

Weaving the Word

That Sinking Feeling

September 1, 2019

Welcome to where we're learning to overcome our fears!

How much are you willing to risk for Jesus? We like to place it safe with our faith. But, Jesus *hates* that. He won't allow it; because, it prevents us from building trust. **How often do fears and imaginations overpower obedience?** I think we'll be shocked to see how many of the scariest moments in our lives were arranged by the Lord for our eternal best.



He puts us in the path of a lot of storms.

When we left off, Jesus fed 5,000 men with a little boy's Lunchable.



[*And now*] Jesus, knowing that they [this, now, mob of 5,000 men] intended to come [in the morning] and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. When evening came, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat [on the country shore of Tiberias (Jn 6:1)] and go on ahead of him to [near] Bethsaida, they got into a boat and set off across the lake for [toward] Capernaum.¹ [Well, which is it?]



Critics claim it's a contradiction. But, Jesus stayed in the countryside; not in the towns. (Mk 1:45) So, contrary to contradicting, Mark and John create a precise Vinn Diagram! So, why does Jesus send the boys away? To fool the unruly mob.



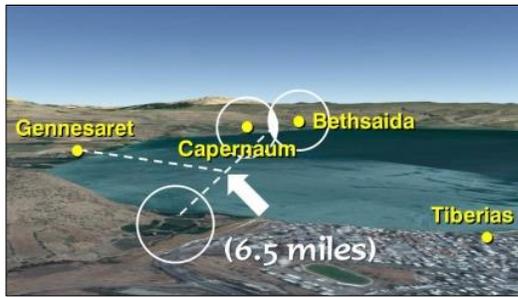
Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. [They need to see the decoys, I mean disciples, go in the only boat] After he had dismissed them, ["Time to call it a night, gentlemen"] he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray [and maybe to sleep, but definitely to wait until the wee hours, to sneak away before that mob takes action. It's the classic, "Let's split up to lose 'em!"]]. When evening came, [as in: came and went; passed (in just a moment Mark says it's around 3:00 am); that's at least eight hours from when they left] the boat was in the middle [lit. between the points] of the lake, By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. [But that's the plan; problem is] A strong wind was blowing and the boat was ... buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.



Cold night air channels down Mt Hermon to the warm air of this 8x13 mile lake, often creating sudden, violent, storms. This 1890s photo at Capernaum shows the type of boat. And, this 27' (15 passenger) actually dates to Jesus' day and location!

¹ Today's story weaves together [Matthew 14:22-34](#), [Mark 6:45-53](#), and [John 6:15-21](#) NIV

They had rowed **three or three and a half miles**, and He was alone on **land**. [lit. *crop land*]



He left the mountain to meet them at a prearranged location. When He walks on water, did you think He sprints down a mountain in the dark, and runs 3.5 miles across the sea to get to them? We're given a math equation: if 3-3½ miles (about 3.25) is the *midpoint*, doubling it gives a total of 6.5 miles, which is the distance from the fields of Tiberias to Bethsaida/Capernaum. And, what's at the 3-3.5 mile midpoint? Gennesaret.

[Mark latter says] They landed at *Gennesaret* and anchored *there*. (Mk 4:53)

[And John says] The boat reached the shore *where they were heading*. (Jn 6: 21)

[From the land] He saw the disciples straining at the oars, [trying to get to shore] because the wind was against them [forcing them further out to sea].

He sees them straining but doesn't help. Why? They didn't ask. **He waits till we ask**. He won't force Himself. **It's a matter of how long we'll man the oars**. We got this! They know He's close by, but still they don't cry.

About the fourth watch of the night [3:00-6:00 am] he went out to them, walking on the lake. **He was about to pass by them**, [Why? They hadn't cried out to Him. But, I thought He "went out to them". He did. Why? To scare 'em. Why? To help 'em. How?]

To help them cry out to Him to help them. Sometimes we need a nudge. **His hands are tied till we come to the end of our self**. It's also referred to as *rock bottom*. And maybe it's also to remind the boys who they're following. Ever since they got back from going out on their own, they seem to be acting a bit familiar, comfortable, and *back-talky*.

[Either way] They saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; [clothes glowing in the moonlight; cloak and hair waving in the wind; rising up and gliding down on the dark waves as He comes] and they were terrified. **They thought he was a ghost**.

Because, that's what He wanted and knew they would think. It's Jesus. Everything He does is on purpose. It's not like He went: "Oh, *whoops*. Sorry. I didn't realize. I was just passing by. I shouldn't have come so close to the boat. Good luck with the not dying." **He's doing the only thing a loving Savior can do with free-willed children who won't ask for help: giving 'em a reason!** And, don't write this off to superstition. The last storm ended in a cemetery being attacked by a maniac with a legion of demons! This time they get a ghost. Just another day on the job!

