!

We must never limit God's methods of rescue! Jesus, noting that they were terrified said, "It is I, don't be afraid." And their fears were calmed. They invited Jesus into the boat and yet another miracle took place: we read, "Immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading."

Jesus rescued them and brought them to safety and peace.

What an amazing true story! We've noted many lessons along the way, but let's conclude with three brief observations.

First, through this miracle, Jesus demonstrates and proves his divinity!

### **#1 Jesus demonstrates his divinity**

Jesus could have rescued his friends by speaking a word to the storm from the safety of the shore. But he chose to walk across the water to reveal his personal power over gravity and wind.

Jesus was both a real human being with a body like ours, and he was God the Creator, who could change the way the laws of nature worked around him, to enable him to walk on the surface of water against high winds and still make progress.

And if you and I will believe that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God, he will make us one of his children and give us the gift of eternal life.

### **#2 Jesus will rescue his people**

Secondly, we should note here that Jesus will rescue his people from harm. Jesus knew what was happening to his disciples, he was praying for them, and in his good time he rescued them.

*"He rescued me from my powerful enemy" wrote David, "from my foes, who were too strong for me... He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me." (That's Psalm 18:17-19)*  
*"The Lord will rescue his servants; no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned." (That's Psalm 34:22)*  
Here's the promise: *"Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence" Psalm 91:3*

The Lord may not rescue us when we ask him to or when we want him to, we may have to row for eight hours, but in due time, he will for sure, come to our aid.

### #3 Jesus is able to save us from sin

Supremely, as we close, this 12-man rescue story is an echo of the Bible's much bigger rescue story, God's rescue mission into this world to save us from our sins.

The Bible teaches that we are all sinners! "All have sinned and come short of God's glory" In our thoughts, and through our words and deeds we have broken the law God placed in our consciences and the commandments of God.

The Bible teaches that since God is a Just God he must punish sin – which puts all of us in a sinking ship, for we all deserve the righteous judgement of God.

But because of God's love and mercy, he took the initiative, he sent his Son into the world to bear in himself the punishment that should come to us. On the cross Jesus Christ bore away sins.

And if we will believe this message and turn from our sins, we will be saved from the hell we deserve and be given the free gift of eternal life!

That's what the salvation of these few men on the lake of Galilee ultimately points to!

Did you notice the words in verse 21, "Then they were willing to take him into the boat and immediately the boat reached the shore." They were saved when they were willing to receive Jesus into the boat

Jesus offers salvation to us; but we must willingly and sincerely receive him, believe in him, and turn from our sins. Have you done that? Have you received Jesus Christ? Have you believed in him? If not, may you do that today.