

Lesson 26

Fear Not!

Icebreaker:

Has the Lord ever told you to do something, which you found difficult to obey? If the answer is yes, describe the events.

Introduction:

When Jesus fed five thousand men with just two fish and five loaves the people were astonished. They wanted to make Him king. Knowing this, Jesus immediately told His disciples to get in the boat and return to Bethsaida¹ while He went up on the mountain to pray.

From His vantage point high on the hill Jesus could see the disciples in the distance struggling to row their boat against the wind.² So during the fourth watch³ of the night He went to them walking on the water.⁴

Reading The Scripture:

Matthew 14:24-33, Mark 6:47-52, and John 6:14-21

Jesus Walks on Water

Matthew 14:24-33, Mark 6:47-52, and John 6:17-21

(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible, authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: "Follow Me: A Message from God", a Journey with Jesus)

But the boat was already many **stadia** away from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And seeing them straining at the oars, at about the **fourth watch of the night**, He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were frightened. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were greatly astonished, for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened. And those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

Stadia. A stadion is a measure of length equivalent to 606 feet. According to the apostle John, the disciples had rowed about 25 to 30 stadia (about 3 miles) before Jesus came to them.

Fourth watch of the night. From 3:00 AM until 6:00 AM.

¹ Bethsaida or "House of fishing" was a city located about three miles east of Capernaum on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee where the Jordan River empties into it. Bethsaida was the hometown of Andrew, Peter and Philip.

² Different winds blow over the lake at different times of the year. In the summer the afternoon west wind (Gharbiyeh) cools the summer heat, but causes no storms. In winter and spring the east wind (Sharkiyeh) often causes sudden dangerous storms. Late March appears to be the correct time period as John 6:4 records that the Passover of the Jews was approaching. That year it would have fallen in early April.

³ Between 3:00 am and 6:00 am.

⁴ According to the Apostle John, they had rowed about 25 to 30 stadia before Jesus came to them walking on the water. A stadion is a measure of length equivalent to 606 feet; therefore the distance would have been around three miles.

Group Discussion:

1. If you were in the boat with the disciples what would you have thought about seeing Jesus walking on the water?
2. Why do you think Jesus was going to pass them by?

The Command:

1. Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid.

The Lesson:

There are several lessons that can be learned from the events in this story. The primary one involves obedience to what Jesus says to do and in doing so He will supply all that we need to complete His request. Lets take a closer look at the story.

The sequence begins when Jesus tells the disciples to get into their boat and go ahead of Him to Bethsaida on the other side of the lake. They obeyed Him immediately and even kept going when the winds and the sea made it difficult for them. Jesus observed their progress from on high. He saw the struggle they were having in complying with His commands just as He does ours. Having compassion for them He decides to walk across the lake to give them encouragement in the midst of their struggle.

It was dark on the lake that night⁵ so Jesus passed near enough to them so they would recognize Him. The miracle of walking on the water was meant to reassure them. In other words it was if He were saying, “Keep going guys, I’ll see you in Bethsaida just like I said.” From this impromptu encounter the disciples were supposed to understand that Jesus was aware of their difficulties but was expecting them to make it to the other side of the lake despite the obstacles.

But the outcome was surprisingly different. The disciples were terrified at His unexpected appearance, thinking they had seen a ghost. According to the Scriptures this fear was generated because they had forgotten about the miracle of the loaves and their hearts had become hardened. The disciples like many of us have forgotten that Jesus still does supernatural things in support of His people.

Group Discussion:

2. What would your reaction have been to seeing Jesus walking by you on the water?
3. Has the Lord performed any miracles in your life?
4. If He has, tell us what they were and what your reactions to them were.

The Lesson (continued):

As we look at the story as a whole we can see it is representative of what is occurring in Christians lives on earth at this time. In the midst of the struggle Jesus wants us to remember His command, *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid”*.

- At the beginning of the story Jesus commissions His disciples to go before Him to the other side of the lake where He will meet them.
 - Christians have been commissioned to preach the gospel to everyone and when that occurs He will return and meet us in the air.

⁵ Passover was approaching, which occurs in the middle of the month or at the full moon. They would have been making the crossing near the first of the month with little or no moon at all. The storm would have made it even more obscure.

- *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- After Jesus leaves He goes up to a high mountain.
 - After Jesus’ resurrection He went to heaven.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- On the mountain Jesus prays.
 - Jesus, our High Priest lives to make intercession for us.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- Jesus saw the disciples struggling to make headway against the contrary wind.
 - He sees our struggles to do His will in a world that is contrary to God.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- He came to the disciples in a miraculous way to encourage them.
 - He comes to us in miraculous ways to encourage us.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- The disciples were frightened when they saw the supernatural.
 - Christians become frightened when they see the supernatural.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- The disciples weren’t sure about the supernatural occurrence. Was it Jesus?
 - Christians wonder about supernatural occurrences as well. Is it really Jesus?
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- Peter asked Jesus if he could join him in the miracle.
 - Some Christians want to participate in the miraculous things Jesus is doing.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- The other disciples remained in the boat.
 - Some Christians don’t want to participate in the miraculous.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- By faith Peter obeyed Jesus and got out of the boat.
 - By faith Christians obey Jesus and participate in the supernatural.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- Peter took his eyes off Jesus and became distracted by the wind.
 - Christians take their eyes off of Jesus and become distracted by the circumstances surrounding them.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- When Peter got into trouble he cried out to Jesus to save him and was rescued.
 - Christians cry out to Jesus and He rescues them.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- Jesus told Peter, *“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”*
 - Jesus tells Christians, *“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”*
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*
- When Jesus got in the boat the wind ceased.
 - It is easier for Christians to reach their objectives when Jesus is along for the ride.
 - *“Take courage it is I, do not be afraid.”*

Group Discussion:

5. After Peter had just walked on the water why did Jesus say “ You of little faith”?
6. What would have been great faith?
7. Why do doubt?
8. Why are you fearful?

The Point Of The Lesson:

Jesus cares for you and will help you.

Application:

Remember, there are 365 “fear nots” in the Scriptures, enough for one a day all year long.
Use them everyday!