When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. [What do you think they cried out? "EEK!"]? In the other storm, they cried out, "Lord save us!" (Mt 8:25) As well as "SHOO!" "GO AWAY! IN THE NAME OF JESUS!"? That'd be embarrassing, huh?] They [all] cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. [Well, good job, Jesus! It's a huge help that we *always fail* to appreciate in the moment; but] **Immediately** he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." ["Because, now I can come and help and *not* pass by!"]

This explains why He doesn't help when He sees their need; why He goes to them only to pass by them; why He leads them to believe He's a ghost; and, why He responds and joins them.

Then they were *willing* to take him into the boat,

I'm guessing they'd been expressing their *unwillingness* to the ghost! This term is emphatic. They're *determined* to take Him into the boat. "Come to us, Jesus! Come in the boat! Come on!"

[But, all of a sudden, a very *different* request is made] "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell [lit. *command; order*] me to come to you on the water." [Peter is so all-or-nothing! Drop everything to follow. Cut off an ear. Risk it all. Again and again Peter flies off the handle; but then, in the OT it's the axe head that miraculously floats!] "Come," he said. Then [after being commanded] Peter got down out of the boat, [took that first crazy, heart-stopping step, and then] walked on the water and came toward Jesus. [Something doesn't make sense to me. Shouldn't his confidence *grow*? When I was young, I'd walk on the slough when it froze. The first steps were scary; but, pretty soon I'd be standing in the middle of it, throwing down a big rock, trying to break a hole in it!] But when he saw the wind, he was afraid [Had he *not* noticed it? Other translations say when he saw/felt its might/strength/noise. In other words, somebody turned up the intensity to an alarming degree] and, beginning to sink, cried out, [again – and likely the same cry they had all cried out] "Lord, save me!" [Let your words be few! Get right to the point. And, just as Jesus "*immediately spoke to them*"] Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

"You of little faith" isn't an insult here. It's like a dad saying, "Hey little man, what happened?" How could Jesus *not* be proud of him? "Hi all you in the boat ... *of no faith*. But, look at *this guy*! He's actually *got* some! Did you see how *hard* I got that wind blowin' before He lost it?! *That's my little man of faith* I'll tell you!" **Who do you think cranked up the wind?** It's like when I'd walk on the ice with confidence ... till I heard a loud *cracking*!

Faith is all about taking that first step, building confidence, and keeping your eyes on Jesus when you hear the ice crack. All He needs to work with is a mustard seed of faith. **The critical factor in faith isn't its size, but its object.** Focus on your spouse and you'll be faithful. Let your eyes wander and you'll begin to sink. **Peter's only problem was that he stopped looking to Jesus.** I don't blame him. I've stepped out in faith, heard the ice crack, took my eyes off Jesus, and had that sinking feeling. Matthew, who stayed in the boat, says ...

And when *they* climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

Jesus could've calmed the water before Peter walked on it. But, where's the fun in *that*? **He wants to walk us through the storm.** With Jesus, it's all about *stretching* and *training* and *testing*.

[Matthew goes on] Then those [of us] who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." [Remember when Jesus calmed the first storm, "*They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this?'*" (Mk 4:41) Well ...]

Well, at least they realize who's in their boat! *Do you?*

Or, are you gonna man those oars and fight that storm on your own?

[But Peter, who got *out* of the boat, says] Then *he* climbed into the boat with *them*, [the other eleven] and the wind died down. *They* were completely amazed, ["What just happened?! Peter! You walked on water!" But, Peter was like, "Why didn't you *all* come out?"] for **they had not understood about the loaves**; their hearts were *hardened*. [But they'll soften. It's a process. It'll just require more pressure.]

Peter understood something about the bread that they'd missed.

"Jesus *commanded us* to feed the people. But, **instead of asking for directions or instructions we focused on our own means**, and said, 'We *can't*. It's *hopeless*. Send them *away*.' Jesus *commanded us* to take stock of what we had to offer. But, **instead of faith, we had a sinking feeling of being asked to do the impossible by an unreasonable Rabbi**, and said, 'We don't have anywhere nearly enough; and we can't afford to *buy* the amount we'd need.' The Bread was a test, and it's part of our training!"

[Remember?] He said to Philip, "Where *shall* we buy *bread* for these people to eat?"
[But] He asked this only to test him, – John 6:5b-6a NIV

"Then He commanded us to bring Him what little we had, and to organize the masses, and seat the people, and serve the bread. **And when we did as told, we made way for a miracle**. The bread was stretching, and training, and testing our obedience."

He's teaching us to trust and obey so we can do what He does.

Why does Peter say, "*Command me to come to You*"?

Because, you can't express obedience without a command to follow.

So, do you seek His commands so you can walk in obedience?

When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there and immediately the boat *reached* [i.e. *was at*] the shore where they were heading.

Because, Gennesaret – and the storm – was the plan all along.

You can't play it safe and follow Jesus. He won't allow it. You'll never build trust.

How much are you willing to risk for His sake? Peter would call that, *leaving the boat*. Jesus would call it, *just another day on the job*. **Don't let fears and imaginations overpower your obedience.** Get out of the boat. Walk on the water.

Have a little faith.

Don't give Him a reason to "Ghost" you!