

## LIFE IN HIS NAME

### JESUS WALKS ON WATER

John 6:16-21

Let's go to the Lord in prayer and ask for his help, then jump into our study. Lord, we come to this text and we seek the help of your Spirit to understand, to comprehend, to respond in faith. Lord, we pray that you would open the eyes of our hearts to see you and to understand more of your ways. Teach us, O God, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

John Chapter 6, verse 16-21:

*When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.*

John Chapter 6, the longest chapter in the New Testament, is all about the sufficiency of Jesus. Jesus is enough for all you need. Jesus is enough for all you want or could want. And in this paragraph in the chapter, the theme really is obvious: **Jesus is the Lord of the storm. In the midst of your storm Jesus is with you.**

It contains this *amazing* miracle of Jesus walking on the water. What else could the miracle mean, except Jesus is Lord, Lord of the storm, and with us in the middle of the storm? This miracle of Jesus walking on the water has become shorthand for doing the impossible. Even people who don't really know much about the scripture or know much about the bible will use this phrase. They will say things like, "Well, I would like to help you and I will do whatever I can, but I can't walk on water." We will hear it in songs. I just did a quick search and in entry after entry there are country songs, there are rock songs, there are hip hop songs about walking on water. They are usually love songs, like "She Walks on Water," or "He Walks on Water."

**Jesus is with you in the midst of your storm.** It is, sadly, a truth we all need to be reminded of. I say “sadly” because none of us are really eager to jump into a storm, but it’s such a helpful and practical teaching. So today we want to break it down into three parts.

- I. **The Reality of the Storm.**
- II. **Revelation in the Storm.**
- III. **The Resolution of the Storm.**

Reality, Revelation, Resolution. Let’s look at the first one.

I. **The Reality of the Storm.**

The Sea of Galilee is almost 700 feet below sea level, which is low, even for us who live almost at sea level. It was not uncommon for there to be a rush of wind that would come down in upon the Sea of Galilee and create turbulent water, and this is one such occasion. We are told that it is dark, that the 12 apostles/disciples are in the boat. Jesus is not with them. The wind is blowing, the waves are churning, the sea has become rough, and we know that they have been at it for quite a while.

Matthew and Mark both tell about this particular miracle with, I might add, a different emphasis, but adding together some of the details they give us, the disciples leave in the evening and Jesus appears to them about 3 or 4 in the morning. They are rowing these three or four miles for seven, eight, or nine hours. The storm has become rather rough and Jesus meets them in the middle of that storm.

There they are. They have just experienced Jesus supernaturally feeding 20,000 people -- 5000 men plus women and children (we estimate the crowd to be 20,000) -- with five small loaves of bread and two pickled fish. This was an amazing miracle and the apostles have to just be riding high. Then that night Jesus is not there, they are in the middle of the storm and are making no progress.

**Storms are a reality in life.** The classic New Testament passage on trials is James Chapter 1. I think it would benefit us to look there for a moment. If you could turn in your bible to the right and go toward the back of your New Testament, you will find the book of James, a short little book, very practical, very helpful. James tells us in Chapter 1, verse 3:

“...For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfast have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

If we go back one verse to verse 2, he begins that with “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds...” So, storms and trials come in many different shapes and sizes. Then he says, “...for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” **James tells us to rejoice when a storm comes into your life, because God has a purpose.**

The storms of your life are purposeful. They are not without meaning. They are not random. They are not just haphazard, reckless events. There are some things that you need to know. James tells us: “...for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” You need to know that your faith is being tested, that you are in this moment being tested, and that your character is being strengthened. That’s part of God’s purpose in the trial in your life. **You are being tested and your character is being strengthened. God is creating in you steadfastness. James specifically tells us, “...let steadfastness have its full effect.” In other words: Don’t give up, don’t quit, stay engaged, stay with God, stay on task, stay in what God has given you to do, so that God can work his full purpose.**

You know, this happens all the time, right? What do we say when we really get fed up in the trial? “I’m done.” We find all kinds of ways to say, “I’m just done.” “I’m done with parenting. I’m just waiting for grandkids,” right? “I’m done with marriage.” And when we are really done, “I’m done with women.” “I’m done with men.” “I’m done with the whole human race.” “I’m done.” “I don’t care. I’m just clocking in. I’m done with this company.”

