

Mark 6:45-51 Jesus Walks on the Water

Today we're going to read about the second occasion where Jesus demonstrates His sovereignty over the sea, the first being the stilling of the storm on the Sea of Galilee in Mark 4:35–41. Earlier, Jesus demonstrated the authority of His Word, and here His authority to make the sea serve Him as a highway, as He walks across the rough water. On both occasions the disciples fail to understand who Jesus is and experience stark fear and amazement. Jesus expects His disciples to have learned from the last storm at sea, and that God had provided what was needed, and not to be afraid. They didn't pass the test. Also, this event immediately follows the feeding of the 5,000, and serves to illustrate that the disciples failed to learn the lesson that God would provide whatever was needed, even if it was impossible in human terms. This time the disciples are alone in the boat and Jesus comes to them walking on the water, and Jesus expects them to use the faith in Him that He has given them—He had sent them out alone, and God had provided. But they still didn't get it.

45 And immediately Jesus had His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He Himself dismissed the crowd. 46 And after saying goodbye to them, He left for the mountain to pray.

After the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus immediately directs His disciples to get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, to Bethsaida. The word means that He “compelled them to leave immediately”, in urgency. John 6:14 gives us the explanation, as to why: **Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”** Jesus did not want the start of a revolutionary uprising on His hands. It was not time for Him to be proclaimed King, and so Jesus did not allow this to happen. He quickly set the disciples off, so that they couldn't make matters worse by verifying the amazing miraculous nature of the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus didn't want them to add more fuel to the fire that was growing in the crowd to proclaim Him as King.

47 When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land.

48 Seeing them straining at the oars—for the wind was against them—at about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.

By the time Jesus had finished praying it was the dark hours before dawn and the disciples were well out to sea. The disciples are on the sea and Jesus was alone on the land, and whenever the master is absent from the disciples, they often find themselves in distress. And each time they experience anguish it is because they lack faith. This is clearly the case in this episode where the physical exhaustion of the disciples was aggravated by stark terror when they encountered what they believed to be a ghost. Jesus, seeing them straining at the oars to get the boat across the lake while the wind was against them lets us know that Jesus was letting them struggle. The fourth watch is the last part of the night, before dawn, roughly 3–6 a.m., and they had apparently been struggling all night, as the pre-dawn light allowed faint visibility. They were unable to make progress without Jesus in the boat, despite their extreme physical effort and discomfort. Matthew 14:25 records that **“during the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the sea”**—this of Jesus calming the storm and reassuring His weary disciples can offer us a sense of comfort and assurance, reminding us that no matter how dark the night may seem or how fierce the winds of adversity may blow, Jesus is always there, ready to calm the storm and guide us safely to shore. And, as Jesus approached, it appeared from the disciples' point of view that Jesus was going to make His way past the boat, making better progress than all of their muscle power could achieve. There's a lesson here about the effectiveness of walking by the Spirit vs. the flesh.

49 But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they thought that it was a ghost, and they cried out; 50 for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, “Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.”--The reason that Jesus came to the disciples across the rough sea about 3:00-6:00 A.M. was that he had seen his disciples exerting themselves

