

Jesus walks upon the waves

Matthew 14 vv.22-36.

Mark 6 vv.45-56

John 6 vv.16-21.

Evening is fast falling as a little fishing vessel sails across the lake of Gennesaret. The sun has sunk behind the clouds and darkness overspreads the lake.

In that ship are to be found the disciples of the Lord Jesus. They sit together in silence. Their faces are sober and sorrowful.

Sorrowful? ... Why is that? ... Oh, they are bitterly disappointed.

When Jesus had fed the five thousand men, the excited thankful people had wanted to declare Him as their king hadn't they?

The disciples have noticed that. They have heard the enthusiastic words of the Jews. They were very pleased. Oh, they will certainly help to crown their beloved Master. They will shout the loudest. They will stand at the front. Of course! Such a position is theirs by right, for they have followed the Lord Jesus for so long, they had been the first to be with Him.

Their hearts flutter with happy expectation. At last, at last the moment will then come when Jesus will mount the throne of the kingdom. Oh, they will march to Jerusalem and throw out that hated cruel Pilate with all his soldiers. What a happy day that will be.

But ... It is all going so differently from what they expect. So completely different. Jesus tells them to go into the ship. They must cross over to the ~~nth~~ other side of the lake.

Yes, but they are not going to do that. Just imagine it! Go away, when any moment now the excited people could proclaim their Master as king? Then they will not be present. No, indeed. They are not going. They want to stay.

But the Lord Jesus commands them to go. We read in the Bible that he CONSTRAINED His disciples to go into the ship. When someone must be constrained to do something, then it is not done willingly, but with reluctance.

So it is here too, the Lord Jesus has to constrain His disciples to go into the ship. They dare no longer to oppose the express command of their Master and reluctantly, with great dislike, they descend to the lake shore where their ship lies.

Evidently they do not sail directly over to the other side, as they had

been commanded, but they linger for a while near the shore. Perhaps they hope that Jesus will even now call them back, or that He too will come aboard. But this does not happen.

At last it becomes quite dark and they decide to sail. At last they obey their Master's command.

So you see, that is why they are sad.

But, why would the Lord Jesus not let Himself be declared king. Surely He was Israel's great King? ... Surey He was the long promised Messiah? ... Well then, why? ... Why all this? ... They cannot explain it. It was such a fine opportunity at the moment. The people were excited about the miracle of the loaves and fishes, for they had now not only seen a miracle, but they had all been fed with that miraculous bread. And now Jesus was not willing. What a pity!

The disciples of Jesus sit disheartened in the ship.

Oh boys and girls, the disciples too still thought far too much about an earthly kingdom. The disciples too still kept thinking that Jesus would one day thrust out the Romans, and that their people would again become free. They did not understand the purpose for which Jesus came to this earth.

That is why they are so disappointed. Now they sail on slowly, and staring ahead glumly, they make tracks in the darkness over the lake. No, they certainly are not happy and cheerful. On the contrary, they are cast down.

To add to their troubles the wind gets up. Heavy gusts come down upon the water from the mountains. Furthermore the wind is against them. They cannot use the sails, for then they will be driven back, and that must not happen. They must go forward.

Evidently they now took to the oars and try now to row against the wind.

Hour after hour goes by. Midnight is long passed and they are still not on the other side, not by a long way.

The wind force increases. The ship is tossed to and fro by the might of the waves like a nutshell.

They row and row, but without success. They are steadily thrown back by wind and waves. They toil and strain. The sweat drops from their foreheads, but they make no progress.

Dreadful fear creeps into their hearts. It seems just as though everything is against them. First that great disappointment, when they were sent away, just when they wanted so much to stay. And now this, the wind against them. They are in any case so disheartened, and that weakens their powers.

They have a lively memory of that enormous storm some time ago. Then too they were in mortal danger, but then Jesus had been on board. Though He had then slept so soundly that even the violence of the sea could not wake Him, yet He was on board, you see. When the danger was at its' greatest they had been able to wake Him.

Now, however, they are alone. Jesus is not with them. Now they cannot go to Jesus and call Him. This realisation increases their fear.

The wind becomes even stronger and the waves even greater. The narrow ship pitches more and more. Sometimes it creaks in all its seams.

And with all their rowing they have got no further than the middle of ~~the~~ the lake. How will they ever get to the other side? It is a terrible night for them, a night of anxiety and fear. They feel to be alone and forsaken. Who will help them in their extremity? Nobody sees them. Alone in the raging storm alone in the midst of the might of the waves and the seething billows.