We find all kinds of ways to say, “I am at the end.” What we are really saying (and we don’t know it in the moment) is that, “I have run out of character.” That’s not an insult, because trials can be *devastating*. A storm comes in and it rips away layers of life. It just creates havoc, and it’s understandable that we come to the end of ourselves. That’s what happens in a trial. That’s what testing is all about. James tells us from the beginning that you can rejoice in knowing there is a purpose in what’s taking place in your life -- very critical, because it just feels destructive.

So, how do you get this knowledge? If I need to have this awareness -- God has a purpose, he is strengthening me, he is testing, he is doing something beyond what I can see -- how do I get it? How do I get this knowledge? He tells us in verses 5-8:

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

James is so practical and so direct, you don't even need me to explain it to you, right? I will anyway. He tells you this. He says, "You lack wisdom. If you lack wisdom, ask God. God gives generously to everybody without a hidden agenda." So, this is what he tells you: "**You lack wisdom? Ask in prayer, then secondly, ask in faith. Expect God to answer this prayer.**"

He gives us a very clear, very black and white warning: Do *not* go in with this double mindedness, where you are on your knees in one moment: "O God, give me wisdom." The next moment you go away and say, "O this will never work, this will never make sense," where you just completely demonstrate unbelief. **Look to the Lord in the midst of the trial. Ask in prayer. Ask in faith.**

So the disciples find themselves in the middle of this storm, and we need to know from scripture that storms are a reality in life. They are not an exception. They are not just one-off, but they are a part of life. God has a purpose in them.

## II. Revelation in the Storm.

There is an unveiling that takes place in the storm. Of course, the first thing, just in general that we would say is that **there is a revelation of self that takes place in the storm.** That's part of what James was teaching us. There are some things you come to know about yourself only in the storm. There are some things that you come to be aware of about your situation, and that revelation only takes place in the midst of a trial.

In 1992, when Hurricane Andrew hit here in South Florida, I remember my wife and I taking our firstborn, a few months old, and we actually put a mattress in the interior hallway and we tried to sleep on that mattress with our three or four-month-old. If that seems an extreme precaution to you, we were new at this first of all, but secondly, if you were here you remember that they were saying that this is a devastating storm. This is going to mow houses down. This is going to bring devastation, and if you went down south of us where they got hit even harder, it happened. There were places just leveled because of this storm. We were there just for that brief time.

I remember it so vividly because we had been going through a storm in our own lives. God had been doing a miracle of rebuilding our marriage and strengthening us. I remember so vividly that when our oldest was born he had colic. It was like colic on steroids. He just seemed to never sleep and had an upset stomach all the time. We would literally go out in the middle of the night and drive around because the car seemed to bring comfort. We would take his little carrier and put it on the washing machine and let it shake him. We didn't shake him. It wasn't anything abusive. It seems so silly, but we were desperate. I was ready to get on the roof, rebuke the devil, do whatever I could.

The reason it was such a trial, it seems like such a silly thing, but we were in such a fragile state. We were like, "Lord, why? We seemed to be getting somewhere, and now we are just exhausted and on one another's nerves." I remember that we did something. We sat down and said, "Lord, we need to know your purpose in this. We are asking for wisdom. We are bringing before you James 1:5." We wrote at the top of a blank piece of paper, "Why is this happening?" And we began to make a list. The first thing we put was "Because we are prideful." We both instantly saw that if parenting was automatic and easy for us, we would be obnoxious parents. We may be obnoxious parents anyway. Nooooo! Crickets. Yeah.

It was so vivid, so clear. We began to list the grace of God visiting us in the storm. What seemed so random immediately began to take purposeful shape in our lives. **You must know that God has a purpose in everything that is taking place in your life, and that his glorious purpose is often invisible to us, but it is there.** There are things revealed about us that are only revealed in that moment.

I truly believe that in my case -- and this is not just pretend humility, or anything that I am putting on in this moment; this is not hyperbole -- in my case God wanted to deal with monstrous pride and selfishness that was destructive in marriage, in parenting, in relationship, in ministry. I use the past tense, but I am aware as I say that I don't pretend for a moment I've got this pride thing figured out, that it's no longer an issue. No, it's a battle for all of us until we die. Though in the moment a trial seems so overwhelming, it's really a mercy of God.