against a strong wind which blew presumably from the north or north-east and drove them off their course. When Jesus saw that the disciples were wearing themselves out, he already felt the desire to reveal his presence to them by passing their way. Jesus could have passed them by, without their noticing, Job 9:8, 11: **“he walks upon the waves of the sea ... If he goes by me, I will not see him, and if he passes by me, I will not recognize him.”** Psalm 77:19 **Your way was in the sea, And Your paths in the mighty waters, And Your footprints were not known.** But, in this instance the divine appearance occurred to the disciples, because Jesus wanted to be seen, so that He could teach them the lesson that divine provision was much better than leaning on their strength, once again. In wonderful fashion Jesus put his authority at the disposal of the disciples and passed by to assure them of his presence with them. The disciples reacted to Jesus’ appearance with terror, convinced that they had encountered a ghost. Fishermen do tend to be a little superstitious. When Jesus perceived the terror of the disciples he allayed their fears and corrected their delusion with a summons to courage. The emphatic “I” in verse 50 can also possess deeper significance as the recognized formula of self-revelation the “I AM that I AM” of Ex. 3:14. Jesus is using another opportunity to show the disciples that He is God the Son! The admonitions to “take heart” and to “have no fear” which introduce and conclude the “I am he” are an integral part of the divine formula of self-revelation. In the darkness, when the disciples are deceived by their eyes, Jesus affirms his identity with the words **“I am he; fear not.”** He says **fear not** because the disciples are terrified. Peter then asks Jesus to command him to come to him on the water. **Matt 14:28-32** **28 Peter responded and said to Him, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” 29 And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!” 31 Immediately Jesus reached out with His hand and took hold of him, and *said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32 When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. 33 And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “You are truly God’s Son!”** Peter’s initial faith is evident in the fact that he says to Jesus, “Lord, since it is you”, quickly overcoming His fear, much faster than the others, maybe due to His bold nature. And, this faith in Jesus is enough to keep Him afloat. This story is about our faith needing to be in the Person and Work of Jesus, to put distractions, storms, and circumstances out of our minds, and walk on the water with Him. It serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of having faith in Jesus even in the midst of life’s storms. It shows that with faith, we can overcome our fears and walk on water, metaphorically speaking, towards Jesus. Their struggles against the storm let us know that this is a time of intense trial and testing, but also a time when Jesus’ presence and power are most evident, if we will just look to Him, and trust in Him. Sometimes He lets us struggle, so that we can learn that we can’t do it ourselves, in our own strength. But it is during periods of deep darkness and challenges, that Jesus’ light and strength shine the brightest. It reminds us to keep our faith strong, especially in the face of adversity, knowing that Jesus is always with us, ready to reach out and save us when we call upon him. And, Peter, because He stepped out in faith learned a deeper lesson than the rest of them, about keeping His eyes upon Jesus, despite the storm, and his dependence on Jesus to do whatever ministry that God had for him to do. There are a lot of lessons for us here. First, Faith Requires Courage--Peter stepped out of the boat into a stormy sea, demonstrating that true faith often involves taking risks and stepping beyond comfort zones to experience God’s power and guidance. Second, Keep Your Eyes on Jesus--Peter was able to walk on water as long as he focused on Jesus. When he looked at the wind and waves, fear overtook him, and he began to sink. This illustrates the importance of maintaining focus on God rather than being distracted by life’s challenges. Third, Doubt Can Creep In--Even with initial faith, Peter experienced doubt. His sinking shows that doubt is natural, but acknowledging it and calling on Jesus for help restores stability and confidence. Fourth, Jesus

Always Reaches Out--When Peter began to sink, Jesus immediately reached out to save him. This teaches that God is always ready to help us when we falter, offering grace and support in moments of weakness. Fifth, Prayer and Solitude Are Essential--Jesus prioritized time alone with God even amid pressing needs. This reminds us that spiritual strength and guidance come from regular prayer and communion with God, which equips us to face life's storms. Sixth, Seek God's Will Before Acting--Peter asked for Jesus' permission before stepping onto the water, highlighting the importance of discerning God's will before taking action. Acting impulsively without seeking His guidance can lead to unnecessary struggles. Seventh, Growth Comes Through Trials--The experience was transformative for Peter. Life's challenges, like the stormy sea, can strengthen faith, build character, and deepen understanding of God's presence and power. Eighth, Jesus Is Present in Our Struggles--Even when circumstances seem overwhelming, Jesus is not distant. **He sticks closer than a brother.** He walks alongside us in our personal storms, offering reassurance and courage. We must maintain focus on God during difficult times. We are not afraid to step out in faith, but we must always seek His guidance first. God uses trials as opportunities for spiritual growth. So, we must rely on Jesus for support, whenever fear or doubt arises. If we stay strong in our prayer life and devotional life in general, during the good times, then we will have the strength in our spiritual walk to call on when we need it. His presence sustains us through life's challenges.

51 Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, 52 for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Jesus assured the disciples with his word and his presence. When he joined them in the boat the wind suddenly died down. The disciples were utterly astonished. They were undoubtedly physically drained from their rowing against a strong head-wind and emotionally drained from their experience of terror. The disciples certainly realized that the multitude had been fed with five loaves and two fish, but they had failed to grasp that this event pointed beyond itself to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. Because they were not truly open to the action of God in Jesus they had missed the significance of the miracle of the loaves for them, and saw only "a marvel." That is why they displayed not confidence and joy in Jesus' unexpected presence but faithless panic. If the disciples had understood the miracle of the loaves they would have recognized Jesus' identity as the sovereign Lord who walks upon the waves of the sea. The problem of understanding is not intellectual, but spiritual; it is a matter of faith. And, we today can look to it as a great lesson that Jesus will strengthen us during times of trouble, if we only put our faith in Him.