

Jesus Walked on the Water

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the importance of spending time alone with the Lord for fellowship by spending time in prayer and meditation on the Word of God. In this topic, we will see that Jesus rejoined the disciples as they were trying to get the boat back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus had told the disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee while He sent the crowd of people away and spent time alone with the Father in prayer. Matthew 14:24-27 says, “But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.’” In these verses, we see that the disciples had been on the Sea of Galilee a long time that night.

Matthew explains the reason why it took the disciples so long to cross the Sea of Galilee. It was due to the fact that there were large waves and the wind was blowing in a different direction than the direction that they wanted to go as they crossed the sea that night. The Sea of Galilee is nearly seven hundred feet below sea level. Mount Hermon is only about forty miles north of the Sea of Galilee and that mountain is over nine thousand feet high. That means that there is a drop of almost ten thousand feet in only forty miles in the river valley. As a result, they can get some very severe winds on the Sea of Galilee that can cause waves of as much as twelve feet high. The Sea of Galilee is about twelve and a half miles from north to south and about seven and a half miles from east to west. With the strong winds blowing, the winds had driven the boat into the middle of the Sea of Galilee when it was more normal to cross within a mile or two of the shore.

By the time Jesus went walking across the sea toward the boat where the disciples were, it was the fourth watch of the night (three a.m. to six a.m.). That meant that the disciples had been in the boat for nine or ten hours trying to get across the sea. Suddenly, the disciples saw something coming across the water toward them. They said, “It is a ghost!” The word translated “ghost” is the Greek word from which we get our English word “phantom”. The disciples did not know what they were seeing but they did not even think of the fact that it might be Jesus. The result was that they were filled with fear. Jesus immediately turned their fear to joy as He spoke to them. Jesus said, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” Here, we see that Jesus made it clear to the disciples that they did not need to be afraid because it was Him. This statement reminds us that we do not need to be fearful because Jesus is also with us at all times. Hebrews 13:5 says, “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’*”

Peter was not certain it was Jesus when he heard Him. Matthew 14:28-33 says, “And Peter answered Him and said, ‘Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.’ So He

said, ‘Come.’ And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind *was* boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’ And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’” Here, we see Peter said that if it really was Jesus, Jesus should ask Peter to walk to Him on the water. Jesus just replied, “Come.”

We have seen that Peter was a man of action. When Jesus told him to “Come”, Peter immediately got out of the boat and started walking across the top of the water to go to Jesus. Suddenly, Peter started looking around and realized what he was doing. He heard the sound of the wind and saw the size of the waves of water. Once he started looking at the waves and listening to the wind, he was no longer looking at Jesus. He immediately became filled with fear. Then, Peter started to sink into the waves because he had taken his eyes off Jesus. He immediately prayed the shortest recorded prayer in the Bible. He cried out, “Lord, save me!” One thing we see from this prayer is that a prayer does not have to be long in order for Jesus to hear and respond.

Jesus immediately reached out His hand and caught Peter as he was sinking into the waves. Then, Jesus made a statement to Peter followed by a question, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” The word translated “O you of little faith” is used five times in the New Testament. Jesus used it in Matthew 6:30, as He talked about worry in the Sermon on the Mount. The other four times Jesus used this word were in various situations where He was talking to the disciples. This shows us that worry was a common problem among the disciples when they first began to follow Jesus. In Matthew 8:26, Jesus spoke to the disciples when they were worried that they were going to drown in the middle of a storm on this same Sea of Galilee. Then, Jesus made the statement here to Peter as He rescued Peter from the waves. Finally, Jesus spoke to the disciples in Matthew 16:8 when they were worrying because they had forgotten to bring any bread.

From all of these uses of this phrase, we see that worry is associated with little faith. In four of the times, Jesus was speaking only to the disciples. Jesus followed this statement by asking Peter a question, “Why did you doubt?” Here, we see that the reason Christians worry is the fact that they doubt God. That is why Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Here, we see the solution to worry. We are to make our requests with thanksgiving to God. Thanksgiving is based on trust rather than doubt. Trust will cause us to experience the peace of God.

Jesus and Peter then got into the boat with the rest of the disciples. As soon as they got into the boat, the wind stopped blowing. This was the same thing that had happened the previous time that Jesus said, “O you of little faith.” Matthew 8:26-27 says, “But He said to them, ‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, ‘Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?’” The disciples had been following Jesus for a shorter time and so they were amazed.

However, we see that this time caused the disciples to have a greater understanding of Jesus. This time, we see that the disciples worshiped Jesus. Here, we see that the more the disciples saw, as they observed Jesus, the more they understood who He is. They expressed their worship by saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.” This was one of the events that helped the disciples to grow in their understanding of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. In the same way, we all need to continue to grow in our understanding of what it means for Jesus to be the Son of God.

We go on to read, in Matthew 14:34-36, “When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched *it* were made perfectly well.” The Sea of Galilee was known earlier as Lake Gennesaret and there was also a town by that name on the northwest side of the Sea. As a result, the area around that town was known as the land of Gennesaret. “The word “Gennesaret” means *harp*. The sea was also known by that name, because the lake was in the basic shape of a musical harp. This meant that the boat reached the shore about five miles south of the city of Capernaum. John 6:21 tells us, “Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.” Once Jesus got into the boat, it immediately went from the middle of the lake to the shore.

The men in the area of Gennesaret recognized Jesus immediately when they saw Him. Then, they sent word to the people throughout that area to let them know that Jesus had arrived in their area. At once, all of the people who had sick family members, in that area, came bringing those who were sick to be healed by Jesus. The people who brought these sick to Jesus just requested permission for the sick to touch the hem of the robe of Jesus. Sometime earlier, a woman had been healed by just touching the border of the robe of Jesus. Luke 8:43-44 says, “Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped.” People had apparently heard about this miracle and so they just asked for permission for the sick to touch the border of the robe of Jesus.

We read that all who touched the hem of the robe of Jesus were made perfectly well. The word translated “were made perfectly well” means *to save or to cure a person who is sick*. We see that every person who touched the border of the robe of Jesus was cured of whatever disease or illness they had. When Jesus had healed the woman mentioned earlier, Jesus said to the woman, in Matthew 9:22, “But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, ‘Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.’ And the woman was made well from that hour.” In the case of that woman, we see that she received both physical and spiritual healing that day. We want to help our children learn to explain to others the need for spiritual healing and not just physical healing. Spiritual healing means that the sin of unbelief has been forgiven and a person has received spiritual life. That is something that has eternal results. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain to others how to receive spiritual life.