

ROWING THE BOAT
jkroberts_us@yahoo.com
www.pacolethillsbaptist.org
July 18, 2021

Matthew 14:22-33

1. This incident happened immediately after Jesus had fed five thousand men, plus women and children, with five loaves of bread and two fish.
2. Additional details related to this event are recorded in Mark and John as well.
3. Looking at the three accounts gives us a clear picture of what happened and why it happened.
 - a. Jesus, with the cooperation of the Disciples, had just miraculously fed a great number of people; possibly as many as 12,000-15,000.
NOTE: Jesus had given His Disciples a lesson in doing the impossible.
 - b. John recorded the response of the people involved. John 6:14-15
Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.
 - c. However both Matthew and Mark reveal that before Jesus withdrew He immediately made the Apostles get into a boat and sent them to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.
 - (1) Jesus did not want them to get caught up in the hysteria of the crowd.
 - (2) Jesus wanted to teach them some additional lessons related to the nature of the Christian life.
 - d. While Jesus sent away the crowd, the Disciples got into the boat and set off across the sea.
 - (1) I have an idea that the Disciples were glad that Jesus had given them an assignment that they thought they could handle, since a number of them had been fishermen and knew all about boats and the Sea of Galilee.
NOTE: Most people prefer to live in the realm of the possible, rather than the impossible.
 - (2) However, due to a storm and a contrary wind the Disciples made little progress even though they were "straining at the oars." Mark 6:48
 - (3) They had not yet learned the lesson that apart from Jesus they could do nothing He wanted them to do. John 15:5
 - (4) It is a lesson we must all learn before we can really make progress in the Christian life.
 - e. Rowing a boat through a storm and into a contrary wind is a lot like trying to advance the Kingdom of God in this present world.
 - (1) It is not going to be easy.
 - (2) It calls for coordination and cooperation.
 - (3) It calls for strength and persistence.
 - (4) It calls for courage.
 - (5) It calls for adaptability due to changes related to challenges.
 - (6) Most of all, it calls for dependency upon God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to the Holy Spirit.
4. Now let's look at some important details related to this incident.

I. Jesus made the Disciples get in the boat.

- A. They were not allowed to rest and revel in what had just taken place.
- B. Following Jesus involves obedience even when He sends us into a storm; which He often does.

II. Jesus saw the Disciple struggling against the storm. Mark 6:47-48

When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. 48 **Seeing them straining at the oars**, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.

A. Sometimes in the midst of life's storms we wonder, "Where is He?"

B. We need to remember that Jesus is fully aware of what we are facing, and He is interceding for us at the Throne of Grace.

C. Our Captain will not allow His ship to sink or His sailors to drown.

D. The phrase, "He intended to pass by them," could be interpreted, "He desired to come alongside of," (McArthur) or, "He acted as if He meant to pass by them." (AMP)

NOTE: The above passage clearly states that, "He came to them, walking on the sea."

III. Jesus came to the Disciples by walking on the water.

A. It was in the process of trying to obey that Lord that the Disciples got to see Jesus walking on the water."

B. As we faithfully obey Jesus, He will manifest His presence and His power. John 14: 21, 23
"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him..." "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."

C. We often wonder where God is, but a better question would be, where are we in relationship to God and His will for our lives?

IV. Jesus encouraged His Disciples not to be afraid.

A. When the Disciples first saw Him they reacted in fear; they were terrified.

B. His response was, "Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid."

C. Jesus' promise in Matthew 28:20 applies to all the circumstances and events that comprise our lives.

"And lo (behold, look, listen), I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

V. Jesus invited Peter to walk on the water with Him.

A. Peter wanted to do what He saw Jesus doing.

NOTE: Our goal should be conformity to Christ in all things.

B. Peter was still in a learning process, but He had learned that Jesus' commands were accompanied by the grace to obey.

C. Peter was not about to get out of the boat without a word from the Lord.

VI. Jesus chided Peter for failing to fully trust Him.

A. When Peter became distracted by the wind and its effects he took his eyes off Jesus.

B. The result was that he began to sink.

C. Our tendency is to be distracted by our own perceived inadequacies, the opposition of the Enemy, the size of the task, or the opposition that comes against all those who are determined to walk with Jesus in this present world.

NOTE: Sometimes our opponents are those who claim to be walking with Jesus, but are not.

VII. Jesus saved Peter from being swallowed by the sea.

NOTE: Those who momentarily take their eyes off Jesus will find Him near when they realize their mistake.

VIII. Jesus miraculously propelled the boat to shore.

- A. Matthew tells us that when Jesus and Peter got back in the boat the wind stopped.
- B. It stopped because it had accomplished purpose.
- C. John stated, "And immediately they were at the land to which they were going."

NOTE: Progress in the Christian life cannot be achieved if Jesus is not intimately involved in the process.

APPLICATION

1. Matthew revealed that in response to what they had experienced the Disciples worshipped Jesus and declared, "You are certainly God's Son!"

2. Mark concluded his account with, "Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, 52 for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened." Mark 6:51-52

NOTE: It is sad when we do not benefit spiritually from the events God orchestrates for our spiritual benefit.

3. Perceived spiritual progress is always going to be tested.

4. It will be tested as we continue to row the boat on the sea of life in obedience to Christ.