

The Jesus Series: Retreats and Storms

Sunday, August 5, 2018

John 6:16-21

There are 71 verses in **John 6**. The first 15 look at Jesus feeding a massive crowd with 5 barley cakes and 2 small fish. Coming up is 50 verses dedicated to Jesus teaching about how that miracle is about His person and mission. And in between there are 6 verses given to this other little thing Jesus did: walking on water (and depending on how you read the text, perhaps a 2nd miracle as well). To me, this account seems a bit understated. Here you have this MASSIVE work of Jesus, exerting his authority over the very laws of nature and it almost seems like a quick side story that John gives. But I think there may be a reason behind that. I believe this miracle was primarily intended for the spiritual development of the disciples who experienced it. Although certainly later recorded by 3 of the 4 gospel writers for our own study. Each one gives a some differing details about what happened. This is not surprising, as each gospel author was writing for different purposes; and therefore each tend to emphasize different aspects of the life and ministry of Jesus. So these accounts - rather than contradict - actually complement each other and when put together give us a full view of this miracle. So in your handout, I have the text from **John 6**, and in the bullets some of the complementing details provided in the other Gospels. Let's pray and begin to dive in.

16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, **17** got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

From Mark 6:45-46 and Matthew 14:22-23 we see that Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After which Jesus went up on the mountain to pray until late in the night.

18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.

From Mark 6:48 and Matthew 14:24 we see that they were making headway painfully, and that the boat was being beaten by the waves, because the wind was blowing against them.

19 When they had rowed about three or four miles (about ½ way across) they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. **20** But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

From Mark 6:48-50 and Matthew 14:25-27 we see that Jesus meant to pass by them, but they saw him and thought He was a ghost and were terrified so they cried out in fear and Jesus turns to them. Mark's language is intriguing and reminds us of how God caused his presence to 'pass by' Moses in Exodus 33 so that Moses could see His glory. Job said **God alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the**

waves of the sea (Job 9:8). So here Jesus is giving these men an opportunity to see **His glory**, His divinity, as the son of God, who tramples the waves.

From Matthew 14:28-32 we see that Peter calls out to Jesus, "If it is you command me to come to you on the water". Jesus obliged and Peter got out and walked to Jesus on the water. Peter then begin to look at the wind still raging, he was afraid, and started to sink. Jesus reached his hand out and took hold of Peter saying, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

From Mark 6:51-52 and Matthew 14:32 we see that the the winds ceased the moment Jesus entered the boat. That the men worshipped and declared He is the son of God, yet were utterly astounded for they were still dealing with hard (dull) hearts and did not fully understand Him.

21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, **and immediately** the boat was at the land to which they were going. **John 6:16-21** There is possibly the second miracle on the sea. Some scholars, dating back over 1900 years, believed this language to be take literally. That as Jesus came onboard and calmed the sea, the boat was instantly at the shore. If so, this may have been ANOTHER sign to the disciples of the divinity of Christ. It is said of God in **Psalm 107: Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; 24 they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. 25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; 27 they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 29 He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.**

So there is so much in this passage, but today we are going to focus on 2 primary observations from this text, both with application to our personal spiritual growth (discipleship).

First - **Observe Jesus retreating to be alone with the Father.** We see this in **Matthew 14:23** above; but we also see this throughout the gospels as a consistent way of life for Jesus that He modeled for his followers, as well as brought them into personally. He continually made time to retreat and be alone with God. Seemingly because Intentional time with the Father, strengthened his Spirit and continually set His direction.

I am adapting this from another pastor - but ask yourself this question: **Do I primarily live from reaction, conformity, independence, or intentionality?** This is a question of how we primarily determine what we do with our lives. To live from **reaction** - means your life is dominated by what pops up; urgencies, deadlines, pushy people all steer your routine. **Conformity** - means your life is dominated by what others need, expect, or want you to do. Which **may** or **may not** be God's will at any given time. **Independence** - is the opposite of conformity. Life is determined by what you want; you rebel against authority and anyone telling you or asking you to do something. And finally, **intentionality** - Where you live your life through very **prayerful, biblical perspective**; as you spend time with God and allow him to direct and convict you through His word. I want to commend to you today, **that a disciple of Christ**

follows the pattern of Christ; and that is intentional living fueled by the spiritual strength and the spiritual direction received from the Father **in retreat**. Prayer Focus: *May we seek Him daily for His truth for our specific situations and lives.*

David Matthis - an author with *Desiring God* - says this, *"We are humans, not machines. We were made for rhythms of silence and noise, community and solitude. But merely getting away is not enough. For those of us who are in Christ, we want to come back better, not only rested, but more ready to love and sacrifice. Getting away is no special grace on its own. But the goal is to create a context for enhancing our hearing from God in His word, and responding back to Him in prayer."*

Christ followers need consistent retreats with God. I believe there should be small daily retreats in our lives that may last 30-60 minutes or so; but consistent. Followed by periodic times throughout the year where you take longer retreats that may be several hours or even multiple days. It will require sacrifice. Know that up front. Married couples will have to help each other with this. It is going to cost you sleep or it is going to cost you entertainment. But it is going to cost you more if you fail to do this. **God must work on you, to be able to effectively work through you**. Many of our life struggles at work, in relationships, marriage, church and beyond directly relate back to our damnable natural inclination to do everything in our own strength. *In this season of my life, this is one of the biggest struggles I am facing. Feel free to ask me about it.*

What should your retreats consist of? I suggest a Bible, a Journal, and Prayer. Ask God to speak. Read and intake the word. Pray whatever comes to mind after you read. And then write down Thanksgivings of recent grace you have seen in your life. Write down what God impressed upon you as you were reading and praying that day. And write down intentional life and spiritual goals based on conviction. There is much more that we would say there but we need to move on.

