

**In Our Boat** John 6:16-24 [www.bible-sermons.org](http://www.bible-sermons.org) September 7, 2008

After the miraculous sign of feeding the 5000 men plus women and children, Jesus sent the disciples back across the lake, while He went up the mountain to pray. That would be the area that we call the Golan Heights today. The story today is also in the other Gospels, so we can get additional information from their accounts. Jesus had a way of disappearing into the crowd. He did it several times when His life was threatened. (Luke 4:30) He did it after healing the man at the Pool of Bethesda. (John 5:13) Now He does it again.

Remember, He and the disciples had originally come to this location to get away and rest. (Mark 6:31) Jesus will be up most of the night. That leads me to believe that the rest He needed was not physical sleep, but to be alone with the Father. Jesus said that if we would come to Him, we would find rest for our souls. (Matthew 11:28-29) He found rest for His soul, (mind, will, and emotions) by going to the Father. Our souls get weary as we face the difficulties of life and the fallen condition of this world. The pain of others can become a burden for us. Our own dilemmas add to that weight. Deadlines and commitments add even more. We live with a watch on our wrist that measures seconds, and we try to use them all. It all adds to the burden on our soul. Jesus knows how it feels, and He showed us what to do. Go to the Father. Get alone with Him and surrender the burden to Him. (1Peter 5:7) Ask Him which direction to go and what step to take next.

The song we sang says it perfectly. "O soul are you weary and troubled, No light in the darkness you see. There's life for a look at the Savior, And life more abundant and free. (chorus) Turn your eyes upon Jesus! Look full in His wonderful face! And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace."

I know I'm not alone in finding this to be one of the most difficult efforts in my spiritual life. It is hard for me to be still and just focus on God's presence, (Psalm 46:10) but when I do, it's so wonderful and so spiritually refreshing. As I was preparing this sermon, I was way behind schedule, but when I got to this point I realized that I needed to stop right then and there and get alone with Him. How could I tell you to do it when I was neglecting it myself? So I left my watch behind, and ignored the schedule I was on, found a quiet, secluded place, and looked on the face of my Savior. Ahhhh! That is the rest we all need. And everyone said, "Amen!" You know you need it. We are deluded if we think we can carry all the burdens of life without Him! (Habakkuk 2:20)

It you are trying to live the Christian life without living in the rest of God, you are going to break down. You can't do it. The author of Hebrews tells us that to believe is to enter the rest of God. He goes on to warn us, <sup>11</sup> *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.* Hebrews 4:11 (NIV) He was warning us that we can be

**Commented [notes1]:** 30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.  
Luke 4:30 (NIV)

**Commented [notes2]:** 13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.  
John 5:13 (NIV)

**Commented [notes3]:** 31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."  
Mark 6:31 (NIV)

**Commented [notes4]:** 28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.  
29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.  
Matt 11:28-29 (NIV)

**Commented [notes5]:** 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.  
1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)

**Commented [notes6]:** 10 "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."  
Psalms 46:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes7]:** 20 But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him."  
Hab 2:20 (NIV)

like the children of Israel. We can try to do it on our own and go our own way and die in our own kind of wilderness, or we can make every effort to enter the rest of God. That is not only to trust in Jesus' work for our salvation, but also for daily direction and decisions. Jesus went up that mountain to remain in the rest of God. He declared it was the Father's word and works that people saw in His life. He ceased from His own labor and let the Father work through Him. (John 14:10; Hebrews 4:10) That is the model for every Christian!

<sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, <sup>17</sup> where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. Matthew tells us that Jesus sent them on ahead and then went up the mountain to pray. (Matthew 14:23) They probably left in enough time to arrive back in Capernaum before it got too dark to see, but one of those common squalls came up on the lake.

<sup>18</sup> A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. The mountain valley to the northwest is like a funnel for wind to come down on the lake, which is at 600 foot below sea level. When there is a large temperature difference, the cool air will flow down to replace warm air over the lake. Sometimes it moves so quickly that it churns up the lake. The disciples were rowing into this wind as it pushed them out into middle of the lake. Even today when this wind comes up, powerboats are forbidden to go out on the lake. I've had to cancel a boat trip because those conditions came up on the day we were to go out on the lake.

<sup>19</sup> When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. The distance to Capernaum was only about that far, so they were being pushed out into the middle of the lake. Mark tells us that Jesus saw them struggling at the oars against the wind and went out to them. (Mark 6:48)

Jesus was walking on the water! I have heard pathetic excuses such as He was walking on a sand bar 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!

Keep in mind that Jesus sent them out on this lake. Mark said He made the disciples get in the boat and go. (Mark 6:45) They may have feared those conditions were about to occur, but Jesus sent them out anyway. Why would He do that? Why do you and I face things in life that seem completely out of control? Why does God allow our worst fears to come upon us?

**Commented [notes8]:** 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. John 14:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes9]:** 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Heb 4:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes10]:** 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, Matt 14:23 (NIV)

**Commented [notes11]:** Mark 6:48 (NIV) 48 He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them,

**Commented [notes12]:** 11 This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. John 2:11 (NIV)

**Commented [notes13]:** 42 Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. Mark 5:42 (NIV)

**Commented [notes14]:** 8 Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." John 5:8 (NIV)

**Commented [notes15]:** 11 Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. 12 When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." John 6:11-12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. Job 9:8 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** 4 Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea - the LORD on high is mighty. Psalms 93:4 (NIV)

**Commented [notes18]:** 45 Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. Mark 6:45 (NIV)

They were in a storm before and had to wake Jesus up because they were afraid the boat would be swamped and sink. (Mark 4:38-39) After stilling the wind and waves, Jesus asked them where their faith was. (Mark 4:40) Here they are again, but this time without Jesus. Were they calling out for Him? The text doesn't tell us, but I would have been, especially when you understand their frame of mind.

