

I AM – FEAR NOT

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Scripture: John 6:16-21

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¹⁶ Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷ got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. ¹⁸ Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. ¹⁹ So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. ²⁰ But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." ²¹ Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.

Professor Joseph reminded us a few weeks back from John 20:30-31, saying:

"³⁰ And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Let us pray. Abba Father, we look to You. We pray that You will speak to us from Your Word. Even as we meditate on the signs that are recorded for us, we pray that You may work in our hearts, that Your Holy Spirit will touch us where we need to be touched. That as we meditate on Your Word, Lord, that we will hear You speak to us. in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The last few weeks we have been looking at the signs, and today we are at the sign of Jesus walking on the water.

Geographical context.

Just to give a little context here, the word that is continuously used is the word 'sea'. But you will realize that what we are talking about is the Sea of Galilee, also known as Lake Tiberias, or the Lake of Gennesaret, or Lake Kinneret. It is the lowest freshwater lake in the world. To give you an idea of the size, it's 21 kilometers long and 13 kilometers wide. This means that the length is almost like from Powai to Colaba, and the width is like from Bandra to Vashi. And storms were usual in this sea, even to date. Lately, I believe the lake has shrunk a bit. Because of the geography, the mountains surrounding it, the temperature difference and the winds that blow, storms are usual.

Scriptural context.

We all would have realized that 6 or 7 of the disciples of Jesus were fisher folk. They were originally fishermen, and this was their home ground, the place where they did their daily fishing. They were used to these storms. That's one aspect I'd like you to hold in your mind as we look further as to what is happening.

Parallel passages.

There are two other passages which record the same incident:

- Matthew 14:22-34. This one also has one additional verse. ³³ Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." Just something for you to hold on to.

- Mark 6:45-54. This passage is almost like the passage in John with one little difference. I actually makes a statement there saying: For they had not understood (they being the disciples) about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

Immediate context.

This situation here, is immediately following the feeding of the 5,000 men, or 20,000 people approximately. Last Sunday we heard how trying to work on our own thought processes versus God's processes, and how different they are. Here too, they wanted to make Him king, as we see in John 6:15, "When Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself, alone."

Here we see that Jesus had something else in mind as to how He was going to go into Jerusalem. He was going to be welcomed as a king, but this was not the time. Even though the people were very eager, their whole outlook was he bread that He had supplied. We see what happens on Palm Sunday. But now, Jesus sends them away and He goes up to pray. This is something that you need to remember here again, that He is the one who sent the disciples on their way. They have not understood the whole idea of this feeding and what exactly it is. And that's the other part of the context that we see immediately following this passage, in v. 22 right through to v. 58. I would encourage you to read it later. It is gripping in terms of the way He actually presents Himself to the people who take up an argument with Him.

What is happening here?

The disciples are rowing. The winds are against the direction that they want to go. Rowing is really hard work. Your hands get calluses within a couple of days of trying it. It's taken them almost the whole night to move just about 3 miles, not even half the distance they were supposed to cover. That's the situation they are in.

Jesus comes walking, and it's obvious that they've seen Him from some distance away. Peter calls out, "Can I come over to you?" which means there is some amount of light. Now remember, these are the same people who have been in the storms of that lake. But this is one feature of that lake that they've never seen – somebody coming across walking on water. So, the disciples are obviously terrified.

Then Jesus says, "I Am. Fear not!" Depending on the translation, you might find the word: 'It is I,' or 'I am here'. But the Greek that is used here, *ergo eimai*, translates directly to 'I Am'. Hold that thought. Jesus steps into the boat and immediately they reach their destination. No more rowing. Jesus is in the boat.

What does this mean?

The disciples are not doing something that the Lord didn't ask them to do. They are doing exactly what the Lord asked them to do. The Lord said, "Go ahead." They are on His mission. So they are going. The winds are against them. You almost feel that if there was a phone, they would have called Jesus back and said, "Jesus, You asked us to go. Why is the wind out here? Shouldn't we have had safe, easy passage?" No.

The point I want you to pick up from this point here is that sometimes we might be going in God's will, for God's purposes. And things may be totally in opposition. Things may not be going the way we want it to go. We might not be making much headway. But remember, Jesus will come. And when He comes, He will take us through.

I AM.

Look at this word “**I Am**”. If you have any amount of familiarity with the Bible, then you will realize that this is now God the Father introduces Himself, or rather tells Moses to introduce Him to the Israelites. When Moses asks, He says, “Tell them ‘I Am’ has sent you.” So, here we see the beautiful name of God. We will come to the significance of that a little later. We see this used in a few other places, right here in the book of John itself. John 8:24 “for unless you believe that I Am, you will die in your sins.”

