

Lesson 10 – Walking on Water (John 6:16-21)

We all need our own solitude from time to time. Jesus was no exception (John 4:8; 6:15). After Jesus realizes the intent of those who had just witnessed his incredible power, Jesus sought some privacy. We can speculate on the motivation for this action, but it must be a common occurrence with Jesus to withdraw from his disciples because they leave for Capernaum without him (John 6:17).

Followers of Jesus, his chosen disciples, set out on their own without their master. It is now dark. The wind begins to blow and the waves mount and the rowing of this large vessel becomes challenging (John 6:17, 18). I'm not sure if you've been in a situation like this, but rowing a boat against a strong wind can be difficult and it may be impossible to reach your intended destination. People can launch off in life without the Lord and find circumstances that are frightening and overwhelming. No matter how hard we try, circumstances seem stacked against us. The disciples are rowing hard to get to Capernaum, but the storm rages and the darkness has snuffed out a focal point upon the shore and these fishermen are lost. Finding yourself in a situation like this is unnerving and without the master by your side life, at times, can be very frightful.

Straining to see the shore, someone looks out upon the water and sees something. It is an object moving on top of the water and its coming straight for us. It has to be a ghost, a demon; the spray from the waves makes it difficult to focus upon this incredible sight and there is no doubt this voyage is doomed (John 6:19). As hope evaporates, a voice is heard above the storm's roar, "*It is I; don't be afraid.*" In a desperate situation such as this, to hear the voice of the master and reconcile your fear with hope knowing that we are not in this struggle alone. What a comfort it must have been when the disciples were willing to take Jesus into their boat (John 6:20, 21). How often do we find ourselves struggling against the storms of life, rowing against the billows, and not realizing that Jesus is there? He knows that we are experiencing a tough time of it. Yet, we are unwilling to take him into the boat.

The gospel writer adds that immediately they were at Capernaum (John 6:21). With Jesus, we can make it safely to shore. The man who could miraculously multiply bread and fish and feed over 5000 people, he can walk upon the water. He can calm the storm. He can transport us from one place to another immediately. This was an incredible event in the lives of Jesus' disciples. From frightful peril to calm and peace, the solution was found with Jesus. This mastery over the physical elements was not something that the disciples had experienced themselves. They had observed Jesus' healings of others, tasted the good wine, and eaten of the multiplied food, but never had their lives required salvation, until now.

It was Jesus who saw them in peril. It was Jesus who came to them, at night, in the darkness, during a raging storm, walking across the water to rescue them all. He immediately conducted their journey to safely arrive at the intended port. It is no doubt this experience, which led Peter to answer Jesus' question the next day, "*We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.*" (John 6:69) And after a less harrowing night on the Sea of Galilee, the disciple whom Jesus loved, recognized the voice of the master and said, "*It is the Lord!*" (John 21:7)

Questions:

1. Although we did not experience this event in the life of Jesus and his disciples, what value does this sign offer to those today who would follow Jesus?

2. Of the seven "I am" claims of Jesus found in the book of John which claim is best proved by his walking upon the water?

- a. John 6:35, 51 – I am the bread of life
- b. John 8:12 – I am the light of the world
- c. John 10:7, 9 – I am the gate
- d. John 10:11, 14 – I am the good shepherd
- e. John 11:25 – I am the resurrection and the life
- f. John 14:6 – I am the way, the truth, and the life
- g. John 15:1,5 – I am the true vine

3. What would cause the disciples' fear to subside when Jesus identified himself?

4. Jesus demonstrates the abilities to walk upon water in a terrible storm and the mass teleportation of a group from one location to another. What should these abilities signify about Jesus?

5. The Twelve experienced something with Jesus that equals the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus 14:15-21. Although these events are miraculous in nature, experiencing them did not assure a permanent faith. Explain Jesus' statement in the later part of this chapter about one of the Twelve (John 6:66-71).