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 Jesus as the grim reaper coming to take them all down to their watery grave.

We sometimes see our salvation in that way. "Surrendering to the lordship of Jesus – noooo! It will be the end of my life!" Actually it is the beginning! We think it's the worst thing that could happen to us, when it is the best thing that will ever happen in our life.

Just when we think it can't get any worse, we realize that Jesus is right there. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." From a previous sermon, do you realize what Jesus actually said? (John 4:26) He shouted over the waves, "I AM!" Doesn't 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 them out there so they would be almost as desperate as He was for the presence of God.

I don't 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 thing. 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's there to see you through safely to the other side. "I AM" is wherever you are, but don't 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.

"Don't 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 life. (Psalm 139:16) It is to have the frame of mind that God is either unconcerned about your situation, or powerless to do

**Commented [notes19]:** 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" 39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. Mark 4:38-39 (NIV)

**Commented [notes20]:** 40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Mark 4:40 (NIV)

**Commented [notes21]:** 6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Matt 18:6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes22]:** 26 Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." John 4:26 (NIV)

**Commented [notes23]:** 1 The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-- of whom shall I be afraid? Psalms 27:1 (NIV)

**Commented [notes24]:** 4 "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Luke 12:4-5 (NIV)

**Commented [notes25]:** 1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." Gen 15:1 (NIV)

**Commented [notes26]:** 12 Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. Dan 10:12 (NIV)

**Commented [notes27]:** 24 and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' Acts 27:24 (NIV)

**Commented [notes28]:** 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalms 139:16 (NIV)

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 (NIV)

<sup>28</sup> "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup> "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" <sup>31</sup> Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup> And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. <sup>33</sup> Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." Amen! Truly He is!

<sup>21</sup> Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading. They would only let Jesus in the boat when they were certain it was He and not some spirit 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 Genneseret, John says they were headed to Capernaum. It could be that after being blown off course, they landed in Genneseret (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 they were in Genneseret 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)

<sup>22</sup> The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. The crowd was confused. The disciples left without Jesus, but Jesus was nowhere to be found. There was only one boat there, and it left without Him. Where'd He go?

<sup>23</sup> Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup> Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. Other boats came from Tiberias, and so many of the people caught a ride back to Capernaum to search for Him. Surely many of them walked back, but it sounds like many sailed. How could that be? Recent archeology has shown that there were 19 ports on Galilee in the first century. Sailing was a preferred means of travel and there was at that time an abundance of ships. Later the Jews would even mount an attack on the Romans in Tiberias with ships.

**Commented [notes29]:** 10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.  
Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

**Commented [notes30]:** 1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.  
2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,  
Psalms 46:1-2 (NIV)

This is a connecting story, telling us what took place in-between two Old Testament types being fulfilled in Jesus. It was also another of John's list of signs that show us that Jesus could be none other than God incarnate.

When you carefully examine what John is saying, you see that he is repeating over and over and over, in different expressions and true stories, that Jesus is God incarnate. If we hear it the way the Jewish people would hear it, with the Old Testament Scriptures as a backdrop, it is as clear as clear could be. God came to man in the form of man. (Romans 8:3) He showed His character by compassion, grace, wisdom and power. When we see Jesus, we see the heart of God.

When we see Jesus coming to us on the storms of life, we see Almighty God, mightier than any waves we face, telling us He inhabits eternity, commanding us not to fear, and bringing us safely to our desired haven. (Psalm 107:29-30) Realizing what a mighty God we serve, ushers us into that place of rest. What peace we can have when we know we are in Almighty God's hands! When things don't go as we desire, when prayers we pray aren't answered like we wish, we can still know that He is with us through it all. (Hebrews 13:5) His timing His perfect; His power is infinite. His love for us is so great. You can trust Him.

In our passage today, John has shown us that the place of rest in our heavenly Father is even more necessary than physical sleep. He has shown us how God sometimes sends us into storms of life to stretch our faith. And when we are about to give in to fear, He comes to us and gives us a revelation of His greatness, tells us not to fear, and then He gets in our boat with us. Could we ask for more? His presence changes everything and gives us that peace that passes understanding. Before we know it, we are at our destination. That is worth repeating! When we are about to give in to fear, He comes to us and gives us a revelation of His greatness, tells us not to fear, and then He gets in our boat with us. Before we know it, we are at our destination. What a mighty God we serve! Amen?

This little lake of life we are crossing can sure get whipped up by the storms of life. Better invite Jesus into your boat. Just realize that when He comes in, He takes over as pilot. Wouldn't it be better for Him to pilot or maybe you think you've been doing a great job? Trust Him. Don't fear. His presence changes everything. He has better plans for you than you have for yourself. The journey will soon be over.

**Commented [notes31]:** 3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,[4 Romans 8:3 (NIV)

**Commented [notes32]:** 29 He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. Psalms 107:29-30 (NIV)

**Commented [notes33]:** 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Heb 13:5 (NIV)