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That same rough night, while the wind howls over the tops of the mountain there is a man kneeling upon the mountain side in the darkness of the night. He is ... the Lord Jesus, engaged in prayer.

He has just sent away the excited multitude. He has constrained His disciples to sail over to the other side. He Himself has gone up into the mountain. He Himself has sought solitude.

Oh, the people had wanted to make Him king, but He has firmly refused it. Yes, they wanted Him as king to drive out the Romans, but which of all those men needed Him as a Saviour? ... Who, among all those people sought forgiveness of their heavy guilt? ... Not a single one. They did not give a thought to their sins. That God's wrath over sin rested upon them, gave them no anxiety. That they lay under the might of Satan made no impression upon them. Most of them were blind to their deep misery. They were merely concerned about an earthly kingdom, not about eternal salvation. To obtain peace with God, had

... with these people. In their hearts there was no room for the

Saviour.

That is why He had refused. Certainly, He could have driven out the Romans. He could indeed have freed His people from those cruel oppressors, but He did not wish to. That was not His purpose. That was not why He had come upon this earth.

Now He is there alone on the mountain. Hour after hour goes by. Yet He still retains that bent posture.

He is praying to His heavenly Father for strength in the heavy path of suffering. Oh, boys and girls, the Lord Jesus suffered not only upon the cross, no, the whole time that He was on earth was one of deep, painful suffering. Understood by no-one, appreciated by no-one, He fought the fight alone. He would pay the great ~~xxx~~ debt of sin, pay with His own heart's blood. He was not forced to do so, He was not reluctant, but freely He did it, in love to His people.

There in solitude He prays for His whole Church. There He prays for His elect, not only among the Jews, but among all races of the earth.

Have you also an interest in that prayer? ... He prays only for His people; He prays only for ~~★~~ those who from all eternity have been chosen unto salvation. Who are those people? ... We do not know that. God has hidden that from us. What a good thing He has. To us the call comes: "Seek ye the Lord, while He may be found!" Oh children, bend your knees often, and beseech Him for mercy.

There in solitude, He also prays for His disciples, who are toiling in the midst of the lake to get to land.

At last He rises to His feet. He knows what is going on in His disciples' hearts.

He knows also, what goes on in your hearts. Your most secret thoughts are known to Him. Perhaps you do not realise that? Then give more thought to ~~the~~ God's all-seeing eye. Just remember that God is all-knowing. That would preserve you from many sins.

Look there stands the Lord Jesus. No, He does not see His disciples with His human eye. He cannot see them with His bodily eye, for He is ~~xxxx~~ surrounded by the darkness of night. He does see them though with His divine eye.

The disciples think that they are alone. They think that no-one sees them, but they are mistaken.

Jesus' heart is full of compassion. He knows that they are torturing themselves to get the ship ahead. He will help them. He will save them from their misery.

Help them? ... He cannot do that. He cannot get to them. Oh, no) ... Is there anything too wonderful for the Lord? ... No, surely not!

Look, there He descends to the lake. Look, there He places His feet upon the seething water. He is walking upon the sea. We cannot do that. We sink at once. But Jesus walks upon the waves and the turbulent sea bears Him up. This too is another sign of God's almighty power.

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We will now return to the disciples.

They have been drifting about all night long upon the raging water, and still they have not succeeded in reaching the other side. In a few hours day will begin to dawn and it will be light. The storm blows undiminished. The foaming billows beat against the ship incessantly.

Suddenly they are all startled greatly, for there ... Oh, just look ... there comes a figure gliding along over the wates.

Their eyes open wide in amazement. They are overcome with great fear. What is that ... ? Paralysed they sit in the boat and stare with astonishment at the wonderful, strange appearance.

They cry and shout in wild terror: "It is a spirit!" Their cry of fear echoes afar, but who will hear it?

Are you too sometimes afraid of ghosts? ... Yes? ... That is silly of you very silly, for there is no need to be afraid of such things. There are no such things as ghosts. Did you hear what I say? ... Ghosts do not EXIST. Remember that! Never forget it. If you see something, or hear something ... then go and have a good look and you will see that you are mistaken. Make sure you do!

The disciples, who cried: "It is a spirit," were also mistaken. They think that it is a ghost. Yes, but they can surely see the figure gliding as it were over the water? ... What is it then? ... Now, you tell me children. ...