John 8:56-58 Jesus is answering the criticism of the Jewish leaders. He says, “⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”

⁵⁷ Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am.”

If there was any question in terms of the previous reference being maybe a twist or something like that, Jesus leaves no room for doubt in this place.

John 18:6 When Jesus is in the garden and Judas is going there with the soldiers to arrest Him. If you remember this scenario, when Jesus said I Am, they drew back and fell to the ground. These are soldiers, not to be easily put off. But just the very way He said it “I Am”. They fell to the ground. But in today’s passage, Jesus doesn’t use that way of saying it. He uses those words, but He uses them differently. He says, “Fear not. I Am”.

We see a difference in the way that it happened at the mountain with the burning bush. God asks Moses to come up there. He tells him, “Not even an animal should come here. Moses, you take off your footwear. It’s a holy place. Nobody can come.” But when Jesus came in, apart from ‘I Am’, He tells the disciples: Fear not. This is something that we want to be very cognizant of. Because they were terrified. Their whole reason for being terrified is just seeing an apparition walk on water, or so they thought. But it was Him in flesh and blood walking on water. They are terrified, and He says “Fear not!”

This is something which we have heard from Jesus time and again: Fear not! We recognize that Jesus is the Son of God. He balances that whole aspect of fear with love. He came down to this earth, into creation. John 1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. He was there. He was the person who made everything – the water that He was walking on, this whole earth. God stooped down into creation for our sake. Because that was the only way that we could be saved. And that’s something that He just did out of His love for us.

Walking through a storm, the powers that He had, it’s something that we wouldn’t even be able to visualize. Of course, now with all this artificial intelligence on media, movies can make it look like people with special powers can do all sorts of things. But it just doesn’t happen. There are illusions which can be made to look like the real thing, but it was only Jesus who ever really walked on water. Please remember that this is not the first time that He has been in a storm with the disciples. There is one other instance which is recorded, both in Mark as well as in Matthew. And in both instances, it efficiently happens a few chapters ahead so we know that it is early in His time on earth.

The disciples’ response is what is interesting for us to see. When they see Him, when they acknowledge that it is He that is walking on the water, they step out. “Truly You are the Son of God.” That was their response. When we see this, what is our response? Do we recognize that the intended purpose of all these signs that we have been seeing is to get us to that point of seeing who Jesus is? Do we see Him the way He is? And if we do, what does that do for us? Do we recognize that it is God who came in for our sin’s sake? What does that do to me? If I recognize that it is God, then I cannot be indifferent to that. There is no room for that. I cannot ignore this fact. This is something which,

once you realize that it is God, and He stepped in for my sin, then the question is: what do I do about it? If I still live my life the way I live it, then that is just not going to make that statement a reality. If I recognize that Jesus is Lord, what is that doing to my life? That is something which I want to ask you.

The other point I want to make here is that Jesus is sovereign. He is the One who created. And is that something that I am willing to accept in my life – that He is sovereign? Am I still trying to live my life the way I want to rather than the way He has asked me to? Are there areas in my life that I have not yet given to Him? Are there areas that I'm holding on to Him? It's a good time for us to see what are those things in the light of who He is. That makes a difference.

I Am is a phrase with so much power. It is not 'I was' or 'I will be'. He's eternal. He is a God who exists. He is a God who is self-sufficient. He is not created. There is nothing behind Him in the past that is other than Him. And there is nothing ahead of Him in the future that is other than Him. What we also learn out of that is that He does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

So, what is it that we take out of this incident as we summarize this passage?

1. If you are a believer, and if you are in a difficult place even though you feel that you have done everything that God has been asking you to, remember that things don't always go according to the way you plan. But, when Jesus steps in, He will take you to that place where you need to go.
2. Do I understand what it means to fear? Is my circumstance so difficult that I am caught up in fear? If I am in that place of fear, am I allowing Jesus' words to minister to me? I Am; do not fear. If I am in that place where I acknowledge Him as Lord, am I allowing that knowledge to transform my life? Or is it just head-knowledge – a verbal statement that does nothing for me? As we look deep inside ourselves, we need to look deeper. What are those areas? Where am I not in God's will? What is it that I do know? Where do I not recognize God as sovereign in my life?

Let us pray.

Holy Spirit, open our eyes that we may truly see God in all His power and authority. We pray that the awe and terror in our lives are also transformed into love and obedience. I pray for each and every person here. I pray that You will step into our lives reminding us, teaching us, revealing to us what You want us to do. Thank You for the written word. Thank You for the Living word. We praise You and pray this in Jesus' most precious name.

Amen.