

Against the Wind

Mark 6:45-6:56

Bob heard the stories all of his life that his father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all walked on the lake on their 21st birthdays. So, on his 21st birth-day, Bob and his good friend Brian headed out to the lake. "If they could walk on water, then I can too!" he insisted. Bob and Brian got in a boat and began paddling. When they got to the middle of the lake, Bob stepped off of the side of the boat... and nearly drowned. Furious and embarrassed, he and Brian headed for home.

When Bob arrived back at the family farm, soaking wet he asked his grandmother for an explanation. "Grandma, why can I not walk on water like my father, and his father, and his father before him?" The feeble old grandmother took Bob by the hands, looked into his eyes, and explained, "That's because you were born in July, dear. Your father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all born in January."

Well, the water Jesus walked on certainly wasn't frozen. Today we are going to look at the story of Jesus walking on the water in Mark 6.

- 45 Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away.**
- 46 And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray.**
- 47 Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land.**
- 48 Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.**
- 49 And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out;**
- 50 for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."**
- 51 Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled.**
- 52 For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.**
- 53 When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there.**
- 54 And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him,**
- 55 ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was.**
- 56 Wherever He entered into villages, cities, or in the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.**

After miraculously feeding 5,000 men in the wilderness of Galilee, Jesus put his disciples in a boat and sent them on their way. Their adventure mirrors the challenge of life. We find the disciples in verse 48 straining at rowing because the wind was against them.

Why were they in such a predicament?

I. Jesus Sent Them into the Wind (v.45-46)

Here's the first lesson: the Lord directed His disciples into the wind. They were on the lake because they were doing what Jesus instructed them to do. Verse 45 says, "**He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side.**" And in verse 46 Mark writes, "**And when He had sent them away.**" He made them to get into that boat. Now sometimes things can go against us because of our disobedience - we do things that are wrong, we sin, we go down wrong paths, we disobey God's revealed will in His word and so on, and it's like we're trying to row against the wind. But here they are facing the wind because they are obeying the Lord - that's interesting, isn't it?

Some Christians get the false idea that obedience to God always produces smooth sailing. But the more correct Biblical understanding is that there are storms of **correction** and storms of **perfection**. Jonah faced a storm because he was sinning and running from the Lord. These disciples face this wind storm because they are obeying the Lord.

Why would Jesus send them into such difficulty?

Verses 45 and 46 both tell us it was so that He could dismiss the crowd. Remember that Jesus had just fed 5000 plus people with two fish and five loaves. John's account tells us after Jesus fed the 5000 that the crowd wanted to make Jesus king by force (John 6:14-15). Seeing the danger of this to the people, it was time to leave. Perhaps seeing the negative affect this could have on the disciples, He hurried them to the boat. Giving them instructions, He then turned and dismissed the crowd.

Back in Mark chapter 1, when Jesus first attracted a crowd, in nearby Capernaum, He separated himself from everyone to pray and then decided, to the chagrin of his disciples, to move on to other villages to preach (Mark 1:35-39). Now here, under similar circumstances, Jesus separates Himself from both His disciples and the crowd in order to pray. Like Moses, who ascended Mount Sinai in the wilderness to meet with God, Jesus leaves for a mountain in the wilderness to pray. His plans are formed in private with God, not in public with the misguided masses.

What do you think Jesus prayed for that night? My guess is He prayed the same kind of prayer He prayed in John 17. There Jesus prays for His disciples, those who believe in Him and belong to Him.

What a wonderful picture we are given by Mark, think of that: here are the disciples in the low valley of the Lake, a storm is about to envelop them, but here we have Christ up on high praying for His servants who are below struggling.

Do you know that Jesus prays for you? Hebrews 7:25 says that Jesus always lives to make intercession for us.

So Jesus sends them into the wind. Secondly,

II. Jesus Saw Them on the Lake (vs.47-48)

The last time the disciples traveled to “the other side” of the Sea of Galilee, a wind-whipped storm swamped their boat and they appeared on the verge of drowning. Jesus was in the boat then, and He calmed the storm after the disciples roused Him. Once again, as the disciples attempt to make their way to the other side, they do battle with the wind. In this case, the wind threatens their progress, not their lives, and Jesus isn’t in the boat with them.

Verse 47 says it plainly, **"Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land."** Jesus is alone on the land, the disciples are alone, through the night on the sea. Nevertheless, Jesus is aware of their predicament, high on a seaside mountain, Jesus watched the drama. He sees them, either in the pre-dawn light of the Moon or supernaturally. Verse 48, **"Then He saw them straining at rowing."** Jesus sees his disciples’ predicament. The word "straining" means painful toiling. What normally would have been a three hour tour had lasted from sunset to the fourth watch, almost sunrise. They are probably worn out from rowing. Jesus sees your toil, your labor. In fact it is this Jesus who says to you in Matthew 11:28, **"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."**

Jesus sees your opposition. Again verse 48 says, **"for the wind was against them."** Jesus sees what you are fighting right now. He knows the forces that are against you. When you are feeling all alone, remember, you are never out of the sight of Jesus.

