

Jesus Walks on the Water

²² Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵ Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷ But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸ "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹ "Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

³⁴ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵ And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him ³⁶ and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What has happened earlier in the day, prior to the disciples being sent on ahead of Jesus to the other side of the lake?

Jesus had come from across the Sea of Galilee to find a solitary place for he and the disciples to rest, but instead encountered a large crowd seeking him. He had taught them and healed their sick, then he fed them (over 5000 people) with five loaves and two fish.

2. What did Jesus do after he had dismissed the crowd?

He sent the disciples ahead of him back across the lake and went up on the mountainside to pray.

3. How did Jesus catch up with the disciples who were already out on the lake?

He walked across the lake toward them on the water.

4. What was hindering the disciples from getting across the lake?

The wind was buffeting against them and they were making slow progress.

5. When they saw Jesus what was the disciples' reaction?

They were afraid because they thought that it was a ghost.

6. What did Jesus say to the disciples as he approached them?

"Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

7. What did Peter want Jesus to do to prove his identity?

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

"Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

8. What happened to Peter when he saw the wind and became afraid?

"When he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

9. What did Jesus do in response to Peter? What did he say to him?

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

10. When Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat what was the disciples' reaction to Jesus then?

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

11. Where did Jesus and the disciples finally come to shore?

When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret

12. What was the reaction of the people there where they landed?

And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country

13. How were some of them healed? What did that demonstrate about Jesus' power? About the faith of these people?

People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed. In comparison to the disciples lack of faith, the people showed great faith in believing that just touching the hem of his garment would bring healing.

DISCUSSION

1. In previous lessons in Matthew we identified Jesus' use of allegories (short stories, parables, or picture stories that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning) as he taught. Similarly, some commentators take the story of Peter walking on the water not only as a description of a miracle, but also as an allegory about the early church. In that line of thought, the church is represented by the disciples out at sea without the physical presence of Christ with them in the boat, intentionally sent forward on its mission. Peter represents all disciples, all Christians, who find themselves at the same time full of faith and full of doubts. Jesus is portrayed as always watching, encouraging, empowering and ready to catch us when we fall short. *How might this allegory help us to see ourselves as we are in mission for Christ today?*
2. Peter is often portrayed in this story as being impetuous. He is chastised for taking his eyes off of Jesus and putting his attention on the wind and waves, thus sinking and needing to be saved from his doubts. Another interpretation of this story is that his error came before his stepping out of the boat when he cried out to Jesus challenging him to prove himself. "Lord, if it is you..." (which sounds like the challenge posed by Satan in Jesus' temptation, "If you are the Son of God...") Jesus had already identified himself to the disciples, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." So why then did Peter feel compelled to challenge Jesus? *If Peter here represents all disciples, all Christians...what does this say about us?*
3. The account ends with Jesus arriving in Gennesaret and the people there spread the news of his arrival and they bring out their sick to be healed, by simply touching the hem of his garment. *What does that say about their faith as compared to the disciples' faith out on the sea?*