That figure is none other than ... the Lord Jesus! He walks calmly

across the wild waves. They cannot harm Him.

Jesus hears their cry. He hears the anxious sound in their voices. At once He calls: "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

The disciples hear that voice; they recognise that voice and their fears are calmed. Oh, what joy, it is their Master. They heave a sigh of relief. And, though their hearts are still throbbing with fright, yet their great terror sinks like a stone.

It is their Master who has come to look for them in their time of need. It is their Master, who does not leave them to their fate.

Peter is the first of the disciples to speak. He answers Jesus and says: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water."

Now, why does he make such a request? Does he just want to try that too? ...

Oh no, but now that Jesus is near they are safe. ~~XXXX~~ Now there is nothing too difficult. He longs to get closer to Jesus and to be the first to meet Him. He is thankful that Jesus has appeared thus in "the nick of time".

Calmly the answer is returned: "Come."

Without hesitation Peter steps overboard on to the foaming waves. And then? ... Yes, truly, he too walks upon the sea. In the certain belief that Jesus is mighty to keep him erect, Peter walks in the direction of his beloved Master.

But ... then he takes his eyes from Jesus and sees the raging waves. He feels the strong wind blowing upon him. Oh, now he begins to sink into that grey water. Brrrr! ... The sure faith in his heart is shaken. "When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid", it says in the Bible.

Indeed, that which he feared, is already happening. He sinks down in the turbulent water. In fear of death he cries: "Lord, save me!" Gone is his trust, gone is his faith in Jesus' watchful care. Death stares him in the face.

But then a strong hand grasps him firmly and pulls him up. ~~XX~~ It is the saving hand of Jesus who rescues him from drowning.

"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Jesus asks reprovingly. It is as though the Lord says: "But Peter, why do you doubt My

power for one moment. What have you to fear? Am I not with you?"

Both of them make their way to the ship and clomb aboard. How shame-faced Peter must have been. Perhaps he dared not even to lift his eyes.

Still more happens however. At that very moment the raging storm ceases. It does not reduce it's force gradually, but suddenly, in a moment!

This is the second time that we have read of nature's power being tamed at the will of the Son of God.

Again, as on the first occasion, this wonder makes a deep impression ~~upon~~ upon the disciples. They come to Him in amazement and fall before Him in worship. "Of a truth, thou art the Son of God," they confess. Their doubt, their sadness, their troubles have disappeared. Their tottering faith is once more strengthened.

No, they are not mistaken. Jesus, their Master, is in truth the long promised Messiah, He is truly the great Son of David. Though everything else should fall out differently from what they had expected, one thing is for them again unquestionable and certain: Jesus is God's Son!

Now that the strong wind has slackened, they arrive quickly at the other shore, yes, in John's Gospel it says that "immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."

They disembark. In the meantime day has dawned.

The people in the district recognise Jesus. Soon afterwards the sick and afflicted come to Him from all sides. Those who cannot walk are carried by their friends and neighbours. They ask Him if they may but touch the hem of His garment, and all who do that are made whole at once. Not that Jesus' garment bestowed that healing upon them, but they touched Him through faith.

Oh, with many it was a "MIRACLE FAITH". They only believed in Jesus' power to heal them of their sickness or infirmity, but many did not believe in Him as the Saviour. They lacked "SAVING FAITH".

Learn from this story that Jesus knows your troubles and difficulties. Are there things which press upon you, and which you cannot discuss with anybody? Yes ...? Confide them in prayer to the Lord Jesus and ask Him to help you, ask if He will resolve your difficulties and take them from you.

Believe it - He is mighty to take away the greatest cares. How often the Lord has demonstrated that He is an ever-present help in trouble.

But ... never forget, temporal blessings are not sufficient for eternity.  
? Wonderful answers to prayer are still no <sup>sign</sup> guarantee of grace. Does the Lord  
bless you in temporal things? ... Be thankful for it, acknowledge the Lord's  
goodness for such undeserved mercies, but ... do not make them a ground for  
eternal salvation. If you learn to know nothing other than relief from  
temporal troubles, or answers to prayer concerning this world's things, then  
you will still die a lost sinner. The one thing needful for a never-ending  
eternity is saving faith in the Lord Jesus. And you cannot give yourself that  
faith, it is wrought by God's Spirit.

Oh, may you learn to know the Lord Jesus as your Surety and Saviour. Often  
ask the Lord to save you from your soul-sickness also.

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