

Our God can walk on water: Mark 6:45-52

Mark 6:45-52 records the miracle of Jesus walking on water, with similar accounts found in Matthew 14:22-32 and John 6:16-21. The miracle is recorded to remind us that because Jesus is the Messiah, we can trust Him in every situation that comes into our lives. (Matthew's adds the walking on water by Peter.) Remember Jesus had spent a full day before this teaching and concluded that day by feeding the 5000 plus who were there.

Read Mark 6:45. That meant that the disciples started their journey across the lake in the evening, probably about 7:00 pm. It is important to note that the disciples would be in the midst of a storm because Jesus Himself told them to go out on the Sea. Remember, being a Christian and in the center of God's will does not exempt one from difficulty and may, as I believe was the case here, actually bring difficulty into our lives so that we might see more fully the mighty hand of God at work. The only guarantee we have is that when the storms come, and they will, we will not be alone. Jesus will be right there with us. The challenge we constantly face when we are in the storms of life is to take our eyes off the waves and look up to Him who will either be right alongside our boat or in it with us.

Mark 6:46 tells us that Jesus went up on a mountainside to pray. We know that Jesus was a man of prayer. His prayer life was so important that His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray as He did.

Mark wrote that later that evening the boat was in the middle of the lake. The new NIV says in verse 48, "**Shortly before dawn he (that is Jesus) went out to them.**" The actual Greek is more precise, saying it was during the fourth watch of the night, which would have been between 3 and 6 am. That means that they had been rowing for 8-10 hours. The disciples were caught in the middle of a terrible storm that was totally exhausting them. This storm was just too much.

When the disciples set out they had every reason to feel safe. They knew the lake well, they had a boat they could count on and they were skilled at handling it. But they were unable to make the headway they should have made because a storm came up that they couldn't handle. At some point in our lives we will come face to face with the reality that all of the things we are so certain are more than adequate to get us through, just might not be enough. They had left nothing to chance when they set out across the lake at the command of Jesus, but suddenly they were face to face with wind and waves that threatened their skills as seamen and the safety of their boat. They were going nowhere. They needed help, help that could only come from Jesus.

Mark 6:48 tells us something truly exciting. While Jesus was still on the shore, before He started walking out to them, He "**saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them.**" Let the beauty of that verse sink in. The disciples were out on the sea, caught in a terrible storm, exhausted and going nowhere fast. They certainly believed they were all alone, but Jesus saw their situation. Too often when we are hurting or in danger we feel like no one knows. God, however, always knows where we are and what circumstances we are in. God is never far from us even when it appears He is not there, and we are on our own.

Read Mark 6:48. At exactly the right time Jesus went to them. In the Old Testament there is a clear message that only God can control the seas which He created. Repeatedly the Israelites were reminded that God dried up the Red Sea, so the people could cross it. God also held back the Jordan River in Joshua, so they could cross into the Land of Promise. Read Habakkuk 3:15.

Then Mark added an important detail in that verse. He wrote, **“He was about to pass by them.”** That can be seen as saying that Jesus was about to go by them on the trip across the lake. The description, however, comes from terminology used in the Old Testament to describe those occasions when God, by passing by one of His servants, revealed an aspect of His strength and holiness that was essential to understand if they were going to move forward for Him. Read Exodus 33:18-19 and I Kings 19:11. Certainly, Jesus walking on the very waves that were frustrating the disciples was a display of God's power and glory in an unusual manner, presenting to the disciples a lesson they needed to see and understand.

Sometimes we ask in times of great difficulty, *“Why is this happening to me?”* instead of looking to see the power and glory of God being displayed in it, a power and glory that could not otherwise be seen if there was not a storm in which He could pass by with His glory. Not all difficulties come into our lives by God's design, but in all of the storms of life, in all of the places of insecurity, if we can look beyond the difficulties and seek to see God, we will discover He is both present and anxious to reveal more of His nature and glory to us.

Read Mark 6:49-50.

We can't blame them for being afraid. It is not every day we see someone walking on water and definitely not in the midst of a storm that is threatening your life. But one of the critical lessons God wants us to know about Jesus is that in our troubles, when our skill and resources are in question, there is the presence of the all-powerful God who can, at the right time speak and quell the storm. Mark quoted Jesus as saying **“Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.”** The announcement of Jesus to the disciples that they should take courage and not be afraid is a theme that reoccurs constantly throughout the Bible. **“Fear not for I am with you”** is a key teaching for Christians.

Jesus said, **“It is I.”** In English it is possible to miss the significance of that statement. When Jesus declared **“It is I”** he used a Greek expression equal to the Hebrew found in Exodus 3:14 where God declared **“I am who I am.”** That translates in the Old Testament to Yahweh, the name of God Himself. When Jesus used that “Godly” name of Himself, He was declaring He was God.

Christianity is not simply a religion but a personal relationship with a living God via faith in Jesus. That means that when we have a need, it is being met by the living creator of the universe.

Mark wrote in verse 51, **“Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down.”** No big surprise there. Mark added, **“They were completely amazed.”** Remember they

had seen Jesus do that earlier (Read 4:35-41). This should have come as no surprise, but they were amazed. God often displays His power and glory to us in the same or similar ways such as a variety of sunrises or sunsets. Learn to marvel each time at how awesome God is. Never get used to God displaying His glory via nature, via answered prayer, via healing, etc.

Read Mark 6:52. Jesus' explanation of their lack of faith was that it flowed from their failure to grasp the significance of what had happened the day before. What had they missed in the feeding of the 5000? They missed the truth that the one who gave thanks and broke the loaves was God Himself. The feeding of the 5000 and the walking on water were self-disclosures of Jesus' deity. Jesus was saying to them, and to us, "Look at what I can do and understand that no mere man or even a great prophet can do what I have done. I am God." A growing faith is one that is learning to trust God more and more as one sees how good He is and what He has done for them. The real issue this incident raises is in whom or on what do we, on a daily basis, place our trust in and look to for our security.

In Mark 6:53 we read they crossed over and landed at Gennesaret. In Mark 6:45 we read they started out for Bethsaida. Mark only mentions where they landed and does not comment on it. I wonder if another reason for the storm was to re-direct them to the place where the ministry of Jesus was desperately needed, as seen in the verses that follow. God never wastes a storm that is given over to Him.

Even as Christians we will face storms and must not give up when they come. When we are in a storm, and perhaps exhausted from rowing, we can know that God not only sees our situation, He is there. He is in the darkness of the night and He will come to us in His time and in His way, He will calm the storm or strengthen us, so we can keep on rowing.

We have a God who is always aware of where His children are and what they are facing. He knows when storms come our way and will, in His perfect time, speak to the storm and tell it to be still. That may be when He calls us home or long before that, but be assured He is always there, either walking with us or carrying us.