I want to be careful. I don't want to trivialize in any way your trial, which might be or might have been much greater than what I experienced in that moment. But I did want to and do want to illustrate this simple truth: God reveals something.

Think about the disciples. Here they are. They have seen Jesus feed 20,000 people, 20,000 people with one little lunch, and we are told in the miracle that there were 12 baskets leftover -- 12 baskets/12 disciples, right? They go down to the boat. Just suppose for a minute that they all have their basket. Each one has his basket and they are all sitting there, "Wow, look at this! Jesus is awesome! Jesus provides!" Right? Next thing you know, the bread is soaked because you are in a storm and Jesus is gone.

That's how fast it happens in our lives. Everything is fine. I had a great quiet time. And next thing you know, life is falling apart! In that instant, God makes evident what I would have never seen if you had sat and told me a thousand times over. If words alone were enough, I wouldn't need the trial. Amen?

**So, a revelation comes in the storm, but thank God, it's not just a revelation about ourselves or about our situation, but there is a glorious revelation of Jesus that comes.** Jesus comes walking to them on water. What's interesting is that we are not told that they are afraid because of the storm, but when Jesus walks to them on the water they are afraid.

I try to picture this miracle, and I don't even know how to picture it. It's not just the obvious - we don't walk on water, we sink - but it's a storm. There is no level place to stand. There are waves, and it's constantly shifting. Did Jesus level the water everywhere he went? Did he stop the storm? Were his feet just below the water? Did they ever touch the water? How did it look? What was the experience like? There is a revelation of the glory of God that in a sense is terrifying!

Friends, Jesus walks on water. He is Lord of all. He is Lord of nature. He is the Lord of your storm. Everything is under his control. And what is terrifying in part in the storm is that you come into a place where you realize: I can't fix this. I can't stop the wind. I can't stop the waves. I don't know if I'm going to survive this. I am at the mercy of God. God alone can help me. And in that place, maybe for the first time in our lives, we are brought to the awareness that we are completely dependent on God. We say that, but experiencing the reality of it is a glorious mercy of God.

Some of you are here this morning and you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ. You don't know that your sin is forgiven because of what Jesus did in your place. A storm in your life could be the very mercy of God to bring you to that realization, to help you see: "I am not all-powerful. I am not eternal. I am not holy and righteous. I need a savior."

Maybe it's something that's a result of your own actions, or maybe it's something that happens to you, but that revelation of your need and the glory of Christ is the greatest merger in life, the greatest moment in life, because what comes from it is eternal life. When we turn to him as Lord of all and say, "Jesus, save me -- come into my life -- I believe in you -- I believe you died for my sin, and I receive as a gift your help, your forgiveness, your lordship," life changes. We encounter Jesus. Many of us would say we encounter Jesus for the very first time in a storm, and many of us would say that our greatest moments of growth came in various trials in life. Jesus comes to them in the midst of the storm, and what does he say? "Don't be afraid." "It is I; don't be afraid." **Jesus is calling us to a place of experiencing his presence and trusting in him in the midst of the storm.**

Let me just say this before we leave this second point, because this is important. There is something very unusual about the recording of this particular miracle in the gospel of John. Normally John explains a miracle. He calls miracles signs, and he usually gives us some interpretation or explanation. He doesn't do that with this miracle. In fact, it just seems like it's thrown in after the feeding of the 5000. I say that because the long teaching that follows this miracle, verse 22 all the way through to the end of the chapter, is a teaching that relates back to the feeding of the large crowd.

So, you have this miracle just stuck here, tucked in here. It obviously happened in this chronology, but uncharacteristically, John doesn't offer an explanation. And the crowds that will join them once they reach their destination are not aware of what has happened. In fact, when we move forward in future Sundays we will read that they were perplexed at what had happened. How did Jesus get there?

