

John 6:16-21

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.

16,17 Mark 6:45 tells us Jesus made them go. He sent them into the coming storm. Sometimes He does that with us too, because it will help us see more clearly that He is greater than the storms of life.

Remember that they came there to rest but ended up ministering to a huge crowd. Then Jesus went up the mountain (the Golan Heights) to find rest in His Father. When we feel we are burning out, it is not so much physical rest we need, though it is important. The main rest is communion with Him. Remember Jesus said if we are weary or burdened we can find rest for our souls in Him (Matthew 11:28,29). Jews believe God is in the seventh day of creation, the day of rest. So when we come to Him we enter into His rest. See Hebrews 4:11.

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

18 This is a common occurrence even today. The lake is 600 feet below sea level. Cool air comes off the Mediterranean Sea and flows down past the Horns of Hattin replacing the warm air over the lake. It would push them southeast, away from their destination. I have had to cancel boat trips on the lake because of the same condition.

19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.

19 That is the total distance they needed to travel, so we can see they were pushed out toward the middle of the lake.

Jesus was walking on the water! I have heard pathetic excuses such as He was walking on a sandbar or rocks. That completely ignores the lake and the conditions on the lake. Jesus is the master of matter. John is sharing with us the signs that prove that Jesus is the Lord of all: water turned into wine (John 2:11); the dead are raised to life (Mark 5:42), the paralyzed are made whole (John 5:8), The multitudes are fed (John 6:11-12), and water changes its properties at His will. There is no explanation for this except that He is the Master of matter. He made it, and He can change it. Job 9:8 tell us that it is God that treads on the waves of the sea. The psalmist (93:4) tells us YHWH is mightier than the thundering waves!

The people around Galilee believed the depths of the lake to be the abyss. They thought it was the place of departed souls. When Jesus said that if someone sinned against a child, it would be better to have a millstone hung around their neck and thrown into the sea, He was standing by this lake (Matthew 18:6). They saw this as a most horrific way to go. Who wants to be down there with all those evil souls? No wonder when they saw Jesus walking on the water that they thought it was a ghost. "Terrified!" is not overstating it! They probably saw the shadowy figure of Jesus as the Grim Reaper coming to take them all down to their watery grave.

20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

20 He shouted over the waves, "I AM!" Does not that make all the difference in the world, to know that God is with us (Psalm 27:1)? That is just what Jesus had

experienced on the mountain, God the Father with Him. He sent the disciples into the storm so they would be almost as desperate as He was for the presence of God. I do not know what would make you panic. For these men it was sinking into the lake. Sometimes God takes us to our fears to make us desperate for Him, but also to show us that we fear the wrong things. There is only one thing we should fear, being out of the will of God (Luke 12:4,5). That is another sermon. Whatever God sends us into, He is there to see us through. The One who is mightier than the great waves of life is walking on those waves as if they were nothing. He is there to see you through safely to the other side. "I AM" is wherever you are, but do not expect Him to rescue you from the consequences of your own sin. He'll see you through even those consequences, but He may not rescue you out of them, because we may need the lesson driven home.

"Do not be afraid." How many times have we seen this comforting command? God speaks it in the Old Testament (Genesis 15:1). Angels speak it in the Old and New Testaments (Daniel 10:12; Acts 27:24), and now we see it coming from the lips of Jesus. To fear a situation is to lack faith in the God who sustains us and who has planned every day of our lives (Psalm 139:16). To fear is to have the frame of mind that God is either unconcerned about your situation, or powerless to do anything about it, and we know both of those thoughts are unbiblical. So, when we fear, we are doubting Scripture (Isaiah 41:10). We are doubting I AM.

Matthew tells us how Peter responded. John is on his way to telling us the sermon that took place upon their arrival that ties in with previous passages, so he left this part out. I think we should read it, just to get a more complete picture of what took place, but I won't elaborate on it today. Matthew 14:28-33

²¹ Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

²¹ This very event seems to be foretold in Psalm 107:25-30. 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.

They would only let Jesus in the boat when they were certain it was He and not some spirit that had come to drag them to the depths of the abyss. Suddenly, they were at their destination.

There is some difference among the Gospel writers about where they were going. Two agree that they landed in Gennesaret, John says they were headed to Capernaum. It could be that after being blown off course, they landed in Gennesaret (where the boat was headed because of the wind blowing them further south?). The people went to Capernaum to look for them but heard word that the disciples were in Gennesaret and went on to meet them there. The next sermon was spoken in Capernaum. The exact location is not as significant as the message of the "I AM" coming to us in the midst of our storm and commanding us not to fear (Psalm 46:1,2).

Questions:

How did Jesus model entering into that rest?

Why did the figure on the lake terrify them?

What causes us to enter into storms? Why?

What did Jesus say to them? Why is that comforting?

What does our fear say about our mindset?

What point is John driving home?

When does Jesus get in our boat?