Second observation and application - Observe how Jesus used the storm to strengthen the disciple's dependence and trust on him.

Storms come. You can call them trials or suffering, but very few days will be without one. It might be short lived: a bad headache, unmet expectations, an unexpected bill; an argument with a spouse; a rebellious child; or a broken down car. Some storms last longer than others and may carry on for a season or more: relationship issues, addictions, marital strife, ministry disappointments, health issues, job loss, money woes. Ultimately, when we are faced with these things - we will ask ourselves Why? That is a perfectly natural question. And the general answer is **Life in a fallen world**. Sin brings death and decay; and we live in a world that is sitting under the curse of sin, and we will not be immune from the impact.

But, at the same time we do know and believe in the sovereignty of God over all things; specifically we can focus on his sovereign hand on the life of the believer. So when storms come, we may ask God specifically why they have come to us; knowing his care and compassion and authority over us. And it is my belief that it is very important that we have a **good theology** when it comes to the storms of life.

So let me say this pointedly: Not every storm will have an answer, either right away or perhaps even at all. The disciples went through a progression of development. They were dull in hearing and understanding. It would not always be like that - they were going to grow. **But growth takes time**. So our understanding of what God is doing may come clear only as we grow in him. It may be years before you can look back at a storm and understand what He was doing fully. And as Paul said in **1 Corinthians 13:12...Now I know in part; then I shall know fully**. We do have to understand some storms, may never be fully understood in this life. And it takes maturity in Christ to be patient and willing to wait for God to reveal what we need to know in His timing.

But with that said - I do believe we can (and must) consider some possibilities of the cause of storms from a biblical foundation. **Some storms come because of sin**. Sin brings chaos. We may sin or someone may sin against us, and storms will come. Remember the man Jesus healed in **John 5 (stop sinning, that nothing worse may happen to you)**. If we are sinning, we will create storms for us and those close to us; and the answer is to repent. Turn from the sin, for the storm to stop. If we are suffering because of someone else's sin, I believe the bible would call us to forgive the person (as we are discussing on Wednesday nights right now) and seek godly, wise counsel on how to proceed and navigate the storm.

Secondly, some storms can be the result of a spiritual attack. Think about **Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places**. I absolutely believe that some storms come from the enemies' warfare against God's people. And I believe those attacks must be dealt with spiritually, which is the point of Paul's message in **Eph 6**. Spiritual issues must have spiritual answers, so in those instances we must begin with prayer and I would say get others in your community involved to pray with you, consistently.

Some storms may come due to lack of faith. This may be one we raise an eyebrow at; It may be we are rightly on guard against the twisting of the gospel that says *it's never God's plan for you to have storms and therefore if you do have storms its because you lack faith*. That is not biblically sound - as we are about to see. **BUT** - if you ask the question - do some storms come because I lack faith (trust in God)? Biblically we say **yes**. Abraham, Jonah, Moses, Peter (in this text today), are all men who went through storms that ultimately were caused by their lack of trust in God. When we lack faith, we have a tendency to strike out on our own to try and solve problems; and the common outcome is that we create our own storms. The solution here is to **GROW** in steadfastness, trust, faith **through** deeper intimacy with Christ. **Colossians 2:6-7** says that we become established in our faith as we live, rooted deeper and deeper in Christ. **Jude 20** says we can **build ourself up in the faith by praying in the Holy Spirit**. Both of these point us back to the critical act of retreats with God. More established faith prevents storms caused by doubt in the provision of God.

And finally **some storms come because God has ordained them to, in order to grow you spiritually**. You and I need this in our theological tool box; I said at the beginning that I thought this miracle was understated, because it was primarily for the spiritual growth of the disciples. Jesus put these men into a

boat, and sent them into a storm. He did this, that He might come to them and they might see His glory, reach out to Him, and experience His deliverance; This event would be a huge part of their spiritual formation.

Take Peter - He asked Jesus - COMMAND me to come to you; That is a bold request. The storm is still raging. There is one place worse to be than on a boat in the middle of the sea during a storm; and that is to be out of a boat in the middle of the sea during a storm. Peter came out - he walked to Jesus. Bold faith. But then, his eyes started to look at his circumstances. He doubted that the one who called him out - would sustain Him. His fear rose up and trampled on His faith. And he began to sink. And Jesus pulled him up - and said, Peter - **little faith**. We have to work on that. You have to grow. There are bigger things for you to do ahead in my Will. You can't be bold one moment, and fearful the next. You need greater steadfastness.

James 1:2-4 Tells us that there is joy to be found in storms: **that they lead to our maturity in the faith, so that we lack no good thing**. Some storms God ordains to send us into. And it is important to note - it is not for your destruction; it is not for your harm; it is for your ultimate good. It will not be your end; rather it will be for your the genuineness of your faith; it will be for spiritual fruit; You will be a greater man, woman, child of faith because of it. And your impact for the Kingdom will be far greater. So look to Jesus and learn.

If time: theological bents

Some storms are avoidable (see above) and I think it's ok to pray to avoid the ones that are not necessary. But when an ordained storm comes - intended for us to learn and grow - I believe the storm will end when we have matured as God planned for that moment. Can we hasten its end? Perhaps(?) Submission is better than resistance. Ask Him - *Jesus what are you wanting me to learn in the midst of this? How do I submit to what you are doing in my life right now, as unpleasant as this is?* What would you draw out of my heart, that should not be there?

John can come up:

Church, **Fear and Faith are always at odds. They Let faith arise in us!** How?

Retreats with the Lord. Let him build you up!

Trust in the midst of storms, look to Him and believe. He will not let you sink.

And it all begins by reaching out to the hand that Christ has extended. Have you ever reached out to Him? Would you do that today through salvation and then baptism?

Prayer Room