It makes us ask, "Okay, John, why is this here?" It really does drive home this point. Do you remember the lesson of the feeding of the 5000? Do you remember we had a simple outline? 1) God's Power, 2) My Poverty, 3) God's Plan. We saw the all-sufficiency of Jesus. The oil never runs out. The flour never runs out. We looked at those Old Testament examples. We take our poverty. It seems insignificant in light of the need. We give it all to God. God's infinite resource provides for us.

And it's not just about bread for the moment. God wants us to see that he is bread. Jesus is bread. He wants us to live his plan. In other words, he doesn't want us to experience his power so we will just have our needs met, and just do whatever we want. He wants us to be a part of his plan -- his plan for blessing people, for serving people. The lesson is so powerful! There I am. I am a disciple.

I'm in the boat with a huge basket, more than we started with after feeding 20,000 people. Jesus: infinite supply. I never have to worry.

And then this miracle, which in a matter of hours undoes everything they just experienced. The lesson is this: **You are going to have trials, and Jesus is with you. Don't let those trials undo all that you know about God.** It will be powerfully tempting to do so in the moment. In the moment the reality is that all we really feel is the trial, the pain of the moment. Jesus is calling us to a place where he says, "Let me be with you. Let me reveal myself to you in the midst of your testing," which brings us to the last point.

### III. The Resolution of the Storm.

Verse 21: "Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going." There is a second miracle where they are fighting for hours. Jesus gets into the boat. We are not given any explanation except - boom -- it's over, and they are immediately at their desired destination. That tells us that **Jesus can end the storm of life at any given moment. He can bring resolution instantly in your life, and he wants us to come to a place of just trusting him.**

Have you ever been in what felt like a trial, and it went on for so long that you came to a place where you said, "You know, I don't think this is a trial, I think this is life -- I don't know that this is ever going to go away"? There are some severe trials where resolution looks like, "I'm just going to trust Jesus for this forever." It isn't easy.

Paul had an example of that for us: his thorn in the flesh. Do you remember? He prayed, "God, this is hindering me. Take this from me." And God revealed to him, "No, no, no, this is the avenue where I bring grace to you. You will experience more of me. You will walk in humility. Pride won't defeat you. This is a protection in your life." The resolution for Paul was, "Okay, Lord, I've got to trust you in this." That's difficult, but when we look at disappointment in relationship, in marriage, in family, in various dynamics, it's helpful to say, "Lord, you will give me grace through this challenge as long as it's here."

Jesus told us that to be a Christian means to die daily. "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Jesus is promising to be your sufficiency and more as you live to know him, dying to self to serve other people. We could even say it this

way: “To the degree that you live your life for others, to that degree you experience the sufficiency of Christ. He wants to be your all.”

I realize I gave a personal illustration about a storm in my life, and then I tethered that to something God showed me about myself and sin in my life. I realize that some of you are in a storm today, or you have been in a storm, and it wasn't your sin - it was the sin of someone else. Or it was just what seemed like a natural condition. I want to tell you that Jesus is still the Lord of that storm.

We will come to a passage in John where the disciples come across a man who was born blind. They will say to Jesus, “Lord, why was he born blind? Was it his sin, or was it his parents' sin?” Obviously, it just doesn't seem right if it was his parents' sin. Why would he have to suffer? And how could he have sinned when he hadn't even been born? They are scratching their heads. I'm not sure the answer brings a lot of comfort at first if you are the blind man. “He was born blind for the glory of God, because I am going to heal him and God will be glorified.” He is an adult. He has lived decades. Don't you want to object and say, “God, how can this be? How can I live to be 40, blind, and it's no one's fault?” **Because the glory of God is worth it.**

That is a *radical* statement. But the reality is that if you go through the most severe trial imaginable, but you see the glory of God...Listen, we are talking about eternity in comparison with the brevity of life. Though we would never want to just brush over the severe suffering that many people experience, and that we experience, and that we walk with others as they experience, we do want to say, **“Listen, life is found only in knowing the glory of God. We only do that through Christ, so God has ordained a pathway that his glory might be revealed. When that happens it heals all, because our God is the God of the resurrection. Our God is the God of new creation. Our God is the God of full restoration. And he tells us, “To the degree that you have experienced depletion, I will *amaze* you with my glory of restoration.” The full reality we know only in eternity, but we know it significantly here by faith through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is with you in the midst of your storms.**