III. Jesus Comes to Them (vs. 48b-51)

Mark 6:48 **"Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by,"**

The disciples were tired, exhausted, at the end of themselves when Jesus appeared walking on the sea towards them. **"would have passed them by"** could be a unfortunately weak translation. Some commentaries say the primary definition of the word translated for "would" is desired. The primary definition of the word for "to pass by" is "to come up beside, approach from the side." Dr. Kenneth Wuest makes a compelling argument that Jesus, seeing the toil and futility of the disciples labor, desired to come along side them.

However, Dr. John Grassmick, using the common translation, points to 1 Kings 19:11-12, and says, Jesus wanting to pass by is a prophetic statement about showing who He really is. The Lord, in his glory, passed by Moses and Elijah, just as Jesus intends to pass by his disciples (Exodus 33:21-23, 1 Kings 19:11). There are several OT passages about God revealing Himself in "passing by." , Each case points to God wanting to reveal who He was to someone. Jesus, seeing the disciples in the storms, longed for them to know who HE was.

When Jesus walks on the sea, then, it’s not as if he thinks to himself, “I think I’ll go for a walk on the sea tonight and give the boys a thrill.” The miracles of Jesus aren’t like that. Jesus’ decision to walk on the sea is formed in prayer with the Father, in response to his disciples’ predicament, and revealing of His person and mission.

Walking on the sea, which God conquered in the first creation and in the first exodus, symbolizes what Jesus came to do: defeat evil and inaugurate the kingdom of God in a new exodus and a new creation.

Did the disciples understand it? No, they thought He was a phantom.

Mark 6:49-50 " And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were troubled."

How would you have felt? Often the Lord comes mysteriously to us. Often the Lord comes to us in our storms in ways that we don't initially recognize Him. Now maybe that's because, at times, we're not looking for Him. Maybe, like these disciples, we're trying to fight, and row, and face the contrary winds. Maybe it's because we're distracted by other things - but He came to them. Maybe you're in a storm just now, and you think the Lord has forsaken you and He's forgotten you. Maybe you don't realise that mysteriously He is very near, and you haven't seen it yet.

When Jesus came to them

1. He came addressing their fear - (III. Stop fearing and never fear again!) (2 Tim. 1:7)

1. He came declaring His authority - (III. "I AM") (He is still God - Heb. 13:8)

3. He came and got in the boat with them - The waves and the winds laid down at His feet like little puppies! III. He can calm your storm also! Matt. 28:18) (III. The span - Isa. 40:12!) III. We have been ordered to the other side and we are going to get there too!

Mark 6:51-52 "And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened."

Interesting verses. Jesus gets in the boat, the wind stops and the disciples are amazed, utterly astounded, completely baffled. Why? Mark says, because they didn't get the message about the loaves. They didn't know who Jesus was. There were still some connections they had not made. Their hearts were hardened, they were unreceptive to the identity of the Lord Jesus Christ as the great 'I Am', the omnipotent Son, the Creator of the universe.

But this passage does give us some great encouragement when we face the storm. When your in the storm, remember....

I. Jesus sometimes sends us into the wind.

II. Jesus sees us in our predicament.

III. Jesus comes to us.

Larry Crabb tells about a man who approached him after he had preached at a conference:

I saw him waiting while I chatted with a group that had gathered. When the folks left, I quickly made my way over to this short, elderly man. He put both hands on my shoulders and told me a story: "Dr. Crabb, I am eighty-four years old. Five years ago my wife died after fifty-one years of a good marriage. I cannot express the pain that I feel every morning as I drink my coffee at the kitchen table alone. I have begged God to relieve the terrible loneliness that I feel. He has not answered my prayer.

Do you know that the best spiritual insights—those that shape you and stay with you for life—often come in the darkest nights when the wind is against you? When Jesus doesn't help you in the way you want to be helped, consider whether he's trying to reveal more of who he is to you.

The eighty-four-year-old man who lost his wife and begged God to relieve his loneliness only to have his prayer unanswered also told Larry Crabb, after pausing and looking past him, "God has given me something far better than relief of my pain. Dr. Crabb, he has given me a glimpse of Christ. And it's worth it all. Whenever you preach, make much of Christ!" With that, Crabb says, the man turned and walked away.

In the middle of the night, in the middle of the sea, in the middle of the storm, when the winds of the world are pushing against you, watch for God to give you a glimpse of Christ.